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Colleagues and friends,

Well, here we are at the end of the semester and quite close to the end of another year. It seems like the semester has gone quickly, but the year (2021) has gone slowly (as if suspended in time). Or is it just me? The perceived passage of time is such an odd phenomenon. Mostly I find myself trying to survive the days and weeks with an occasional fantasy that I will get ahead one day and have more leisurely time than I will know what to do with. But this year, or perhaps more accurately stated, these past 18 months, have tinkered with my sense of normalcy and interfered with my well-worn daily life patterns.

But here we are, soon to be turning the page on 2021 for the promise of 2022 - I am ready. How about you? Have you arrived at the end of this year better or worse for the year? I hope you all are, at the very least, still holding on to the hope that new days, new semesters, and new years bring. I hope you will look back at 2021 in a month and applaud your own resilience.



I am thinking about resilience a lot lately, particularly as we approach a holiday season filled with a wide-variety of rituals and traditions. The holidays are so important to our framing of hope and joy. They are a time to regroup ourselves in what we value and what matters to us. But the holiday season is not equally delightful for all. The financial, emotional, and psychological struggles have unmoored many and left their lives feeling frighteningly adrift. And there are others who will not be with their family for the holidays because they are serving in the military and will be in duty stations all over the world. This impacts the military member and their family members.

This month's call to action asks you to give however you can this holiday season (and beyond) to those in need. Your giving doesn't need to be a monetary donation, it can be a gift of your time or resources. We all have something to give to others, even if it is just a kind word. Please look at [the article that provides 33 suggestions on giving](#) and think about the ways in which you can help others have a holiday season that is a little brighter.

Thank you VALOR allies, partners, and board members for all you do to support student veterans. The environment you help create fosters their success and helps them meet their academic and life goals. Your efforts matter and are appreciated. May you have a lovely holiday season with those you hold dear. See you in 2022.

Carol Cwiak, J.D., Ph.D.
VALOR Faculty Liaison

"Those who are the happiest are those who do the most for others." ~Booker T. Washington



VCO Update
Jim Stoddard

You can visit Jim on campus at the Veterans Educational Training Office in Ceres 329; or by phone at 701-231-9706; or by email at james.stoddard@ndsu.edu.

Health & Safety: Covid-19

NDSU continues to emphasize safe practices and vaccination to reduce the spread of the virus on campus.

Face masks are required in the classroom and recommended in other situations where physical distancing of six feet or more is not possible. There are also reporting requirements for those who test positive for the virus. Let's all do our best to #ProtectTheHerd.

As we complete another semester, there's always some good academic news to report. Unofficially as of Nov 24th, we have 28 military NDSU students with expected graduations of fall 2021. For comparison, there were only two military students with a "degree awarded" in fall 2020. Of those 28 expected military graduates, 19 (68%!) currently show a GPA of 3.0 or higher, with one graduate student carrying a perfect 4.0.

Congratulations!



Hopefully you've all seen the announcement about NDSU pre-Nursing student and ND Air National Guard Airman 1st Class BreAnn Sullivan winning the Sanford Health Military and Veteran Scholarship for 2022. You can read about it [here](#). This is fantastic recognition of BreAnn's achievements and potential, and we're so proud to have her as part of our Bison military community!

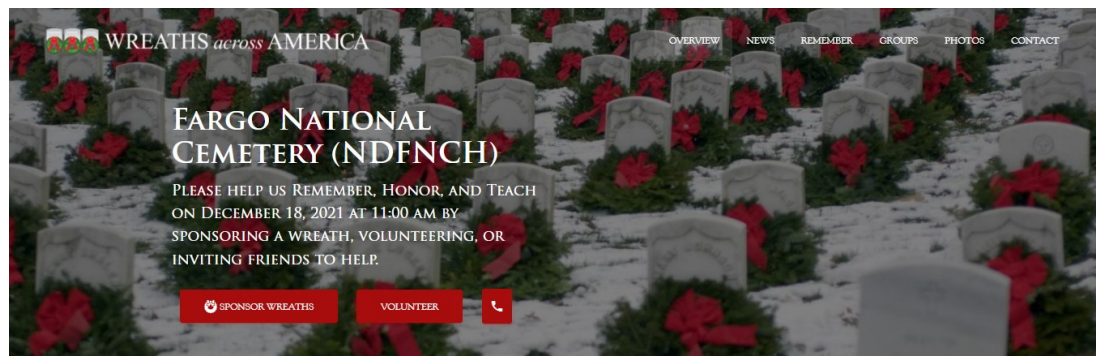
And there's another great student you should meet who uses her talent [to honor military veterans at their funerals as part of the Fargo Memorial Honor Guard](#) - Cadence Decoteau. Cadence is majoring in instrumental music education, and we're very fortunate to have her example of service among us!



