DISPATCH Daily

"For God & Country"

SALT LAKE CITY NATIONAL CONVENTION — MONDAY, SEPT. 2, 1996

Legionnaires pack Tabernacle

■ Historic Temple Square site of solemn remembrance

Music, tears and remembrance mixed in equal measure at Sunday's Patriotic Religious Service, conducted in the splendor of Salt Lake City's world-famous Mormon Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle seats 6,500, and every one was filled with Legion family members who gathered to remember lost friends and honor their devotion to God and Country by attending the annual service.

Gordon B. Hinckley, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, was keynote speaker; American Legion National Chaplain the Rev. Mr. Joseph E. Reynolds delivered a stirring memorial message.

"It is my prayer that this service will touch you as we try to honor our nation and its heroes as best we know how with our humble efforts. For in this service we are trying to rekindle a spirit of patriotism in each of us as we recall publicly the debt we owe to so many," said Reynolds.

He said being good citizens – obeying the nation's laws, fulfilling our obligations as parents and grandparents, acting as role models for the young – is the best tribute to the sacrifice the nation's veterans made to maintain freedom and America's democratic institutions. That theme also sounded in remarks by President Hinckley, who at one point halted his speech, overcome by emotion while remembering an older

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CITY'S HEART: The Mormon Temple attracts visitors worldwide.

Dole, Perot bring campaigns to convention

Two presidential candidates who are looking to spoil Bill Clinton's bid for re-election are on deck to address more than 6,000 American Legion National Convention delegates and other visitors to the Salt Palace Convention Center.

Republican nominee Bob Dole, former Senate Majority Leader from Kansas, is scheduled to make remarks 11:30 a.m., Tuesday, Sept. 3, in **Exhibit Halls A & B.** Reform Party candidate H. Ross Perot is on tap to address delegates at 11:15 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 4.

President Bill Clinton also was invited to make a convention appearance but turned down the request. A White House official cited "unfortunate" scheduling problems as the reason why the president will be a no-show at the Legion convention. As a Democratic Party nominee in 1992, Clinton delivered remarks to Legionnaires at the National Convention in Chicago.

Dole, a Kansas Legionnaire and World War II veteran, is expected to touch on issues ranging from veterans' health care to the flag-protection amendment he cosponsored in the Senate in 1995.

"As a combat-disabled veteran, Mr. Dole certainly understands why veterans' medical care is an important issue," says National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig.

Meeting the health-care needs of the nation's 26 million veterans is the focus of a sweeping plan devised by The American Legion and recently introduced in Congress. The GI Bill of Health, **HR 3950,** introduced last month in the House, would expand VA health care services to all veterans and their families. It also would allow the VA to retain money it collects from federal programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, CHAMPUS, TriCare and insurance companies of veterans.

Perot, who was graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, has been a longtime supporter of veterans' issues, most notably his activism on the POW-MIA issue.

"The families of America's servicemen who did not return from foreign battlefields have a friend in Mr. Perot," Ludwig says.

Perot also has financed scientific research at Duke University on the mysterious, undiagnosed maladies afflicting thousands of Persian Gulf War veterans. Many still wait for VA to adjudicate their disability claims. ❑

Boys Nation alumni meet up in Chicago

LaGRANGE, Ill. — As an American Legion Boys Nation delegate in Washington last July, Sean Stephenson went through the receiving line at the White House to meet President Bill Clinton. After shaking hands, the president told Stephenson he was looking forward to traveling to this city for the Democratic National Convention.

"I kind of kidded with him and told him to give me a call when he got in town," Stephenson said in a telephone interview. "I figured that was the end of that."

Stephenson didn't get a call last week from Clinton, but he did get called upon. On Aug. 28, as the Clinton campaign train tour stopped outside of Chicago at a rally in Michigan City, Ind., Clinton recognized the wheelchair-bound Stephenson in the crowd. After the rally, Clinton visited with the 1996 Illinois Boys State governor, his mother and friends.

"I was flattered that he remembered me, but I think it was mainly because I was wearing my Boys Nation shirt and baseball cap," said Stephenson.

"I was flattered that he remembered me, but I think it was mainly because I was wearing my Boys Nation shirt and baseball cap," said the 17-year-old Stephenson, who is starting his senior year in high school.

