

Owatonna Veterans Memorial



Special Section Produced by the Steele County Times • November 2023

Honoring Those Who Served

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HONORING VETERANS

Veterans Day 2023

Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023
Owatonna Veterans Memorial

9 a.m.- Dedication and Flag Raising
Ceremony Veterans Memorial- 18th Street
& Austin Road

9:30 a.m.- Veterans Memorial Program
and Light Refreshments
Steele County History Center

Sponsored by: Moonlighters Exchange Club

Moonlighters Exchange Club Veterans Memorial

President: Annette Duncan

President-Elect: Rhonda Guthrie

Past President: Nicole Wacek

Secretary: Lynn Limberg

Treasurer: Lori Arnold

Other Members: Linda Breyer, Elise
Ferguson, Karen Hale, Megan Melchow,
Trudy Pierce, Becky Tankersley, Shari
Wickman, Liz Bratsch, Ben Cass, Bryan
Duncan, Liane Peterson and Katie Smith

OWATONNA VETERANS MEMORIAL SUPPORTERS:

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VFW Post 3723



PLATINUM \$25,000-\$50,000

Federated Mutual Insurance Co.
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GOLD \$15,000-\$25,000

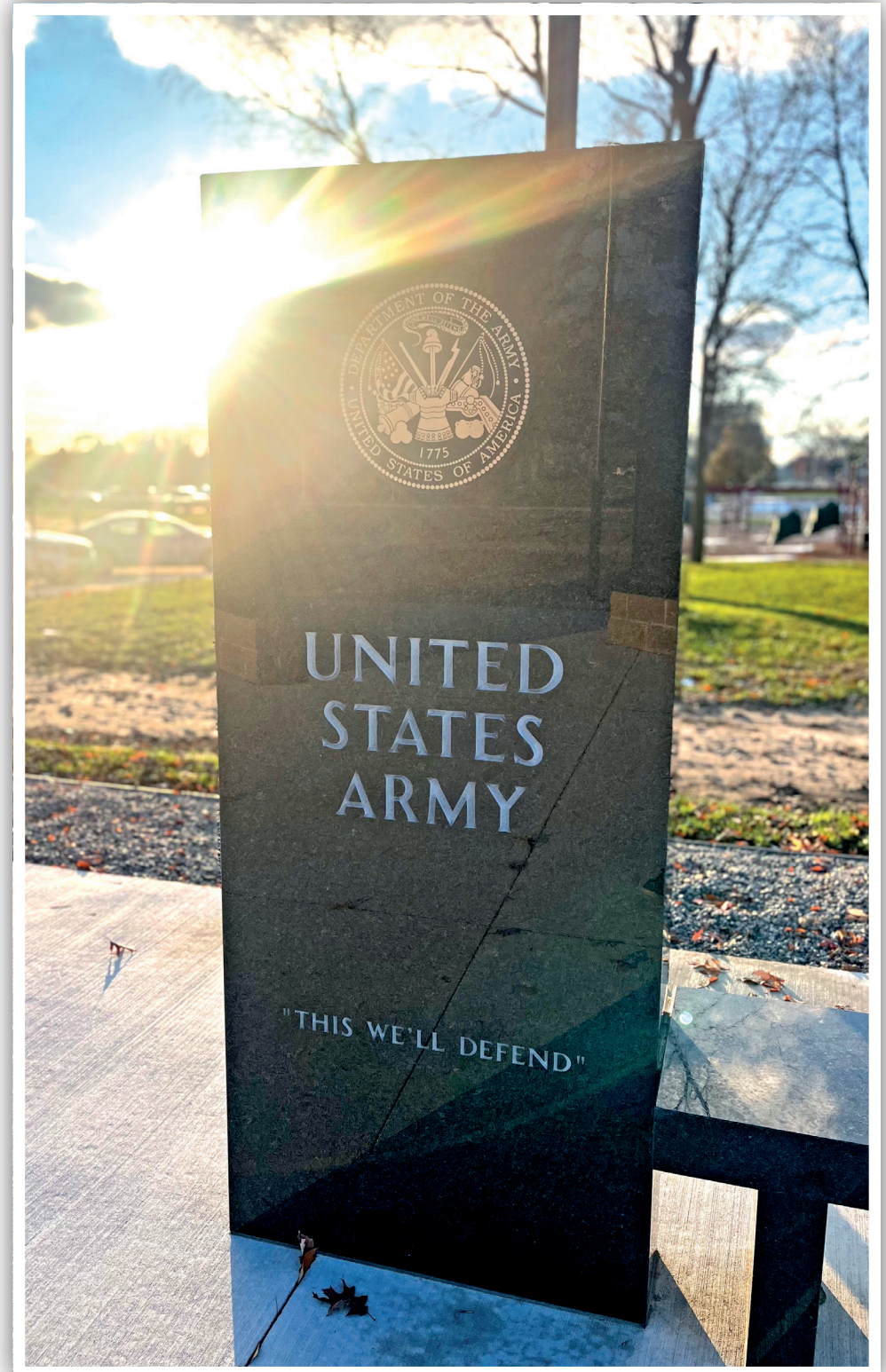
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Irene Miller
Tom, Sherry and Nicole Wacek
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Owatonna Electric/IBEW Local 343
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Randy and Sandi Kurth
Steele County Honor Guard
Allan and Randee Radel



Owatonna Veterans Memorial Special Section

Produced by Steele County Times • Owatonna and Blooming Prairie, MN

Contributing Writers and Photographers: Kay Fate, Joni Hubred and Rick Bussler

Special Thanks: Moonlighter's Exchange Club

Be A Part of History!



Veterans from all branches of service will be honored at the Owatonna Veterans Memorial.
Individual bronze plates are available for purchase to honor your loved one.

Join us for the dedication of the Owatonna Veterans Memorial and be a part of history!

