Gold Star Gazette

New Museum Hours

The Iowa Gold Star Military Museum has changed its operating hours due to the CONVID-19 virus. Visiting hours are now from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.

Tuesdays and Thursdays
Reservations Only

Wednesdays
Seniors Only

Friday and Saturday
Walk-Ins Only

All visitors are required to wear a face-covering/mask. Besides undergoing a temperature check upon entering the museum, visitors are also being asked to sanitize or wash their hands. Once inside the museum, please follow the direction of travel as marked..

Iowa Gold Star Military Museum

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020

A pandemic begins: The Spanish Influenza

Michael W. Vogt, Curator

In the summer and fall of 1918, a deadly and contagious form of influenza spread across the globe, infecting millions, through random genetic mutation. The virus originated in rural Haskell County, Kan, and was unknowingly brought to the U.S. Army training facility at Camp Funston, near Fort Riley, by selective service draftees.

In its original, milder form, the virus infected recruits there and introduced to other Army camps by personnel transferred for training. As part of America's crusade to support the Allies during World War I, thousands of U.S. troops were leaving ports in the United States by troopship every week. Among them were infected personnel arriving at France and Great Britain in April 1918.

In August, a more deadly mutated strain of the virus infected soldiers and civilians worldwide. The neutral Spanish government was the first to report hundreds of deaths caused by the flu. Thus, the illness was nicknamed the "Spanish Influenza."

Unlike other forms of flu, Spanish influenza proved lethal for 5-10 percent of those infected. Furthermore, the majority of deaths resulted from rapid, acute pneumonia, killing victims primarily between the ages of 15 and 40, with the highest mortality rate among those aged 21-29.

Spanish Influenza was reintroduced to the U.S. by troops returning home from Europe in late August, and also aboard civilian passenger and merchant ships arriving at U.S. Ports.

As historian Alfred Crosby describes in his book *American's Forgotten Pandemic*, "The pandemic struck the two armed services earlier and more severely than the civilian population: and, to a considerable ex-

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Volunteer spotlight

Don Long, a wealth of information

Whether researching the military history of a family member, gathering background information for a historical novel, or completing a term paper on the Civil War, Camp Dodge's BG Edward W. Bird Memorial Library, located at the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum, offers a wealth of research information.

Of course, the library also boasts of another great research tool – Iowan Don Long, an 18-year Museum volunteer.

According to Long, who volunteers about five days a week, two to three hours a day, there's no typical day, as it just "depends on what needs to be done.

"Whenever I come up to the museum, there's always books to deal with," he said. "I take an audit to ensure the books we have are where they should be and then just do whatever needs to be done that day in the library."

Besides shelfing and organizing, if someone needs assistance, Long is the person to go to.

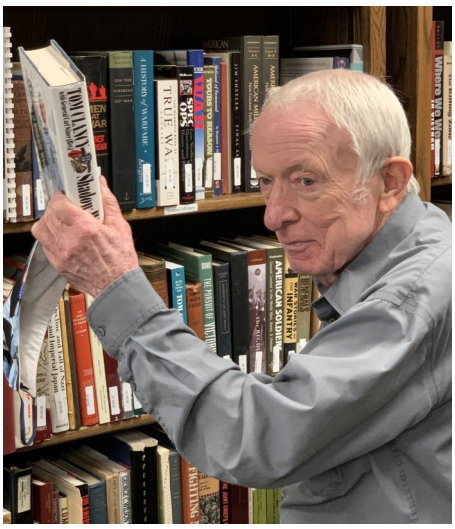
"I help researchers when they come in with a topic," Long said, "I'm there to help them find books that cover those topics, as well as magazines, maps, or even CDs – whatever they need.

"The library is set up for ease of use - if you know how to bring up a certain book, if you have the title or author, then it's easy - all our reference materials are listed on the computer."

A 1957 graduate of Panora, Iowa, Long served four years as a radar operator with the U.S. Air Force, from 1958-62. His duty stations included bases in North Dakota and British Columbia, Canada. He joined the military, he said, since being from a small town, there was no jobs to be found.

Once he retired from the Iowa Department of Transportation as a safety inspector, General Aviation, in 2002, he felt he needed to find 'some activity to take up my time."

