

# LST 534 Newsletter

January, February, March, 2011

Volume 14 , Issue 1

## BIRTHDAYS

2010 was the year for celebrating milestone birthdays for two special people.

My Mom, Marian Alvers, celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. I flew out to California to be sure and witness this amazing age. She looks great and I only hope I have some of her genes.

We had fun asking her what happened some 90 years ago. No TV! No Telephone! She even told us about early refrigeration. They kept food cold by attaching it to a string and lowering it into the well. "It had to go down deep to keep it cold". And we heard her version of an itty-bitty book light...a candle. It made us shiver when she described going to the outhouse in the middle of the night in freezing cold temperatures.

Times have changed a lot, thank goodness. But my Mom has not changed that much over 90 years. A child, a young girl, a student, married, children, working, living through the depression, outliving her husband. What a life... Happy Birthday, Mom. May you live forever.



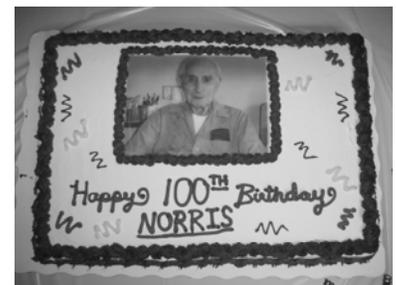
A few days later I flew down to North Carolina to be with our shipmate, Norris Long as he turned 100 years old. I told Norris back in September that I was coming down and arranging a Big Birthday party for his 100<sup>th</sup>. He kept telling me NO. But as the date approached, he warmed up to the idea. There were some 30 or 40 family and friends who came to help him celebrate. Plus a nice variety of the nursing home staff dropped by to say Happy Birthday to their oldest resident.

Norris received congratulations from the White House and from the Secretary of the United States Navy. He also had his 15 minutes of fame when he was mentioned on the Today Show by Willard Scott.

Norris blew out his candles, cut his cake, opened his gifts and had a genuine good time. He got cards and gifts from all over the country.

He is still talking about his party today, so I think he had a good time. Can you believe he is already working on his 101<sup>st</sup> year???

Happy Birthday, Norris.



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## NEWS

### Rifle squad honors vets with 57,000 goodbyes

MINNEAPOLIS — The bus stops on the cemetery path and the silver-haired men file out, sober-faced and silent amid a sea of white marble tombstones. Some carry rifles, some flags, a few hold bugles. They've all come to say goodbye — to a stranger.

This is their eighth funeral of the day. They have five more to go.

The men are members of a special fraternity of veterans. Two generations. Three wars. Survivors of places such as Khe Sanh, Chu Lai, Tokyo Bay, the Chosin Reservoir. Recipients of Purple Hearts and Bronze Stars. Now all together, offering a final salute to those who, like them, served long ago.

Their gait may be slower than it once was, their shoulders a bit more stooped, their eyesight not quite as sharp, but every weekday, 12 months a year, in knee-deep snow and blistering heat, the men of the Fort Snelling Memorial Rifle Squad are out in force and in formation, paying tribute to veterans being laid to rest.

The volunteer squad travels in its own bus across the vast Fort Snelling National Cemetery, conducting full military honors: The call to arms. The white-gloved salute. Three rounds of rifle shots. The mournful wail of

two bugles. The folding of the flag. A few words of thanks to the family. Then one final salute. It's a sad ceremony, but a celebration, too.

"When you fire those three volleys and play Taps, that's a signal to somebody upstairs that someone special — a veteran — is on the way there," says Ted Nemzek, an 82-year-old squad member and Korean War vet whose Bronze Star hangs jauntily from his cap. "It's a wonderful way to say goodbye. It's meaningful."

He should know. He and the squad have said goodbye more than 57,000 times.

#### A squad is born

It began with a man named George Weiss Jr. more than 30 years ago when a friend, a World War II fighter pilot, died and some buddies at the VFW post in the tiny town of Mendota asked him to gather a rifle squad for the proper military send-off.

Easier said than done.

Weiss had to snag a local high school kid to play the bugle and call in some favors to gather a six-man team. That got him thinking. There had to be others who'd need the tribute. So he began making the rounds to VFW and American Legion halls, pitching the idea. A squad was born. It has been going ever since.

