

South Dakota
VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING
Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veterans Home
Hot Springs, SD November 1-2, 2006

On November 1st, 2006, 1:08 PM MST, Chairman Paul Evenson called the meeting of the South Dakota Veterans Commission to order in Canyon Cottage on the Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veterans Home campus. He then led the "Pledge of Allegiance" and asked Gunner Baatrup for an invocation.

Announcements were then made by Larry Wilcox, Superintendent of the SDVH to include a brief history of the Canyon Cottage, built in 1900, used to house nurses and families of employees, remodeling began in 2002 and it has been reopened for use of the residents of the Home and other private and civic groups. There is a barbeque scheduled for this afternoon at 5:00 with invitations for the Commissioners and guests of the meeting to join the residents in the auditorium. On November 2nd the new greenhouse will be dedicated and the Commissioners and guests are again invited to join the residents in the much anticipated occasion.

Director Foell had some administrative announcements. Samples of the new veteran's license plates are on display in the back of the meeting room. He had copies of the letters of thanks directed to himself and the Veterans Commission from former Commissioner Goodhope and several of the employees of the 1st Fidelity Bank in Winner (all veterans of the Vietnam War Era), for the very meaningful and appreciated Vietnam War Memorial Dedication in September. He also had a copy of the Governor's Proclamation for November—Hire The Vet First Month. Director Foell also had the following agenda changes: Earl Schultz is unable to attend the meeting; addition of "12a", election of chairman and vice-chairman; and Dr. Robert Petzel is unable to attend the meeting.

A motion to approve the agenda as changed was made by Loudner, 2nd by Murphy and the motion carried.

Introductions were made around the room. Chairman Evenson then had a motion from Murphy, 2nd by Clarke to approve the minutes as printed. Motion carried.

Major General Gorman was asked for the report on the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs. Highlights included: Charlie Battery has just returned from Iraq; the Air Guard has just had veterans returning after 6 month tours; the Reserve Unit from Aberdeen has just returned; the 129th Public Affairs Detachment is serving now, some in Florida and others internationally; The Air Guard is performing F-16 Missions over Iraq, about 500 Airmen will be deployed during the next year; the Military Police Unit is at Fort Bliss preparing for deployment to Iraq. General Gorman also reported on the Legislative Research Council review of the entire organization of Military & Veterans Affairs which was conducted this summer. He likened it to "show and tell" for the several divisions. There was no major change for the organization and only minor wording changes were suggested. There was a letter from Representative Gordon Pederson of the Committee (See letter attached.); however, indicating one area for research and possible improvement would be the compensation for the County/Tribal Veteran Service Officers. The proposal from M&VA (See proposal attached.) to look at this issue would include looking at compensation; duties of VSO's; combination of or consolidation of duties; and position within a county or among counties. The Committee suggested by DMVA would be made up of the Deputy Secretary Andy Gerlach from the Department; Director Dennis Foell, Larry Person and Charles Quinn from the Division of Veterans Affairs; Mike Birnbaum and Gene Murphy

from the SD Veterans Commission; and Bill Locken and Kevin Graber from the VSO Association. They shall meet four (4) times from 1 November, 2006 to 31 October, 2007; shall bring their proposals to MG Gorman and he shall upon concurrence get them to Governor Rounds. This issue was tabled to be discussed later in the meeting.

MG Gorman had DVD's of a September 14th one hour program aired by SD Public TV relative to what is being done for the returning veterans. A copy was presented to each of the Commissioners. One of the important points of the program was these resources, benefits, assistance are for ~~A-L-L~~ returnees. Governor Rounds had also organized a meeting between MG Gorman and Chief Justice David Gilbertson to discuss the possibilities available for judges or the judicial system to know in order to "help" returning veterans who might end up in trouble with the law. MG Gorman and several Guard Staff members met with all circuit court judges and SD Supreme Court Justices and other members of the UJS to brief them on options and assistance available for any returnees, if they find themselves in the justice system.