His first job at the museum was



Volunteer Don Long

working with the photo archives, unrolling the old, yard-long panoramic photos and flattening them out, before helping arrange the back-storage area for artifacts

"Long joined the volunteer force as we were moving from the old Joint Iowa National Guard Headquarters building (part of today's museum complex), to our new location, and he was looking for a project to take on," said curator Mike Vogt.

"We needed someone to survey all of our old books, because we would often have three to four copies of the same book on the shelf. Don weeded through all those books and then set up an accounting system for them," Vogt said.

He began by organizing the library, assembling the books by conflict, title and author. He then created an indexing system, keystroking all the library's publications and reference materials into the system himself, by hand.

You'll find materials ranging from the Civil War, WWII (Pacific and European theaters) Korea, and Vietnam, as well as the Cold War and Gulf War. There's also biographies, autobiographies, and books about weapons and branches of service. WWII Enlistment and Induction Cards are also located within the library, which includes when and where they served.

In addition, Long created the "Used Book Store," as a way to share the library's duplicates. To date, the museum has generated more than $9.000 in sales.

A Des Moines resident, Long travelled nation-wide, until the pandemic hit. While his last big trip was to the Admiral Nimitz State Historic Site, in Fredericksburg, Texas, he's also traveled primarily to the west, including the Dakotas, Wyoming, and Montana.

For Long, however, it's all about the books.

He also enjoys the company of a good book. While novels aren't his first preference, he admits to enjoying military books, primarily those concerning the Pacific Theater.

For Long it's all about the books.

"I like categorizing the books, putting them onto the shelves, or getting them ready to sell," Long said. "I like dealing with the books."

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Museum Staff

Museum Director.....Sherrie Colbert
Museum Curator.....Michael W. Vogt
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State Quartermaster..Col. (Ret.) Gary Freese

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tent, the armed services were the foci from which the civilian population received the disease."

Following initial outbreaks at port cities and military bases along the Atlantic coast, the virus was carried west and south by infected soldiers and civilians along the main transportation routes. The highest mortality rates in the U.S., at both military and civilian locations, occurred in late September and October 1918.

Navy losses per day peaked at 880 dead on September 28. Army losses per day peaked at 6,170 dead on October 11. Philadelphia lost 700 citizens in one day during October 1918. San Francisco totaled 8,682 dead through October 26.

Medical science in 1918 was not yet aware of viruses, nor would one be viewed by microscope until 1933.(The Spanish influenza virus, preserved in a sample of lung tissue from a U.S. soldier who died in 1918 and kept at the former Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Maryland, was not viewed by microscope until July 1996.) Military and civilian physicians presumed the deadly Spanish influenza to be caused by a bacterial infection.

In response to the appalling death toll, schools, churches, civic and sporting events, and other public gatherings were discouraged or cancelled. Mandated and voluntary quarantines were the only defense against an unknown and unseen viral killer.

In some areas the effective and preventive practices began too late. In some cases isolation and quarantines were abandoned too early, leading to a resurgence in early 1919.

Regardless, these measures significantly reduced the numbers infected. The influenza pandemic ended in the spring of 1919 after killing an estimated 25-30 million persons worldwide. Twenty-five million Americans were infected and 670,000 died from influenza including 7,762 Iowans.

A view from the Camp Dodge Hospital Influenza ward

Camp Dodge

Military bases were exceptionally hard-hit by the pandemic. The flu virus was eventually introduced to Camp Dodge by transferred military personnel and civilian draftees beginning in late August 1918. Even as the flu invaded communities across the U.S., the mission of training and supplying troops for the war against Germany continued at Camp Dodge and other Army posts.

During September, October, and November, the peak months of infection, 13,713 inductees entered Camp Dodge and were exposed to, or brought the virus with them. In addition, close formations of drilling soldiers and dense concentrations of 150 men in barracks and mess halls facilitated rapid transmission of the flu.

As the number of influenza cases grew, the hospital and camp were quarantined in late September. Most suffered the aches and symptoms the virus caused and later recovered. Others died within 24 hours of the first symptoms appearing.

