

# PRESS & DAKOTAN

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER

(605) 665-7811

Published by YANKTON MEDIA, INC.

319 Walnut St., Yankton, S.D. 57078

**PUBLISHED DAILY**  
**MONDAY-SATURDAY MORNINGS**

Periodicals postage paid at Yankton, South Dakota, under the act of March 3, 1979.

Weekly Dakotan established June 6, 1861. Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan established April 26, 1875.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078.

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Payable in advance: Carrier Delivery  
— 1-month \$12.09, 3 months — \$36.27, 6 months — \$72.53, 1-year — \$133.09  
Motor Route, where available: 1-month \$14.51, 3 months — \$43.53, 6 months — \$87.05, 1-year — \$139.14.  
Mail in Retail Trade Zone: 1-month — \$16.93, 3 months — \$50.79, 6 months — \$101.57, 1-year — \$148.82.  
Mail Outside Retail Trade Zone: 1-month — \$19.35, 3 months — \$58.05, 6 months — \$116.09, 1-year — \$186.33.  
\* Plus applicable sales tax for all rates

# Yankton Set To Celebrate 4th

BY REILLY BIEL

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With the Fourth of July comes two traditions: watching the fireworks and partying (not necessarily in that order). Fortunately for area residents, Yankton has them covered.

The Riverfront Event Center is hosting a street dance that will take place on Walnut St. between Second and Third streets starting at 7 p.m. tonight (Saturday). Food and alcohol will be sold, with music played by The BS Band from Irene.

This will be the first street dance held on the Fourth in Yankton.

"We created the street dance because we had time to," said MelCena Bernard, a street dance organizer. "We hope that there's a good turnout and that everyone has a good time."

In addition to the street dance, the Summer Pops Concert series, sponsored by Yankton Area Arts, will kick off with two bands, Livin' Free and Saving Vinyl City, performing from 8-10 p.m. at the Riverside Park Amphitheater. This event is free of charge.

Last year, the annual fireworks display was moved to the Meridian Bridge due to the damp weather. With the slightly drier conditions this year, it's back at its regular location on the Nebraska side of the river opposite Riverside Park.

City officials remind the public that the Meridian Bridge will be open during the fireworks, but spectators will not be allowed to set up chairs, blankets or other items that may block the pedestrian walkway on the bridge.

will once again see a flurry of activity with its Arts Festival at this year's Riverboat Days, which will be held Aug. 21-23. Yankton Area Arts executive director Julie Amsberry is prepared.

"We have 130 vendors this year, and about 25 of them are either new artists or artists that haven't participated in years," Amsberry said. "It'll have a fresh look and a fresh feel."

The artists in question applied all the way back in March. Choosing which artists to showcase involves a jury process of looking at submissions and selecting a wide variety of art forms. The artists chosen then have until August to work on their creations.

According to Amsberry, art fans are

Later this summer, Yankton Area Arts

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# In Service For Freedom

## Some Veterans Reflect On The Meaning Of This American Holiday

BY ALYSSA SOBOTKA

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For Yankton veterans, the war, military branch, time period or position in which they served may have been different, but they all shared the common goal of protecting American's freedom that was adopted by America's forefathers more than two centuries ago and celebrated every year on Independence Day.

Bill Kerr, a World War II veteran, remembers making the decision to volunteer to join the United States Army 71 years ago.

"There was no enlisting in those days; you were either drafted, or not," he said.

Kerr was in Cleveland, where he grew up and resided a good portion of his life, when a high school friend and he decided to volunteer.

Kerr was told he would be rejected, standing at 6-foot-7," one inch taller than the limit.

"I said, 'Where's the boss?' I went in and had a discussion with him for quite a while before he finally decided to let me in," he said. "I had to fight my way in, to start with."

In early January 1945, Kerr began his journey with the army.

He spent most of his time as a Private First Class (PFC) in Germany, a member of the 30th Infantry Division

"I went there, wanted to do a job and get rid of the dictators," he said. "I wanted to preserve our way of life."

The European war ended that same year on May 9 – Kerr's birthday.

"At rest camp, we got to talking and I predicted the war would end May 9 and, sure enough, it did," he said. "When it happened, one of the men said: 'Hey, Stretch, didn't you predict May 9? How did you know that?' When I told him it was my birthday, he just (groaned)."

When the *Press & Dakotan* asked if he had received any awards or honors, Kerr pulled off his black cap which read "WWII 30th Infantry Division" in gold letters. The cap included pins and stitched bars, signifying Kerr had received two Purple Hearts, two Battle Stars, a Good Conduct Medal and Presidential Unit Citation of his regiment.

Kerr said the Fourth of July is a holiday that resonates with war veterans.

"(The Fourth of July is) the day that represents a new start, a new way of living (different from) what our forefathers came from," he said. "The old way they left was nobles and peasants. They wanted something different and they made something different."

Patriotic display is in no shortage when it comes to retired National Guard veteran Donovan List.