Spring term enrollment is currently down for military students by about 150 students compared to fall 2021. As of Nov 24th, we're currently showing only 233 registered for spring '22, down from 383 in fall '21. There are probably many who are just waiting to register for various reasons, but it's a shame more military students don't take advantage of the priority registration benefit so they can have the best chance to get the classes and schedule that most ideally fits their situation.

Sanford Health's Program for Undergraduate Research (SPUR) is trying to increase the number of military veterans in the scientific workforce. Sanford invites members of this population majoring in life sciences or other STEM fields to apply for their summer 2022 research program. Selected students would work at a Sanford Research lab in Sioux Falls, SD for 10 weeks, participating in cutting-edge projects, and would earn an educational stipend. Housing in Sioux Falls is provided. The application deadline is January 31, 2022. For more details and to apply, visit: <https://bit.ly/3ABTG7p>. If you have additional questions, contact the Sanford Undergraduate Research Program at 605-312-6590 or [un-dergraduateresearch@sanfordhealth.org](mailto:undergraduateresearch@sanfordhealth.org). Please help us share this opportunity with others who may be good candidates!

Finally, Wreaths Across America will be laying Christmas wreaths at gravesites in the Fargo National Veterans Cemetery starting at 11 AM on December 18th, 2021. You can help either by sponsoring a wreath, or by volunteering to help in the wreath-laying ceremony. Visit their website [here](#) to participate.



On National Wreaths Across America Day, there are wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at more than 2,500 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea and abroad.



Veteran's Voice

Craig Schwinden

VALOR Student Veteran Representative

Greetings fellow Student Veterans,

I do not know about you, but I cannot believe we are this far in the semester. The strange thing is, I feel I still have so much to do instead of feeling like I am nearing the end. So, I guess I, and we, just push on.

Welcome to December! It is the holiday season and with all the appreciation of family and friends, the merriment, the music, the food, and general goodwill to all, we also have more spending, more traveling, finals week, and generally more stress. Make sure you are looking out for

yourself and your buddies out there. As I have said many times before, there is nothing wrong with asking for help. We are all human and all need help from time to time. Remember, "the obstacle is the way. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way."

Here a few links for help, both on and off campus.

- [NDSU Counseling Center](#)
- [NDSU Career & Advising Center](#)
- [Health Services | VA Fargo Health Care | Veterans Affairs](#)
- [Bison Student Veterans](#)

Next up...academic news. Let's all make sure we are really buckling down and focusing on the task at hand, successfully completing our course work and graduating. Let's work together and help each other. Again, there are places to go for help, but you really should start with your instructor/professor.

Also, a final reminder that the COVID-related G.I. Bill changes

take effect on December 21st. Make sure you have registered for face-to-face classes for this spring semester, or you will not receive your full monthly stipend.

The Bison Student Veterans (BSV) will meet next on Tuesday, December 7th at 5:30 PM in the Memorial Union. BSV is doing great work this semester and making real progress on spreading the mission and elevating their profile on campus. I encourage you to attend their meetings. There will not be a social hour this month, but they will start up again in January.

Finally, please check out our Student Veteran of the Month for December, John Lund. John comes to us from the Minnesota Army National Guard. John is a Black Hawk maintainer. As a former flyer, I know the importance of our "wrench-turners" ...they keep us up in the air! Thank you for your service, John and for participating in the Bison Student Veterans.