MG Gorman also voiced his concern and will probably write a follow-up letter about the Vet Centers, specifically the travel and per diem restrictions on the personnel and filling vacancies in a timely manner so these staff people are available to do the outreach necessary to offer the returning veterans counseling or assistance.

Another concern that MG Gorman has is presenting a "second" American Flag to families of Soldiers killed in action. He feels the appropriate flag is "the one" from the Department of Defense and a second is not appropriate, and it is hard on the families, and hard on General Gorman—he will refuse to do another such presentation. He would suggest that organizations be offered or be creative with alternate ways to honor the memory of someone killed in action—scholarships, grants, jobs for spouses or any number of other ways to be helpful to a bereaved family. Likewise the display of "boots, helmet, and weapon" is also inappropriate, because that is used in theater only. MG Gorman is asking the Veterans Commission and all veteran organization guests present to carry these concerns back to local organizations.

MG Gorman has the concurrence of the Veterans Commission for his letter regarding the "second" flag presentations and displaying the boots, helmet, weapon outside of the theater. Several Commissioners indicated like feelings and were grateful that the General would address it.

The Vietnam War Memorial Dedication was a marvelous success. Thanks for the support of the many veteran organizations. The feedback to Department, Division, Guard, Governor, etc. has been most heartwarming.

One question for MG Gorman was, is the Legislative Review Committee better informed on the functions of the Department in general? The response was that these individuals are, but every opportunity to talk with legislators in whatever groups is of benefit to "tell our story." With elections to be held next week, there will be a number of new legislators as well.

There was a motion made by Murphy, 2nd by Birnbaum to send a letter to Mr. Slaughter in St. Louis concerning the lack of personnel (FTE's) as well as vacancies in Rapid City and Sioux Falls Vet Centers. (Murphy and Locken will report back to Foell on the local status of Sioux Falls and Rapid City respectively in order to make the letter information correct.) Consensus was to include this special note: we're proud of the work of the Vet Centers in South Dakota, but they are hamstrung with vacancies, short staff, and travel restrictions. The motion to send this letter carried. The letter will be

directed to Mr. Slaughter in St. Louis, Missouri, but carbon copies will be sent to Dr. Baatres, at the Central Office in Washington, D.C., as well as our three Congressional Delegates.

The proposal to study the Salary Supplement Program, all aspects thereof or possibilities including duties, double duties, consolidation of duties between counties, payment—the whole package, what to do and a how-to-do-it plan for the Governor and further a plan for the Legislature. The 8-member committee should include representation from the Association of County Commissions and Gerlach had intended to have the Executive Director of that organization in attendance as a resource person. The members of the Veterans Commission wish to receive the minutes of these meetings.

The next order of business was the definition of the term “veteran” as it is used in South Dakota Statute. “Veteran” definition is found in § 33-17-1. “Veterans preference” means, in South Dakota, if you are qualified for the position, you automatically get an interview. Veteran’s benefits are different for different classifications of veterans. This was written into the original law or statutes: “One small change for one group of veterans could open another area that will be tough to handle,” is the warning that was made. Motion by Clarke, 2nd by Murphy that a 6 member study committee be established by the Commission for this issue. Motion carried and the following were appointed by Chairman Evenson: Todd Kolden, SD DOL; Earl Schultz, US DOL; George Summerside, SD DVA; Don Loudner, SD Veterans Commission; Claims Office Staff representative—tba; Field Staff representative—tba. They will deal with (1) should the definition be changed, if yes, how and what would be affected? (2) Options, if there are weaknesses in present statute. There was a consensus that the present “veterans preference” statute is a good law.

The next order of business was handled by Director Foell. The Commission had requested corresponding division positions and salary ranges from the surrounding states. See handout for information from Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Montana, and South Dakota.