November 11, 2023 at 9AM

at the memorial (northwest corner of 18th St and Austin Road)

Program:

Honor Guard - Steele County Honor Guard
Pledge of Allegiance - Brad Meier
Invocation by Scott Fluegel
Opening Remarks - Katie Smith
Thank You to Supporters - Annette Duncan
Special Recognition - Nicole Wacek
Proclamation - Mayor Tom Kuntz
National Anthem - Rebecca Somers

Keynote Address - Andrea Delgado (Amy Klobuchar office)
Official Dedication
Laying of the Wreath - Senator John Jasinski and
Representative John Petersburg
Taps Echo - Steele County Honor Guard
Benediction - Pastor David Klawiter
God Bless America - Jeff Elstad

Reception to follow in the Steele County History Center including light refreshments

Thank our lucky stars for Veterans!

Owatonna Eagles Club

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STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Nicole Wacek has been leading the Veterans Memorial committee for the past eight years. She had been working closely with Mike Pierce up until July when he died.

Wacek teamed up with Pierce to lead the Veterans Memorial campaign

BY RICK BUSSLER

When Nicole Wacek joined the Moonlighters Exchange Club eight years ago, she quickly became entrenched in a project that had been in

the planning stages even before that time.

Wacek stepped into the role of heading the committee for the Owatonna Veterans Memorial. But she had the perfect man to help assist her over the years: Mike Pierce,

a veteran and long-time VFW member. Pierce and his wife, Trudy, were also members of the Exchange Club.

"Mike didn't want to be the point person," Wacek recalled. "He told me he

See **WACEK** on 6 ►

Pierce reflects on 'bittersweet' work, dedication

BY KAY FATE

For Trudy Pierce, one word sums up her emotions about the Nov. 11 dedication of the Owatonna Veterans Memorial: bittersweet.

"I'm having a tough time with it," she said. "He worked so hard on it; it meant a lot to him."

"He" is Mike Pierce, or Michael, as Trudy always called him, and if there was a face of Owatonna veterans – and the importance of a memorial for them – it was his.

Pierce served one tour of duty in Vietnam, "but he said he was lucky," his wife said. "He was in the right place at the right time; he was never fired on. He hauled bombs from the base to the ships; he drove a general some; he did a little bit of everything."

He did a little bit of everything in Owatonna, too, after he and Trudy arrived in 1974. In addition to his job at Crane Creek Asphalt, Pierce joined the local VFW Post #3723, where he was very active in all roles, including national spots.

Pierce took an active role in the kitchen, too: He and his wife organized and managed the Owatonna Community Holiday Dinner for 15 years, serving up to 1,000 guests annually for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

In addition to his VFW duties, Pierce was chairman of the state's Pheasants for Hospitalized Veterans, as well as a member of the American Legion and a charter member of Am Vets.

It might be a surprise, then, to learn that the veterans memorial wasn't actually his idea.

"When we first started (the Moonlighters) Exchange, that was one of our biggest goals, way back then," said Trudy Pierce. Mike Pierce wasn't a member right away.

It was 2010, "and everybody said, 'nah, that'll never happen. It'll never happen,'" Trudy said of those first discussions within the group.

As it turned out, it did take longer than they expected, but "finding the location is when people said, 'it's really going to happen now,'" she said.

Still, as the couple traveled to communities small and large, "he always had to go past all the veterans memorials," Pierce said, "to see what they were like."

The location – at the corner of 18th Street Southeast and Austin Road – drew some criticism initially, "but I'm really happy, now that it's there, that it's near the (Steele County) History Center," she said.

As she drove past the memorial on her way to



Trudy and Mike Pierce were named Senior Citizens of the Year at the Steele County Fair in 2022. Mike Pierce died this past July, a few months before the completion of the Owatonna Veterans Memorial.

a meeting at church last week, Pierce saw "a dad and a son looking over everything, and I thought, 'oh, I hope parents teach their children what it's about.' It was so cool to see them out there," she said.

It's a busy intersection, meaning plenty of people will see it, and there's ample parking nearby. In addition, it's within walking distance of the Steele County Fairgrounds, which brings in about 300,000 visitors annually.

The memorial honors members of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine

Corps, Coast Guard and Space Force, with room for 2,400 plaques to recognize those who have served.

"The first ones ordered were our grandsons', because Grandpa ordered them," Trudy Pierce said. One grandson served in Afghanistan, the other was stationed stateside.

Tears crowd her eyes often as she speaks of her husband, who died of cancer in July – weeks before their 49th wedding anniversary and just months away from seeing the memorial come to fruition.

See **PIERCE** on 7 ►



Mike Pierce

Wacek teamed up with Pierce to lead the Veterans Memorial campaign

◀ **WACEK** from 4 would do all the grunt work if I would do the public speaking,” she said. She took him up on his offer.

Wacek hit the speaking circuit by going to various clubs and organizations in Owatonna to pitch the memorial and raise funds. “I was asked to speak to different groups who had questions on what we were trying to do,” she said, adding Pierce usually went with her but she did most of the talking.

“He became a second dad to me over the past 10 years,” Wacek said fondly of Pierce. “Trudy and Mike are two of the best people I know next to my parents.”

Wacek remembered one occasion when Mike Pierce asked her if the project would get done before he died. She promised him it would get done. But Pierce lost his battle with cancer and died in July, several months before the memorial would be completed.

OWATONNA VETERANS MEMORIAL FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

- Mike and Trudy Pierce
- Lori Arnold
- Nicole Wacek
- Karen Hale
- Annette Duncan
- Ben Cass
- Katie Smith
- Lynn Limberg

“It breaks my heart that it didn’t get done, but he’s looking down on us now,” Wacek said. “I’m glad to get this finished for him,” she added.

