

## NDOR

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referred to the public sentiments in a news release announcing its decision to withdraw its application.

"The public made it clear that an alternate solution should be sought," the release said. "The public spoke about Alternative 7 and of hardships on landowners and current farm and ranch operations within the valley if it was pursued. The public also commented on the potential for shading, icing and snow removal challenges with any alternate located directly adjacent to the bluffs."

About 200 people, primarily from the Niobrara and Santee area, registered their opposition to the project during the Niobrara public hearing, the *Press & Dakotan*

reported. There were no comments supporting the permit application, the newspaper added.

The local opposition included families concerned about losing land in their families for 100 years and being forced to give up family homes, farms, ranches and hunting area. The opponents also expressed concerns about wildlife and travel safety in the area.

The Santee Sioux Tribe expressed concern about the project's impact on the local economy. A tribal official spoke about the anticipated negative impact to the tribe's casino, convenience store and new \$5 million golf course.

Audience members noted the proposed Highway 12 relocation doesn't address the sediment issue of Lewis and Clark Lake and at Gavins Point Dam near Yankton.

The NDOR proposal would shift the existing highway

south, within the Missouri River valley, to a location along the earthen bluff. The project would reconstruct about 12 miles of existing Highway 12 east and west of Niobrara. Plans call for raising the highway elevation to provide a permanent transportation solution and protect it against future flooding.

"In a letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Omaha District, Regulatory Division, the NDOR has requested that the permit application forwarded on Sept. 11, 2015, be withdrawn," the news release said.

"The NDOR proposed to work with the Corps to find an alternative solution along existing Highway 12; one that would result in a safe and reliable transportation system that would solve the problem of re-occurring flooding along the existing highway."

The Corps' public comment period was scheduled to

close last Monday, according to a Corps news release.

With the NDOR's decision to withdraw its application, the Corps will notify federal, tribal, state and local cooperating agencies that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be put in a pending status, the Corps said in its release.

"A decision regarding N-12 Alignment A7 is not required because the application was withdrawn," said the Corps' Becky Latka. "We will notify the tribes and public and all cooperating agencies once a new permit application is submitted."

Highway 12 serves as a major travel artery through northeast and north-central Nebraska. The two-lane highway runs alongside the Missouri River at Niobrara. The highway has experienced flooding and damage because of the river's high water levels, worsened by sedimentation.

Flooding is nothing new for Niobrara, which has seen its town relocated multiple times during its existence. However, historic Missouri River flooding in 2011 created some of the worst problems for the Highway 12 segments in recent years.

The flooding started in the spring and lasted all summer. The river releases reached and remained at 160,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), or 1.1 million gallons of water per second. Flood waters covered portions of Highway 12 east and west of Niobrara, which forced closure of those road segments for months.

Chief Standing Bear Memorial Bridge remained open between Niobrara and Running Water on the South Dakota side of the Missouri River. However, the Highway 12 closure forced travelers to take extended detours or find alternate transportation — such as boats, canoes and

kayaks — for moving through the area.

Nebraska Highway 14 was elevated to improve access during the flooding. Both Niobrara and nearby Niobrara State Park remained open and accessible during the flooding.

The floodwaters eventually receded. However, flooding and other issues remain a continual problem, according to Corps officials.

"The Nebraska Department of Roads proposes to improve N-12 to reduce the risk of flooding and resulting damage to provide a reliable, stable and safe roadway for the region," the Corps said in its news release.

"Other alternatives, including relocations, will be evaluated in the EIS."

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## Nurse

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of the Bulge had been raging since Dec. 17. They were only 10 miles from the front lines. Times were drastic. The military placed guns on top their hospital, in violation of the rules of war. Only a Red Cross was permissible.

After they first arrived at Liege, they often walked outside to look and hear "put, put put." That's a V-bomb in the distance. Helen showed me a picture of one that a GI took. It was a waste of time because they landed elsewhere. However, on Christmas Eve, every five minutes for 24 hours, they heard the "put... put... put" coming slower and slower. That's when you take cover. The Belgians would run and stand against a wall. They were afraid. "We were young and dumb," she said.

In fact, V-bombs hit the hospital twice. There were slats on the walls filled with plaster. The dust would fly and they put sheets and blankets over the patients to protect them.

