the Daily Dispatch

1994 MINNEAPOLIS NATIONAL CONVENTION — Thursday, Sept. 8, 1994

Brown talks tough about file felonies

VA employees who allegedly destroyed documents in veterans' claims files are a blot on the VA's integrity and a supreme disservice to the veterans they are sworn to serve.

"This is a betrayal of the trust you placed in them; therefore, we are not going to tolerate that kind of behavior," said VA Secretary Jesse Brown, addressing delegates at Wednesday's convention session.

"I want you to know that anyone caught destroying your records will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," said Brown.

Information in veterans claims files are needed to establish service connection for disabilities; determine increased valuations; education benefits for veterans' children; and medical care for veterans and their families.

While conceding Congress has shredded the administration's national health-care reform bill for this year, Brown vowed to resist efforts to undermine the VA system.

"I will fight to ensure that this nation's VA hospitals will be maintained as an independent system for our veterans," he said. "I will fight to open our doors to any veteran who wants care from the VA."

He said under his watch he's determined not only to to keep VA independent but expand services to deliver a comprehensive care package that takes care of all veterans health needs. That concept mirrors recommendations made in *An American Legion Proposal to Improve Veterans Health Care,* released in January 1993.

"I want you to know that anyone caught destroying your records will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

-- VA SECRETARY JESSE BROWN --

According to Brown, VA has had a busy year promoting its own veterans agenda. He pointed to progress in providing care to Operation Desert Storm veterans who have been stricken by an array of baffling medical conditions since returning from the gulf in 1991.

After some prompting by Congress, VA agreed to provide medical care to Persian Gulf War veterans rated at least 10 percent disabled.

Veterans will be eligible for care up to three years under a House-

See BROWN, page 2

Doing business in Vietnam is bad business, senator warns

If the administration's lifting of the economic embargo against Vietnam was a business decision, it may not show any profit in resolving the fates of American servicemen who didn't return from the war.

"The only business we ought to be doing in Vietnam is the business of finding out what happened to our men," said Sen. Bob Smith, R-N.H.

Smith, the ranking minority member on the Senate Select Committee on POW-MIA Affairs, was on hand to receive a meritorious service citation from The American Legion during the Wednesday's convention business session.

Smith, who served with the Navy in Vietnam in the mid-1960s, echoed what Legion leaders have speculated on what the controversial lifting of the ban may ultimately mean. "The United States has embarked on a path to normalize relations with Vietnam," Smith said.

Lifting the embargo, which the Legion still opposes until there is a thorough accounting of POWs and MIAs, allows U.S. firms to set up shop in Vietnam and allows American citizens to travel in that country.

The senator cited a document that surfaced in former Soviet archives last year written by a top North Vietnamese general. In a September 1972 memorandum — six months before American prisoners were released in "Operation Homecoming" — the general reported Hanoi was holding 300 more POWs than they were admitting to during negotiations with the United States.

"We have more MIAs that have not been accounted for than there are people in this room," Smith said, gesturing toward the delegates in the convention hall.

Smith said the problems the U.S. government is creating for itself in dealing with the Vietnamese may have an effect on finding out what happened to 8,000 missing servicemen from the Korean War.

He said that "inside the beltway" rumors in Washington indicate the administration may be moving toward an improvement in relations with the North Korean communist government.

"It's an absolute disgrace (if relations are restored)," he said.

"North Korea can do more to provide answers what happened to our men."

Where We Stand

In November 1919, the founders of The American Legion gathered in the Minneapolis Auditorium to forge the bedrock principles on which the organization would be built.

Seventy-five years later, two blocks from the site of that historic meeting, Legionnaires have met again to affirm those same principles.Delegates Wednesday morning unanimously adopted **Special Resolution 419**.

The text of the resolution is reprinted on the back page of this final daily convention edition of *THE AMERICAN LEGION DISPATCH.*

Newsome elected Auxiliary President

A Maryland woman will lead The American Legion Auxiliary as it begins its diamond jubilee anniversary year.

Linda M. Newsome, Waldorf, Md., was elected National president by delegates attending the 74th annual National Convention of the Auxiliary. Her election capped a 29-year career in the Auxiliary that has included tours of duty as president of the Department of Maryland in 1975-76. Newsome also has been active in membership activities and Girls State.