As always, if you have any comments, ideas for stories, or items you would like shared, please email me at craig.schwinden@ndsu.edu.



You can also call Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647 - 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



"The soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."

~Douglas MacArthur



Name: John Lund

Major/Minor: Agriculture Systems Management

Originally from: Dawson, Minnesota

Current city: Fargo, North Dakota

Career plans after college: After college John is going to assist with, and gradually take over, his families' farming operation (in Dawson) with his younger brother. He will continue to grow corn and soybeans and focus on integrating farm equipment with new agricultural technology for greater precision and yield.

Military Service/Awards: John serves as a Black Hawk Maintainer in Minnesota Army National Guard. He's received the Army Commendation Medal w/ C Device, Global War on Terrorism Service Ribbon, the Army Achievement Medal, and the Inherent Resolve Campaign Medal.

NDSU activities/engagement: Bison Student Veterans, Gaming Guild

Community activities/engagement: Firearms Safety Instructor, Trap Shooting Coach, Boy Scouts of America, FFA

An interesting tidbit about the veteran: He can play three instruments. The violin, the trombone, and the piano.

Favorite experience/memories/etc. at NDSU: Meeting and swapping stories with other veterans from different service branches on campus, participating in Hall activities/tournaments.

CALL TO ACTION: **GIVE HOWEVER YOU CAN**

This has been a very difficult 18 months for many individuals and families—financially, emotionally, and psychologically. Community, state, and national organizations that serve unmet needs have more needs to meet this holiday season. This year during the holiday season (and beyond), we call on you to give to others however you can. Whether that is a monetary donation or a donation of your time or resources, everything counts in our collective effort to help each other, particularly those who are struggling.

BestLife offers 33 ways in which you can give back during the holidays (<https://bestlifeonline.com/holiday-charities/>). This is a great article to prime your thoughts on what you can do from where you are at, with what you have to give. In reading the article you will undoubtedly think of many other ways you can give to others.

If you are interested in specifically helping currently serving military members and their families or veterans, see a list of organizations [here](#) or reach out to any of the local organizations serving veterans (see links to their Facebook pages on page 8 of this newsletter). Tens of thousands of military members will be away from their families this holiday season serving our country. Being away for the holidays is not only difficult for them, but also very difficult for their family members.

Please do what you can, wherever you can, in the spirit of giving. Your compassion for others is not only a gift to others, it is a gift for yourself. Thank you for doing what you can.

Fire Watch*Brennan Lemar and Devon Patton, BSV*

Hello all! As we bring this Fall 2021 semester to a close, we want to wish everyone a happy holiday season. We hope that you enjoy your winter break, and we look forward to seeing you again in the spring. Congratulations to all our graduating NDSU student veterans! This has been a great semester for BSV filled with new members and fresh ideas. We hope to see more of that in this upcoming semester.

Our next meeting is Tuesday, December 7th at 5:30 PM in the Meadow Lark room of the Memorial Union. This will be the last monthly meeting for 2021. This month's BSV featured speaker is Raymond Pizarro, a peer leader for the Wounded Warrior Project. We look forward to learning more about that organization and their commitment to serving veterans. Thanks again to Jerry South for presenting at our November meeting. At this time, we do not have a speaker lined up for any of the spring semester meetings. If you or someone you know may be interested in speaking at one of our upcoming meetings, we encourage you to contact us. We will be holding elections for BSV officer positions in April for students interested in running. More information will be available on that soon.

We encourage our fellow student veterans to finish this semester out strong and offer thanks to staff, faculty, and allies for your continued support.



Veterans Heal Through Art: “Warriors in The North” Program Features Music, Poetry, Art, and Camaraderie By Craig Schwinden

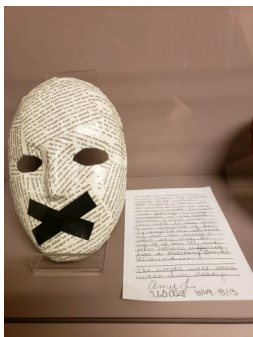
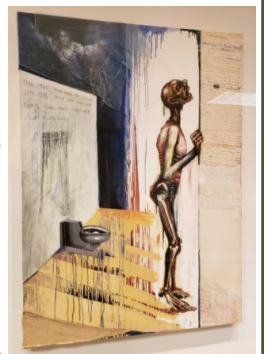
There has been much improvement in the recognition, treatment, and reduction of stigma regarding mental health issues. The recent Veterans Performance Showcase “Warriors in the North” program sponsored by the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC) and the Fargo Veterans Administration focused specifically on expressing mental health struggles faced by veterans through art.