List, who has resided in Yankton County his whole life, and his wife Marlyss line their driveway and sidewalk with patriotic lights and flags in honor of the Fourth of July holiday.

But patriotism at the List household is not only present around the holiday.

"We have a flag that goes up every morning and comes down every evening," Donovan said.

He enlisted in the National Guard in 1947. He spent time numerous places during his nearly 42 years of service, but two assignments remain clear in his mind.



IMAGE: METRO GRAPHICS

From 1950-1952 he served as an E5 Sgt. during the Korean Conflict, then he became a Motor Sgt. during the Berlin Crisis from 1961-1962.

In 1988, he retired from the National Guard as an E9 Command Sgt. Major.

The Lists are happy to decorate their home with patriotic red, white and blue, contributing to the holiday's dedication to veterans that Donovan remarks as just one portion of the holiday.

"(Fourth of July provides) a lot of dedication to veterans that have given their lives in defense of the United States of America," he said. "It's an honor for the Fourth of July to respect people that have given their lives or gotten hurt in the world conflicts."

Deb Bodenstedt, Captain, United States Navy retired, has celebrated Independence Days from all over the world.

In 1982, she began her naval career when she was sworn in at Omaha. She was then commissioned and trained in Newport, Road Island, before embarking on

more than 20 locations during her 28 years of service.

Her patriotism and adventurous nature were just a few reasons she decided to join the Navy, she said.

"One of the reasons I opted to join the Navy was because doors were being opened to greater opportunities for women – equal pay for equal work."

The Challenger space shuttle explosion in 1986 was a moment Bodenstedt will never forget.

She was stationed in the northern Atlantic Ocean when she received word that she would be transferred to a diving unit off the coast of Cape Canaveral, Florida, to help with the recovery of the Challenger.

Bodenstedt also recalls visiting the beaches of Normandy, where she was reminded of a similar message the Fourth of July holiday brings.

"I was very much moved by the sacrifices of the men and women before me that died over there coming ashore," she said. "I got a lump in my throat because I know how many Americans

have sacrificed for their country overseas and given the ultimate sacrifice so we can be free as we know it."

After retiring in 2010, she left Hawaii and chose Yankton as her home.

For Bodenstedt, the holiday is not "the Fourth of July," but "Independence Day."

"The reason for the day is independence," she said. "We should be grateful for the sacrifices our military has done to provide us with the freedom and independence that we're all accustomed to."

Lt. Gov. Matt Michels served as a naval officer with the United States Navy from 1985-1989.

He was commissioned during the action in the Gulf of Sidra ('86) and attacks on Libya.

His background in health care law sparked his interest in joining the U.S. Navy, he said.

"It was a dream of mine as I went through my school-

**"The reason for the day is independence. We should be grateful for the sacrifices our military has done to provide us with the freedom and independence that we're all accustomed to."**

DEB BODENSTEDT

ing that (joining the Navy) would be an opportunity," he said. "I wanted to be able to serve my country and be involved in health care law."

Michels became an international prosecutor and negotiator involved with base treaties.

Of the three Fourth of July holidays spent abroad, Michels said one celebration still resonate with him.

"One time I remember, of all things, was in Florida," he said. "I wasn't on the ship, but got to see a closed caption of an aircraft carrier at sea where Lee Greenwood (performed) 'God Bless the U.S.A.' in the cargo hold. It was full of people crying, and that was pretty amazing."

After his naval career, Michels said the celebration of the meaning of the Fourth of July holiday was enhanced with family and fireworks.

It is the Fourth of July fireworks that help Yankton man Brooks Schild celebrate what the Fourth of July means to him, while simultaneously remembering someone who holds a special place in his heart.

Schild and his family set off fireworks in Tabor on the Thursday in June that begins Tabor's Czech Days in honor of his late younger brother, Rich Schild. Rich was killed in Iraq in 2005 on the same mission Brooks was deployed.

"Fireworks are a form of patriotism, so I like to go to

fireworks shows and think of my brother and others – they did what they had to do so we could keep our freedom," Brooks said.

Brooks said that Independence Day is not solemn like Veterans Day or Memorial Day, but instead a happy celebration of America's freedom and the veterans who fought for it.

Brooks and Rich Schild prepared for deployment with Yankton's Charlie Battery National Guard Unit to Baghdad by first training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, in June 2005.

Brooks served as a squad leader and Staff Sgt. at Camp Rustamiah until returning home in late September 2006.

He deployed a second time to serve as a Platoon Sgt. near Kuwait City where his unit's assignment was Seaport of Debarkation from April 2009-2010.

He recalled celebrating the Fourth of July holiday overseas in some fashion or another. Often times, the celebration included a fancier meal at the chow hall and a 5K run in Kuwait.

He recalls a moment around the Fourth of July in Baghdad, when a group of Iraqi men told him and some of his men that they believed American troops had overstayed their welcome.

"They were thinking that it was getting time for America to leave Iraq," he

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**We hope your weekend is a blast, but please remember to celebrate responsibly and stay sober behind the wheel.**

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