

Pine Knot News

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Friday, May 27, 2022

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This week in Carlton County's only independent, locally owned newspaper.



1963 trophy is right here **Page 8**



A chance to buy local **Page 3**



Playoffs have begun **Page 9**

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BIKE RACERS DODGE TREES IN PINE VALLEY



Aiden Jurek of Minneapolis was the overall solo winner of the 12-hour race, riding 85 miles on the hilly course at Cloquet's Pine Valley during the inaugural Log Jam mountain bike race. *Tom Urbanski / Pine Knot News*

Log Jam debut tests endurance

Tom Urbanski
news@PineKnotNews.com

Mountain bikers took to the trails at Cloquet's Pine Valley last Saturday for a full day of riding in a new race event called the Log Jam.

For some race participants, a full day was defined as 12 hours on the race course. Aiden Jurek of Minneapolis was the overall solo winner of the

12-hour race, riding 85 miles on the hilly course and setting the individual mark to beat in future Log Jam races. The winning team in the 12-hour race completed 29 laps for 145 total miles.

Riders had the option of signing up for a 12-hour race or six-hour race, and competing solo, on a two-rider team, or on larger teams with up to six members.

In the two-rider and team events,

only one rider from a team was on the course at a time. Solo riders, duos, and teams who completed the most laps at the end of the six- or 12-hour time frames were declared winners of their respective races.

The course was a 5-mile loop that followed a mix between the singletrack trail and Nordic ski trail throughout Pine Valley.

Continued on back page

Memorial Day events planned

Pine Knot News

And suddenly, it's Memorial Day. The unofficial start to summer. A weekend of remembering those who are gone.

Observed on the last Monday of May, Memorial Day was originally set aside to honor the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. Many Americans observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries and decorating graves, holding family gatherings and participating in parades and other ceremonies.

Local honor guard members and other veterans groups treat Memorial Day — and their stops at various cemeteries to play taps and salute the dead — as a sacred duty.

In Cloquet, the events of the day culminate with an 11:30 a.m. program at Veterans Park. Troy Smith will be the master of ceremonies, with Carlton County sheriff Kelly Lake as the guest speaker. Mark Goad will provide music for the services. There will be a flag raising, roll call of deceased veterans and a salute to departed comrades by the Cloquet Combined Honor Guard.

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Flowers and a flag were placed on a memorial paver at Veterans Park in Cloquet last Memorial Day. *Pine Knot News*



Disabled American Veterans & Auxiliary Chapter 18 Carlton County

BURGERS & BRATS

Thursday & Friday, May 26 & 27

9 a.m. - 6 p.m. ~ In the Premiere Theatres parking lot by L&M
Proceeds benefit Carlton County Veterans ~ *Thanks for supporting our Veterans!*



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CLAIMS OF ABUSE STIR PROTESTS



Lorna Roy, left, and Ashley Roy hold photos of Ashley's children, who they fear are being abused, outside the Carlton County Community Services Center Friday. Photos by Jana Peterson/Pine Knot News

'Give her babies back'

Jana Peterson
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Photos and video showing the alleged child abuse of at least two Native American children in foster care set off a Facebook firestorm last week that has ballooned into a series of protests that organizers say will continue in Carlton County until the children are deemed safe.

One video shows a toddler being spanked repeatedly. Another shows a boy between the ages of 5 and 10 years old wearing only what looks like a diaper while he's being hit in the back with a spatula. The same boy is pictured again being grabbed by the neck, his skin pulled toward the woman grabbing him. Because no charges have been filed on any alleged perpetrators and the alleged victims are juveniles, the newspaper will not name them in this story despite the names being revealed

over social media.

Danielle Martineau, aunt to one of the boys in the photo, who has a brother also in foster care, said she reported the abuse after her three nieces showed her videos and photos taken when they were in the care of the two women being accused.

The nieces were at a funeral wake for Martineau's mother, their grandmother, and opened up to family members.

"I was disgusted and heartbroken to see the evidence and hear the stories of what they had to endure," Danielle Martineau told the Pine Knot News in an interview Friday. Martineau said she took care of her nephews in her home for a year before they went into foster care, and that she advocated for them to go to the person she now thinks should be charged with child abuse.

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During a protest outside the courthouse Tuesday, Danielle Martineau tells how she found out her nephews were being harmed in foster care..

YEAR IN REVIEW

Summer provides a bit of normal

Pine Knot News

Our monthlong march through 2021 looking back at past issues of the Pine Knot News continues today with the next four months of the year, May through August. It was a summer that saw a return of many regular activities after another Covid-19 pandemic lull in the region. It wouldn't last, as we'll find out in the final installment of the year in review next week.

May

In mid-May, 600 finalists from around the world will gather for the Regeneron International Science and Engineer Fair to dazzle scientific experts with their projects and compete for nearly \$5 million in awards, prizes and scholarships. Four Northland students will be attending virtually, three of them from Cloquet: junior Harmony Tracy and sophomores Emily Sapyta and Rowan Rock. Joining them is East High School sophomore Emelyn Beaster.

When the pandemic suddenly made Minneapolis substitute school teacher Sam Kavanaugh jobless, the Carlton High School alumnus turned it into an opportunity. He went full "Olympic mode" with his training for the Jeopardy! Tournament of Champions that aired May 17-28. And he won it all. A total of 15 competitors, including Kavanaugh, faced off for the \$250,000 grand prize. Kavanaugh won a total of \$156,202 on the popular quiz show in 2019.

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DAV CLOTHING DRIVE
 EVERY SATURDAY IN JANUARY • 1/15 - 1/22 - 1/29
 10 A.M. - 2 P.M. AT THE CLOQUET ARMORY IN CLOQUET & LAMPERTS LUMBERYARD IN MOOSE LAKE
LOOK FOR THE GREEN BOXES
 ITEMS ACCEPTED: CLOTHING, BEDDING, PURSES, SHOES, TOWELS & JACKETS



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It's a summer fun guide!

Pullout



Athletes find state wins

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New team runs race

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CRIME & COURTS

Judge: Life sentences for Thompson

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Once the jury found him guilty, there was never any doubt that Sheldon Thompson would be sentenced to life in prison for brutally killing his pregnant girlfriend, Jackie Defoe, their unborn child, and Jackie's 20-month-old son, Kevin Lee Shabaiash Jr., in March 2020.