Camp Dodge reported the first three flu deaths on October 1, and by mid-month, soldiers were dying at a rate of 50 per day. Pvt. Andrew E. Boyd of Stanhope, and Pvt. Leo P. Koster of Cascade, were inducted on September 5 and died of "Pneumonia" on October 10.

Irene Robb, a nurse at the Camp Dodge Base Hospital wrote home on October 15: "Day before yesterday I had five patients die on my ward; three yesterday and one today. There is a terrible strain all the time of being so short of help."

The growing numbers of sick and dying soldiers quickly filled the 2,196 beds at the base hospital. Adjacent barracks buildings were hastily converted to hospital wards for the mounting numbers of ill, in addition to patients suffering from non-flu-related maladies.

1st. Lt. Theodore Willis, Ward Surgeon, Camp Dodge Base Hospital, remembered: "Hospital beds overflowed, and nearby barracks were commandeered. Beds vacated by death were taken out to be sterilized; their replacements promptly filled, sometimes more than once a day."

Throughout the nightmare, morale of the hospital personnel remained high. Doctors, nurses, corps men, and maintenance staff stayed on their jobs night and day without complaint."

The hospital and adjacent buildings peaked at 11,626 patients in October -- cared for by 1,048 hospital staff -- many of whom also fell victim to the flu.

The growing numbers of sick and dying military personnel was adjudged to be of strategic and propaganda value to Germany. Consequently, the Army (and Navy) implemented security

LTC Michael J. Mussel

LTC (Ret.) Michael John Musel, 74, of Urbandale, passed away April 12, 2020, at Iowa Methodist Medical Center, Des Moines. Mike was born Oct. 22, 1945, to Bernard and Arlene (Rebik) Musel in Belle Plaine.

He graduated from Belle Plaine High School in 1963. He attended Iowa State University for two years and , was in the U.S. Army ROTC program. He enlisted in the US Army, receiving his commission as a second lieutenant from the Officer Candidate School, before serving 18 months in Vietnam as an Engineer Officer.

He returned home, working with his father on the family farm, and raising his two sons. In 1979, Mike left farming, taking a job with the Farm Administration of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Spencer.

In 1980, he joined the Iowa Army National Guard as a captain commanding Alpha Battery, 194th Field Artillery Battalion. He also served in the 185th Training Regiment, Joint Forces Headquarters, and State Area Command as a Mobilization Officer. He retired from the National Guard after 25 years of service.

In 2005, he retired from the USDA, and followed his true passion, becoming a historian at the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum until his passing.

A voracious reader and accomplished military historian, he played the accordion, fiddle, and piano. He was a proud and active member of the 34th Infantry Division Association, serving the past 15 years as treasurer.

He is survived by his sons, Nicholas (Katie York) Musel of Springfield, Va., and Alex (Justina) Musel of Platte City, Mo.; his beloved grandchildren Dylan, Sadie, and Madelyn; and his siblings; Ann (Larry) Shilhanek of Strawberry Point, Carol (Rick) Petersen, Belle Plaine, Doug (Rose) Musel of Vinton, Phylis (Dennis) Kurriger of Belle Plaine, Mary (Jeff) Hunzinger of Lee's Summit, Mo., Jane (Charles) Gustafson of Colorado Springs, Colo., and David (Mike Fortunato) Musel of Washington, D.C. Mike is preceded in death by his parents.

Joe Oertli

Joe Oertli passed away April 16, 2020. Joe and his wife Laverne were a volunteer dynamic duo, serving countless hours at the museum since 2007. Whether working the front desk, assisting with special events, collecting donations for deployed military personnel, or decorating the museum for events and holidays, the list goes on.

Even when Joe's health was failing, he still volunteered monthly and for special events, answering the phones and greeting visitors. Joe loved engaging with visitors about new exhibits and their area of interest. Joe always made sure he had a museum hat so he could wear it in public to engage with strangers about the museum.

Joe also volunteered with the Troop B, 1-113th Cavalry Family Readiness Program, and was President of the Northwest Optimist Club, organizing youth programs. He was also active in the Prospect Park Neighborhood Association, Holy Trinity Church and the Knights of Columbus.

