

Norwegian Battalion

Last week, I did a story on the 99th Battalion, a unit of Norwegian Americans fighting during WWII. I found an interesting story about ‘Hootin Annie’ a Willys Jeep that for several months of the war was assigned to the 99th Battalion headquarters company. Driven from 1943 until the end of the war, ‘Hootin Annie’ was part of the Normandy invasion, Battle of the Bulge and the invasion of Germany. Roy Carlson was assigned driver and Bjarne Kvingedal gunner. How’s that for a couple of good Norwegian names? ‘Hootin Annie’ was in an accident and destroyed shortly after the war ended. The 99th Battalion Foundation purchased a replacement vehicle, painted and marked as the original and is often driven in parades and shown at car shows.

It is early Tuesday morning as I write this column from mostly sunny Arizona. I say mostly sunny because our first night here, it rained. Every day on the way here, we were driving into a wind, the strongest about 25mph. The Commins diesel pushed our motorhome here without a problem. It cruised at 70mph on Interstate highways. Since the motorhome is self-contained, we were able to stop for the night at truck stops, parking with the big rigs. Saturday night we stopped at Truth or Consequences, NM at an RV park. The city has a wonderful Memorial Park and Museum. We were able to see the park, but the museum was closed. The park is somewhat unique because it is laid out in the shape of a Medal of Honor. One of the traveling Vietnam Walls is permanently located here purchased by the State of New Mexico. It is very impressive. Sweetie, Bev and I hope to visit several memorials and museums while here.

When I started college at MSC, I was a History major until I realized that was not a well-paying major and changed to Math and later to Computer Science. However, I’ve still enjoyed studying History and have read many books on early US History, both fiction and non-fiction. Driving through New Mexico and Arizona, we see references to military battles, mining sites and gunfights (we are near Tombstone). We are near Cochise’s Stronghold, the Chiricahua leader who battled the US Army here. If we feel ambitious, we’ll be visiting these sites and other attractions.

Back in Moorhead, the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Moorhead committee has started a review on our action plan. The plan was developed in 2011 when Moorhead was designated as a Minnesota BTYR City. Action plans should be reviewed on a regular basis, frequently every five years.