How many life sentences he would get was the question.

The sentencing hearing Tuesday at the Carlton County Courthouse came just over two weeks after Thompson was found guilty of eight counts of murder on May 31.

Thompson was charged with murder in the first degree-premeditated for the deaths of Defoe, Shabaiash and the unborn child. He was also charged with murder in the first degree while committing domestic violence with a past pattern of domestic abuse of Defoe and Shabaiash. He also faced two charges of murder in the second degree for Defoe and Shabaiash and murder in the second degree of an unborn child-intent, not premeditated. The first-degree murder charges carried with them a penalty of life imprisonment, while the second-degree murder charges have a maximum penalty of not more than

40 years imprisonment.

The murders were violent. Jackie Defoe's throat was slashed; she was also stabbed more than 30 times in the back, 60 times in total. Shabaiash was also brutally murdered: his skull and jaw fractured, legs broken, evidence of either strangling or choking on his blood.

Carlton County attorney Lauri Ketola argued for three life sentences to recognize each victim.

"It's true he only has one life, but he took three," Ketola said.

Defense attorney Steve Bergeson said justice should be "meted out with rationality and a sense of balance" and the sentences should be

served at the same time.

"It makes no sense — in any measurement — that someone can give more than one life," he said. "Which is why I ask for concurrent sentences."

Judge Jill Eichenwald said her decision on consecutive sentences was an easy one. "The murders were separate and distinct," she said. "In my head, there's no justification for dealing with [those deaths] on a concurrent basis," she said, stressing that legally consecutive life sentences would not "result in punishment out of proportion to Sheldon Thompson's offenses."

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DANDY LYING



Next week is International Pollinator Week. AJ Miller, owner of Drone Grown Photography, captured this photo of his 4-year-old daughter in the family's backyard in Cloquet. "We participated in "no-mow May," and I thought it would be fun to take some photos in a sea of dandelions," Miller said. "My daughter, Livia, jumped right in. I powered up my drone and took to the skies." That's when he captured this unique photo of Livia and entitled it, "Dandelioness." She was awestruck by the photo and immediately felt like a movie star, he said. Miller calls aerial photography a therapeutic and liberating experience. "Piloting drones offers a bird's point of view and by which I'm able to share with others a different and sometimes unusual perspective."

WRENSHALL SCHOOLS

Board leans toward inquiry

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After more than 50 people showed up at its last meeting, the Wrenshall school board held its regular June meeting in the commons area of the school instead of the cramped library. A microphone was deployed so a similar-sized audience could hear what was being discussed Monday.

But when it came time to talk about the current controversy consuming the board, the microphones went unused and the mumbled conversation that ensued was difficult to hear even on a playback of a recording.

The Monday meeting began like many of the board's meetings do these days, with items added to the agenda. And this time, it wasn't something small. Chairwoman Misty Bergman said the board would consider, as the last item on the action agenda, hiring an investigator concerning the "allegations" discussed in closed sessions on June 7.

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BUST TO BOOM



A crowd gathers for a movie in Veterans Memorial Park in Cloquet Tuesday, a day after rain postponed the event and many others on the Fourth of July. There was a stand-still parade in the afternoon and fireworks after the movie on Tuesday. Photo by AJ Miller / Pine Knot News

Fourth blends to Fifth after rain

Pine Knot News

Cloquet rebounded from a fairly disastrous July Fourth by making the most of July Fifth: holding a last-minute stand-still parade Tuesday evening before the movie and fireworks to make up for the canceled parade on Monday.

Cloquet Fourth festival co-coordinator Ivan Hohnstadt said the idea for the

Inside

Look for more Fourth photos on **Pages 10-11** and online at PineKnotNews.com.

stand-still parade came to him late, after a cold and wet July Fourth that saw the parade canceled and the movie and fireworks postponed to Tuesday. He emailed committee members at 1

a.m. and called city officials Tuesday morning to get permission. From then on, it was a mad scramble.

Although not every parade entrant could make it, more than half lined up along Avenue B, next to Veterans Park. Police shut down the street and the crowds came, walking past the floats, collecting candy and other giveaways.

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Umbrellas were the fashion of the day on Monday, the Fourth, as well as jackets, as demonstrated by Alex Goebel, left, and Brian Saice. It was wet and cold. Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News

CRIME & COURTS

Shots fired in Pinehurst; arrest made

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Police shut down Pinehurst Park Saturday night after shots were fired, resulting in the arrest of a 16-year-old boy from Superior.

According to the Cloquet Police Department, at 11:15 p.m. Saturday, July 2, a Cloquet police officer was

stopped by two young men and a woman and her teenage child in a car on Cloquet Avenue, who reported that someone had shot at them in Pinehurst Park. The car had damage consistent with gunfire.

They told the officer that minutes before, the two young men — ages 16 and 20 — had flagged down the 39-year-old woman, who was driv-

ing on Pinehurst Park Drive, telling her that someone was shooting at them. After the two got into the car, the car was hit with bullets. No one was struck by the gunfire.

Cloquet police chief Derek Randall said investigators don't think the victims and the shooter were known to each other, but police said there had been some "form of

interaction at the park before the shooting."

Police blocked off the road at both ends of the park in central Cloquet into Sunday morning and the scene was processed. People driving by on Minnesota Highway 33 Saturday night could see the aftermath.

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FARM LOLA

PICK YOUR OWN Berries

Honeyberry picking is NOW!

Blueberry picking starts in mid to late July • 852 Cemetery Road, Wrenshall

Call the recorded Berry Hotline at (218) 400-4950 or sign up for text updates at www.FarmLola.com



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A DECISION; A DAGGER



Carter Zezulka celebrates a winning touchdown catch Saturday as Esko moved on in the Class AA state football tournament. After a wild, snowy 28-21 win over New London-Spicer in Brainerd, the undefeated Eskomos will play in the semifinals Saturday at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis. For details on the game, and all the sports action from the week, turn to **Page 9**. And look online for updates from the weekend.