“Trauma experts have explored the role that creative arts can play in the healing and recovery process of veterans and military service members, particularly those suffering from post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury” ([HCSCC website](#), 2021). The “Warriors of The North: Healing Through Art” effort highlights these creative efforts in two key ways - a performance showcase and an art display.



The performance showcase, held on November 10th, 2021, at the Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead, featured songs, poetry readings, and scripted dialogues written and performed by veterans or surrogates for the veterans. These pieces were created by the veterans to help them address the experiences and painful memories they carry. With titles such as “Life as I See It”, “Letter to My Younger Self”, “My Heroes Have Always Been Soldiers”, “Why I Didn’t Save You”, and “Collateral Damage” - the emotion conveyed in the pieces was raw and clearly felt by the audience.



The art display, which is incredibly powerful, is on the lower level of the Hjemkomst Center. The display features paintings, photos, and masks. The masks are representative of the “masks” that veterans “wear” to mask their emotional wounds and are accompanied by hand-written narratives written by the creators of the masks. The paintings and photos vividly capture the emotional pain and mental trauma veterans struggle with. The art display will remain at the Hjemkomst Center through March 6th, 2022. Visit the [HCSCC website](#) for more information.

There will also be a free panel discussion on How to Talk to a Veteran on Tuesday, December 7th from 6-8 PM. This discussion will be held at the Hjemkomst Center and also via Zoom and Facebook live. See www.hcsonline.org/events for more information.

VALOR would like to recognize and thank VALOR Board Member Amy Tichy for her work with this project.

Career Corner

Jerry South, Assistant Director, Career Coaching, NDSU Career and Advising Center



As another semester comes to an end, so does another year. We often use this time to reflect on the recent past and evaluate whether it was a good year or not. We set New Year's Resolutions and pray next year we will do better. A majority of our focus is put on the highlights as we walk down memory lane, but rarely do we use this time to reflect on what may not have gone so well and look for ways to learn and grow from those events.

I would encourage you to do both, reflect on the positive and the negative events from your personal as well as your professional life. Spend some time jotting down some of the pros and cons of the school year, your work life, and your personal life. Then think about what made the positive experiences positive. What did you say or do that helped it be successful? Do the same thing for the negative experiences. Next, identify what you could have done differently that may have improved the outcome of that experience. There is an old saying, "if you keep doing what you are doing, then you will keep getting what you are getting." If you are happy with your results, carry on; but, if you are not happy with the results, look for a way to break that cycle. You can do this by developing a plan of attack that can help prevent those negative experiences from happening again.



Once the above exercise is complete, you can move onto the planning stage for the year to come. This too is a multiple stage process. First, determine what areas of your life you would like to grow in. Think about what skills to you want to develop, what relationships do you want to improve, and aspects of your physical, spiritual, mental, or emotional health that you would like to enhance.

Next focus on finding a learning method - a technique or a tool you can use to help achieve this goal. Or perhaps the solution is simply to intentionally dedicate more time to that area of your life.

Once you have identified the areas and determined what is needed, you need to develop the implementation plan. How will you go about achieving these goals? Do you need to buy something to help? Do you need to calendar events and reminders? Do you need to find a mentor to help you in that area of life? Find out what it will take to improve each area.

The final step in this process is to write out your plan. This will help you hold yourself accountable to accomplishing these goals. If you are really serious about achieving them, you can find an accountability partner to share this plan with and ask them to hold you to it. You could plan occasional meetings to go over your progress and determine any corrections you need to make to stay the course. Growth does happen on its own, but it can be slow and haphazard. If you direct intentional focus and action in these areas, you can shape that growth and become who you wish to me much quicker.