Clinton invited Stephenson to be his special guest the next night when delivering his nomination acceptance speech.

While Clinton declined an invitation to speak to delegates attending The American Legion National Convention in Salt Lake City, Stephenson invited the president to think about how the Legion serves the nation.

"I told him all about the positive things The American Legion does for our citizens and the nation," Stephenson said. "The Legion gave me a great opportunity that I will never forget." ❑

Legionnaires leaving a memento of compassion here

Legion family members no doubt will leave Salt Lake City with mementos of their trip, but they also can leave a gift for area veterans and other Utah residents. That gift is blood.

The National Convention Blood Drive continues in **Exhibit Hall I** at the Salt Palace Convention Center, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 3 and 4.

The Inter-Mountain Health Care Blood Services is conducting the drive and collections will be distributed at the local VA medical facilities and Salt Lake City area hospitals. Convention officials hope to collect more than 300 units in the drive.

The American Legion has been identified as the nation's leading blood donor organization. To recognize Legionnaires' efforts, the National Security Commission recently announced the winners of the 1995-96 American Legion Blood Donor Program. Awards are presented in two categories: individual and Post.

The individual award goes to the Department with the highest percentage of individuals participating in the program. The Post award is given to the Department with the highest percentage of Posts taking part.

Individual awards this year went to: **Minnesota,** Category I ; **Maryland,** Category II; **Nebraska,** Category III; **Oregon,** Category IV; **Rhode Island,** Category V; and **Delaware,** Category VI.

Post awards include: **Ohio,** Category I; **Maryland,** Category II; **Nebraska,** Category III; **Oregon,** Category IV; **Rhode Island,** Category V; and **Delaware,** Category VI.

For more information on setting up a blood drive at your Post, write: National Security-Foreign Relations Division, The American Legion, 1608 K St., NW, Washington, DC 20006. ❑

BANK ON IT: Legionnaires can roll up their sleeves again Tuesday and Wednesday.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"It is these patriots who loved freedom and who are no longer with us that will forever remain in our memories and our hearts that we stand here today to honor in this service with our words, our music and our tears."

National Chaplain the Rev. Mr. Joseph E. Reynolds at Sunday's Patriotic Religious Service

Legion family welcome to visit aerospace museum

ROY, Utah – As a hallmark of Utah hospitality, the Hill Aerospace Museum will be open for tours by Legionnaires today, according to Jackie McDonough, the museum's director of volunteers. There is no admission charge, and Monday's hours are 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The museum is located 30 miles north of Salt Lake City off Interstate 15; take Exit 341. The museum, normally closed Mondays, is being opened to accommodate Legionnaires, Auxiliary and SAL members in town for their annual conventions.

Veterans may hit jackpot with Job Bank

A changing world and workforce make for an exciting and anxious time ahead, especially for veterans seeking to improve the lives of their families.

Nonetheless, change can often be for the better, according to Preston M. Taylor Jr., assistant secretary of Labor for veterans' employment and training.

In a speech, "Readjusting for the New Workforce," Taylor explained to the National Economic Commission Saturday some of what both the federal government and The American Legion can and should do "to care for him who shall have borne the battle."

Two new approaches being undertaken by the Department of Labor (DoL) are One-Stop Career Centers and America's Job Bank. Both systems improve how the DoL matches candidates with employers. "At VETS (Veterans' Employment and Training Service) we are firmly committed to the principle that America's veterans deserve nothing less than our best effort. No matter what our budget turns out to be, we will continue to work as hard as we can to improve the quality of veterans' employment services in every corner of the United States," Taylor said.

Here's how these new systems work:

One-Stop Career Centers provide current job vacancies, career information and counseling, assistance finding a job, referrals to job training, and help filing unemployment claims. More than $150 million already has been invested by the DoL in states willing to try these re-employment centers.

"I'd like to see The American Legion putting computer terminals in their Posts so veterans can access these services."

– Preston Taylor –

America's Job Bank takes a different approach. After all, as Taylor points out, the high-tech world has eliminated many jobs and the need for many job skills. This system counters that unfortunate consequence of technology by using an internet site accessible on the World Wide Web to assist veterans.