"The public should be aware that the Auxiliary has been a focal point in local communities throughout the world," said the newly elected president. "This anniversary year will be an opportunity to tell the story of our accomplishments to the public — such as our organization's ability to raise $18 million each year for reinvestment in VA medical centers and community programs."

LINDA NEWSOME

At the National level, she has served as National vice president and chairwoman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and Children and Youth commissions.

Newsome pledged the Auxiliary's continued support and work with the Citizens Flag Alliance. "As president, it is my responsibility to spread the word about the CFA's goals."

She is a legal secretary with a prestigious Washington, D.C. law firm, and is married to Theron T. Newsome, a Navy veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. They have two sons, a daughter-in-law and two grandsons.

• BROWN

Continued from page 1

passed compensation bill now in Senate hands.

VA also is carrying forward an aggressive research program into why thousands of veterans have reported symptoms media have labeled "Persian Gulf Syndrome."

Veterans have complained of chronic fatigue, hair loss, intestinal problems, aching joints, flu-like symptoms, memory loss and other symptoms.

"I believe very, very strongly we have a moral obligation to compensate those with undiagnosed illnesses," Brown said, who promised to lobby the Senate to follow the House's lead in passing legislation granting compensation to Desert Storm veterans.

Three years after winning the war against Iraq, the Department of Defense (DoD) finally agreed to begin releasing documents from the war.

Officials are trying to ease veterans concerns some American and coalition troops had been exposed to biological or chemical agents in the war against Saddam Hussein.

VA also recently mailed letters to 40,000 Vietnam veterans notifying them VA is now paying compensation for chloracne, non-hodgkin's lymphoma, respiratory cancer and several other conditions deemed service-connected to Agent Orange.

In the past year, Brown said, VA spent $1 million to train every one of its 260,000 employees "on how to treat our veterans with dignity and respect," acknowledging many VA officials over the years have been insensitive to veterans' needs.

War And Remembrance

Korean, Vietnam women's project, WWII women memorials still seek help

For Legionnaires, there are no forgotten wars. Veterans take care of their own, and they remember those who served. Convention speakers Wednesday coupled their appreciation with pleas for more help in paying the cost for veterans memorials.

Past National Commander John P. "Jake" Comer of Massachusetts said the Korean War Memorial Advisory Committee is on schedule for dedicating the memorial July 27, 1995 in Washington, D.C.

"I guarantee you The American Legion will be the largest single contributor to the Korean Veterans War Memorial, just like we were the biggest single contributor to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," said Comer.

Members of The American Legion family donated $1.25 million to finance construction of "The Wall" honoring the nation's Vietnam-era veterans.

National Commander Bruce Thiesen presented Comer with a check for $357,000 on behalf of the men and women of The American Legion.

Comer thanked Legionnaires for their generosity, and encouraged more donations needed for the memorial's perpetual maintenance. To date, the Legion family has donated $613,004.02. Iowa, Connecticut and Illinois led Departments in donations at convention.

The Vietnam Women's Memorial dedicated Veterans Day 1993 culminated a 10-year fight Legionnaires supported with their prayer, hearts and pocketbooks, said Diane Carlson Evans, a former Army nurse in Vietnam who heads the memorial project organization. The women's memorial is on the Mall in Washington near the Wall.

"At last, the men and women who served in that area of the world during that turbulent time are together forever," Evans said.

She said Legionnaires donated $135,000 to the $4 million project, but the non-profit memorial group still needs $300,000.

Sale of memorial coins will help close the gap, but Evans complained Massachusetts Rep. Joseph Kennedy is blocking a coin bill in a House committee.

Retired Air Force Gen. Wilma Vaught reported fund-raising progress for the Women in Military Service for America Memorial. The foundation Vaught serves as president recently received a $9 million grant for restoration work at the memorial site near the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery.

To date, the foundation has sold 185,989 commemorative coins. Vaught said the coins cost $31 through Friday, Sept. 9, and $35 thereafter.

Legionnaires have donated $139,353 to the memorial, with New York, Texas and Florida making the largest single contributions, Vaught said.

Legion All-Star Team includes several Hall of Famers

Baseball fans can't cheer for today's stars because they're all on strike. With the season going down the tubes, Legionnaires can cheer their selections to the American Legion All-Star Dream Team.

