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Greatest Generation

*Peterzen: An awful lot of men ...
did an awful lot of work*

Editor's Note: This is the final story in a series on World War II veterans written by Hibbing Daily Tribune summer intern and Hibbing High School senior Matt Nelson.

by Matt Nelson
HDT Intern

Maybe in the future someone will try to put together an encyclopedia that lists every veteran who served in World War II. Sheer numbers of entries would immediately cause complications—each veteran might receive a small paragraph with the barest of information: Name: Conrad Peterzen. DOB: 1922. Served in the European Theater of the War 1944-1945.

That would be accurate, if disgracefully incomplete. It wouldn't tell how Peterzen left his job as a chemist to go to war, or about the time he spent nearly 48 hours driving an open-air jeep—in December.

It wouldn't mention the bombed-out buildings Peterzen looked into or the 13 days he spent in a coma after a head-on collision with a two-and-a-half ton truck. It wouldn't memorialize the unforgettable half-day he spent in Dachau concentration camp, lifting the arms of emaciated bodies to write down the numbers that had been forever inscribed into the skin.

Fortunately, no such encyclopedia entry is needed for Peterzen. His story has been told several times over, most recently, to the Hibbing Daily Tribune.

Conrad Peterzen weighed 3 lbs., 14 oz. when he was born in Little Falls.

His small size made him a target at school for the first few years of his life.

"School for me was a running battle," he said. "Other than that, pretty good."

His size proved no hindrance to his intellectual growth. He skipped the second, fourth and sixth grades and scored 144 on an IQ test in seventh grade.

Peterzen vividly remembers dust storms during the Depression.

"My mother would be in tears half the time," he said. "She would dust the whole house before we went to bed, and in the morning the house was all dusty again."

Peterzen attended the University of Minnesota. He says he was best at the science courses, and he admits that even though he liked algebra, it was his worst subject. He learned how to dance in the springtime from a girl named Dorothy Johnson, and went to "Sock Hops" (dances) in his spare time.

Yet the lightheartedness of college life was clouded by the forces moving in Europe at the time.

"All of us down at the university knew that it was gonna be tough for us to get through school because they were drafting people no matter what their IQ was," he said.

It became harder and harder to put thoughts of war out of his mind. Finally, on Dec. 7, 1941, it became impossible.

"I was waiting tables at Pioneer Hall," he said. "There were 20 tables in the hall. None of us could figure out why everyone quit eating, why they were all in the lounge. Of course, the reason for that was Pearl Harbor. So we all knew our days were numbered."

The draft letter didn't come right away. Peterzen spent that summer working at Rutger's Resort. When his future father-in-law called him up to tell him the Oliver laboratory in Hibbing needed a chemist to

help test silica samples, he came back to the Iron Range and took the job until he was drafted in late 1942.

"My mother had a small case of hysterics (when he was drafted). She had me dead and buried before I even got into uniform! My dad said he took it pretty hard too."

Peterzen had his basic training at Camp Polk, La., where he learned to drive jeeps and assorted heavy machinery. Near the end of the exercises, he heard the Army was seeking students for advanced educational programs, including medicine.

"I thought, 'Oh, that's good, I can go back to school.'" He was sent to a small college in East Texas, where he passed all the tests given to him. He awaited an assignment that never came.

"A letter came that said we were winning the war in Europe and Japan and we didn't need any more doctors," he said. "So they sent me back to the Army. I wound up in the 99th Infantry Division as a rifleman, which is quite a comedown!"

Some of the superiors Peterzen served under weren't as professional as they should have been. During a bayonet drill, his bayonet sagged a little, and the sergeant made an unacceptable comment. Peterzen hit the sergeant in the face while fixing his bayonet and told him, "Is that high enough for you?"

Peterzen now says, "I thought I was going to get in trouble for that one for sure, but I guess another commanding officer saw what happened and didn't like it. He was gone the next day, and I didn't get in any trouble."