During the Bulge, soldiers with frozen feet hobbled into their hospital. Helen had frostbite as a kid, but she saw severe frostbite here. The men, many of whom were young and barely trained, wore improper clothing. America was desperate for troops, enlisted them, put them on plane and then put them on the front line. She didn't see any shell shock, but she wasn't looking for it, either. "My thought was just to live!" she said.

She also treated German prisoners. When asked about how this went, Helen replied, "If you are a Christian, how do you feel? They don't want to be here anymore than I do. We are doing the job. They are doing their job."

The Germans who came into the hospital were old (72-76 years of age) and young (14). They were desperate. "We were almost desperate too." They cared for SS soldiers as well, but they had a private room. "The minute you opened the door they swore, they spit at you, threw things at you," she said. "They thought they were winning the war."

Interesting things happened in Belgium. She was promoted to 1st Lieutenant. And she met her future Husband, Rolf Graning, a Norwegian from Minnesota. Rolf had enlisted and was a 1st Sgt. when the Bulge came. She outranked him. He was stationed with the 312th Station Hospital, which was located closer to the front. He had to be evacuated and he did such a good job with the patients that he received a battlefield commission to 2nd lieutenant. As a result, he had to be transferred out of unit. "He couldn't fraternize with the enlisted men, who were all his good friends," Helen said. So he then transferred to the 56th General Hospital.

Rolf was a medical administrative officer in charge of equipment. She remembered their first encounter. "Lieutenant, may I see your bandage scissor?" As you recall, she had lost hers. She pulled hers from her pocket. This was a replacement scissors given to her while she was with the 2nd. "Lieutenant, this doesn't say your name on it. This is the property of the U.S. Army and it will hang on the cart!" he said. He then put it on the cart, did an about face and walked out. She took them off the cart and put them in her pocket. "It was not love at first sight," she admitted. If asked, she would have said, "That's last person that I would marry!"

On April 12, 1945, while in Belgium, President Franklin Roosevelt died. All the windows were draped in black

crepe paper. "Very mournful," she recalled. Some also displayed a picture of FDR. "We knew that America would be alright."

### VICTORY

Helen was in Paris many times. She happened to be there on V-E Day. In between, on July 14, she was also there on Bastille Day, which celebrates the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille in 1789, the culmination of the revolution two days prior. There was a big celebration on Champs, which would have been began at the Arc de Triomphe, erected to the memory of those who died during the Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, and ended at the Place de la Concorde.

"You could walk down Champs-Elysees and now the cars came out [and clogged up the streets] during the celebration," she recalled.

She does not recall the day the atomic bombs were dropped in Japan. "We were not as informed as people at home," she said. However, she supported the decision.

She happened to be in Paris again on V-J Day. This time, amidst the partying, all of the fountains were started again. She had her picture taken in front of the Eiffel Tower. Later in 1968, she and her family returned to Europe to trace the path of both herself and Rolf through France and Belgium.

### HOME ABOARD USS ARGENTINA

In October 1945, Helen boarded the USS Argentina and returned home. Again, there were no problems. However, Rolf had problems on his return. His ship, the Athos II, was supposed to return home in time for Christmas 1945 and, instead, his ship departed Le Havre on Dec. 14, was severely battered in an Atlantic storm, limped in to Ponta Delgada

in the Azores, was picked up by the USS Enterprise as a part of Operation Magic Carpet, and arrived in Brooklyn on Jan. 22, 1946. Rolf made it home in time for Valentines Day. Helen was discharged on Jan. 26, 1946.

### ROLF COMES CALLING

Helen surmised that Rolf obtained a roster of all enlisted men, nurses, etc. He saw her name and her address. He was from Minneapolis and was home on leave. He wrote a letter to her and asked if he could drive through and see her on his way to Georgia, where he was to be discharged.

At the time the letter arrived, Helen was in Iowa staying with a friend. Her mother called her and told her about the letter. She wondered, "Who is Lt. Graning?" Helen said to keep it until I return home. She was puzzled after she opened it. Mission Hill was not on the path to Georgia.

"He hasn't changed, nutty as he was," she said. She didn't like him.

He said he would arrive at the corner of Valley View Station. She refused to meet him and her dad had to pick up him and bring him up. "Poor dad," she said.

Rolf was in civilian clothing. He looked entirely different with a hat, which was "all the rage." However, this "hat

looked like it belonged to a monster," she recalled.