'Beauty' of a story plays in Cloquet

Jana Peterson
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The Cloquet High School fall musical has returned, and it is a spectacle. In the Disney version of "Beauty and the Beast," wondrous human teapots, clocks, dressers, candlesticks and more come to life on the stage, dazzling audience members and startling the "only human" characters in the show.

The set is also remarkable: creator and handyman Rich Brummer has outdone himself, hanging three massive antlered creatures (that he shot out West) on a Tudor-style tavern wall, and crafting a castle worthy of the Beast himself.

There's plenty of talent to go around too. So much, in fact, that two girls are playing the part of Belle: Olivia Macaulay on Thursday and Saturday, and Martha Stephenson on Friday and Sunday. LeFou is also being played by two actors: Sarah Ellet Cardinal and Sam Remus. The Beast is played by

senior Sam Buytaert, comfortable on the stage he first trod as Oliver when he was a fourth-grader at Washington Elementary School. Ilei Benson as Cogsworth and Jack Liang as Lumière are also magical.

"Beauty and the Beast" is a musical for all ages, with lessons to be learned and fun to be had. For the few who haven't seen it: the story is of an arrogant young prince and his servants, who have fallen under the spell of a wicked enchantress. She turned the prince into a hideous Beast, and the spell can be broken only when he learns to love and be loved in return. When the headstrong and no-nonsense village girl Belle enters the Beast's castle after he imprisons her father, the servants see hope that the spell could be broken. With their help, Belle begins to draw the coldhearted Beast out of his isolation and even teaches him some manners, as the two begin to fall in love.

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Sam Buytaert is the Beast, a once arrogant prince who was transformed into the beast by an enchantress, and only love can set him free. Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News

COVID-19 UPDATE



Covid comes knocking

Mike Creger, Jana Peterson
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Monday's Wrenshall school board meeting began with a palpable moment of silence. Superintendent Kim Belcastro said the family of board member Alice Kloepke reported she had taken a turn for the worse in a battle with Covid-19 and was in an intensive care unit in the Twin Cities area.

Hours earlier, Wrenshall resident Shelly Kilby posted a dire report on her husband Steve. "They needed to intubate Steve. It was a tough decision for him. They have called the six surrounding states to try and find a critical care unit for him. He received a transfer to a critical care hospital and this morning he will be in Minneapolis."

Two numbing cases of Covid in one very small community. It tells the story of the Covid-19 pandemic in Minnesota as cases spike to levels not seen since a year ago, when Covid raced through communities after a summer lull.

For the Kilby family, things got brighter Wednesday. Shelly had said doctors were optimistic because Steve's organs were in good shape and he was a relatively young Covid patient.

On the family's GoFundMe page, a friend reported that "they took the breathing tube out, he is pain-free, awake, talking and responding appropriately. He is still on the (oxygenator) machine and his labs look good."

From Nov. 10-16, 125 Minnesotans died from Covid-19 and 24,448 new cases were reported. Included in the most recent case numbers were 9,433 people who had been reinfecting with Covid, meaning they had a previous positive case at least 90 days before. Breakthrough cases for people who are vaccinated against Covid are also on the rise, with 72,628 total cases reported as of Tuesday. That is still a very small percentage of the total, at 2.245 percent of the more than 3.23 million fully vaccinated Minnesotans, but that number has increased from the "less than 1 percent" touted a month or two ago.

Vaccination can make illness less severe in people who get vaccinated but still get sick.

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Library has a big to-do **Page 3**



Runners stay packed **Page 10**



Play takes on guy talk **Page 18**

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MEMORIES AND LAUGHS AT GORDY CELEBRATION



Hundreds gathered at Gordy's Hi-Hat Sunday for a celebration of life for Gordy Lundquist, who died in July. His son Dan, top, talked about the founder of the famous Cloquet eatery. There was also a service that honored Gordy's Navy experience. Plenty of memories were shared. For a story and more photos, see **Page 8**.

Tradition holds at Cloquet's shoe store

Jana Peterson
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History repeated itself this week at Burger Shoes in Cloquet.

After closing on the sale of the longtime local shoe store Tuesday evening, Carmen LaPlant celebrated her first day as the new owner on Wednesday, exactly 54 years after Ludwig Burger held his grand opening at 1609 Carlton Avenue.

Ludwig's daughter, Maria Leyrer, took down the bell that hung over the front door of the store on



Carmen LaPlant is the new owner of Burger Shoes. In addition to running the longtime local business, LaPlant is doing many of the basic shoe repairs now, and has partnered with a larger repair business for other repairs. *Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News*

Tuesday — as a new family heirloom — and enjoyed her first day of retirement. "It's home," she said. "I grew

up here. I was 1 when we moved here."

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Big doings in the West End Saturday

Pine Knot News

They're closing down the streets in Cloquet's West End business district Saturday, and everyone is invited for a trip into an idealistic version of the future. It will be a place where children play, people enjoy yoga and dance, musicians jam, artists do their thing, businesses thrive and vendors sell their wares: think block party mixed with art fair, farmers market and business district.

Welcome to West End Flourish, a free community gathering. Avenues C and B and Vine Street will be closed from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday for this celebration

of the West End and the arts, and many other things that make Cloquet unique.

Vendors will line the streets, Wentworth Park will be a hub of activity, and the VFW parking lot will be transformed into an outdoor food court, featuring Carlton County food trucks. Many West End businesses are participating, including the Rock Place, the Pine Knot News and its art gallery — last chance for the bird show — and Common Ground and Wood City Nutrition, among others.

Bear in mind that parking could be tricky Saturday.

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TO THRIVE, PROSPER, GROW & DEVELOP

WEST END flourish

FREE EVENT!

MUSIC • FOOD • ARTS • CRAFTS • KIDS' ACTIVITIES

In Cloquet's Historic West End
12 p.m. - 6 p.m. • This Saturday, Sept. 25

FOOD TRUCKS!