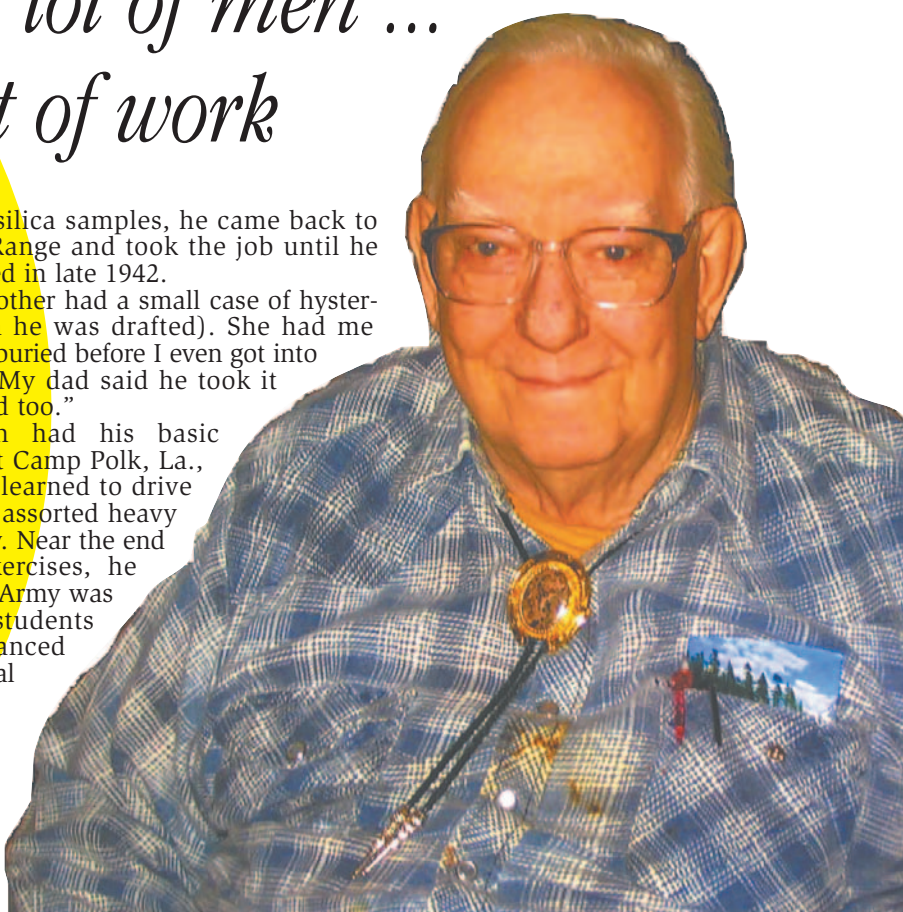
Peterzen was transferred shortly afterward as a truck driver for a training squad, where he had his first brush with death.

"We were training on the edges of a cotton field. They put dirt up against the cotton plants so the balls wouldn't fall off. I was with a guy I knew would have trouble because he couldn't shift. We went around three times and he still couldn't shift. Suddenly he turned the wheel and we went crossways on all those cotton plants. We were heading right for an elm tree when I switched off the key. He didn't even realize what had been happening—he'd frozen. He wasn't there the next day either."

Peterzen was granted a leave in September 1944, and he used it to get married to his sweetheart, Margaret.

"The wedding was very nice. Margaret had the nicest smile on her face as she was walking up the aisle, and she had an even broader smile on her face as we were walking back afterwards. We had a very nice honeymoon—it lasted 24 hours, and then I had to get on a bus and go back to East Texas."

Less than a month later, Peterzen was shipped overseas on the sister ship to the Lusitania, the Aquitania. The Lusitania, as history buffs will recall, was bombed in



World War II veteran Conrad Peterzen

1917 in an incident that nearly sent the United States into World War I (the Zimmerman telegram was the final straw).

The Aquitania traveled without escort across the Atlantic, causing Peterzen some uneasiness.

He finally arrived in Southampton and the troops marched downtown.

"The town looked good," he said, "but when you stuck your head through the windows, you saw there was nothing there. It had been totally bombed out. That brought the war pretty close to home."

Next Peterzen and his battalion had to go up Utah Beach in Normandy.