Joe had a long career as a Counselor working for the Family Guidance Center in St. Joseph, Mo., and Substance Abuse Counseling Centers in Onawa, Harlan, Denison, and Des Moines. He spent the last nine years of his career at the Newton Correctional Facility, before retiring. Joe enjoyed wood carving, traveling, skiing, fishing and hunting.

He leaves his loving wife Laverne, son Thomas (Anna) Oertli and two grandchildren. Kamila and Wyatt.

John Evan Rice

John E. Rice, 73, passed away June 25, 2020, at MercyOne Hospice in Johnston, after a courageous 4.5 year battle with lung cancer. He was born Feb. 14, 1947, in Centerville, to Frank and Doris Jean (Evans) Rice.

John graduated from Centerville High School (1965) and received his BA from Upper Iowa University. He married Sue Ann Courtney on May 31, 1969.

John was a dedicated soldier, demonstrating his patriotism to his state and nation by serving 38 years with the Iowa Army National Guard. He was commissioned in the Engineer Branch, after completing the officer commissioning program at the Iowa Military Academy. He was breveted to the rank of colonel upon his retirement.

John also served the Iowa Guard as a Federal Civil Service employee, continuing in the logistics field as the State Property Officer, accounting for all State property issued to the Iowa National Guard. He retired in 2016, with more than 49 years of dedicated service.

John served countless hours at the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum. He enjoyed participating in the Great Iowa Tractor Ride and was proud of his extensive coin collection. He was a supporter of the Iowa Speedway and held tickets to the Daytona 500 for the last 13 years.

John is survived by his loving wife Sue Ann, children Mark Rice and Kelly (Jordan) Harrison, and grandson. Cole Jordan Harrison. He was proceeded in death by his parents, Frank and Doris Jean.

Mary L. "Kitty" Rolfes

Mary Louise "Kitty" Rolfes. 90, was called home to be with our Lord May 7, 2020. Kitty was born May 12, 192, in Le Mars, to Frank and Trudy

In Memoriam
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Museum celebrates 35th anniversary of telling the story of Iowa veterans

What once began as a labor of love for two World War II veterans, has since evolved into a world-class organization honoring all military veterans throughout the state of Iowa.

From its humble beginnings in June 29, 1985, the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum has recognized the various conflicts Iowans have served in, starting with Iowa's early frontier settlers.

Ed Bird, president of the Iowa National Guard Memorial Association and then-museum president, and Aloysius T. Rolfes, then-secretary-treasurer, had the foresight to amass a wide variety of stories, photos, artifacts and memorabilia, to allow each Iowa veteran to tell their story.

Today, the museum's gallery and its accompanying collections bring to life these stories of service and sacrifice in a lively and chronological order.

The museum was originally housed on the ground level of the Camp Dodge Chapel, which was built in 1970 for $134,000.

However, it wasn't long before it outgrew its environs. In 1994 the museum shifted to the Adjutant General of Iowa's Headquarters building. In 2008, with financial assistance from the State of Iowa, a $4 million, 18,000-square foot addition was constructed.

The current museum opened in October 2009 and the installation of interpretive, interactive exhibits has been ongoing ever since, and the rest, so to speak, has been history.

The Iowa Gold Star Military Museum is owned and operated by the Iowa Department of Public Defense. Museum staff includes two full-time employees (Museum Director and Curator) and two, part-time employees. More than 70 volunteers offer their time and indispensable. The entire operations budget of the museum is funded by the State of Iowa.

The tradition of the blue and gold star banner began in WWI when white service flags, bordered in red, were displayed from homes, business, schools and churches. A blue star indicated each active servicemember in the U.S. military. A gold star indicated those who had given their lives for their country. This tradition has continued through WWII, the Korean War, and through the present day.

The tradition of the blue and gold star banner began in WWI when white service flags, bordered in red, were

New Rules and Guidelines

We adhere to all state and national CDC guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. With that in mind, here are a few of our established rules and guidelines:

- Capacity limited to 25 visitors at one time.
- All visitors must wear a face covering/mask or they will not be allowed to enter the Museum.
- No food of any kind allowed,
- No drinking containers of any kind, including water Bottles.
- No umbrellas allowed.
- No bags (Exceptions include purses and diaper bags).
- If you have an elevated temperature, you will not be allowed to enter the museum.
- Social Distancing of at least 6 feet will be required of all visitors unless you are a family or group (less than 10 people).