So, over the holiday break, I challenge you to reflect on the year, identify what went well and what needs improving. Discover what you could have done differently to improve yourself and develop a plan to do so. Finally, work on becoming who you want to be with a proactive approach toward the year. Do this by setting some personal and professional growth goals along with an action plan to make sure it isn't all talk - like most New Year's Resolutions.

A Mission for the Holiday Season: Help a Veteran

The Fargo VA Health Care System is always in need of volunteers and donations. They keep a link to a running list of available volunteer positions on their [Volunteer and Donations page](#). Also on that page, you can find ways in which you make monetary donations and a list of items that are actively being sought to assist veterans. The items being sought include clothing (to include winter clothing), personal care items, and specific food items. Due to COVID-19, all donations must be mailed or dropped off outside the front doors of the Fargo VA. Please call 701-239-3700, ext. 3395, if you want to make an appointment for a contactless drop-off.



valor.veteran.alliance.organization/

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COVID-19 Rules End Soon**Military and Veteran Certification Office**

Todd Yackley

Starting December 22, 2021, students will no longer be able to receive their Military Housing Allowance (MHA) at the resident (in person) rate for classes taken online. This is because special COVID-19 legislation that permits students to receive MHA at the resident (in person) rate, while taking approved courses converted to online training due to COVID-19, will end on December 21, 2021. When enrolling for courses in 2022 or any subsequent term, students will need to enroll in approved resident (in person) classes to continue receiving their MHA at the resident rate. Otherwise, students will receive the online rate (half the national average) Additionally, many GI Bill® programs are not normally approved for online training; they are only approved for resident (in person) training These programs are only currently approved for GI Bill® benefits® for online training by virtue of the special COVID-19 legislation mentioned above. If you have any questions, please let me know.

ENDING SOON

U.S. Troops Serving Overseas This Holiday Season**U.S. Troops Serving Overseas This Holiday Season**

Service members serve on all seven continents — there is one service member in Antarctica — and on all the seas. Military personnel serve in more than 170 countries.

- Afghanistan: 14,000
- Bahrain: 7,000
- Iraq: 5,200
- Jordan: 2,795
- Kuwait: 13,000
- Oman: 300
- Qatar: 13,000
- Saudi Arabia: 3,000
- Syria: Unknown
- Turkey: Unknown
- United Arab Emirates: 5,0000



Sailors will man their ships from the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Mexico. Navy officials maintain that roughly a third of the Navy is deployed at any one time. Air Force missileers and airmen are in the silos, by the planes and in the command centers ensuring the nuclear system is ready if needed. Source: [MilitaryBenefits.com](https://militarybenefits.com)



In June 2021, the United States Postal Service issued a new first class stamp in the Forever series called *Go For Broke: Japanese American Soldiers of WWII*. With this stamp, the Postal Service recognizes over 33,000 Japanese Americans who served in the U.S. Army during World War II. The stamp features a member of 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The photo that the artwork was based on was taken at a railroad station in France. The stamp was designed by Antonio Alcala.



"America is hope. It is compassion. It is excellence. It is valor." ~Paul Tsongas

COMING UP

December

Civil Air Patrol Birthday	December 1
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	December 7
U.S. National Guard Day	December 13
National Wreaths Across America	December 18

January

New Year's Day	January 1
NDSU Spring Semester Starts	January 10

February

Four Chaplains Day	February 3
USO Birthday	February 4
National Salute to Veteran Patients	Week of February 14
Coast Guard Reserve Birthday	February 19

Connect Locally via Facebook**NDDVA**facebook.com/NDDVA/**DAV North Dakota**facebook.com/davnorthdakota/**American Legion Post 2**facebook.com/americanlegionpost2/**American Legion Post 21**facebook.com/legionpost21/**North Dakota American Legion**facebook.com/NDAmericanLegion/**Dilworth VFW Post 1223**facebook.com/VFW-Post-1223-106022496155155/**Fargo VFW Post 762**facebook.com/fargovfwclub/**West Fargo VFW Post 7564**facebook.com/VFW7564.org/**North Dakota Veterans Educational Training**facebook.com/VeteransEducationalTraining/**Bison Student Veterans**facebook.com/BisonVeterans**VALOR**facebook.com/valor.veteran.alliance.organization/**Local Events**

On **Tuesday, December 7th**, join the Historical and Cultural Society of Class County for a free and public panel discussion entitled "**How To Talk to a Veteran**" from **6-8 PM**. Local veterans will share stories of their experiences in military and civilian life and field questions from the audience. The event will be held at the **Hjemkomst Center and webcast live via Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube**. ASL interpretation will be offered on Zoom by Kaylah Machtell.