"There were these big awkward stones, and no matter how you stepped on them they'd slip either sideways or backwards and all over the place." Each of the men carried nearly 150 pounds of gear up the beach with them. "You never heard so many swear words in your life," Peterzen remembers with a laugh.

"It didn't help any."

Much of Peterzen's days in France was spent in a jeep.

"I think I sat in one for 48 hours," he said. "It's surprising how long you can get cramped up sitting for that long."

He once had to drive an open-air jeep in December. "I was cold as could be, and I was just chilled to the bone. My two passengers wrapped themselves in blankets, but you can't run a jeep when you're wrapped up. We were moving along at 25-30 mph. It was good fresh air and plenty of it!"

On one of Peterzen's jeep trips he hit a slick of black ice and crashed headlong into a two-and-a-half-ton truck. His memories immediately following the accident are hazy, but he does remember being taken to a castle in Luxembourg that had been converted to an aid station. He spent the next 13 days in a coma.

"When I woke up, the guy on the stretcher next to me told me the date, and I said, 'Oh shucks, I missed my birthday!' He laughed and said he never thought I was going to come to. I guess my pulse and heartbeat slowed way down. My goodness, I didn't think I hit that truck that hard."

Once Peterzen was well enough, he was

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BUHL

Gotcha!

■ Iron Range town mulls use of cameras

BUHL, Minn. (AP) — Local law enforcement officials are pushing a plan to place six surveillance cameras around this Iron Range town of less than a thousand people.

Sgt. Pat McKenzie of the St. Louis County Sheriff's office, which has overseen law enforcement in Buhl since the city disbanded its police department in 1999, said it'd be a tool for solving and deterring crime. But some residents are asking: What crime?

"If we had the crime I could understand," said Mark Frahm, co-owner of Billy's Bar in town.

But McKenzie said it's an affordable way to offer more law enforcement coverage.

"We don't have enough presence and the city is not able to afford enough police presence in town," McKenzie said. "This is a supplement. It's an effective, efficient way to supplement the law enforcement that they can afford."

McKenzie proposed placing cameras near the city limits at the three main highways into town, as well as one apiece near the city park, the city beach and at an industrial park outside town. He said having only three ways to get into town would make the cameras particularly effective in keeping out potential criminals.

"It's also our hope to deter people from coming to town if it's well known that coming and going from town you are going to get caught on video surveillance," he said.

The city council has hired a consultant to look at the total cost of the proposal, and Mayor Craig Puhlford cautioned that discussions are still "in the infant stages."

But, beyond the question of whether such heavy surveillance is needed in a small town, some residents are also worried about the potential invasion of privacy.

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NEW YORK

Eveleth woman leaps to death

■ Visited NYC with her boyfriend

NEW YORK (AP) — A 21-year-old woman from Minnesota visiting New York to see a concert at Madison Square Garden plunged to her death from her Times Square hotel room, police said.

Jennifer Olson, of Eveleth, Minn., and boyfriend Timothy O'Neill had won tickets from a radio promotion to Friday's sold-out Jingle Ball concert, with a line-up including Alicia Keys and Avril Lavigne.

But the pair apparently quarreled in their room at the Night Hotel on West 45th Street. Police said Olson jumped 60 feet from a fire escape to her death.

The New York Post and the Daily News reported that Olson suffered from depression and was on anti-anxiety drugs.

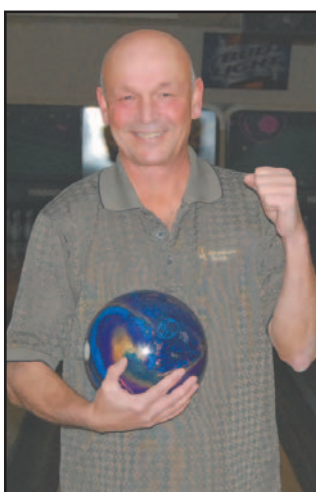
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Phil VonderHaar became first bowler to break the 800 series mark in Hibbing league play.

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DEATHS

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NEWS

Greatest: Man's inhumanity to man is almost impossible to define

From Page 1A

transferred to Paris to be seen by more specialized doctors.