Wacek is quick to point out that she didn’t do this alone. She has had tremendous support from other members of the Moonlighters as well as veterans from the Owatonna VFW. “I can’t thank them enough. So many helped out with this. They are phenomenal.”

Each member of the Moonlighters brought something different to the table, Wacek said. “This is a diverse group, and I never doubted it would get done,” she said, adding it is a big accomplishment for such a small group.

The biggest hurdle the Moonlighters ran into was finding land for the memorial. They had several other sites picked out around town, but they fell through for various reasons, which Wacek described as being disheartening. One of the locations was the Steele County Courthouse. If the memorial had been built there, the Courthouse would have been removed from the National Register of Historic Places.

“Our biggest challenge was getting the land to get the ball rolling,” Wacek said.

Wacek credits Trudy Pierce for coming up with the current location at 18th Street and Austin Road next to the Steele County History Center. “It’s a per-



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

The Moonlighters Exchange Club of Owatonna has been responsible for bringing the Veterans Memorial to Owatonna. To date, the group has raised about \$300,000 for the memorial.

fect place because it’s next to the History Center,” Wacek said. “It’s a high traffic area and will get lots of exposure.”

She has struggled with the time it has taken to make this memorial become a reality. “I could never wrap my head around why it couldn’t be done sooner,” Wacek admitted. She pointed to several other area communities, including Blooming Prairie, Medford and Morristown, that have erected memorials over the past 10 years.

“It’s important for us

“It’s important for us to get this up so people have a place to honor their loved ones.”

Nicole Wacek

Veterans Memorial Chair

to get this up so people have a place to honor their loved ones,” said Wacek.

Both of Wacek’s grandfathers have plaques on the memorial. Joseph Wacek Sr. and Edward Bluhm both served in World War I.

“It has always meant something to me,” Wacek said of the service of her

grandpas. “I came from a military family and chose to be on this memorial committee.”

Wacek said her grandparents were “very, very strong people,” who instilled in her the value of helping other people as well as a strong work ethic.

She is excited about Saturday’s dedication of the new memorial. And she has a surprise planned for Trudy Pierce in honor of the man who provided all the grunt work in getting the memorial done.

“It’s important for us to honor Mike.”

Pierce reflects on ‘bittersweet’ work, dedication

◀ **PIERCE** from 5
After 13 years of planning and fundraising, the project is nearly complete and will be dedicated during a ceremony at 9 a.m. Saturday.

“Before he passed away, he said, ‘if you get any memorials...’” Pierce said. She stopped, then emphasized, “‘if you get any memorials, I want every penny to go to the project.’”

The family received more than \$13,000 in Mike’s name, “so you know how many lives he touched,” his wife said.

One piece remains unfinished, though.

“What we’re waiting for now is a huge globe,” Pierce said, “that will represent all the freedom we’ve been able to help people in other countries achieve.”

She wouldn’t admit it, but it was her idea to substitute an eagle or other symbol with the solid brass globe, which is nearly three feet across.

“This will be a little bit different,” Pierce

“He always said, ‘I want this (memorial), not for me, but I want it for all the guys that served, especially those that came back from Vietnam and were treated the way they were.’”

Trudy Pierce
Mike Pierce’s Widow

said, “but think of all the countries we’ve gone into, to help their citizens enjoy freedom.”

Michael, she said with a smile, thought it was great.

For now, though, the globe remains in Colorado; shipping the massive sculpture has a price tag of \$8,000, “so we have to wait to get it here,” Pierce said.

She has backed away from the project and its details, she said, “because it’s hard. We don’t realize how important every day is. We take it for granted.”

Two of their three children, their seven grandsons and eight great-grandchildren will

attend Saturday’s dedication with Pierce, as will some of Mike Pierce’s cousins from Iowa.

Trudy’s focus remains on her husband, though.

“He always said, ‘I want this (memorial), not for me, but I want it for all the guys that served, especially those that came back from Vietnam and were treated the way they were.’ That was really important to him,” she said.

On Saturday, Pierce said, “he’d be so proud – but he never took the credit. I know he’d be thankful that it’s done, that it finally happened.

“Where do people think they get their freedom?”



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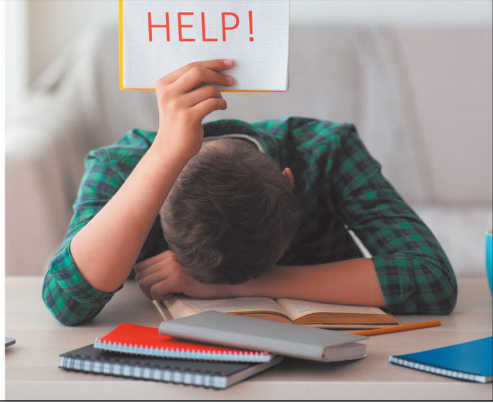


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Hoffmann donates 1,400 hours to construction of memorial



Jim Hoffmann points to a memorial plaque featuring his father, Donald L. Hoffmann, who served in World War II in the U.S. Army. Jim Hoffmann also has plaques in his honor as well as his brother, Mark.

BY RICK BUSSLER

For Jim Hoffmann, retirement has meant volunteering in a big way. And he's found just the place to make it happen.

Over the past 18 months, Hoffmann has dedicated more than 1,400 hours to constructing the new Owatonna Veterans Memorial. He looks at it as a full-time job, but one he could do at his own pace.

"Jim was a huge help with this memorial," said John Heerema, who worked on designing the memorial with the Moonlighter's Exchange Club. "He is a service person who takes it to his heart," he added.

Hoffmann credits one man for getting him involved in the project—Mike Pierce, who died earlier this summer. "We worked together for 20 years in construction," said Hoffmann. "He asked me if I could do excavating on the memorial."

Hoffmann didn't hesitate for a minute once Pierce put out the call. After all, the memorial is personal for Hoffmann, a veteran who served in the U.S. Army during Vietnam, from 1966 to 1969.