West End Flourish funding made possible by

SPRINGBOARD for the north

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IN MEMORIAM



Community members, friends and past and present Gordy's Hi-Hat workers stand in silence and solidarity Sunday with family members during a short service for Gordy Lundquist, who didn't want a funeral. He got an ice cream social and celebration of life instead. Gordy Lundquist died at his Florida home in July. Photos by Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News

Celebrating Gordy: 'He had a really good heart'

Jana Peterson
news@pineknotnews.com

Instead of a funeral, hundreds of coworkers and friends gathered with the family of Gordy Lundquist Sunday to remember the man they adored at the place that has become a Cloquet icon.

It was a celebration of life, complete with ice cream and conversation, a rifle salute and many memories shared in the parking lot of Gordy's Hi-Hat, now closed for the season.

Lundquist, who founded Gordy's Hi-Hat restaurant with his wife, Marilyn, passed away July 6 at the age of 93. He was at the couple's Florida home — where they'd stayed more often since the Covid-19 pandemic began — with Marilyn by his side. They were married for 71 years.

The two of them founded the famous restaurant, a favorite of residents and tourists, along Highway 33 in Cloquet in 1960. They still worked side by side at the Hi-Hat until just a couple of years ago. Gordy loved taking orders and shaking hands with customers, which became a special treat after Gordy and Marilyn's fame on the Food Network show "Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives."

Their son, Dan, now runs the restaurant with his son, Sever. Dan eulogized his father Sunday from the back porch of the restaurant, photographs of Gordy lining the table behind him. He talked about what a good father he was to him and his brother, Rick, a loving grandfather and great-grandfather and a proud independent businessman. He was also a proud American and a Navy man, Dan said, adding that he was honored to have the honor guard there. Gordy served in the Navy during the final year of World War II.



"The thing I'm most proud of is he had a really good heart, which is probably why you're here," the normally stoic businessman told the crowd, pausing occasionally when his emotions bubbled over. "He touched lives in small ways and he did it every day. He made a big impact while selling hamburgers on the side of the road."

Following three rifle volleys by the Cloquet Area Honor Guard in the back parking lot, Navy personnel Alexandra Signorello and Tim Carlson folded a flag, and Signorello presented it to Marilyn: "May God bless you and may God bless your family," she said, following with a long salute.

Later, Cloquet's Chris Medich approached Marilyn and said her husband was a "class act."

"He enjoyed every day he was here," Marilyn said.

Fond memories

Before and after the short ceremony, family members mingled

with the community, this time without the task of serving food. It was hugs and smiles all around.

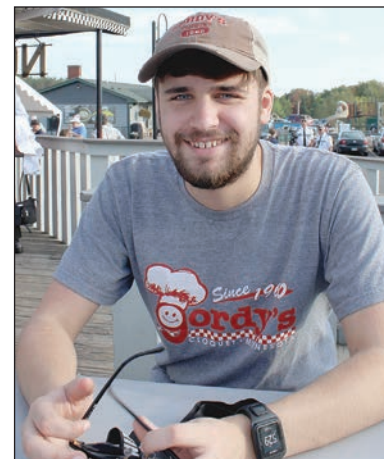
Gordy is survived by Marilyn, sons Rick (Patty), Dan (Kelly), grandchildren Riki (Nick), Hallie, Danny (Jenna), Anna (Eric), Sever (Kaitlyn), Sadie, and Rose and great-grandchildren Harper, August and Wilk.

Recently back from Florida, Marilyn chatted with old friends and co-workers, like Jodi Ward, who's been a cook at the Hi-Hat for 22 years.

Ward wasn't the only past or present coworker there Sunday. The memories flowed from all corners of the parking lot.

"He's going to be missed. He was a great guy: good to work for and a personal friend," said Bob Vajdl, who worked at Gordy's from 1966 to 1968, and again when he got out of the Army. "I'll miss him."

Those early days were when customers had to walk up to the front porch and order, then



Above: Casey Essler worked in the dining room and behind the counter with Gordy. He said he was a great boss.

Left: Marilyn Lundquist greets longtime kitchen co-worker Jodi Ward outside the Gordy's Hi-Hat restaurant Sunday.

take their food and go, Vajdl said. When guys drove street rods there to hang out, and Vajdl would often take Gordy's latest car to Duluth to fetch supplies.

Debbie (Krueger) Buczynski worked at the Hi-Hat around the same time, starting when she was 14 or 15 until she graduated from high school.

"Gordy and Marilyn were always so very nice. They were hard workers. I learned a lot from them," she said. When she and her husband married, Gordy ordered the food for their reception. They moved away, but they always went to Gordy's when they came home.

"He always remembered us, always, always," she said.

Brett Port just finished his 11th season at the drive-in. He worked alongside Gordy almost every day of his career, pre-pandemic. "It is special to work here," Port said. "This place just has something."

"Love," said his fiance, Abby

LaFlash.

Casey Essler worked in the dining room, then one year behind the counter with Gordy. His handwriting could be tough to read, he said, but he was a happy boss. "He never yelled," Essler said, recalling when a coworker dropped a giant ketchup container that splashed onto Gordy and himself. "Gordy just laughed."

Paul Cameron was one of the Gordy's parking lot "controllers" last summer, waving and gesturing with their flashlights, pointing the way to a parking spot, often making people smile in the midst of the pandemic.

"Gordy looked out for the community and his family, and he passed down something so great, and he brought a smile to so many faces," Cameron said. "When you tell people you're from Cloquet, it's Gordy's they think of. He definitely put his thumbprint on this place."

Sever Lundquist said he was happy he came back home six years ago after pursuing a career in the Twin Cities area. Coming back was always part of the plan, he said, but when his company was relocating to Boulder, he decided it was time to move back up north and get into the family business. He and his wife, Kaitlyn, have a toddler, Wilk, and they're expecting another baby in a month.

Sever said it's been really nice hearing all the stories and feeling the outpouring of support since his grandfather passed away. "People telling us about different interactions with Gordy over the last six decades ... we really appreciate the community sharing those memories," he said. "Gordy started a lot of relationships. We hope we can continue to honor him by upholding those relationships."

Pine Knot

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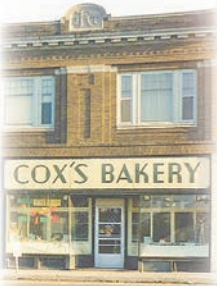
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These photographs are part of a collection long held by World War II veteran Wiekko Seppo, a Marine from Duluth who fought in the Pacific Theater in 1944 and 1945, including the one of the deadliest battles of the war on Iwo Jima. Seppo's widow, Susanne, has turned the photos over to Cloquet librarian Keiko Satomi in hopes of getting the photos to family members in Japan.