Todd Kolden from SD DOL was then called on for his report. He first of all wanted to congratulate Larry Wilcox on Canyon Cottage. He reported for Earl Schultz that in this region of 13 states, SD had ¼ of the re-employment rights cases. It was noted, at least part of these are attributed to “Butterball” cases. This was a particular class action case handled by the State of Florida which really had nothing to do with actual re-employment issues.

For the State of SD unemployment is the lowest in the nation. 13,000 jobs are going wanting because there are no qualified persons. As a result of this DOL is trying to reach outside of SD to see if South Dakotans are interested in returning to a professional position here *now*. This is called “ROOTs” program (See attached brochure.), and the Governor hopes to bring SD veterans back to South Dakota as well. Under the ROOTs program, the first phase is information mailed out to parents and grandparents with relatives out of state who might be enticed back to SD for any of the 13,000 technical, professional openings. Many are located along the eastern border of South Dakota and the salary ranges are not usually comparable to out-of-state rates.

Under SDDOL DVOP a veteran will be referred first to a job (employer). Remember preference does not mean for the job but for the interview. DOL is serving the employer as well as the job seeker.

3832 is in Congress and will pass in either 109th or 110th Congress. It is going to set up licensing/certification programs. That means it will make licensure and certification for “job training” in the military mandatory. Classification so the qualifications/experience of military jobs can be determined as compared to civilian training.

The budget for Kolden under Department of Labor continues to be cut by the State, but the federal grant stays flat, so no personnel cuts. Just for your information DOL also loses people to federal positions which are higher paying. DOL did distribute the Sioux Falls Vet Center openings nationwide. Kolden did have two direct referrals of qualified professionals to the Sioux Falls VA for those positions.

There was a break of 15 minutes from 3:15 until 3:30.

Following the break Martin Skye of United Tribes was introduced. He has been trying to network with Veterans Affairs and the Commission in order to develop a shared program in the future to work with Native American issues.

Todd Otterberg, SDNG Benefits Coordinator, reported next on the Demob trips including the Veterans Affairs personnel and County Veteran Service Officers who accompanied the National Guard to meet C Battery at Fort Dix. One of the forms in the packets carried along for part of the briefing was the 1010EZ, so these forms are already completed by the returnees. The "reintegration drill" will be in early December and participants will include VSO's, Guard personnel, mental health providers, Vet Center personnel, and VA Hospital and Regional Office representatives. He felt in spite of the travel budget dilemma for Vet Centers, they make super efforts to be where they are needed!

Otterberg is planning for retirement benefits briefings to be made around the State. Publicity will go out to the VSO's, Vet Centers, Legion, VFW, DAV, Retired Officer and Enlisted Organizations. The suggestion was made that he might work with the Veteran Forums as well. The biggest problem to be encountered is the number unaware of their entitlements.

Mr. Bob Sack is a "burial honors" coordinator for veterans, who is located at Camp Rapid, 605-737-6927. It is a new program just launched 1 November. There is funding available to help with travel and uniforms, and Mr. Sack will work with any and all organizations, i.e. SDNG; SDANG; TREA; VFW; American Legion; and any combinations, etc., to provide training for burial honors for veterans.

Larry Wilcox, Superintendent of the Veterans Home, was called upon for his report. See his report, some surveys, and copy of Fitz Bitz attached. Sometimes he is criticized for low veteran employee percentages. However there are often up to 40 veterans involved in the CWT program that are on campus working daily. (CWT is a recovery/work/training program through the VA.) At the Home the veteran is always considered first for employment if qualified. Wilcox mentioned that CNA's are always needed. They have an excellent training program, but once trained they are often hired away to higher paying positions. BOP is working that issue right now in order to make that position comparable to what other facilities are paying.

The Resident count is 118. He needs more, and he needs help to promote and bring prospective residents out to visit the Home or make more people aware of this facility. Wilcox also talked of the dedication of the Paul Redfield Greenhouse on November 2, 2006, at 1:00. Redfield was a resident of the Home, had written the specifications, and had purchased the redwood to be used himself. It was in storage on campus. This building was designed by Redfield, too.