The site lists more than 500,000 jobs—more than five times the number listed just 17 months ago. Taylor was particularly complimentary of the site's complementary nature.

"America's Job Bank works with veterans' priority of service," he said.

Taylor would like to see the Legion actively pursue the internet as a means of assisting veterans.

"I'd like to see The American Legion putting computer terminals in their Posts so veterans can access these services." For their part, the government is creating Internet Access Zones in community colleges, libraries, post offices and shopping centers.

Taylor took a moment during his presentation to award the annual Sam Murphy Award to Ronald G. Bachman, a VETS' regional administrator from Chicago.

"Ronald G. Bachman is a man who has dedicated his career to America's veterans and the agency that provides them with employment assistance," Taylor said. A fitting description for a man receiving an award named after an outstanding Legionnaire and American who worked for years as a tireless veterans' advocate within the DoL.

The commission also heard from Larry Woodard, director of the vocational rehabilitation and counseling service, Department of Veterans' Affairs; and Mary Lou Lindholm, associate director for employment, Office of Personnel Management. ❑

VA cemeteries plan expansion

VA's National Cemetery System is alive and well and growing to meet the demands of the 21st century, the system's director told members of the National VA&R Commission Saturday.

After averaging one new cemetery in the system every four years, plans are under way to design, build and open four new national cemeteries before 2000, which will bring the total number in the system to 118. Exactly half of VA's 114 national cemeteries remain open.

"We know our mission, and that's to provide burial with dignity and honor to veterans and their eligible dependents," said Jerry Bowen, director of the National Cemetery System. The Tahoma Cemetery in Seattle is nearing completion and should be dedicated no later than September 1997, said Bowen.

The director said three cemeteries are in varying stages of completion serving veterans in these metropolitan areas: Chicago, Dallas and Albany, N.Y. The Illinois site comprises 980 acres of what formerly was the Joliet Army Arsenal; construction bids are expected to be let in October on a 560-acre site near Dallas. Plans for a national cemetery in Cleveland, Ohio have been pushed back, but Bowen said Congress appropriated $11.2 million for facility design. Construction should be completed by 2000, he said. "I know you'd like to see a national cemetery in every state, but the budget just isn't going to let that happen," Bowen said.

To meet growing demand, major expansions also are planned for the national cemeteries in Florida and in Phoenix, both of which experienced a 12 percent increase in burials during 1995-96.

Nationally, burials are increasing about 4 percent a year, Bowen said. According to VA projections, in 1995 some 513,000 veterans died, but only about 10 percent of deceased veterans are buried in a national cemetery. As the WWII generation passes away, burials in national cemeteries are expected to peak in 2008, but as late as 2020, VA estimates 525,000 veterans deaths that year.

Bowen said the system is concentrating new construction and expansion efforts in metropolitan areas since 80 percent of veterans buried in national cemeteries have families who live within 75 miles of the cemetery. And the system's budget reflects that growth.

In 1992, Congress allocated $67 million to operate the National Cemetery System. After modest increases, the budget was "flat-lined" in 1994-95 at around $70 million. The administration is requesting $77 million for fiscal year 1997, which begins Oct. 1. If approved, the budget will be up 5.5 percent over fiscal 1996 appropriations. Bowen, a career Army officer, was appointed director in May 1993, andsupervises the system's 1,300 employees. ❑

Yardley, Pa. hits it big in Roseburg

■ Opponent dominates awards, but Yardley takes home crown.

ROSEBURG, Ore. – Proof that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts, the Yardley, Pa. American Legion Baseball team defeated Gonzales, La. by a score of 6-3 and won the American Legion World Series, Aug. 23-27, in front of 4,089 screaming fans in Roseburg, Ore.

The teams were tied 2-2 until the 7th inning, when Gonzales scored one run and Yardley tacked on three with another coming in the eighth inning.

"We're not a big inning team but we keep striking until we score," said Yardley coach Joe Ferraro after his team claimed Regions One's first ever Legion World Series triumph.

Statistically, Gonzales should have defeated Yardley, on paper – with better individual players. But on the field and on the scoreboard, Yardley was the winner. "It was a total team effort," Ferraro said. "We don't have a lot of great players. We have a lot of good players who play great together."