Photos long tucked away create somber intrigue

Mike Creger
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The sepia-toned photographs, slightly larger than a business card, tumble out of a browning, mottled envelope. For what is known of the six photos, and also what is enticingly unknown, the sight of them is breathtaking.

Keiko Satomi punctuates the moment.

"It's just," she pauses. "It has a weight."

From what can be pieced together across nearly eight decades, the photographs were found on the bodies of dead Japanese soldiers during a Pacific Theater battle in World War II. There are pictures of three women in formal dress. Sisters? A mother? A girlfriend? There is a family photo. Two pictures of soldiers. There is some identifying writing on the back of them, in columns of scribbled Japanese forms.

Keiko Satomi has been charged with finding more about the photos, and to perhaps get them back to families in Japan.

"It's such history," she said from a table in the children's section of the Cloquet Public Library where she works. "These were passed hand to hand with so much emo-



The photos are assumed to have come from the pockets of dead soldiers on the battlefield. Wiekko Seppo had them in an envelope among other war relics in his home.

tion. You think of how much they meant" to the soldiers.

We know the hands from which the photos passed since the end of the war in 1945. It was a Finlander from Duluth, to a German-born wife in Cloquet and, now, to a librarian, born in Japan.

The Marine

Wiekko Seppo was too short.

Five feet and 4 inches tall, he somehow got accepted for the Marine Corps after being drafted into the Army. He left Duluth and trained in California as part of the then novel amphibious Marine divisions created to bolster the U.S. presence in the Pacific.

Continued on Page 7

Enjoy this countywide edition of the Pine Knot

Hello, fellow Carlton County residents. I'm Pete Radosevich, the publisher of the Pine Knot News and an avid fan of our community. We are sending a copy of this newspaper to nearly every address in the



county, so you can see what thousands of subscribers to the Pine Knot News already know — real journalism is alive and well in Carlton County, and it's in the Pine Knot News.

When five of us chipped in money to start the Pine Knot News three years ago, many people thought we were a little crazy. After all, who would start an old-fashioned newspaper in this age of digital communication and shrinking newspaper companies? Well, it turns out that our community was thirsty for news that is reliable, thorough and interesting — a local paper filled with unique content about this place we call home. And they found that in the Pine Knot News. It's why we've been winning award after award, including the prestigious Minnesota Newspaper Association's top award for weeklies in 2021.

You also like us because we are a local company with an office in the county and staff members and contributors who live among us. It's what helps us be the hyper-local treat readers find us to be in their mailbox each week.

So, enjoy our paper. Read the sports, the news, the features, and the columns. Note the advertisers. And if you haven't already — subscribe. You won't regret it.

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Photos ...

Continued from Page 1

They were trained for beach landings and fighting the enemy on established islands needed for aircraft staging.

Seppo fought on Tinian in August of 1944 and Iwo Jima in February and March of 1945, among others. In those two battles, he was injured, and received a Purple Heart medal and Gold Star.

Seppo died in 2001 at age 77. What is known about the photographs comes from his wife of 26 years, Susanne Stiefel Seppo.

On her mind

Susanne is among thousands of people across the country who have found themselves clearing things from their homes during the pandemic. The photographs have been on her mind for some time, especially since meeting Keiko Satomi as a frequent Cloquet library user.

Satomi was born in Japan, and maybe she could find something out about the photographs. Born in Germany and raised in Duluth, Susanne was a generation younger than Weikko. They married in the mid-1970s. He told tales of the war, and certainly had nightmares, but she never could piece it all together. She said he suffered from Alzheimer's disease in his 50s, likely the result of his war injuries. Before he died, he had been in a care facility for some time.

"I didn't want to do anything (with Weikko's war relics) while he was living," Susanne said. "The pictures have been in a box for years. I thought it was time to find them a home, and I thought of Keiko."

Resources

Keiko Satomi is using family and friends in Japan to try to piece together information on the six photographs. She put the images on Facebook and asked for help in deciphering the writing. She saw that one picture showed a military member wearing a hat saying "Sasebo Navy" on it. Sasebo was a large seaport in western Japan in the Nagasaki Prefecture. It was an important base for the Japanese and was on a list of 17 sites designated by the U.S. for an atomic bomb drop.

Satomi heard back from people at City Hall in Sasebo. They identified the name and address of the man in the photo and confirmed that he was a casualty. They are looking for any possible family members.

Satomi also contacted the Obon Society in Oregon, which helps Americans in returning war relics



Weikko Seppo was a Marine who fought in the Pacific during World War II. He died in 2001. He trained in California, right.

to Japan. Its director said she would take on the photograph project. Most commonly, Obon deals with the "good luck" flags the Japanese wore before going off to service. They are deeply personal objects, signed by family and friends with messages. They became common bounty for American soldiers.

Survivor

Dick Jessor was the same age as Weikko Seppo when he fought in a neighboring division of the Marines at Iwo Jima. He was planning on celebrating his 97th birthday on Wednesday. The Pine Knot News came across his name on a search for Iwo Jima veterans because he was in the news the past year, retiring from the University of Colorado Boulder as the longest-serving professor in the school's history: 70 years. He taught behavioral sciences and psychology.