The panel discussion will be moderated by Dr. Margo Norton of the Fargo VA Health Care System. "How To Talk to a Veteran" is offered in conjunction with HCSCC's "Warriors in the North: Healing Through Art," on exhibition at the Hjemkomst Center through March 6, 2022. More information about the exhibit and panel discussion, as well as links for the broadcast, can be found at <https://www.hscconline.org/warriors.html>.

On **Wednesday, December 8th**, from **10 AM-12 PM**, veterans and their families can visit the **Fargo Air Museum's Veterans Coffee Hour** for free Sandy's Donuts and coffee. This event is held every second Wednesday of each month!

On **Wednesday, December 8th**, from **10 AM-3 PM**, attend the **Military and Veteran Virtual Job Fair**. This event is hosted by North Dakota Job Service. To pre-register to attend the event, visit: <https://bit.ly/2YBcois>.

On **Saturday, December 18th**, **11 AM**, please attend the **Wreaths Across America** wreath-laying ceremony at the Fargo National Veterans Cemetery located at 8709 40th Ave N. in Harwood. For more information about this event - to attend or volunteer - visit [here](#). You can also contribute by sponsoring one or more wreaths at a cost of \$15 each.

On **Monday, December 20th** (and the 3rd Monday of every month), from **1-4 PM** visit the **free, walk-in legal clinic** for help for low-income veterans with civil legal matters at **Fargo VA's Community Resource and Referral Center (CRCC)**. Note: this service is not at the VA hospital; the CRCC is on 1st Ave N in downtown Fargo, next to the Federal Courthouse.

"Veterans know better than anyone else the price of freedom, for they've suffered the scars of war. We can offer them no better tribute than to protect what they have won for us." ~President Ronald Reagan

\$\$\$\$\$ Do you need money for an emergency? Check out [NDSU's Emergency Fund info](#). \$\$\$\$\$



The Christmas Truce of 1914 Was a Much-Needed Rest: Troops from Allied and Axis Powers Exchanged Gifts, Played Soccer, and Caroled

By Craig Schwinden

An artist's impression of soldiers from the British and German armies exchanged in cheerful conversation. This image was first published in the *Illustrated London News* on January 9, 1915: "British and German Soldiers Arm-in-Arm Exchanging Headgear: A Christmas Truce between Opposing Trenches".
(Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Christmas is a time of year for festivities, merriment, family, and love. In the many wars our country has fought, there are literally thousands of stories about service members being away from their families that detailed where they were and what they did. This article is about a notable Christmas truce that provided service members a brief holiday respite from war.

During the initial five months of the First World War, a makeshift Christmas truce (German: Weihnachtsfrieden; French: Trêve de Noël) on the Western Front brought peace back to the front, even if only temporarily. Along many areas of the front, troops stopped the fighting and left their trenches to greet their counterparts on the other side or sometimes they would meet in "no man's land". While quiet times in various sectors often led to communication between the troops from the warring nations, the cordial behavior between the two sides really percolated in the week leading up to Christmas of 1914.

At that point, Britain, France, and Germany, and their respective allies, had been at war since late July of 2014. Both Allied and Axis powers had attempted to gain an early advantage by entering the other's territory in the fall, only to be repulsed while absorbing heavy casualties. Thus, began what military historians refer to as the "Race to The Sea" where each army attempted to save valuable troops by building trenches and outflanking the other. This lasted until both armies ran out of room and now had an intricate network of trenches from the Swiss border to the North Sea. The bloody stalemate of trench warfare would soon begin.