One of the major concerns of the Home is the food service. Right now 79% think it is "good" or higher rating. Constant attention to this issue includes taking suggestions from residents and the staff.

Wilcox was most sincere in his warm personal remarks about Randy Meyer and his recent return to work. His efforts on behalf of the Home are exceptional and now his dedication to return only four months after extremely serious injuries sustained in a rollover accident with a 4-wheeler. The doctors had predicted a 13-month recovery and rehabilitation, but they did not know Randy. Everyone is most grateful for his continuing recovery and for his return to duties as Director of Operations at the Home.

David Parr had a brief report (See attached report.) from the Claims Office in Sioux Falls. In the briefings the Claims Office Staff provides, they are emphasizing to Reserve and Guard veterans their benefits, especially health and the option for the Depleted Uranium test is encouraged, registration within the allotted time frame, too. The office is busy with roughly 5,000 active claims pending. Just less than \$63 million came in to South Dakota in these 10 months of 2006. Parr said that many veterans tend to represent themselves, but that would not be recommended.

George Summerside had a report on Veterans Education Benefits. He provided the Commissioners one of the binders used at the Annual Benefits School training session lead by Summerside, Tom Murphy, and Steve Oliva. It was an overview of the entire program for VSO's.

Steve Oliva, Division Field Officer, suggested a folder of materials to take along to the demob stations for returnees. It was compiled and they went to Fort Dix, NJ and Fort Riley, Kansas—it included greetings from the Governor; the Welcome Home Brochure, 1010EZ form and other education and benefits materials and was very helpful.

The approval of programs through the SD State Approving Agency is mandatory or the educational benefits may not be used in South Dakota. George has a letter to the Congressional Delegates he would like to have the SD Veterans Commission consider and sign. It requests a Congressional Review of the VA program of regionalization. A motion was made by Loudner, 2nd by Murphy to sign the letter drafted by George Summerside. The motion passed. The Bill establishing a 40% across the board cut in budget for SAA in 2008 did pass Congress. This was the Bill opposed in the letter the Commission had signed in the July Meeting.

Larry Person is the Field Services Supervisor and he reported on the Bonus begun in August of 2004. To date there have been 4,474 claims paid for just over \$2 million paid out. The 452nd Reserve Unit is filing for the bonus right now. The Field Staff has participated in several demob briefings and the family briefings, and there are more to come. They also participate in the Veteran Forums and encourage the local VSO's to take part. The new VSO in Brule and Aurora Counties is even doing his own—he is very pro-active in his efforts. The mini-conferences held in the fall of the year will be different this year, because the Pension Maintenance center in St. Paul is sending a representative out to train the VSO's on those forms necessary for continuation of a veteran pension. This is most timely since these forms will be coming due in the near future.

Field Officer Steve Oliva has developed a monthly test for his service officers as a Training Tool to help keep his contacts up-to-date, trained, and aware. It is going to be incorporated by the rest of the VFO's and Oliva said he has even learned or picked up new "tricks of the trade" from the VSO's. There is a new VSO Eric Johnson in Hughes/Sully/Stanley County.

The meeting was recessed at 5:00 PM to be reconvened at 8:00 AM, November 2nd. The report of Dennis Foell, the election of the new chair and vice chair, and Wayne Vetter's report will be held over until Thursday morning.

Chairman Evenson called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM on November 2nd, 2006. He led the “Pledge of Allegiance.”

Dennis Foell was asked for his report on the Division. First he commended the leadership of his staff: Person, Parr and Wherry at the Claims Office and Summerside. He also explained that everything goes through the Claims Office to the VA—that is the safety net, the double check before it goes forward to the VA. He said he felt that the \$1.2 million in the DVA Budget yields about \$72 million—a very good return. For the bonus it was anticipated there would be about 8,000. In 2 years we are about one-half way, if the numbers hold. The presence of the Division at each of the Demob Stations is very noteworthy. The 452nd Reserve Unit was really glad to see our people and they were of great help to those from other states as well.