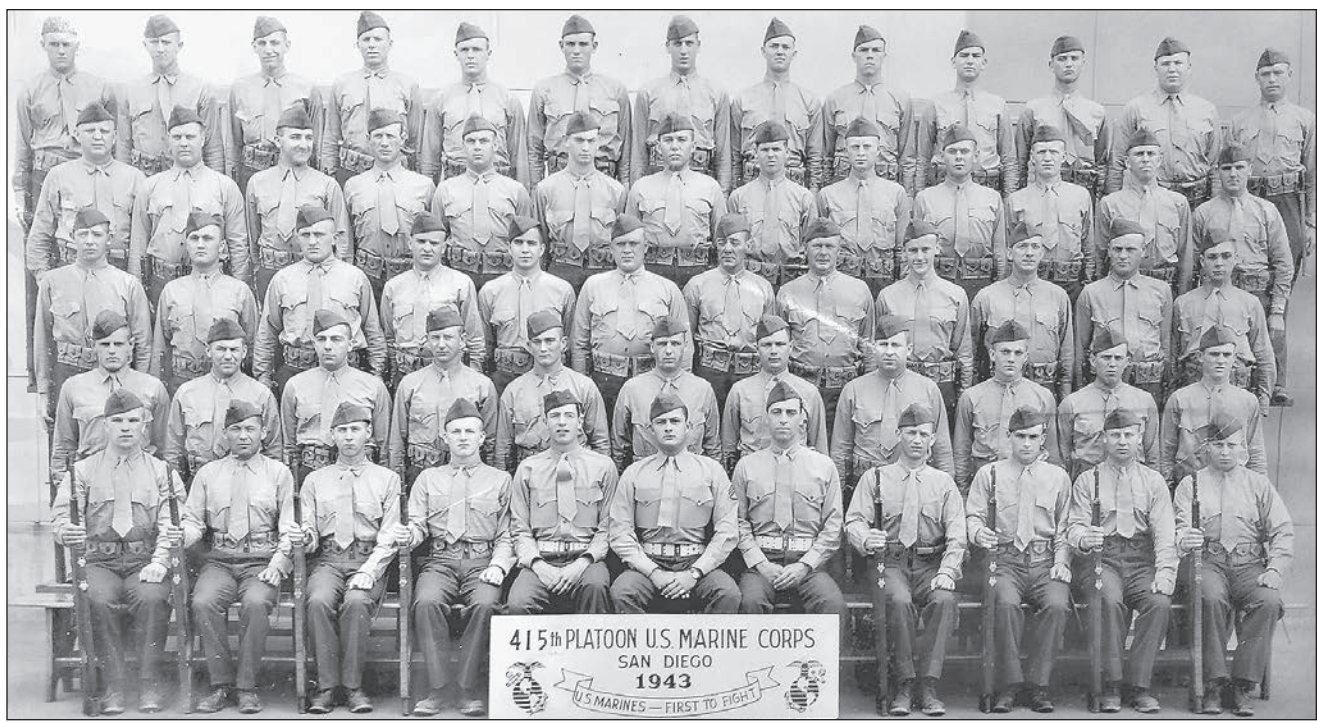
Jessor said it was unusual for photographs to be taken from enemy soldiers. He recalled coming across a body outside his foxhole one morning and looking for one of those flags. He ended up finding letters on the soldier. The inhumanity of war hit home as he saw a commonality with his enemy.

"I didn't touch those," he said of the letters. "It was an epiphany. I had letters from home in my pocket. It really gave a whole sense of how crazy it was."

He said the fighting on Iwo Jima was so fierce, with the enemy hidden in bunkers underground, that it drove men to extremes when it came to how they reacted when coming across a Japanese body. Unspeakable things, Jessor said. "The anger and hostility just came out after being continually shot at by people you couldn't see. Being assaulted by an unseen enemy."

There were an estimated 20,000 Japanese on Iwo Jima when the Marines landed in February of 1945. Most of them died there. More than 7,000 U.S. soldiers died as well.

Jessor eventually did handle one of those Japanese flags. He has a hand



The soldier on the left has been identified among the six photos kept in a box for nearly 80 years after Weikko Seppo obtained them in battle in the Pacific.

grenade from the island sitting on his desk at home.

He said he couldn't say what may have been in Weikko Seppo's mind when he obtained the photographs. It remains a question if he got them from Iwo Jima or someplace else. "You do get a sense of how much the enemy is just like you," Jessor said. "Pawns in a battle. The sense throughout became an abstraction."

Seppo was a sharpshooter and "he killed a lot of Japanese," Susanne said. Perhaps he found in the photographs a moment to reflect.

Passing down

Satomi has studied the writing on the photographs and believes some of them may have been collected by a Japanese soldier before coming to Seppo. Some have two sets of handwriting on them, the original information a soldier may have written on them and then a different hand perhaps noting when the pictures were obtained from a dead soldier.

It could be that Seppo got the photos from one man who had been collecting the momentos in hopes of surviving and returning



This is the sixth photo in the collection.

them to families.

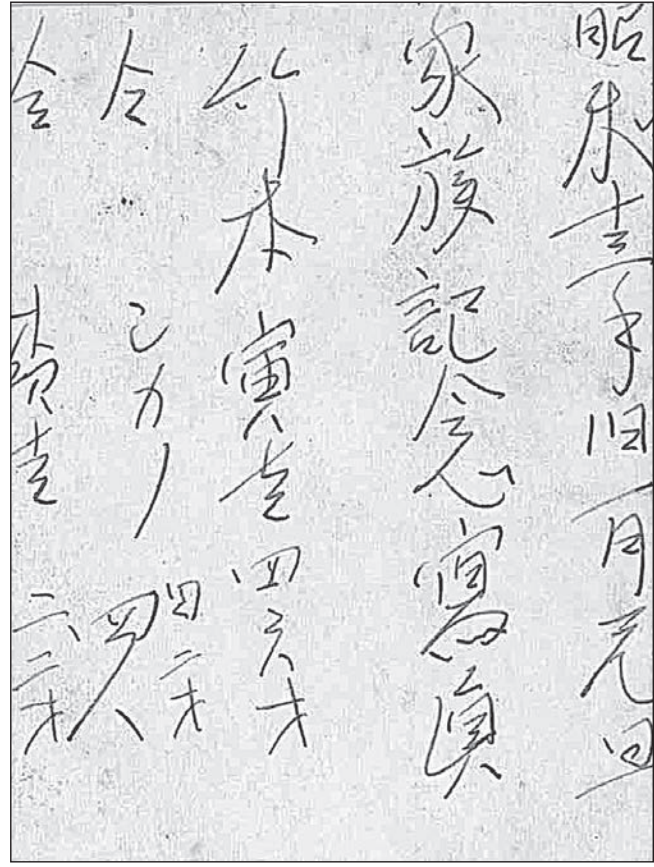
"I hope I can find them a home," Satomi said.