He went to work in securing the necessary permits from the county and city to construct the memorial near the Steele County History Center. With the permits in place, Hoffmann dug the footings with the help of construction equipment from JJD Companies of Blooming Prairie, a company Hoffmann once owned.

The veteran was involved in the entire process.

The memorial ended up including four name panels instead of just one as originally planned. Hoffmann dug 4-foot footings, along with placing 40 inches of sand fill. After being compacted and set over a frost freeze for one year, concrete was poured, and the monuments started coming in July.

"I donated all my time," said Hoffmann. "It's an honor to do it, it really is. I'm retired and I had the time to do it."

While Hoffmann lives five blocks from the memorial, he says the memorial kind of became his home away from home. "It's like I've been up here for 18 months," he said.

Hoffmann is commander of the Owatonna Color Guard,

See **HOFFMANN** on 13 ►

STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

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PUBLICATION OF STEELE COUNTY TIMES

World globe featured

Owatonna is Heerema's 12th area memorial

BY RICK BUSSLER

Designing and constructing memorials is becoming old stuff for John Heerema of Owatonna Granite. In his 37 years of monument work, Heerema has had in hands in 12 veterans memorials around the area with the most recent being the Owatonna memorial.

Heerema worked closely with the Moonlighter's Exchange Club on the concept and design of the new memorial. "I came up with the concept and the design was done by the art department at Sunburst (Memorials in St. Cloud)," he said, noting Owatonna Granite, which he owns with his wife Barb, works closely with Sunburst on granite projects. He added Sunburst does the art drawings for every memorial no matter if they are \$300 or \$300,000 like Owatonna's.

There are two unique features on the Owatonna memorial. While most memorials feature an eagle or soldier as the center piece, Owatonna's will have a world globe. "The main focus of design

is how the U.S. represents the entire globe," Heerema explained. "There is military support all over the world. You can see that with what is happening in Israel. It definitely represents how the U.S. supports liberty and freedom throughout the world."

One of the challenges Heerema ran into was finding a company that made a high-quality globe. He ended up with a bronze globe, which was made by a company in Lander, Wyo. It is expected to be installed this week in time for Saturday's memorial dedication.

"I'm really excited to see the globe," Heerema said.

Another unique feature is that the memorial will honor six branches of service, including the U.S. Space Force, which is the newest addition to the U.S. Armed Forces and the world's first space force.

Bronze will be featured throughout the memorial. The memorial marker plaques are all bronze, which Heerema finds to be very clean and easy to read. "Bronze holds up very well," he said.



John Heerema of Owatonna Granite has been the point person for the new Owatonna Veterans Memorial located next to the Steele County memorial by utilizing Sunburst Memorials of St. Cloud, a company that works closely with Owatonna Granite on monuments. The memorial honors the newest U.S. Space Force.

on new memorial



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

County History Center. He has supervised the construction of the memorial features large panels of all six branches of military, including

Heerema said extra space has been added to the memorial for future expansion. “There is quite a bit of space available. It’s just a matter of deciding what to add,” he said, adding a bronze life-size soldier is one idea being kicked around to add in

the future.

Overhead lighting will be installed so the memorial can be illuminated at night.

The biggest challenge with the Owatonna memorial was finding a location, Heerema said, noting four locations were

considered before settling on the current site next to the Steele County History Center.

“It has all worked out well with good community support,” Heerema said. “The committee did a fantastic job of putting things together. They worked

hard and put in lots of hours.”

Besides being involved in the designing and constructing, the memorial is personal in another way for Heerema. His wife’s father, Adolph Huinker, and brother, See **WORLD GLOBE** on 14 ►



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

John Heerema of Owatonna, left, shows his appreciation to Brad Woods of Sunburst Memorials of St. Cloud. They worked together along with others on constructing the new memorial.

Hoffmann donates 1,400 hours to construction of memorial

◀ **HOFFMANN** from 8 a position he has held for the past 20 years. When he needed help with the memorial, he leaned on other Color Guard members.

“When I called them, they would be here in five minutes,” he said. “One time I had 11 guys here shoveling. I had no problem finding help. Everybody just wants to help. It’s unbelievable how many stopped to offer help.”

If Hoffmann wasn’t physically at the memorial, he was back at home working on the design of it.

Hoffmann, who worked closely with Pierce throughout the project, said his favorite part of working on the memorial was Pierce being able to see the concrete poured before he passed away from cancer in July.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative helped dig in the three main poles. “We packed sand around them,” Hoffmann said, adding it was a bit of a challenge, but it worked out great.

He has enjoyed working

with the Moonlighter’s Exchange Club, an organization of mostly women who have been coordinating the project. “I call them the girls,” Hoffman said. “They put it together with Mike Pierce. I admire the 10 girls that went out to get the money. It’s a big deal to me that 10 girls would do that. I can’t thank them enough for doing this.”

Working on the memorial has been a complete honor for Hoffmann.

Pointing to the nearly completed veterans memorial, Hoffmann said the Owatonna project is simply long overdue. “We are one of the last ones to get it up. I’m glad it has finally gone through.”

Three of the memorial plaques feature Hoffmann, his father, Donald L. Hoffmann, who served in the U.S. Army in World War II from 1944-46, and his brother, Mark L. Hoffmann, who served in the U.S. Army from 1972-75.

“Out of the 200 (names) up there, I know 99% of them,” said Hoffmann.

“It’s just an honor to do this for the veterans with their names on there.”

In addition to placing his name and service years on the Owatonna memorial, Hoffmann’s information is also featured on the memorials in Medford and Dodge Center.

Hoffmann is thankful to have worked alongside Pierce. “We were like brothers,” he said. “Mike and I go back along way and we think alike. He knew I would finish the memorial.”