"I was there for three days, and the doctor asked me what the heck I was hanging around there for. He said I had to go back to work. I said, 'You really mean that doc? You don't mean I ought to go home and see my wife, do you?' He said 'Oh Heavens never, not as long as you're able-bodied.' So they put me on a train and away I went."

Peterzen returned to Luxembourg, where he worked for the next few weeks hauling ammunition. The job became strenuous and time-consuming.

"Sometimes I would start at 4 in the morning and get back at 4 the next morning. That was a long day, when it was snowing or raining or both. The cabs did have a roof that kept most of the garbage off, though."

Once, while Peterzen was hauling on a mountain with a friend, the truck hit a slippery spot and slid partway off the mountain.

"My buddy had to get the truck to sit against the mountain to stop it," he said. "Part of the wheels were hanging off, right over a church. We didn't want to go to church that way."

At one point, Peterzen was stationed near a large iron bridge over the Rhine River that the Germans were trying to bomb. "They had all their air force mustered to try and blow up this bridge, and we had all our air force there to stop them." It was an exciting situation, as Peterzen says, but you could die from it. The bridge was used mostly because of the space on the other side where the Allies could park and store machinery. Peterzen recalls a painful incident that occurred after he had crossed the bridge.

"The word came through that there was enemy fire at such and such coordinates. Charlie Company jumped in their jeeps and away they went! I followed them because the captain said we needed to report back to the colonel."

When we got there, we saw about six or seven young kids from the ages of 10 to 13 years old holed up in a barn with a red-tiled roof. They were shooting at whatever they saw with rifles. The rifles were just as tall as they were. We just moved back a little bit and took our guns, 4.2 mortars, and sighted them in by eyeball and dropped ten rounds through that roof, through the whole barn. No kids came out of it.

I guess we ruined all of them. Kind of too bad. I guess they might be geniuses today."

One of the last and most powerful experiences Peterzen went through in Europe was the time he spent in the Dachau Concentration Camp. He had been assigned to help take the tattooed numbers from the arms of the dead and living. He was also there to

bury. "I was the third one in there," Peterzen says softly. "There were two infantrymen ahead of me. They were looking for guards, but the guards had all left. They were pretty sure they might not live through it. I had a ten-round clip in my carbine all set to go, but I never used it."

Peterzen said he and other soldiers buried 25,000 Jews and other victims.

"Army engineers came in with their big bulldozers and made big pits in the front yard of the camp. Of course it was no trouble because all the prisoners had the number tattooed on their wrist. We'd just take the number and add it to the list and go back to the Army headquarters where the Germans had the information, and we identified them."

"Boy, the Germans were very careful at keeping track of all their people. Of course they didn't mind killing them, but they kept track of them."

"I think the worst thing was the stink. Between the burning flesh and the dying flesh and the whatever else was lying around...that was...that was..." Peterzen could not find the word he wanted to describe exactly what he experienced in Dachau.

"I spent one half-day there, and that was one half-day too many. Man's inhumanity to man is almost impossible to define."

The war in Europe had ended, but the war against Japan still raged on, and the end of the conflict was still far off for most of the U.S. Army. Soon after his time in Dachau, Peterzen received orders to go to the Pacific theater of the war to be part of the planned invasion of Japan.

"I didn't want to go. Even though I was half a continent and the Atlantic Ocean and a full continent and the Pacific Ocean—they were still going to send me."

Peterzen was given a month's leave when he returned to the United States, and while he was on leave, the atomic bomb was dropped and the war ended.

"The celebrations—well, the bars were all full, let's put it that way," he said, chuckling. Peterzen spent his festivities with Margaret and his infant son, who had been born in April.

When asked what he thought the term, 'Greatest Generation,' means, Peterzen thought for a few seconds. Then he replied, "Just—an awful lot of men—did an awful lot of work."

No encyclopedia entry could ever capture Peterzen's experience. Not even this article can do a man like him the justice he deserves.

Men like Conrad Peterzen deserve to live on forever through the work they did for the country they protected from evil.