Ballots for the promotion honoring Legion ballplayers who went on to distinguished pro careers were printed in the May issue of *THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE*. Voting was held between May and July 31, with the preferences of more than 15,000 Legionnaires announced Monday by PNC Donald E. Johnson, chairman of the 75th Anniversary Committee.

Final results, by position:

Pitcher, Bob Feller, Cleveland Indians; catcher, Johnny Bench, Cincinnati Reds; first base, Harmon Killebrew, Minnesota Twins; second base, Ryne Sandberg, Chicago Cubs; third base, Brooks Robinson, Baltimore Orioles; shortstop, Peewee Reese, Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodgers.

Outfield: Stan Musial, St. Louis Cardinals; Ted Williams, Boston Red Sox; Carl Yazstremski, Boston Red Sox.

Budget cuts putting military on the defensive

Legionnaires and members of The National Guard share a common heritage of service, the head of the National Guard Association of the United States said Wednesday.

"The National Guard and American Legion have much in common — we've served together in times of conflict and times of natural disasters," said retired Maj. Gen. Robert Ensslin, the association's executive director.

"You are America's great citizen-based volunteer driven force, and we are its citizen-based defense force," he said.

He said the half million-strong National Guard, America's citizen army, is present in 3,000 communities, "volunteering to become part of America's Total Force," Ensslin said of the guard's role in complementing active duty forces.

He said budget cuts in recent fiscal years impair the guard's ability to forward deploy with active forces and provide its vital support functions, and emphasized the guard's public affairs role in rallying public support through education.

ROBERT ENSSLIN

"We must educate America about the importance of maintaining a strong national defense. It is only by being prepared to defend our way of life that we will save American lives in the future," said Ensslin, a member of Post 141, Emporia, Va.

As part of that goal, the association has joined The American Legion, the Association of the United States Army, and local civic, government and business groups in sponsoring defense forums in various U.S. cities. The forums bring together military analysts to discuss America's future defense needs and force structures, and the military's role in a post-Cold War world rife with regional conflicts.

The first forum was held in Indianapolis last March. Ensslin said defense forums will be conducted early next month in Dallas, and in Cleveland in late October.

The National Guard's role in complementing active forces is only half its mission, the general said. Guard units deploy to assist disaster relief efforts.

Units provide support to civil authorities, the most recent examples being the California earthquake last January, and flooding in Georgia earlier this summer. The guard also has been called on to help overseas in humanitarian and peace-keeping missions in Rwanda, Somalia and Bosnia.

Shooting victims don't let bullet keep them from National Convention

Alabama Legionnaire Clifton Lee Haveard of Brewton Post 79, didn't let a little thing like a gunshot wound keep him from attending the Diamond Jubilee Convention.

In one of the convention's most incredible stories, last Saturday Haveard and Auxiliary Post President Virginia Moye survived a sniper attack along I-94 in Monroe County, Wis. on the way to Minnesota.

"I was wounded in the Battle of Guam and it didn't stop me then and it certainly won't stop me today," Haveard, 70, told the *Dispatch* matter-of-factly.

National Commander Bruce Thiesen detailed the group's ordeal during Wednesday's plenary session. Haveard was at the wheel of a recreational vehicle filled with Alabama Legionnaires and Auxiliary members when an assailant fired a round at the vehicle, the bullet passing through Moye's shoulder and lodging in Haveard's neck, near the juggler vein.

Somehow, the veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam maintained control of the vehicle and was able to pull to the shoulder. His wife, Frankie Haveard, also kept her cool. She found a lipstick tube in her purse, and wrote: POLICE—HELP—SHOT— on the window, in reverse so it would be legible to passers-by.

Friendly truckers spotted the distress signal and notified the Wisconsin Highway Patrol. The truckers escorted Haveard and company to the closest hospital, in Blackwater Falls, 18 miles from the shooting scene, where he and Moye received emergency treatment

.All aboard took a vote and figured they wouldn't let some nut's act of random violence keep them from their friends and comrades in Minneapolis. So the Alabamans, who included Ray Taylor and Agnes Lucas, drove on and arrived in Minneapolis around 1 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 4.