Two days before Pierce passed away, Hoffmann referred to the memorial and told Pierce, “I’ll get this rascal done.” Pierce, Hoffmann added, knew it was in good hands.

Hoffmann will be leading the Color Guard at Saturday’s dedication, which will feature raising the flag, call of colors and Taps.

Besides taking part in the memorial dedication, the Color Guard will also raise the flag at the Courthouse and visit 80 veterans at area care facilities throughout the day.

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World globe featured on new memorial



◀ **WORLD GLOBE** from 11 David Huinker, have memorial plaques featured. Adolph served in World War II while David was in the U.S. Navy from 1966-88. Both are deceased.

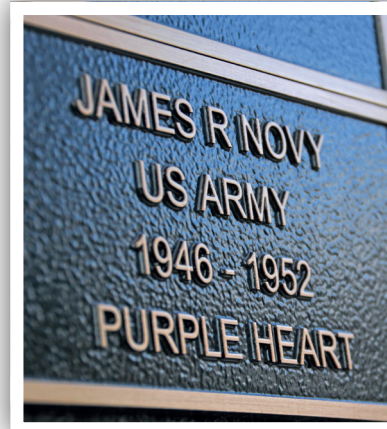
"I plan to bring the grandkids to show them the plaques," Heerema said.

Sunburst is involved in several thousand monuments every year, according to Heerema.

Of the 12 memorials Heerema has been involved with, Owatonna's will be the second largest just slightly larger than Blooming Prairie's, which Heerema was involved with in 2019. New Prague has the largest memorial that Heerema has worked on. Others include: Medford, Hayfield, Dodge Center, Waseca, Mazeppa, Zumbrota, Wanamingo, Morristown and Lonsdale.

"The main focus of design is how the U.S. represents the entire globe."

John Heerema
Owatonna Granite



This is the world globe that will become the center attraction of the new Owatonna Veterans Memorial. While the globe wasn't installed when this edition went to press, it's expected to be up by mid-week in time for Saturday's dedication.

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

Thank You Veterans!



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Owatonna Veterans Memorial Plaques

We don't know them all, but we owe them all!

There are about 200 names currently etched into pavers on the Owatonna Veterans Memorial. This is the list as provided by the Moonlighter's Exchange Club on Oct. 1, 2023 of veterans who are featured on the memorial. Additional plaques will continue to be added on the memorial in the future. The names are listed below along with the dates of service and branches of the military:

BRUCE A ABRAHAM
US ARMY
1973 - 1975

CAROL LEE ABRAHAM
US AIR FORCE
1961 - 1953

CURTIS E ABRAHAM
US ARMY
1965 - 1968

DENNIS DALE ABRAHAM
US ARMY
1969 - 1970

HAROLD WILLIAM ABRAHAM
US AIR FORCE
1958 - 1962

LYLE J ABRAHAM
US ARMY
1961 - 1962

LESLIE (LES) R ABRAHAM
US ARMY SP5 - STAG
1965 - 1968

WARREN WALTER ABRAHAM
US NAVY
1969 - 1970

LARRY DAVID ALLARD
US NAVY
1962 - 1964

ANTHONY "TONY" ARNFELT
US NAVY
1945 - 1946

CORBIE L ARNFELT
US ARMY
1918 - 1919

PAUL H ARNFELT
US ARMY
1957 - 1959

ALVIE L ARNOLD JR
US NAVY
1951 - 1955

JERROLD R ATKINSON
US ARMY
1971 - 1974

ROBERT LAYTON AYERS
US MARINES
1944 - 1946

BRUCE ALLEN BARTSCH
US ARMY
1968 - 1970

NEILL D BENNETT
US NAVY
1979 - 1982

ROBERT L BISHOP
US ARMY RESERVE
1956 - 1966

RONNIE BLAKSTAD
US ARMY - PFC 4
1970 - 1972

LAURENS A BLANKERS
US ARMY
1956 - 1958

EDWARD BLOCK
US AIR FORCE - WWII
1943 - 1945

RICHARD BLOCK
US ARMY - KOREA
1950 - 1952

RODNEY C BLOCK
US ARMY - VIETNAM
1966 - 1967

EDWARD W BLUHM
US NAVY
1942 - 1945

ROBERT L BOHLMAN
US AIR FORCE
1951 - 1953

ROGER LEROY BORCHARDT
US ARMY
1956 - 1962

ROBERT C BORWEGE
US NAVY - HM3
1968 - 1972

CS3 RICHARD L BROMLEY
US NAVY - VIETNAM
1971 - 1976

GERALD C BUECKSLER
US ARMY 1972 - 1975
US Army Reserves 1976 - 2003

DONALD DAVID BULVER
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
1961 - 1969