She had a grandfather from Japan who survived the war after being captured by Russians and spending four years in Siberia.

Susanne Seppo said she's glad she has Satomi working on the mystery of the photographs. It really is a twist of fates: a native German finding a native of Japan to work out a Pacific island mystery sparked by a Finn nearly 80 years ago.

Susanne will take it. "What are my choices? Throw them out?"

If they find a home with family members in Japan, that will be more than she could imagine, she said. "It will have some meaning to them."



Part of the challenge in the photo mystery is deciphering the Japanese writing on the back of the photos.



Dick Jessor turned 97 this week and is a veteran of World War II who fought at Iwo Jima, in the 25th Marine Regiment. Weikko Seppo served in the 24th.



Jessor said taking photos off dead enemy soldiers wasn't common, unlike collecting flags the Japanese wore signed by family members wishing them good luck on the battlefield. Jessor, center, held one of the flags at Iwo Jima.

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN: MEMORIAL DAY 2022

Spates of rain did not deter Carlton County's honor guards as they made their solemn rounds on Memorial Day Monday.

Events at cemeteries and parks across the county were marked by U.S. flags and required umbrellas that added color to a colorless, rain-dotted morning.

The rain subsided at St. Matthews Cemetery on North Cloquet Road at 10:30 as people gathered for song and prayer before the Cloquet Combined Honor Guard arrived for the playing of taps and a rifle salute to those lost in service to the country in the armed forces.

It was the last stop for the guard before it lined up for the 11:30 ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park in Cloquet. It repeated the taps and salute there, along with remarks from Carlton County Sheriff Kelly Lake and singing of the national anthem.

The center flags at the memorial in Cloquet, per custom, were raised to full staff after resting at half-staff since daybreak. Wreaths were placed at the stone memorial under the flags.

A similar scene took place at the same time at Hillside Cemetery in Carlton, where members of the Carlton VFW Post 2962 Honor Guard and Auxiliary were part of the ceremonies. Photographs from events there can be found on **Page 5**.



Top left: Capt. Richard Chasse raises the flags at the center of the Veterans Memorial Park plaza during the Memorial Day ceremony there. **Above:** Lance Cpl. Bryce Moe plays taps at St. Matthew's Cemetery east of Cloquet. **Left:** The tradition after the ceremony in Cloquet is to roam the plaza and read the names on the memorial bricks there.



Above: Members of the Cloquet Combined Honor Guard entered the plaza in Cloquet for the ceremony. **Above right:** Carlton County Sheriff Kelly Lake was the guest speaker at the memorial in Cloquet. **Right:** Honor guard members bowed their heads as a prayer was said at St. Matthews Cemetery



Photos, text by
Mike Creger / Pine Knot News



Open since Veterans Day 2018, the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery-Duluth is the third state veterans cemetery. The addition of the Saginaw cemetery was part of a nationwide campaign by the National Cemetery Administration to provide burial within 75 miles of a veteran's home.

A 'beautiful' final resting place for vets

Jana Peterson
news@pineknotnews.com

Although it was not a happy event, Cloquet's Patricia Johnson said her father would have approved of his funeral at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery-Duluth, held on what would have been Arthur Johnson's 93rd birthday.

The Cloquet Combined Honor Guard provided funeral honors, including a color guard, the playing of taps and a rifle volley. After taps, two Army representatives folded the U.S. flag into the symbolic tricorn shape and presented it to Johnson's family.

"He would have loved the military honors and the flags," his daughter said. "And it's a beautiful place."

Arthur Allen Johnson served in the U.S. Army 1947-1951. He was a veteran of both World War II and the Korean War. Because of that service almost 70 years before his death, Johnson and his wife, Charlotte, were both eligible to be buried at the State Veterans Cemetery.

Open since Veterans Day 2018, the cemetery near Duluth is the third state veterans cemetery. The addition of the Duluth cemetery was part of a nation-

wide campaign by the National Cemetery Administration to provide burial within 75 miles of a veteran's home. The closest VA national cemetery to this site is the Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, approximately 160 miles away.



Arthur Johnson

Cemetery administrator Cory Johnson said the fact that our region has the second-highest veteran population within a 75-mile radius was key to getting the cemetery constructed. A federal grant from the National Cemetery Administration funded \$8.3 million of the \$9.6 million project; the balance was funded through state appropriation.

The cemetery administrator said the biggest selling point to veterans and their families is the perpetual care promised by the state and the federal government. "This cemetery will always be cared for, even 100 years from now when we reach full capacity — well outside of our lifetimes — there will always be staff here, giving the utmost care to all of the gravesites we have here at the cemetery," he said.

The grounds of the three-year-old cemetery are immaculate.



Arthur Johnson's family and friends gather and listen to retired pastor Dennis Morreim during the Cloquet veteran's June 11 funeral service at the Committal Shelter at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery-Duluth in Saginaw. Photos by Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News

Continued on next page



Fresh flowers are always welcome at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery-Duluth, although they will be removed when they become faded or unsightly. Artificial flowers are permitted Oct. 15 through April 15 only.

DALE FELIX NELSON
SK3
US NAVY
VIETNAM
MAY 19 1948
FEB 19 2019
FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

MICHAEL HOWARD GILL
LI3
US NAVY
JUN 29 1952
JAN 23 2019

DUANE BRIAN PEARSON
EM2
US NAVY
VIETNAM
JUL 23 1946
AUG 17 2018
SUBMARINER

ROBERT JAMES WOODS
CPL
US MARINE CORPS
WORLD WAR II
JUN 7 1924
APR 3 2015
HUSBAND FATHER
GRANDFATHER

Cemetery ...

Continued from previous page

There is the Committal Shelter where loved ones gather for funeral services, the straight white rows of white marble gravestones, and the stone and marble columbariums. Even the fresh flowers or other gravesite decorations are strictly regulated.

There is no cost for the services, the burial site or the gravestone for the veteran. Costs are minimal for the spouse or eligible dependents. Deceased veterans can be reinterred at the veterans cemetery if the family decides they want to do that.