Colorado megachurch vows to move forward

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The leader of a megachurch where a gunman opened fire a week earlier, killing two teenage sisters and wounding three other people, said Sunday that the congregation's trials of the past couple of years were nothing more than tests.

"Last weekend was a test ... but we are passing the test," said the Rev. Brady Boyd, New Life Church senior pastor, on a bright, sunny day when snow-capped Pikes Peak could be seen from the church grounds.

Another test came a year ago, Boyd said, when founder the Rev. Ted Haggard was dismissed after a former male escort claimed Haggard paid him over three years for sex. Haggard publicly admitted committing unspecified "sexual immorality."

"This is not what this church will be known for," Boyd said.

"Our heart is to be a church that gives to people," he said. "We are a group that cares for people,

any person." That was written on the faces of members of a mostly smiling crowd who sang, clapped and waved as they watched the stage or several large-screen televisions simulcasting the service above them. Some cried. Dozens accepted a call to come to the front if they needed help to deal with the pain.

"All it has done is strengthen us," Boyd said at the service, attended by at least 4,000 adults.

Reacting to the shooting and the service, Josh Caldwell, 17, said: "It's definitely been really rough. But seeking the church continue to grow is an incredible experience. And seeing God move among us."

Boyd said the church's struggles could be compared to those faced by early Christians. "In times like this our theology is simple. ... We believe in Christ," he said.

Photographs of victims Stephanie Works, 18, and her sister Rachael, 16, adorned the program for

services Sunday. The two were killed when gunman Matthew Murray, armed with an assault rifle, a .40-caliber semiautomatic handgun and a 9 mm semiautomatic handgun, opened fire in the parking lot as a service was letting out. The girls' father and two other people were wounded.

A volunteer security guard shot and wounded Murray, 24, before he turned the gun on himself. Twelve hours earlier and about 65 miles away, police said, Murray killed two staff members of the Youth With a Mission missionary training center in Arvada and wounded two others.

A funeral was held Saturday in Minnesota for one of the Arvada victims, 26-year-old Tiffany Johnson. A memorial service was held earlier in the week in Colorado.

A private service was held Friday in Denver for Murray. A service will be held for the Works sisters Wednesday at New Life.

Dan Fogelberg, easy rock singer, dies of cancer

NEW YORK (AP) — Dan Fogelberg, the singer and songwriter whose hits "Leader of the Band" and "Same Old Lang Syne" helped define the soft-rock era, died Sunday at his home in Maine after battling prostate cancer.

His death was announced Sunday in a statement by Anna Loynes of the Solters & Digney public relations agency, and was also posted on the singer's Web site.

"Dan left us this morning at 6:00 a.m. He fought a brave battle with cancer and died peacefully at home in Maine with his wife Jean at his side," it read. "His strength, dignity and grace in the face of the daunting challenges of this disease were an inspiration to all who knew him."

Fogelberg was found in 2004 to have

advanced prostate cancer. In a statement then, he thanked fans for their support: "It is truly overwhelming and humbling to realize how many lives my music has touched so deeply all these years. ... I thank you from the very depths of my heart."

Fogelberg's music was powerful in its simplicity. He didn't rely on the volume of his voice to convey his emotions; instead, they came through in the soft, tender delivery and his poignant lyrics. Songs like "Same Old Lang Syne" — in which a man reminisces after meeting an old girlfriend by chance during the holidays — became classics not only because of his performance, but for the engaging storyline, as well.

Mixed reaction to changes to Texas juvenile prison system after abuse reports

DALLAS (AP) — Nearly 10 months after reports of inmate abuse first surfaced, not everyone agrees with claims of progress in reforming the agency that oversees the Texas juvenile prison system.

State lawmakers ordered the Texas Youth Commission to revamp its programs and change its managers after the scandal broke. But since then, inmate abuse allegations have risen, staffing shortages persist and controversy remains over the continued use of pepper spray on juveniles.

Jon Halt, a member of a watchdog group and whose teenage son was sexually assaulted by another inmate in a juvenile prison, said the changes have been minute. "They still treat kids like dirt," he told The Dallas Morning News for a story in Sunday's editions.

The commission's own assessment of its progress is more positive. "I'm going to say excellent," said Dimitria Pope, the commission's acting executive director.