WAYNE A CAMILLI
US AIR FORCE
1965 - 1968

RICHARD EARL CARROLL
US NAVY - WWII
1946 - 1947

MICHAEL CASSEN
US ARMY
1969 - 1970
BRONZE STAR

FLOYD G CHRISTIANSON
US AIR FORCE (?)
1942 - 1945

IVAN CHRISTIANSON
US ARMY
1965 - 1968

KARL W CHRISTEY
US ARMY USAR INF
1951 - 1953

DARCI CHRISTOFFERSON
US NAVY
1998 - 2006

LELAND D COULTER
US ARMY
1942 - 1945
PURPLE HEART

SPC MATTHEW R CROOKS
US ARMY
2008 - 2012

RICHARD JOHN DAVID
US ARMY
1965 - 1967

LLOYD RAY DAWLEY
US ARMY
1942 - 1946
PURPLE HEART

CAPTAIN GEORGE E DOW JR
US MARINE CORPS
1954 - 1957

COLONEL PETER C DRAHEIM
US AIR FORCE
1988 - 2018

RICHARD A DULITZ
US AIR FORCE
1967 - 1970



RONALD L DUTTON
US ARMY
1967 - 1969

GEORGE W ELLIS
US ARMY AIR FORCE
1942 - 1945

MARVIN H ERDMAN
US AIR FORCE
1969 - 1973

FRANKLIN FALTEYSEK
US ARMY AIR FORCE
1942 - 1945

JOE F FALTEYSEK
US AIR FORCE
1966 - 1969

RODNEY K FLETCHER
US ARMY
1968 - 1970

DUANE SCOTT GASNER
US ARMY
1945 - 1946

JAMES R GAVESKE
US ARMY
1941 - 1945

DANIEL T. GAWORECKI SP4
US ARMY - AIRBORNE INFANTRY
1967 - 1969
PURPLE HEART

MICHAEL GRANOWSKI
US ARMY
1970 - 1971

ALLEN D GROSLAND
US ARMY
1961 - 1964

LLOYD C GUTHIER
US ARMY
1941 - 1957

MITCHELL L HANNOVER
US MARINES
2011 - 2015

SSGT DANIAL W HANNOVER
US MARINES - AFGHANISTAN
2009 - 2015

WALTER EDISON HANSEN
US NAVY
1971 - 1975

LEVI DAVID HANSON
USMC-11
2005 - 2009

LEE HARRA
US ARMY
1967 - 1969
KIA

OTTO J HAVELKA
US ARMY
1958 - 1964

RICHARD J HEIDE
US NAVY - USNR
1960 - 1966

JAMES ALLEN HELLER
US AIR FORCE
1965 - 1969

MSGT CRAIG M HENDRICKSON
US AIR FORCE
1982 - 2008

SP3 MAYNARD J HENDRICKSON
US ARMY TANK CORP
1953 - 1957

GERALD A HERGET
US ARMY
1966 - 1972

See **VETERANS** on 16 ►

◀ **VETERANS** from **15**

EDMOND J HOEFENER
SP4 - US ARMY
1958 - 1961

DONALD L HOFFMANN
US ARMY - WWII E-3
1944 - 1946

JAMES W HOFFMANN
US ARMY - VIETNAM E-5
1966 - 1969

MARK L HOFFMANN
US ARMY
1972 - 1975

HANS H HOHRMAN JR
US ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
1962 - 1968

ADOLPH F HUINKER
US NAVY
1942 - 1948

DAVID F HUINKER
US NAVY
1966-1988

JAMES DAVID INDYKIEWICZ
US ARMY
1989 - 1994
BRONZE STAR

M.L. MICKEY IVERSON
US NAVY - AIR CORP
1942 - 1943

JOHN MICKEY IVERSON
US ARMY
1969 - 1972
PURPLE HEART

FRANCIS J JENO
US NAVY
1950 - 1953

MERRILL ODELL JENSEN
US ARMY
1952 - 1954
BRONZE STAR

LEONARD ALVIN JOHNSON
US NAVY
1945 - 1949

DENNIS F JOHNSON
US AIR FORCE
1952 - 1956

STEVEN P JOHNSON
US NAVY
1986 - 1992

KENNETH W JONES
US NAVY - KOREA
1951 - 1954

RUSSEL KARLEN
US ARMY VIETNAM - KOREA
1964 - 1967

PFC LARRY R KELM
US ARMY
1965 - 1966
PURPLE HEART, SILVER STAR

DAVID KENOW
US ARMY
1959 - 1967

CPRL HAROLD KERKVLiet
US ARMY
1950 - 1952

DONALD FRANCIS KIEFER
US ARMY
1965 - 1967

EUGENE KISPert
US NAVY
1950 - 1954

SP4 JOHN LEO KLINKNER
US ARMY
1977 - 1980

SGT LEO NICHOLAS KLINKNER
US ARMY - WWII
1942 - 1945
RANGER SOUTH PACIFIC

SP4 PAUL WILLIAM KLINKNER
US ARMY
1977 - 1980

DOUGLAS B KOLBE
US ARMY ARTILLERY
1969 - 1975
BRONZE STAR

JAMES R KRAAY
US ARMY
1955 - 1957

CPL ROBERT KRAAY
US ARMY
1951 - 1953

DAVID HOWARD KRAUSE
US ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
1953 - 1962

