

American Legion Auxiliary National Convention  
August 24-27, 2009  
Louisville, Kentucky

On Friday, August 21<sup>st</sup> I was one of 24 Nebraska delegates to make their way south to Louisville, KY for the 89<sup>th</sup> American Legion Auxiliary convention. The flight was on time and rooms were waiting for our arrival at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Settled in we made our way to our NE caucus. This was my first caucus. The delegates were quickly filled in on the behind the scenes of the Finance Committee. Past National President, Carol Van Kirk, told us in no uncertain terms that there was quickly becoming no accountability to the Finance Committee.

Following the caucus there was plenty to do on Fourth Street Live. Your choices ranged from the typical TGIF to the not so typical British and Irish Pub. Just walking the street was entertaining and pocket draining.

On Saturday morning, Aug. 22<sup>nd</sup>, my preconvention meeting was scheduled for 10:10 AM to 10:40 AM. The topic was Community Service. I decided that since there was so much controversy, I would attend the National Executive Committee meeting that began at 8 AM. Needless to say, it was interesting. The head of the Finance Committee, Linda Boone, told the assembly that they had anticipated revenue of \$7,600,000 but what was realized was \$6,200,000. She stated contributions were down 20%. Expenses for the budget were to be \$7,600,000, but thru actions taken by headquarters they were able to save \$1,700,000. Items that the NEC moved to the floor were: 1) move the Philippines, 2) change the ages for the patches used for the Juniors. Tabled indefinitely was the ability for National staff to sign contracts for \$25,000 or less. The accountants needed the wording for this amendment for the new 990 IRS forms. Also large on the agenda were the 20 VISTA volunteers who will be joining the staff at National and at 11 Departments throughout the US. The ALA received a grant for \$150,000 for the training of the staff to supervise the VISTA volunteers. Unique to this grant was no need for matching funds from the ALA. There was controversy on the floor in that delegate believed there was money being spent on travel and there was to be no expense to the ALA for the volunteers. National staff assured the delegates it was all covered by the grant.

Because the NEC went way long, my committee meeting was nowhere close to 10:10 AM. It was abbreviated to a mere 10 minutes. Sharon Conaster, the committee's chair told the assembly that reports were not being forwarded to National. Awards were handed out. Our department did not receive an award. One idea that I thought was especially interesting, was a "Souper Bowl Sunday. The Unit hosting this event received over 6,000 cans of soup on Super Bowl Sunday that were donated to the Salvation Army.

The afternoon of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, I attended the Northwest Division caucus. Nebraska showed with 25 members. Northwestern Division National Vice President, Thelma (Tootie) Fueller introduced the 144 members to Joyce Babcock of Custer, MT the new NW Division National Vice President. The new Department Presidents were introduced by the outgoing Presidents.

On Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, I attended the Patriotic Memorial Service held in the Kentucky International Convention Center. It was indeed a memorable service. There were hymns sung by the "Masters Men" from the Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY. Memorial Wreaths were placed by each branch of the Legion Family. Rev. Larry L. Vollink, delivered the message of "Faith, Hope, and Love." The service ended with the assembled singing "God Bless America."

We were to assemble at 3:15 PM to make our way to the start of the Parade. Unfortunately, there was some conflict in scheduling. The VanKirk-Bock reunion was thought to leave before the end of the parade. There were several members who did not participate. I was one of those delegates.

Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, the delegates were seated with the brief movie featuring the Gaither Vocal Band. The theme for the convention was Energize. Energy was brought from the Rivercity Drum Corps giving each National Officer a drum beat. National President, Desiree Stoy, gaveled the convention into session with 901 delegates present.

Then began the reports of all committee chairmen. Highlights included:

Girls Nation President-Rachel Lipstein Suffern, NY

Republic of China representative who so appreciated the help the USA has given his country that he bowed to us.

VISTA volunteers: 8 to Headquarters, 2 to the Department of CA, 1 each to the Departments of AR, MI, WI, NM, CT, NY, FL, OH, OR, and WA.

National Elections: President-Rita Navarrete, NM, Vice President-Carlene Ashworth, TX, Chaplain: Beverly Wolff, ND, Historian-Joyce Arent, AZ

Special Presentation by Mike Alerding, Alerding & Associates, LLC: What will be necessary to appease the IRS to keep the ALA the valuable resource it is. This includes:

The VALUE of the organization's mission & purpose to society

The effectiveness of the organization's delivery of its charitable services to its member & society.

The quality & effectiveness of the organization's internal controls & governance policies.

The manner in which the organization receives & spends its resources.

The transparency of the organization. All these must apply to every level within the organization.

Throughout the reports were resolutions and amendments made by the committees.

## RESOLUTIONS

- (1) Starting with the fall issue each issue will contain Plans of Work for each program. Passed
- (2) Lists of Donors will be passed from National to Departments. Defeated in a 2/3 vote, but Passed in a majority vote on ruling of the Parliamentarian.
- (3) Number of Home Front magazine from 4/yr to 6/yr. Defeated
- (4) Change the first two age groups for patch achievement in the Jr. Program- Passed. Level 1 will be K-3, Level 2 will be 4-8, other levels and requirements remain the same.
- (5) To allow payment of VIM membership on time payments defeated

## AMMENDMENTS

- (1) Allow all spouses' entrance to membership in the ALA-defeated
- (2) Admit the wives of the SAL to membership in the ALA-defeated
- (3) Grammatical correction to make sure the Past National Presidents continue to have voice, but no right to vote-passed
- (4) National Historians not to receive money or pin unless first three reports have been filed-passed
- (5) Audit committee with rotating terms of 3 yrs, 2yrs, 1 yr, every term there after will be 3 years passed
- (6) Human Resources committee with rotating terms defeated.
- (7) Finance Committee-withdrawn
- (8) Dues Raise to \$2.00 for Jrs. and \$7 for Srs defeated
- (9) To coordinate with the Legion National Commander the theme *if possible* passed

Of course the highlight of the reports had to be Virginia Nelsen, Public Relations Committee chair. She is always a delight and always encouraging.

## Presidents Awards of Excellence

Bert S. Crossland Unit #170 of Torrance, CA-52 members  
Leander Kinchen Unit #47 of Hammond, LA  
Palmer Roberts Unit #214 in OH  
KT Crossen Unit #214 of Athens OH  
Jackson County Unit 160 of Passcagulah, MS  
Department of the Year-Wisconsin

So, all in all I was energized, revitalized, found out I believe and now am ready for "Service Not Self."

Elizabeth Paes, Prague Unit 254, Delegate for District 7.