The Vietnam War Memorial Dedication was an overwhelming success. Attendees felt it was worth it! The National President of the Vietnam Veterans of America was greatly impressed by the whole event. The latest estimate from the Chamber of Commerce is 42,000 attendees or participants.

More of the staff people are taking the TRIP training so they may access the VA Computer screens—this is a “read only” access.

The next order of business was the election. Donald Clarke will decline the chairmanship for personal reasons—the traditional order of succession. He would recommend the following options: Don Loudner as chairman or Paul Evenson to retain the chairmanship. Evenson spoke to that and wishes to pass it on. Don Loudner was nominated as Chairman by Murphy and there being no further nominations heard, a unanimous ballot will be cast. Locken nominated Mike Birnbaum as Vice Chairman and there being no further nominations heard, a unanimous ballot will be cast.

Wayne Vetter was called upon for his report as President of the C/TVSO Association. He wanted to thank and congratulate the Division of Veterans Affairs for another successful Benefits School. Some VSO's testified at the Legislative Hearings—Locken, Lolley, and Vetter. The Legislative people were surprised at all that had to be known by a VSO. The amounts of money for approved claims raised eyebrows. Vetter requested notification of the VSO Salary Supplement Review meetings so he could inform VSO's for those interested in attending and also so he can get updates out to the network. One further concern that he has are those VSO's located in non-handicap accessible offices. He would request that the Veterans Commission function as PA outreach to the County Commissioners so they know we support them, but will have demands as well. Perhaps an invitation could be extended to them to attend the Veteran Forums.

The Associate Director of the VA Medical Center had a report. (See attached report.) Gary Million reported several new hires including David Auch and some retirements or losses to other offices. For the specialty area of Optometry there are new contracts in place for local providers. He said 100% of the patients are enrolled with primary care doctors. The projected budget is \$101 million, but that is preliminary. Million is going to be moving to the Associate Director position in Iowa. He wanted to thank the Commissioners for asking the “tough” questions.

Peter Henry from the Black Hills Health Care System had a short report for Dr. Petzel. (See attached report.) He wanted to thank the VSO's and others in the Veterans Network who have been instrumental in bringing the OIF and OEF veterans to the VA. This has brought growth to VISN 23 so it is looking good for budgets for the new fiscal year. There is a new HR person who will help to plan bringing new people on board in preparation for all the retirements that are expected in the next 10

years. \$1.5 million in VISN 23 is targeted for positions requiring special knowledge—VA accounting, HR, etc.—bringing interns into the system. Some Mental Health positions have been added within VISN 23. Henry feels VISN 23 is ready to care for the OIF/OEF veterans to include the seriously wounded.

For the Black Hills Health Care System (See attached report.) there has been turnover in key clinic positions and recruiting is in progress. He announced a Stand Down for November 9th at Eagle Butte set up by the BH HCS.

A question was raised for both VA facilities. How many exams were done at both VA's for heavy metals—depleted uranium test.

There was a break in order to allow the VFW to honor and present Clarence Wolf Guts with a personalized jacket, identifying him as a Code Talker. It was in honor of his service as one of the original 25 Code Talkers.

Lynn Carpenter was there for a report on the Dakotas Regional Office in Sioux Falls. (See attached report.) There is an average of 325 claims processed per month, but about 380 are received monthly. It figures at approximately 6,500 claims in a year. The "Blue Water Claims" are being held pending a decision from the VA before proceeding on these claims. The Regional Office is fully staffed and they will be participating in the "Charlie" Battery Reintegration Drill on December 2nd. Outreach to other returnees is also planned.

