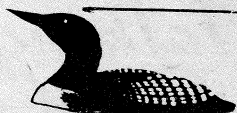


North Country Notebook



George Vukelich

Colonel Of Truth

1-25-85

As old-timey dragooned members of what the Army of the United States laughingly refers to as "Enlisted Personnel," Steady Eddy and I still get a little suspicious when anything—or anyone—that smacks of the military gets too close.

"It doesn't have to be a war," Steady says. "I break out in a rash now when I see paratrooper boots."

Steady, you understand, was once a member of the 82nd Airborne Division, and to this day he claims that he made his first jump out the open door only because that was where the sergeant pointed when he asked for directions to the joint.

"Since that day," Steady says, "I wouldn't trust the military with a book of matches."

After all that, you can imagine Steady's reaction when we received a letter the other day—a "communiqué," as they say in the biz—from a retired lieutenant colonel who now commands a contingent of old soldiers at American Legion Post 431 in Three Lakes, Wis.

Distrustful as always, Steady insisted that before we opened the letter we first soak it in a pail of water to defuse whatever malevolence the colonel had sent us. The letter soaked for three days, and I apologize for the delay in relaying his dry commentary to you.

"We did right to soak it," Steady maintains. "The minnows in the pail are still wooly."

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It should be noted before we get to the colonel's dispatch that the activities in the American Legion Bar in Three Lakes have long been chronicled here in the pages of Isthmus and more recently on "AM Saturday" ("a well-stapled kiosk of the airwaves," as Steady describes it), which circulates like an Arctic air mass into every nook and cranny of the Badger State.

"Some colonels," Steady says, "don't read. Some colonels don't listen. When you get one who does both, watch yourself at all times."

"American Legion Post 431," our colonel began, "is delighted with the attention we receive every Saturday on 'AM Saturday' and offers congratulations on an excellent program. We hope you know, though, that in reality the beer cooler is on the first floor, behind the bar. [Editor's note: Steady swears it was in the basement the last time he visited, but, of course, he was entangled in his parachute at the time.] Furthermore, because the entire building is centrally air-conditioned, there is no need to stay in the beer cooler in the summer to keep cool.

"In case you have not received your copy, I hope you will immediately send off to the Three Lakes Historical Society, Box 250, Three Lakes, WI 54562 for the new and outstanding history of Three Lakes: *The Pine, The Plow And The Pioneer: A History Of Three Lakes And Clearwater Lake, Wisconsin, 1881 To 1984*. The book has 132 pages of names, anecdotes

and pictures which should provide you with material for at least another 50 broadcasts of 'AM Saturday,' if not more. By the way, Father Himmelsbach receives considerable mention.

"We hear a rumor (anything published in a Milwaukee newspaper about the north woods is just a rumor) that you would like to broadcast 'AM Saturday' from Three Lakes this summer. The Legion, at least, would be delighted if you would do so....

"We invite you to broadcast from the Legion Bar, but you must know that space is a bit limited on the first floor. The club rooms in the basement have more space, but perhaps during the summer a broadcast could be done outside around the horseshoe pits and the ersatz cannon between the Legion and Dobbs' Red Owl.

"You might wish to do a broadcast in connection with the new Northwoods Midsummer Arts Festival, which runs from the last weekend in July through the middle of August. 'Arts' mainly means music, including the Summer Music Festival at the Camp of Eagle River and the Musical Film Festival in Eagle River, Rhineland and the Minocqua-Lakeland area. Probably included in the midsummer festival will be a series of musicals at the Northern Lights Playhouse and a Gilbert and Sullivan performance by the Nicolet Players at Nicolet College in Rhineland.

"While the festival might give you the excuse to come this far north, we hope you won't ignore other local talent for your show, including the Saint Theresa Kitchen Band or the Northwood Big Band (Gene Step plays in this group), and perhaps such personalities as Kim Richmond. Kim summers in Three Lakes and does a weekly jazz program on WXPR-FM, but spends the rest of the year on the West Coast, playing the clarinet in film scores and the like. He plays both jazz and classical music and is a bit of a character, besides.

"By the way, additional information on the Northwoods Midsummer Arts Festival can be gotten from Pete Nordgren, chairman of the coordinating committee and president-general manager of WXPR Public Radio, 303 W. Prospect St., Rhineland, WI 54562. I am chairman of the board as well as classical music host and technician (all volunteer) at that station, so I believe that we can offer help in case Wisconsin Public Radio thinks this is a bit far north into the sticks.

"Thanks again for raising the consciousness of downstate WPR listeners to the joys of the north woods, and we hope to see you at the Legion Bar (not necessarily in the beer cooler) this summer."

The letter is signed "Elmer A. Goetsch, Commander."

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Steady still swears that the beer cooler is in the basement. And who are you gonna believe: Steady or some colonel in the boonies?