Yardley's victory over Gonzales looms even larger when you look at the numbers. Gonzales logged the RBI's, the most total bases and won four of the seven top awards for batting and pitching. Yardley's only honor was awarded to the coaching staff.

While Gonzales had five players named to the *Baseball America* American Legion World Series All-Tournament Team, Yardley had one. As winning pitcher Ed Soley said so succinctly: "We surprised a lot of people, but our team knew we could do it with a little luck," he said.

Following are the top individual award winners from the 1996 American Legion World Series:

George W. Rulon American Legion Player of the Year and $2,000 scholarship from Buick - Christian Bourgois, Gonzales, La.

James W. Daniel Jr. Memorial Sportsmanship Award and $2,000 scholarship award from Gatorade - Andy Hoffman, Midland, Mich.

Louisville Slugger Award (Highest batting average) - Bryce Gehlen, Vancouver, Wash. .514 batting average.

Rawlings Big Stick Award (Most total bases) - James Jarreau, Gonzales, La. 34 total bases

Cowger RBI Award (Most RBIs) - Christian Bourgeois, Gonzales, La 15 RBIs

Bob Feller Pitching Award (Most strikeouts) - Ben Sheets, Gonzales, La 37 batters struck out

Jack Williams Memorial Leadership Award (Coaches of the Year) - Meade Tenaglia, head coach; Joe Ferraro and Paul Zavorksi, assistant coaches from Yardley, Pa.

Baseball America
AMERICAN LEGION WORLD SERIES ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM

Catcher: Andy Fontenot, Gonzales, La.
First baseman: Christian Bourgeois, Gonzales, La.
Second baseman: Casey Lambert, Gonzales, La.
Third baseman: Bryce Gehlen, Vancouver, Wash.
Shortstop: Kevin Quinn, Midland, Mich.
Leftfielder: Matt Madison, Vancouver, Wash.
Centerfielder: John Wakeley, Yardley, Pa.
Rightfielder: Kip Harris, Midland Mich.
Designated Hitter: James Jarreau, Gonzales, La.
Utility player: Travis Goins, Rowan County, N.C.
Pitcher: Ben Sheets, Gonzales, La.
Pitcher: Andy Hoffman, Midland, Mich.

Jordan takes reins of SAL

A 38-year-old Texan was elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Sunday afternoon.

Jack Jordan, Cleburne, Texas, was elected to SAL's highest office by delegates as they wrapped up their 25th National Convention at the Marriott Hotel.

"I joined SAL because I believe in veterans' rights, my country and the American flag," said Jordan, a 15-year member of SAL. He's a member of Texas Squadron 50.

He replaces John Dietz, who helped lead the organization to a membership of 185,000 last year. Dietz cited statistics from the past year that demonstrated SAL's ongoing commitment to American Legion programs, including 63,000 hours of volunteer work in VA hospitals and $240,000 in cash and gifts to veterans' affairs & rehabilitation projects. "The Legion reports to Congress every year on what they do for America. Well, part of those numbers they report are our numbers, and we can all take pride in that," Dietz said.

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brother who lies in an American military cemetery in France.

He urged Legionnaires to continue what they do so well, serving their communities. He remarked The American Legion is second only to the Mormon Church in the number of Boy Scout troops sponsored, and noted Legion youth programs and other assistance has molded millions of young Americans in habits and values that make productive, valuable citizens.

"You have been defenders of our liberty at great cost and great sacrifice. Once you gave your blood on the battlefield; now you give it to save lives that otherwise would be lost."

The 90-minute service included a stirring performance by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, including a patriotic medley of American classics such as, *This Land is Your Land, Shenandoah, Dixie and This is My Country*. The audience was restrained by church decorum from applauding the powerful performances, though one woman in the audience said, "You feel like clapping even when you know you're not supposed to."

The service began with a fanfare and parade of colors through the historic Tabernacle, built between 1863-67. The organ and choir set a tone both solemn and majestic, elaborate elaborate fluted woodcarvings encasing the massive golden organ pipes. The choir's famous rendition of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* made it difficult *not* to applaud, some observers said.

National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig, joined by National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle, placed a memorial wreath to honor the fallen, a ritual followed by representatives of the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and Eight and Forty. The service concluded with *Taps*. ❑