Dan Cassidy from Black Hills National Cemetery was called upon and he introduced Mishelle Kochel, who will very likely be the new director, as he will be moving. They have just had expansion to add a couple sections, and this will include a columbarium for above-ground inurnments. There will also be the creation of a memorial walk. Ms. Kochel will be working on a formal request to BLM for a land transfer that has been discussed for a long time. The expansion will have pre-placed crypt areas for burials—the liner will already be there. There have been surveys done by the Cemetery Administration to determine satisfaction with quality of service of the cemetery staff; overall quality of service; appearance of the cemetery grounds; experience exceeded expectations and the ratings with only one exception were into the 90th percentiles. They have finally been able to establish a secure area with installation of a chain link fence for storage of equipment. An "outhouse" has been okayed approximately 50 feet behind the Memorial Chapel. The procedures for flying Branch of Service flags has been changed—raised and lowered for specific purposes. For the budget they are hoping for a cost of living raise and anything in the area of travel and outreach would be great.

There is an Eagle Scout project in progress at the old Fort Meade Cemetery. He is erecting a small shelter to house maps for checking out location of grave sites. They are working to complete some improvements there—tilling and plowing in preparation for sowing native grass seed. There is no flag flying there, because they are too short staffed to have people over there to raise and lower the flag.

Darrell Shoemaker from Senator Johnson's office reported on veteran related issues. The appropriations bill is going into the Lame Duck Session. It is a continuing resolution now, but will probably end up an omnibus bill. \$77.9 billion total is scheduled for Veteran health care. \$41.4 billion will be mandatory, the rest is discretionary. This does not include the co-pays, fees, etc. Money is coming from the military construction and BRAC funds. There are three military construction projects in SD that have been approved: Base Civil Engineering Building in Sioux Falls; Base Water Well; and Armed Forces Center in Sioux Falls. Johnson is working on (1) defeat of veteran's choice of

representation bill—the concern is if attorneys are brought in, they would be getting money rightfully due the veteran; (2) reversing or minimizing the SAA funding cut passed this year; (3) Survivor Benefits, to include provisions to eliminate offset; (4) Concurrent Receipt for those deemed 100% unemployable, but not already included—because it is not affordable; and (5) money for CARES provisions to be specifically appropriated—not pulled from military construction funds.

Sandy Massey with Senator Thune's Office had a report. Jason Van Beek of Thune's office in Washington recently toured Ft. Meade, the Veterans' Home and attended the Veterans Creative Arts Event held in Rapid City. She assured the Commission that Thune is committed to ensuring the VA is adequately funded. He is working with the flag protection legislation and legislation to provide health care in rural areas—improving care and provision for health care facilities as well as use of local care givers and facilities for rural areas. The Wounded Warrior Benefit and legislation to augment PTSD/Mental Health Provisions are also issues of interest for him and legislation to increase VA funding up to 62%, the greatest increase since WWII.

Erin McCarrick was the spokesperson for Representative Herse's Office. She was a participant of the Vietnam War Memorial Dedication, has visited the Star Base Program at Camp Rapid, was at the deactivation of Charlie Battery and has assisted the Cornerstone Mission in Sioux Falls with a grant to increase capacity by 30 beds. She has been working on loan funds for Native Americans' application in order to build on Native American lands. She is also trying to get funding increases so disabled veterans can make improvements in their homes. Other issues still being pursued are Concurrent Receipt without offset which is still not through the Legislature; travel reimbursement funding for VA patients to at least the level of government travel rates; transition assistance program for the returning National Guard personnel; and work with the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission in their study—need to be sure nothing already in place is cut or in any way reduced. (See attached report.)

The consensus is our three Congressional Delegates work together for the benefit of the South Dakota Veteran. The Commission would request work be done to promote the Depleted Uranium Testing so a base line can be established on the returnees of the present conflict and work to support the Vet Centers to encourage timely appointments to the local positions interacting with the veterans and funding specifically for travel and outreach to the veterans where they are.