*By Sharon Cohen - The Associated Press  
Posted : Thursday Nov 11, 2010*

### New Veteran Burial Medallion

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki announced June 29 that the Department of Veterans Affairs is offering bronze medallions to attach to existing, privately purchased headstones or markers, signifying a deceased's status as a veteran.

"For veterans not buried in a national or state veterans cemetery, or those without a government grave marker, VA is pleased to offer this option that highlights their service and sacrifices for our country," said Secretary Shinseki.

The new item can be furnished instead of a traditional government headstone or marker for veterans whose death occurred on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker.

Under federal law, eligible veterans buried in a private cemetery are entitled to either a government-furnished grave marker or the new medallion, but not both. Veterans buried in a national or state veterans cemetery will receive a government headstone or marker of the standard design authorized at that cemetery.

The medallion is available in three sizes: 5 inches, 3 inches and 1 ½ inches in width. Each bronze medallion features the image of a folded burial flag adorned with laurels and is inscribed with the word "Veteran" at the top and

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the branch of service at the bottom. Next of kin will receive the medallion, along with a kit that will allow the family or the staff of a private cemetery to affix the medallion to a headstone, grave marker, mausoleum or columbarium niche cover.



More information about VA-furnished headstones, markers and medallions can be found at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov). Search under burial and memorial benefits.

VA officials are developing an application form for ordering the medallion. Until it is available, applicants may use the form for ordering government headstones and markers, VA Form 40-1330. Instructions on how to apply for a medallion are found on the VA website at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) or call toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a VA national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a presidential memorial certificate and a government headstone or grave marker.

The new medallions will be available only to veterans buried in

private cemeteries without a government headstone or marker. Families of eligible decedents also may order a memorial headstone or marker when remains are not available for interment.

The VA operates 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than 3 million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict -- from the Revolutionary War to the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan -- are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 19,000 acres.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the VA website at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

*Story printed from Air Force Website*

## A Stamp for LST's??

That's right. Several people are petitioning the United States Postal Service to commemorate a stamp in honor of LST's and those men serving on them. They need to hear an outcry for support.

If you are interested in sending your support of a stamp honoring LST's, send a letter to the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, c/o Stamp Development, US Postal Service, Arlington, VA. 22209-6432

Simply explain that you are in support of the decision to issue a stamp in honor of Landing Ship Tanks used in World War II. You might add that Winston Churchill proclaimed the allied forces won the war due to the LST. It wouldn't hurt!!!

## BIRTHDAYS

### January 4

**Ed Overstake**

2440 World Parkway Blvd. E. #38  
Clearwater, FL 33763

### January 14

**Frank Frame**

PO Box 1017  
Jal, NM 88252

### February 3

**William Dox**

443 South Main Street  
PO Box 756  
Massena, NY 13662

### March 26

**Willie Gunn**

105 Bull Street  
Swainsboro, GA 30401

## HOLIDAYS

### January

1 New Year's Day  
17 Martin Luther King's  
birthday observed

### February

1 National Freedom Day  
2 Ground Hog  
Day  
12 Lincoln's Birth-  
day  
13 21 President's Day  
22 George Washington's  
Birthday



### March

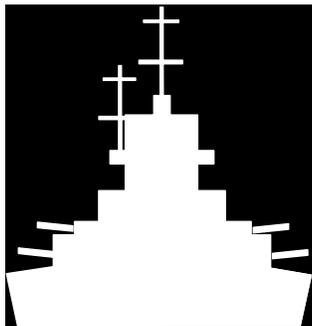
9 Ash Wednesday  
13 Daylight Savings Time  
17 St. Patrick's  
Day  
20 First Day of  
Spring



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# Just for Fun

Golfer— A study found the average golfer walks about 900 miles a year. Another study found that golfers drink, on average, 22 gallons of alcohol a year.

That means, on average, golfers get about **41 miles to the gallon!**

Makes me proud to be a golfer!

*Credit: Roger Lee*



### NAUTICAL TERMS

*In memory of James Richard Drew who contributed to this column until his passing.*

Slack—Not fastened; loose. Or to loosen.

Keel—Centerline of a boat running fore and aft; the backbone of a vessel.

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