

Happenings in Arizona

Last week, we went to the American Legion post 66, were sitting there with our burgers and beer when a man came up to me and asked ‘Didn’t you work at the Lamplight in Moorhead?’. I didn’t but went there many times in my younger days. It appears this person was a bartender there along with his younger brother. We chatted about the old days and the number of Vietnam-era Veterans who worked at the Lamplight. Jerry, Spud says Hi.

We talked to a neighbor couple last week, they were out walking and said that were house-bound the past two days due to weather. Weather, I asked and was told, yes, it didn’t get above 60 degrees so we couldn’t go outside. That was 60 degrees above zero.

At a spaghetti dinner sponsored by the local Rotary, I innocently mentioned that I’d given a few presentations to the Rotary back home. One of the people at our table asked about my topics, so I told him. Guess what, I gave a presentation to the local Rotary on Minority Servicemembers During WWII. As you know the military was not integrated until 1948, when President Truman signed an executive order desegregating the military. My presentation got its start in late 2007 when the Moorhead Community Education director and Assistant Superintendent of Moorhead Schools called me and asked if I would do a presentation for their Martin Luther King Day in-service workshop for teachers. I, of course, asked why would you want an old white guy doing a MLK Day presentation. They suggested I do something on the Veterans Oral History project I was doing. I agreed and developed a presentation using video oral histories from the Library of Congress Veterans oral history project. Using video clips of WWII minority Veterans, I added a few comments and produced a 45 minutes slide show. The first video clip was of an African American company in Belgium following the Battle of the Bulge when a chaplain joined them. He was helpful in setting up showers and latrines. He had heard that the Negroes had been let out of cages and had tails, he wanted to see the tails. The final clip is of a wounded soldier in Europe as he arrived at a field hospital he heard people talking about an Eskimo being in the group of wounded. He got on his elbow and asked about the Eskimo and was told ‘that’s you, dummy’. It went over so well, I was invited back to give it again the next year. Each time I deliver it, I am amazed that people who had to use segregated drinking fountains, bathrooms and lunch counters would enlist and serve honorably in the military. I also couldn’t believe that Japanese Americans whose families were rounded up and transferred to internment camps in Wyoming would also enlist and serve honorably. During difficult times, real American serve.