By coincidence, local authorities were conducting a helicopter search for an escaped convict in the area where the shooting occurred.

Coordinating ground and air search patrols paid off in the arrest of a suspect in the shooting.

For Halveard, his wounding was just another bump on the road, though he's become an object of discussion and admiration for his rugged determination not to miss the Diamond Jubilee Convention in Minneapolis.

Employers recognized for working overtime to hire U.S. veterans

One of the main objectives Legion founders were concerned with when they met in Minneapolis 75 years ago was to ensure that their fellow veterans had jobs waiting for them in civilian life.

Since those days, the Legion continues to work on behalf of veterans' employment needs and recognizes businesses who work overtime to hire veterans.

Three companies were recognized at the Wednesday convention as recipients of the National Economic Commission's Employer of the Year Awards.

Schneider International Inc. of Green Bay, Wis., won in the Large Employer Category (200 or more employees); Morton International Inc. of Seabrook, N.H., won in the Medium Category (51-200); American Classic Charter and Tours Inc., Selma, N.C., was tops in Small Category (less than 50 employees).

The Schneider official accepting the award said his company employs more than 5,600 veterans, adding that "success is measured by growth, and growth means more opportunities for jobs for veterans with our company."

The Morton company official earlier donated $1,000 to the Department of New Hampshire, and will be used for a new flagpole and a plaque at a national cemetery that will soon open in that state.

Delegates also heard from Preston Taylor Jr., assistant secretary of labor for veterans affairs.

"They bring to the job market not only the skills they learned in the armed forces, they embody the qualities that employers prize most — discipline, maturity and leadership."

WWII Gift Drawing Winners Announced

The names drawn as winners of gifts at the WWII booth in the convention hall: Chuck Bezio, Monroe, La.; Al Alfaro, Frankfort, Ky.; Pat Gilbert, Syracuse, N.Y.; Vern Schroeder, Tomahawk, Wis., Marshall Busey, Cleveland, Ohio; Adeline Mitchell, Glascow, Mont.; Carol Reiter, Palatine, Ill., Molly Spearman, Saluda, S.D.; Art Hamilton, Cleveland, Ohio; Joseph Mander, Waterbury, Conn.; Paul Shadewald, Sykestown, N.D.; Emil Palau, Lainsburg, Mich.; Irv Tedin, Oaks, N.D.; Jack Lemons, Abita Springs, La.; Carl W. Swisher, Columbus, Ohio.

Special Resolution 419

1919 The Minneapolis Affirmation 1994

WHEREAS, To us, the heirs of a proud tradition, the Founders of The American Legion in the City of Minneapolis in November 1919 bequeathed the four pillars upon which our great brotherhood yet stands, as proclaimed in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, It is upon these pillars that we have built the programs by which we serve our comrades, our youth, and our nation; and

WHEREAS, By the Throne of Almighty God the Founders surely stand and say of us "Well done, beloved heirs and comrades"; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Sept. 6-8, 1994, that we express our eternal gratitude for the wisdom and foresight of our Founders in this, our 75th Anniversary Year, by affirming anew our commitment to the perpetuation of our principles; and be it further

RESOLVED, That in affirmation of our troth, we pledge our unrelenting vigilance on behalf of our comrades-in-arms, their children, and their widows and orphans; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm the American Flag to be the sole unifying symbol of these United States, a nation born of diversity and nurtured in the shadow of that banner, beneath which the honored remains of countless heroes have been laid to rest, deserving if need be of our protection unto death; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm to the generations as yet unborn their due inheritance, a legacy no less grand than that to which we today are heirs; a nation strong, united and flourishing in peace and prosperity; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm to our nation's defenders, and the citizens they serve, our dedication to national sovereignty and security so inviolable as to render America forever free from aggression and domination by those who would do us harm; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm the principle of citizen soldiery by our support and dedication to those who stand in ready preparedness to answer the call to arms, the Reserve and National Guard forces; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm to all Americans our commitment to the principle of government of the People, by the People, and for the People, a principle best embodied by a Congress unfettered and free from foreign influence and ever alert to the failures of foreign policy by which the constraints on war are loosed; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That by the witness of Man and in the Presence of Almighty God, we do hereby commend this affirmation to all in whom these sentiments ring true.

The Delegates of the 1994 National Convention of
The American Legion