The organizational reports and comments started with Gunner Baatrup, State Commander of the American Legion. He mentioned they are "veterans helping veterans"—the American Legion teaming up with the Department of Defense. Locally they have the "Hometown to Heroes" program. Doris Ann Werlinger is the State Auxiliary President and she wanted everyone to know what an extraordinary success the National Creative Arts Festival in Rapid City had been.

Russel Dramstad, State Commander of the VFW, reported on Operation Uplift—phone cards supplied by VFW which often go in deployment packets. They assisted with costs of two service officers who attended national training and they will help send CVSO's in the spring. They also sponsored a veterans' hunt for disabled veterans. Carol Gross is the State Auxiliary President and she reported on their "Teacher of the Year", "EMT of the Year", "Policeman of the Year", etc. She is very pleased to say that South Dakota has donated \$10,000 to cancer research. They have established a new program for the Unmet Needs of dependents of deployed service personnel. For that they will provide as appropriate money, time, labor, materials. If a message needs to get out to the people or to legislators, let them know and it will go out through their Voice of SD.

The DAV State Commander Loren Murren reminded everyone to get out to vote in the upcoming election. He also gave a reminder of the April 10-12 State Meeting and each person present should go to a nursing home during the holiday season to look up a veteran. Harley-Davidson has provided \$500,000 to the DAV. There are about 20 vans out in South Dakota and they are ordering four, possibly more, to be placed or as replacements.

Dave Jungemann was the spokesman for TREA of which there is only one chapter in South Dakota, but about 800 members strong. Nationally they are still pushing for Concurrent Receipt and the Flag Amendment. The TREA Sr. Citizen League continues to deal with the "Notch Amendment" to equalize Social Security payments to those persons "in the notch". They are requesting a \$5,000 lump sum payment to them. Jungemann wanted to announce that they have an honor guard readily available and also now Air Force certified. They do provide ten \$1,000 scholarships that come from the gaming (Bingo) proceeds. "Charitable" gaming in general seems to be suffering throughout the State. He would also like to suggest that National Guard and Reserve personnel should be able to draw retirement upon retirement—not waiting until 60/61 or 65.

Jim Foster represented the PVA and mentioned some of their past and upcoming projects: PVA – Platte Pheasant Hunt; Christmas Luncheon; travel to the Veterans' Home in Luverne, Minnesota, and their time at the Sioux Falls VA to distribute cards and gifts to veterans hospitalized during the holidays.

Don Loudner spoke for the National American Indian Veterans, Inc. They are going to make a big final push at the end of November to get the Code Talkers Legislation out of Committee and onto the floor for a vote. Clarence Wolf Guts will be brought onto the floor in order to encourage the action. Loudner spoke about a Fresno, California parade for honoring all Native American Indian Veterans. The newspaper that day would also be all in honor of them. He encourages the Native Americans' attendance at the Veteran Forums around the State. There has also been action on awarding Woodrow Keeble of Sisseton his Medals of Honor for both World War II and Korea. It should be signed by the President and when the presentation is made, Loudner suggests we will need to honor him. Thanks was again given to TREA for the \$1,000 donation made toward a statue of a Code Talker to be in Pierre, South Dakota, by the other war memorials.

The next meeting will be February 13-14, 2007 at the Holiday Inn Express in Fort Pierre. This coincides with the American Legion Legislative Reception on 13 February. The rest of the meetings for 2007 will be:

April 16-17, 2007 in Fort Meade

16-17 July in Sioux Falls

22-23 October at SD Veterans Home in Hot Springs.

Loudner expressed that the Commission needs to meet in rural areas and/or on a reservation.

David Luce, a resident of the Veterans Home wished to thank all veteran organizations, service organizations, and various State organizations for their work on behalf of the Home and interest in the Home.

A motion was made by Murphy, 2nd by Locken, to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM (MST).

 11-21-06
Dennis G. Foell, Director SD DVA / Date


Beverly Mickelson Recording Secretary