

Veterans

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He doesn't remember a lot about that day. "I was in a radio room, and we didn't see anything," Kuestermeyer said. "I knew what was going on, but I was a long way from the beach."

Upon graduating from high school in Hitchcock in 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. It would be Kuestermeyer's life for the next 3 1/2 years. In addition to Normandy, he took part in the earlier invasions of Sicily and Salerno, Italy. "I'm glad I did it, but I wouldn't want to do it again," Kuestermeyer said. Johnson grew up on a farm near Gayville. He dropped out of high school in order to help his ailing father but decided to enlist with the U.S. Coast Guard in 1941.

"I thought I was going to be a hero," he said. When D-Day arrived, Johnson's LST landed at 5 a.m.

"It got stuck," he said. "We had 21 tanks on the tank deck and probably 40-50 trucks on the main deck. We were waiting for tug boats to come pull us out, but they never made it for about five days."

"I don't remember anything about D-Day but that night," Johnson continued. "We were up for so darn many hours, we were like walking zombies. We were doing the job we were supposed to do, but you lost track of time."

He recalls mass confusion — "Nothing turned out the way it was on paper," he said — and dead bodies. "Some of them were pretty hard to identify because they didn't have arms, legs or a head," Johnson said. He was discharged Oct.

15, 1945.

"It was a great experience. I just wouldn't want to do it again," Johnson said, echoing the words of Kuestermeyer. "It was like being in prison. When you were in the service during the war, you can't say you were free. You were free to shoot, but that was about it, I think."

He would spend 20 years as a salesman in California before buying a farmstead northwest of Yankton and moving there in 1964.

"I like the privacy," Johnson said.

Haar and Hosmer felt Friday's gathering was a success.

"The fascinating thing is, they want to come back," Haar said. "That tells David and I something right away. It's the best compliment we could possibly get. I don't think anything else could top that."

With that in mind, the men said they hope to arrange similar events in the future — perhaps on the 70th anniversaries of the victory days in Europe and Japan next year, for example.

Collecting the World War II stories of the dozens of men in attendance during the last several months has been fun, rewarding, educational and humbling, they said.

"All of them will tell you it took a team effort to win," Hosmer stated. "Almost every single one of them is extremely humble. They don't take any personal credit whatsoever. They led us to our own conclusions. My conclusion is, they are the Greatest Generation. I hope these guys know the community still places value on their service."

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net/.

Cramer-Kenyon Home Tours Begin Weds.

The Cramer-Kenyon Historic Home in Yankton has opened for Tour Season 2014.

Located at 509 Pine Street in Yankton, the Eastlake Stick Style home, built in the late 1870's and first occupied in the 1880's, occupies a place on the Historic Register and has been a source of inspiration for visitors since the mid-1970's.

The home is named in honor of Nelson J. and Alice Bullfinch Cramer who lived there from 1890 until their deaths in 1916 and 1929. The house then went to Mr. Cramer's great-niece, Esther Kenyon who lived there with her husband, Herbert, and family until his death in 1972.

Tours are given of the entire historic home including the basement with its winter

fish pond, the attic which was the living quarters for the house help during the time the Cramer and Kenyon families lived there, and the two richly appointed levels which comprise the rooms which the family inhabited from 1890 forward. The carriage house is also on the tour list, as is the gazebo and, of course, the gardens which feature flowers and bushes reminiscent of the era in which the home was occupied by the Cramer and Kenyon families.

Tours are held Wednesday through Sunday until Labor Day from 1-4 p.m. For large group tours, call the curator of the Home at (605) 665-7470. Take a step back in time and enjoy the sweetness of the past with a visit to 509 Pine Street.



SUBMITTED PHOTO
The Cramer-Kenyon House will open its doors for tours next week.

Races In Charles Mix, Vermillion Still In Doubt

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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Last Tuesday's election hasn't decided two area races — at least, not yet.

Races remain in doubt for Charles Mix County and the city of Vermillion.

The Democratic primary for Charles Mix County sheriff became even closer — with the margin dwindling to one vote — and qualifies for a recount.

After Tuesday night's vote counting, Desarae Gravatt of Lake Andes led Gene Niehus of Wagner 324-322 for the Democratic nomination.

Gravatt has worked as a Wagner police officer since July 2011. She also works part-time for the Douglas

County sheriff's office.

Niehus works as the chief deputy for the Douglas County sheriff's office. He has spent the last 22 years as a member of the Wagner police force, with eight of those years as Wagner police chief.

Tuesday's two-vote margin was cut in half after this week's decision by an election board, said Charles Mix County auditor's office.

The board accepted a provisional ballot and awarded the vote to Niehus, bringing the current margin to 324-323. That figure stood after the election canvass.

Under state law, Niehus has five days to ask for a recount after the canvass, which makes the deadline

next Wednesday, according to the auditor's office.

The Democratic primary winner advances to the general election against Republican incumbent Randy Thaler of Lake Andes in the November general election.

Meanwhile, a Vermillion City Council race has maintained the same result but is headed for a recount.

The Vermillion council held its canvass Friday noon, and the Northeast Ward outcome remained Holly Meins over Sara Bye 58-56.

Bye requested a recount Friday afternoon, according to Vermillion finance officer Mike Carlson.

"We will follow the process outlined (in state law) and schedule the re-

count when the recount board is determined," said Carlson, who will coordinate the process.

The Vermillion council saw a recount in 2010, its first in more than 20 years, when challenger John Grayson led incumbent Mary Edelen 101-96 for a four-year term as Central Ward alderman. Grayson held on to win the office after the recount.

Grayson decided not to seek another four-year term this spring.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

Cass Lake Minnesota Has An Arson Problem

CASS LAKE, Minn. (AP) — When a 17-year-old boy was arrested in May in a suspected arson fire that scorched 76 forested acres near Cass Lake, it was just the latest indication the city has a problem with fire-setting.

An analysis of arson statistics from 2009 to 2012, the most recent available, showed a much higher rate in the city than statewide, Minnesota Public Radio News reported (<http://bit.ly/logdsw4>).

Twenty-two intentional fires were re-

ported in the period, which amounted to almost 35 per 1,000 people. The statewide average for the same period was just 3.3, MPR reported.

Cass County emergency director Kerry Swenson said he was surprised the numbers weren't higher. He said the volume of intentional fires has forced Cass Lake firefighters into a more serious role.

"These aren't guys who sit around on a Friday night and have some beers and talk about fires," he said. "They're serious."

Most of the fires take place on Leech Lake reservation land, Swenson said.

Garr Pemberton, assistant tribal police chief for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, told MPR that most of the fires are started by kids who see them as entertainment.

If juveniles are setting fires, they aren't being caught. Cass County Probation Department director Jim Schneider said only three juveniles were convicted of arson in the entire county during the four-year period when 22 arsons were reported.

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