EUGENE J KRIESEL
US ARMY / AAF
1943 - 1945

MARLIN D KROHNBERG
US NAVY
1957 - 1963

ERNEST P KRUEGER
US ARMY
1942 - 1944
BRONZE STAR

RONALD J KRUEGER
US AIR FORCE
1964 - 1968

MICHAEL A KUBISTA
US MARINE CORPS
2020 - 2009

JEROME A KUBISTA
US NAVY
1945 - 1946

THOMAS A KUNTZ
US AIR FORCE
1963 - 1971

RANDY R KURTH
US ARMY - US ARMY RESERVE
1965 - 1975 / 1979 - 1992
AIR MEDAL, BRONZE STAR,
PURPLE HEART

FRANCIS H LAMMERS
US ARMY
1943 - 1946

JIM M LEONARD
US ARMY - VIETNAM
1968 - 1971

GERALD E LEWISON
US ARMY - 101ST AIRBORNE
1964 - 1967

ROGER F LIMBERG
US ARMY
1964 - 1965

DAVID M LINDERS
US NAVY - VIETNAM
1966 - 1970

JOSEPH A LISOWSKI
US ARMY
1961 - 1963

LAWRENCE A LOCKNER
US ARMY
1966 - 1969

DONALD O LOKEN
US MARINE CORPS
1964 - 1970

LARRY S MAHLMAN
US AIR FORCE
1970 - 1973

ERIC MATEJCEK
US NAVY - IRAQ
2007 - 2011

DON MATEJCEK
US ARMY - VIETNAM
1965 - 1966

ROBERT V MEIER
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
1969 - 1975

MICHAEL S MEIXNER SFC
US ARMY
1984 - 2008

GEORGE MEIXNER PFC
US ARMY - CAV - JAPAN APT
1946 - 1948

LARS J MELAND
US ARMY AIR FORCE
1942 - 1945

MARTIN O MELAND
US ARMY
1942 - 1945
BRONZE STAR

VERNON MELBY
US ARMY
1942 - 1945



MICHAEL D MEYER - UTI
US NAVY SEABEES
1979 - 1999

WENDELIN JOSEPH MILLER
US ARMY
1951 - 1951

ROBERT E MOLLENHAUER
US ARMY
1968 - 1970

RUDY MOLLENHAUER
US ARMY VIETNAM
1970 - 1971
BRONZE STAR

JAMES R NOVY
US ARMY
1946 - 1952
PURPLE HEART

GEORGE OLSON
US ARMY
1944 - 1946

ANSEL M PAULSON
US ARMY
1945 - 1946

SPC SCOTT H PEGLOW
US ARMY - DESERT STORM
1988 - 1996

HARVEY G PEGLOW
US AIR FORCE
1962 - 1966

ANTHONY J “BUD” PEKA
US NAVY
1944 - 1946

MICHAEL H PIERCE
US ARMY - VIETNAM
1966 - 1967

VICTOR PIRKL
US ARMY
1955 - 1958

DEUEL POTTER
US COAST GUARD
1960 - 1967

NICHOLAS NORMAN PRIEBE
US NAVY
2008 - 2013

DERALD E QUAM
US ARMY
1956 - 1959

KENNETH C RADEL
US ARMY - RESERVE
1965 - 1993

ROGER H RADEL
US MARINE CORPS
1960 - 1967

EUGENE “GENE” RASSMAN
US NAVY
1949 - 1953

HARLAN REDMAN
US ARMY
1957 - 1963

JACK REUVERS
ARMY USAR UNASGD
1965 - 1971

GARY A RIDGE, MAJ
US ARMY ARTILLERY
1967 - 1972
BRONZE STAR

GARY ALLEN RINGHOFFER
US ARMY
1969 - 1971

LEONARD G RINGHOFFER
US ARMY
1945 - 1946

HARVEY M RONGLIEN
US ARMY - GERMANY
1944 - 1947

JAMES E ROWE
US AIR FORCE
1964 - 1968

LARRY DEAN ROWE
US ARMY
1970 - 1972
PURPLE HEART, BRONZE STAR

BERNARD WARREN RUE
US ARMY
1970 - 1974

BRUCE RUE
US AIR FORCE
1970 - 1974

CRAIG LOWELL RUE
US NAVY
1970 - 1974

THOMAS GLENN RUSSELL
US ARMY
1965 - 1968

DAREN RYG
USAR
1984 - 2006

DAVID E RYSAVY
US MARINE CORPS
1966 - 1968
PURPLE HEART, BRONZE STAR,
COMBAT

JOSEPH A SAMPSON
US ARMY
1957 - 1961

SGT SCOTT D SCHMIDT
US ARMY - VIETNAM
1969 - 1971

RONALD L SCHROHT
US ARMY
1964 - 1967

See **VETERANS** on 18 ▶

Vets Memorial close to becoming reality

Site identified along 18th Street by History Center

Editor's Note: This story was one of the last interviews Mike Pierce did regarding the memorial before he died this past July. This was originally printed in the Veterans Day edition in November 2021.

BY RICK BUSSLER

For veteran Mike Pierce, persistence and determination are paying off in his quest to honor others like him.

Over the past six years, Pierce has heard it over and over again: "Where are you going to plant it?"

That big question has to do with the Owatonna Veteran's Memorial. Pierce has been consumed over the years trying to figure it out. And he now is "99% certain" the answer has finally come.

Pierce, along with his fellow members of the Moonlighter's Exchange Club of Owatonna, has located a spot just south of the Steele County History Center and east of the picnic shelter along 18th Street. There are a couple formalities left before it will become a reality.

What has complicated things is that the proposed site involves three entities: Steele County,



Mike Pierce of the Moonlighter's Exchange Club in Owatonna shows off a sketch of the new Owatonna Veteran's Memorial, which is expected to begin construction next spring just south of the Steele County History Center along 18th Street. The group is waiting for final approval for the site within the next month.

STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

City of Owatonna and the Steele County Fair. It sits on county property while the city has a lease on it for the ball diamonds and the fair board utilizes the space for one week during the fair. All three groups

must sign off on it before the memorial can be constructed.

"We need to get all our I's dotted and T's crossed," said Pierce, who is on the memorial committee within the

Exchange Club. "We are fairly confident we will be able to start by next spring," he added.

This is the fourth site the group has looked at over the past few years. They were turned down

on three other sites for various reasons.

Pierce likes the site along 18th Street near Austin Road because of the traffic flow it offers.

To help build the momentum along the

Owatonna VFW will be presenting a \$25,000 check to the Exchange Club Monday night. "This will be our biggest donation so far," Pierce said.

With next week's \$25,000 donation, the Exchange Club has raised \$37,000 so far. The memorial is expected to cost around \$250,000. Pierce said at least \$200,000 is needed before construction can begin.

The Exchange Club has refrained from doing any solicitation so far. "We have not gone out because we feel we need to say this is where it's going before asking for money," Pierce said. "It's a challenge. It's a lot of money to ask people for," he said, adding, "I can't imagine this community won't get behind it and do it."

The Exchange Club launched a website this week for people to learn more about the memorial or make donations. It can be found at www.owatonna-veteransmemorial.org.

If construction begins by spring, Pierce hopes it will be ready to go by next fall. Unique to this particular memorial will be recognition of U.S. Space Force, which is the space service branch founded two years ago.

Fundraising continues for Veterans Memorial

BY RICK BUSSLER

Honoring veterans is exactly what the Moonlighters Exchange Club of Owatonna is out to accomplish.