"Why didn't you come along?" he said.

"I had no desire to meet you, but I thought we should accommodate you," she replied.

He stayed for 4-5 days. She wonders if his hat is still on the shelf at the Majestic Café? Ironically, she grew to like him, even out of a "glamorous" uniform.

### MOVED TO MINNEAPOLIS

Having completed her time in the military, one can clearly say that the war certainly changed her. When she arrived back home, she saw that she had nothing in common with the people who had not served. They would ask, "What did you do? What did you see? Were people badly hurt?" She didn't want to talk about it. However, if she saw a stranger in uniform, she could talk to him as if they had been together all the time. Her parents became aware of this and intentionally shielded her from people who would not ask questions.

The war led to her husband. After their short encounter in Yankton, Helen decided to move to Minneapolis. However, there was a housing shortage. Quonset huts had all been taken by the servicemen. She worked as a nurse, but the hospital had no residencies. However, on

the fourth floor was university space. There were few empty rooms so Helen lived with several other nurses and a friend who attended anesthesiology school. She didn't use the GI Bill, but in hindsight she says she should have. She didn't want to be a public health nurse or a teacher, the careers that were readily open to her. She married Rolf on Nov. 27, 1947, in St. John's Church in Yankton.

Rolf used the GI Bill and went to printing school. He was a jack-of-all-trades. He could do anything and he was willing to try. He went to law school, but he didn't get a degree because he did not want to write his essay. He was a Minneapolis policeman for 10 years and then worked security at Sears. He was promoted to a Sears department manager and eventually a building superintendent at Sears. They had four children, all adopted. When the children were older, she worked at nursing homes.

In 1980, after many years apart, she and some others organized a reunion of the 56th General Hospital. They met in Minneapolis. Since then they have met every two years, but now meet every year. Presently, only she, one other nurse and two enlisted men survive.

Rolf died of prostate cancer on Dec. 31, 1997. Helen now lives in Minneapolis, and her son David sees her very frequently.

## RTEC Sets Dates for Classes!

### Holiday Wreaths "Just for Fun" Class:

Holiday Wreaths, a new and exciting class being instructed by crafting enthusiast Marybeth Herrboldt, will be held from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 30, 2015. You'll learn how to turn an ordinary wire clothes hanger, some ribbon and a few ornaments into a charming holiday wreath. Simply bring the hanger and RTEC will supply the rest of the materials. Cost is \$26.50. To reserve your spot, please call RTEC at (605) 668-5700 or send a quick email to [contactrtec@gmail.com](mailto:contactrtec@gmail.com).

### Knitting Without Needles "Just for Fun" Class:

Knitting Without Needles, one of RTEC's most popular "Just for Fun" classes, will be held from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2015. During the two-hour class, which is also instructed by MaryBeth Herrboldt, you'll learn how to knit without needles by using your arms to fashion a beautiful infinity scarf. Cost is \$21.20. Participants are asked to bring a scissors and two skeins of yarn – either #5 chunky or #6 extra chunky in the color or colors of your choice. Register by calling RTEC at (605) 668-5700. If the offices are closed for the holiday, please email [contactrtec@gmail.com](mailto:contactrtec@gmail.com).

### Friday CTE Academy - Computer Aided Drafting (CAD):

Students enrolled in grades 11 & 12 at Avon, Bon Homme, Gayville-Volin and Irene-Wakonda school districts for the Spring 2016 semester are invited to participate in the Friday Career and Technical Education (CTE) Academy CAD Solidworks class. It will be held on Fridays at RTEC from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Completers receive high school credit and may be eligible for credit from Mitchell Technical Institute, if approved. Check with your school counselor and contact RTEC for complete details!

### Friday CTE Academy - Welding:

Students enrolled in grades 11 & 12 at Avon, Bon Homme, Gayville-Volin and Irene-Wakonda school districts for the Spring 2016 semester are invited to participate in this Friday Career and Technical Education (CTE) Academy Welding class. It will be held on Fridays at RTEC from 1:30-4:30 p.m. Completers receive high school credit and are eligible for 1.5 credits from Mitchell Technical Institute. Check with your school counselor and contact RTEC for complete details!

Register by calling RTEC at (605) 668-5700. If offices are closed, you may register by emailing us at [contactrtec@gmail.com](mailto:contactrtec@gmail.com)!



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