Currently in the first phase of 10, the cemetery has 2,500 available burial sites. That includes two in-ground urn sections, or columbariums, with individual urn compartments sealed by a marble plaque with the decedent's information, as well as two sections reserved for more traditional casket burials. One of the casket sections includes 850 preplaced crypts — sized to hold both veteran and spouse.

"They do that (the double depth) to create efficiencies so we can serve as many veterans and their families as possible," the



Stone and marble columbariums hold urns at the cemetery.

cemetery director said, adding that so far roughly 90 percent of the people interred at the cemetery have been cremated. If both spouses are buried there, the veteran's name is on one side — facing the flag — and the spouse's information is on the other side.

Funerals are scheduled Monday through Friday, leaving weekends for families who want to visit their loved ones uninterrupted, Cory Johnson said.

The public information center building has a computerized "gravesite locator" inside, which looks a little like an ATM at first glance.

There is also a place for quiet reflection, a pathway not far from the main office that leads through the trees to a memorial wall replicating the original "Walking into the Unknown" sculpture created by Wayne



Two Army representatives carry a U.S. flag and Arthur Johnson's remains during Johnson's funeral service in June at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery.

Williams in 1996 for his father, a Vietnam veteran who was dying from exposure to Agent Orange during the war.

The wall shows the back of a soldier, loaded up with gear and a gun, walking forward toward the wall.

It represents every veteran who has ever put on the uniform, according to the nearby explanation, "a journey of sacrifice made by every Soldier, Marine, Sailor or Airman who has ever served our country in peacetime or war."

For your information

Burial at a State Veterans Cemetery is open to all veterans discharged from active military service under conditions other than dishonorable. Their spouses, minor children, and under certain conditions, unmarried adult children, are also eligible for burial. Eligible spouses may be buried, even if they predecease the veteran. Also eligible for burial are members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces, the National Guard, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps who die while on active duty for training or performing service or who have 20 years of service in reserve components of the armed forces creditable for retired pay. There is no residency requirement for burial; veterans from any state who meet eligibility criteria can choose burial at a Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery.

To register for burial, or learn more about burial at a State Veterans Cemetery, including the Duluth cemetery, please visit www.MinnesotaVeteran.org CEM or call 1-888-LinkVet.

VETERANS DAY DINNER

presented by the American Legion Auxiliary and Cloquet VFW Auxiliary

**Thursday, November 11
3:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

Turkey dinner with all the fixings.
Pickup only. Advance order required: call 218-210-7793 by 5 p.m. Tuesday

**No charge to veterans,
\$10 for others.**

Cloquet VFW Post 3979 • 210 Arch St., Cloquet



A memorial wall at the cemetery replicates the "Walking into the Unknown" sculpture created by Wayne Williams in 1996. It was in honor of his father, a Vietnam veteran who was dying from exposure to Agent Orange during the war.

VETERANS DAY EVENTS

Turkey dinner

The Cloquet VFW and American Legion auxiliaries are offering a turkey dinner 3 to 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 11. Call the VFW bar in advance at 218-210-7793 to reserve meals by 5 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 9. Meals are pick-up only from the VFW parking lot. No charge to veterans with military ID. Others \$10.

Roast beef dinner

Carlton VFW Post 2962 Veterans Day will have a roast beef dinner with the program starting at 5 p.m. and dinner at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 11. No charge to

veterans with DD Form 214. Others \$10, \$8 for age 12 and under. No registration necessary. Questions? Call 218-384-3794.

Programs

Celebrate Veterans Day with a program starting at 9 a.m. in the big gymnasium at Carlton High School. This event is open to the public. Remember to wear a mask, please.

Cromwell-Wright school will offer treats 1-1:30 p.m. in the cafeteria and present a program honoring veterans 1:30-2:30 p.m. in the big gym.

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Pine Knot News

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Friday, November 5, 2021

\$1.25

INSIDE

This week in Carlton County's only independent, locally owned newspaper.



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VETERANS DAY 2021

"The highest obligation and privilege of citizenship is that of bearing arms for one's country."
Gen. George S. Patton

Find dozens of profiles on area veterans inside today's Pine Knot News

Former car dealership has a tangled past

Court records show web of financial woes

Jana Peterson
news@pineknotnews.com

News that the Cloquet Police Department is investigating the former Cloquet Ford Chrysler Center after receiving more than a dozen complaints didn't surprise people watching the former business's Facebook page, which was littered with complaints.

As outlined by police chief Derek Randall and Facebook followers, the issues range from people going to get tabs and then finding out they don't legally own the vehicle, because the title was never transferred, or people trading in a vehicle and the loan not being paid off, leaving them paying on a loan for a new car and the old car they don't own anymore.

The problems are easy enough to describe, but what happened to cause those problems is still unclear. Randall said it's uncommon for his department to get involved with financial issues, so they are investigating and working with the state. They're still in the investigation phase, he stressed, adding that he doesn't know if it's a criminal investigation yet. They would like to talk to anyone who's had issues, so they can collect as much information as possible.

He stressed that they've had no complaints about the new business at the former Cloquet Ford Chrysler site at 701 Washington Ave. in Cloquet.

The new business, Wood City Motors, is owned by the Duluth-based car dealership group Evergreen, which owns dealerships in the Twin Ports and across the state and region including Kia of Duluth, Kia of Mankato, Kia of St. Cloud,



Iron Trail Motors on the Iron Range, NorthStar Ford and Volkswagen of Duluth, Sonju Two Harbors, and several dealerships in Wisconsin.

Cloquet Ford Chrysler, aka Cloquet Motors LLC, was originally started and owned by three people: husband and wife Alan and Renee Birman, and Mike Larson, who the Birmans described then as a silent partner in the business.

Last summer, a story in the Pine Knot News reported that the Birmans had "stepped back to a more silent role" while "previously silent partner" Mike Larson had taken on a more active role. At the time, Larson said he was trying to stabilize the course of the business.

Continued on Page 6





VETERANS DAY 2021

HONORING ALL
WHO PUT ON THE UNIFORM

We asked, and many answered. On the following pages you will find but a small sample of people from the area who have served in the United States military. We thank them and their families for sharing their stories and photos.

Enjoy this special edition of the Pine Knot News.