News reports in February revealed that officials at a West Texas youth prison had been accused of sexually abusing inmates. The re-

lations that followed included reports of youth beatings, lax medical care and a culture of retaliation against whistle-blowers.

Legislation passed in May was supposed to address the problems and, to some extent, it did, according to one lawmaker.

"We probably don't have management raping kids now," said state Rep. Jerry Madden.

Madden, who sponsored the reform bill, cited other encouraging signs. Youths who commit misdemeanors are no longer sent to the commission and an independent ombudsman has hired staff. New guards are getting more training and a stronger internal investigations unit has pursued dozens of cases of employee misconduct.

"I'm beginning to have a little confidence that improvements are being made," he said. "But we need to see results."

However, Dr. Barry Krisberg, president of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, said he believes the state juvenile prison system is locked into an outmoded model based on punishment dealt from

large, remote prisons.

"The way they're going, a correctional model, is a dead loser," he said. "That's not going to get them anywhere. It's never gotten anyone anywhere, except court."

Krisberg was part of a commission-appointed task force that produced a report that the agency rejected this year. The task force advocated a "home-like environment" for inmates, among other things.

David Springer, chairman of the advisory task force, said the agency seems better off in some respects, but worse in others. The commission may not be able to fix itself, he said.

"It's an uphill battle that I'm not sure can be climbed," he said.

Gotcha!: Going down a bad road

From Page 1A

"How intrusive do you want your government to be? That's what this is all

about," said Shari Swanson, a member of the city council opposed to the plan. "Why should we be under surveillance? We're the citi-

zens of the community. It's creepy and we're going down a bad road."

Cop Report

HIBBING — Officers of the Hibbing Police Department recently responded to the following incidents among others:

- Arrested a male around 4:15 p.m. Sunday in the 400 block of Howard Street on a St. Louis County warrant. Gregory P. Maclean, 29, was taken into custody and was being held in the Hibbing jail.
- Arrested a male around 11:45 p.m. Saturday in the 1900 block of Seventh Avenue East for underage consumption and

disorderly conduct after responding to a call. Jerry W. Thronson, 20, was taken into custody and was being held at the Hibbing jail.

- Cited a female around 5:18 p.m. Saturday for driving after revocation following a traffic stop near the intersection of Highway 169 and Howard Street. Lacey J. Pasch, 24, was cited.
- Cited a female around 11:14 a.m. Saturday for no proof of insurance following a traffic stop near the intersection of Highway 73 and Leighton

Road South. Cynthia L. Thompson, 54, was cited.

- Arrested a female around 12:54 a.m. Saturday in the 2000 block of Third Avenue East for domestic assault. Audra E. Erkelenz, 25, was arrested.
- Cited a male around 10:34 p.m. Friday near the intersection of Highway 169 and 15th Street East for driving after suspension and no proof of insurance following a traffic stop. Richard W. Niesen, 50, was cited.

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PUBLIC NOTICE OF HIBBING PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING NOTICE

The Hibbing Public Utilities Commission is hereby giving public notice that there will be a special meeting held on Tuesday, December 18, 2007 at 3:00 p.m., for purposes of a Budget Working Session.

The above-mentioned meeting will be at the administrative building in the Commission meeting room.

BY ORDER OF HIBBING PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
KEVIN GARGANO, Commission Secretary & Director of Finance

Merry Christmas From Heaven

*I still hear the songs
 I still see the lights
 I still feel your love
 on cold wintry nights*

*I still share your hopes
 and all of your cares
 I'll even remind you
 to please say your prayers*

*I just want to tell you
 you still make me proud
 You stand head and shoulders
 above all the crowd*

*Keep trying each moment
 to stay in His grace
 I came here before you
 to help set your place*

*You don't have to be
 perfect all of the time
 He forgives you the slip
 If you continue to climb*

*To my family and friends
 please be thankful today
 I'm still close beside you
 In a new special way*

*I love you all dearly
 now don't shed a tear
 Cause I'm spending my
 Christmas with Jesus this year*

*Remembering James Falbo
 by wife Betty*