Up until the truce, small breaks in the fighting were common. Just after dusk, rations for the troops would arrive and both sides put down their arms to collect these rations and prepare them. Also, during the "war of manoeuvres", both sides would stop to collect their wounded and bury their dead. A German surgeon recorded such behavior in early December and noted that the "boys are exchanging newspapers". Some of these truces were forced by bad weather such as when the trenches would flood, and the occupants had no choice but to come out and wait for the waters to recede.

After a particularly bloody battle on December 18th, something changed. The Germans began by placing candles on their trenches and on Christmas trees, then continued the celebration by singing Christmas carols. The British sang carols of their own. Soon thereafter, there were excursions across "no man's land", where small gifts were exchanged, such as food, tobacco, alcohol, and souvenirs, such as buttons and hats.

Henry Williamson, a nineteen-year-old private in the London Rifle Brigade, wrote to his mother about the experience on Boxing Day:

"Dear Mother, I am writing from the trenches. It is 11 o'clock in the morning. Beside me is a coke fire, opposite me a 'dug-out' (wet) with straw in it. The ground is sloppy in the actual trench, but frozen elsewhere. In my mouth is a pipe presented by the Princess Mary. In the pipe is tobacco. Of course, you say. But wait. In the pipe is German tobacco. Haha, you say, from a prisoner or found in a captured trench. Oh dear, no! From a German soldier. Yes a live German soldier from his own trench. Yesterday the British Germans met & shook hands in the Ground between the trenches, & exchanged souvenirs, & shook hands. Yes, all day Xmas day, & as I write. Marvellous, isn't it?"

(continued on page 10)

The Christmas Truce of 1914

(Continued from page 9)

Captain Robert Miles, of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, who was attached to the Royal Irish Rifles recalled in an edited letter that was published in the *Daily Mail* and the *Wellington Journal & Shrewsbury News* in January 1915, following his death in action on December 30, 1914:



"Friday (Christmas Day). We are having the most extraordinary Christmas Day imaginable. A sort of unarranged and quite unauthorized but perfectly understood and scrupulously observed truce exists between us and our friends in front. The funny thing is it only seems to exist in this part of the battle line – on our right and left we can all hear them firing away as cheerfully as ever. The thing started last night – a bitter cold night, with white frost – soon after dusk when the Germans started shouting 'Merry Christmas, Englishmen' to us. Of course our fellows shouted back and presently large numbers of both sides had left their trenches, unarmed, and met in the debatable, shot-riddled, no man's land between the lines. Here the agreement – all on their own – came to be made that we should not fire at each other until after midnight tonight. The men were all fraternizing in the middle (we naturally did not allow them too close to our line) and swapped cigarettes and lies in the utmost good fellowship. Not a shot was fired all night."

A German soldier assists a British soldier lighting his cigarette during the Christmas Truce of 1914. (Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Although dismissed by most historians, there were reports of football (soccer) games played between the armies as well. Many of the accounts involved football matches played in "no man's land" between the trenches. There are several stories written by British soldiers that were published in the newspapers after the holiday season. As time passed, these stories even detailed final scores of the matches and units involved. However, most historians pass these stories off as the glorifying the stories as veterans get older and memories fade. The condition of the grounds at or near "no man's land" and the lack of any accounts of these football games from the German side raise doubt of the validity of the stories.

In each of the war's succeeding years, troops from both sides attempted to call a truce during holidays and other lulls in the action, but none materialized, at least not to the level of the Christmas Truce of 1914. In fact, Allied commanders issued direct orders the following holiday season explicitly prohibiting "friendly" contact with the enemy.

While we do not seem to be in any kind of an official "shooting" war currently, let us not forget our sisters and brothers who are now overseas and will not be able to be with family this holiday season. Let us also not forget the tremendous sacrifices, including many, many days away from home, made by our country's veterans, past and present.



A cross, left in Saint-Yves (Saint-Yvon – Ploegsteert; Comines-Warneton in Belgium) in 1999, to commemorate the site of the Christmas Truce. The text reads: "1914 – The Khaki Chum's Christmas Truce – 1999 – 85 Years – Lest We Forget" (Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