There are currently about 200 names on the new memorial located at 18th Street and Austin Road next to the Steele County History Center. The Moonlighters

have sold 300, but the additional ones won't be added until next spring because of weather conditions.

But the Moonlighters group plans to continue fundraising beyond next week's dedication of the memorial. Individual bronze plates are available for purchase to honor your loved one.

The memorial is not exclusive to those who

have lived or are currently living in Steele County, according to Nicole Wacek of the Moonlighters. Applications are accepted, along with a copy of the Veteran's DD214 or other proof of honorable discharge.

The bronze plaques are currently \$300. Information needed for the plaques includes name of veteran to be recognized, branch of service, dates of service, military honors and donor information. Checks may be sent to Owatonna Veterans Memorial, P.O. Box 763, Owatonna, MN 55060.

Orders may also be placed at www.owatnaveteransmemorial.org.

HONORING VETERANS

- Owatonna Veterans Memorial Fundraising
- 300 sold to date, 200 displayed on memorial
- Bronze plates recognizing veterans available for \$300
- Send check to Owatonna Veterans Memorial, P.O. Box 763, Owatonna, MN 55060



STAFF PHOTO BY JONI HUBRED

Volunteers add name plates on the Owatonna Veterans Memorial. There are currently about 200 names of the memorial. Another 100 have been sold but won't be added until next spring.

◀ VETERANS from 16

- JOHN SCHROM**
US MARINE CORPS
1968 - 1968
- LYLE E SCHULTZ**
US NAVY
1958 - 1964
- JEFFREY PAUL SCHUSTER**
US ARMY - 82ND AIRBORNE DIV
1986 - 1991
- CLAYTON SCHWANKE S1C**
US NAVY
1942 - 1945
- TODD SCHWANKE 1SG**
US ARMY/USAR
COLD WAR
ENDURING FREEDOM
- DALE B SELTHUN**
US ARMY - KOREA
1952 - 1955
- SPC 4 RONALD H SEYKORA**
US ARMY
1968 - 1970
- WILLIAM J SEYKORA**
US ARMY
1967 - 1968
PURPLE HEART
- RUPERT D SHANKLAND**
US ARMY
1956 - 1959
- LT COL GRANT A SNITKER, JR**
US AIR FORCE
1988 - 2014
- LT COL PAULA DOW SNITKER**
US AIR FORCE
1990 - 2016
- BRAD WILLIAM SORUM**
US ARMY
1989 - 1997
- LAVERN SOUKUP**
US ARMY - NATIONAL GUARD
1963 - 1969
- EUGENE E SPINDLER**
US ARMY
1952 - 1954
- FRANCIS (WAYNE) STARMAN**
US ARMY - NATIONAL GUARD
1958 - 1964
- CARL L STEWART**
US AIR FORCE KOREA
1951 - 1955
- CARL L. STEWART**
US ARMY
1969 - 1975

- GLEN A STEWART**
US ARMY
1970 - 1976
- KENNETH E STEWART**
US AIR FORCE
1985 - 1989
- GARY J STOLTZ**
US ARMY
1968 - 1970
PURPLE HEART
- JEFFREY L SVENBY**
US NAVY
1986 - 1990
- LESTER SVENBY**
US ARMY
1942 - 1945
- CLELAND ELLSWORTH SWANSON**
US MARINE CORP
1942 - 1945
- ARLAN J THOMPSON**
US NAVY
1962 - 1966
- EDWARD L VAN DEN HEMEL**
US ARMY
1983 - 1986
- LANCE VANDENHEMEL**
US ARMY
2006 - 2013
- ERVIN ALBERT VASICEK**
US MARINE CORPS
1945 - 1946
- JAMES J VONRUDEN**
US ARMY
1965 - 1967
- JORDON VORE**
US AIR FORCE
1980 - 2019
- LONNIE VORE**
US AIR FORCE
1952 - 1962
- GEORGE E WACEK**
US ARMY
1971 - 1972
- JOSEPH F WACEK**
US ARMY - TECH 5
1942 - 1946
BRONZE STAR
- GARY R WANDREY**
US ARMY
1967 - 1996
- LUVERNE L WANOUS**
US ARMY - GERMANY
1958 - 1960
- KENT WANOUS**
US MARINE CORPS
2008 - 2012
- TERRENCE WARNER**
US ARMY VIETNAM
1969 - 1970
PURPLE HEART, BRONZE STAR
- JOHN JAY WEIKEL**
US MARINE CORP
1962 - 1965
- VICTOR RICHARD WEINZETL**
US NAVY
1938 - 1949
- BENEDICT JAMES WENCL**
US ARMY ARTY SP4
1967 - 1968
- LARRY JAMES WENCL**
US ARMY
1968 - 1971
- RICHARD D WENCL**
US ARMY
1965 - 1967
- DAVID WENCL
US ARMY
1967 - 1968
PURPLE HEART, KIA
- JOSEPH ALLEN WICKMAN**
US AIR FORCE
1987 - 2007
- HENRY J WILDUNG**
US ARMY
1918 - 1919
- ROBERT W WILKE**
US ARMY
1952 - 1954
- SIDNEY J WILKER**
US ARMY - AIR CORPS
1942 - 1946
- HENRY ALLEN WILMOT**
US AIR FORCE
1962 - 1966
- LAWRENCE J WITTROCK**
US MARINE CORP
1943 - 1946
- GARY E WOLFF**
US ARMY
1967 - 1973
- LEROY ARNOLD WOLTERS**
US ARMY
1951 - 1952
BRONZE STAR
- WILLIS H YULE**
US NAVY - E5
1952 - 1956
- KENNETH E ZAK**
US AIR FORCE
1965 - 1969



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

VETERANS DAY

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currently serving and those
who have served in the past.
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Honoring Those Who Served

Owatonna Veterans Memorial



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