For visitor information, please call (515) 252-4531 or contact us via email at goldstarmuseum@iowa.gov. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/IowaGSMM

measures to safeguard information regarding diminished American troop strength. Daily reports of flu deaths at Camp Dodge were terminated. ‘

This lack of information led to fabricated newspaper reports of vaccine experiments, medical staff executions and mass graves at Camp Dodge. All were fiction.

In nearby Des Moines, the city’s undertaking establishments worked round the clock to embalm the civilian and Camp Dodge dead for burial.

Merle Gall, a 13-year-old milk delivery boy to Camp Dodge, later recalled, “I saw them take soldiers out of there by the truckload. Every day there were bodies. Every day the trucks.”

Decades later, Omar N. Bradley, serving as a Major with the 19th Division, wrote: “Many of my close friends were lost. I vividly remember the sad sight of dozens of corpses being taken to undertaking establishments in Des Moines.”

By the end of November, the Army accounted for 10,008 cases of the flu, 1,923 cases of pneumonia, and 702 deaths at Camp Dodge.

Overall, the Spanish influenza killed 55,322 U.S. military personnel. More soldiers died fighting a virus than from German shells, gas, or bullets during World War I.

Following the pandemic, U.S. Army Surgeon General Dr. Victor Vaughan summarized the events of 1918 and prophesized: “There can be no armistice between medicine and disease. The conflict will continue as long as man walks the earth.”

In Memoriam

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(McGraw) Luken. She was the youngest of five and quite spunky; her brothers gave her the nickname ‘Kitty” based on the precocious little girl featured in the Kitty Higgins comic strip. The name stuck as did the spunk.

On June 8, 1955, Kitty married Aloysius ‘Al’ Rolfes. Al was a WWII veteran, father of two and a young widower. Decades later, in an interview with the Le Mars Daily Sentinel, Al recalled “Mary Luken was the prettiest girl in Le Mars and everybody called her ‘Kitty.’ Kitty didn’t come from a big family and had no previous experience with children. But when we married, she took care of the boys, she took care of me and she took care of the six babies that followed.”

Kitty was a volunteer at the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum for many years. We couldn’t wait for Kitty to arrive, as she always brought treats and updates on what her kids where doing. She was very proud of her kids.

Kitty is survived by her children: David (Kin) of Gowrie, Gary (Carmen) of Clinton, Scott (Becky) of Panora, Tim (Therese) of Ankeny, Tom (Jeannine) of Granger, John (Alison Rohlfing) of Milwaukee, Wisc., Mary of Johnston, Joe (Kathleen) of Norman, Ill.; 18 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; sister Bonnie Westergard of Le Mars; sisters-in-law Lois Woll and Jeannie Schmitz; and many nieces and nephews.

Seeking WWI enlistment induction records? Check out the Gold Star Military Museum

Do you have a relative, or family member who served in the U.S. military during World War I (April 1917 - November 1918)? Are they an Iowan?

If so, the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum may have a copy of their WWI enlistment/induction card on file within our collection in the Edward W. Bird Memorial Library.

In order to find your relative’s card, we’ll need their first and last name, or their military serial number, If you know the city or town they lived in, that can also be helpful.

We will be more than happy to either email, or mail the card to you. If you need more than two cards and want them mailed, there may be a small fee.

Gold Star Museum ranked among Top 5 virtual tours

Mark Catton, of M. Catton & Co., a Le Mars, Iowa company with more than 30 years of experience in the museum and exhibition industry, recently presented his list of the Top 5 Virtual tours and the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum was ranked among the top five.

“One of Mark's favorite projects, view the mighty Flying Tiger (created by M. Catton & Co.) and several other exciting murals, displays, and collections inside the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum,” wrote Catton.

Other museums that were ranked among the top five virtual museum tour experiences were the Smithsonian Institution, or National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. (#4); the Field Museum in Chicago, Ill. (#3); The Berhringer-Crawford Museum in Covington, Ky. (#2); and the top-ranked CIA Museum, located in McLean, Va.

Look for the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum virtual tour on Google.