

# Antigo Daily Journal

(3/17/2003 – Front page article.)

## MILITARY GROUP, MARCHES FOR PARADE



A very special color guard, brought together to pay tribute to one of its members, led the Pickerel St. Patrick's Day parade Saturday.

The parade, which has also carried more of an American than Irish tilt toward patriotism, was led by the color guard of the 5th Battalion of the 7th Cavalry Association, a group of men, most draftees, who served together during the most brutal years of the Vietnam conflict.

With their First Sergeant Wes Westmoreland, who retired years later as a command sergeant major, the soldiers marched in cadence and presented the colors in honor of Harry Clark, a Pickerel resident who served as a platoon sergeant and squad leader with the unit.

Clark, who rode rather than marched due to recent heart surgery, served as parade marshal.

In ceremonies after the parade, American Legion Commander Steve Bradley read a commendation to Clark from Ted Swett, president emeritus of the Association. Lt. Col. Swett was the battalion commander of the battalion.

"It is an honor for me to express to you, on behalf of all members of this very special band of brothers, the love we share with you on this very special day," Swett wrote. "This parade honors you, our color guard honors you. It also honors the soldiers of the First Cavalry Division, the First Team, as they deploy into the war zone that is so much on our minds today, because we are with them in spirit."

The day offered a mix of military tributes and some good-natured fun for the men of the 5th of 7th, several of whom traveled thousands of miles to join the color guard and honor Clark.

Westmoreland, at age 28, was the youngest first sergeant in the Army, and he recalled an incident with Private Karl Haartz, now of New Hampshire, who attended Saturday's parade as well.

It seems that Haartz, who admitted to having a non-Army attitude, took the First Sergeant's car; a new white Mercury on a cross country joy ride, at what Westmoreland termed "a high rate of speed." He flipped the vehicle and ended up court martialed and in the brig at Fort Carson, Colo., a long way from Vietnam.

"I said anybody brave enough to steal the First Sergeant's car is too brave to leave in Fort Carson. This is the kind of man we need," Westmoreland said. "So we got him off the boat in Vietnam, gave him a rifle, put him in a line platoon and made him the point man, which is the most dangerous job in the company."

Haartz ended up as an E-4 and earned two Purple Hearts.

Westmoreland said that, to this day, he keeps an extra key on his car keys in Haartz's presence.

The men said that being a part of the association, and its camaraderie, makes it easier to deal with the memories of Vietnam.

"These guys stick together real good," Westmoreland said. "They went through a tough time, a very tough time. But we were blessed with good people, good troops, good young Americans from all walks of life."

Haartz said he has another mission as well.

"When the troops come home today, I want to make sure they get a hero's welcome," he said. "I don't want them to go through what we went through."

The unit was deactivated in 1971. According to an article in "The Veteran," a publication devoted to Vietnam era soldiers, in the years the 5th of the 7th served in Vietnam, 302 men were killed in action, five were listed as missing in action, and four won the Medal of Honor, three posthumously. Seven members of its officer corps went on to become Army generals and about 30 other non-commissioned officers retired as Command Sergeant Majors.

The unit was the focus of a book, "On the Tiger's Back," by Bernie Grady, one of its officers.

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March 17, 2003

## Big crowd for traditional Pickerel parade



Irish eyes were certainly smiling on Pickerel Saturday.

The 18th annual St. Patrick's Day parade, led by a color guard from the 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Association, rolled through Pickerel under bright, sunny skies. It was a grand day for a celebration, with hundreds lining the parade route, many digging out their lawn chairs, tee shirts and shorts for the occasion. Harry Clark, a member of the 5th of the

7th, was marshal.

The parade, which more often has been held during snow, rain and even sleet, gives the Pickerel community a chance to shake off the winter cobwebs and have some fun. And its fame is growing, with units attending from throughout the northwoods and a crowd far outnumbering the residents of the area.

This year's entries were judged by Forest County Judge Robert Kennedy Jr. along with Langlade County Court Commissioner Paul Payant and Antigo Police Chief Bill Brandt.

It was tough duty, but by the time the final big truck rolled by and the last of the candy was collected by the youngsters, they had some winners.

First place went to the "Roll out the barrel" entry, which included a cadre of clowns young and old. The children of St. John Church rode the wagon.

Country Inn, the unofficial parade headquarters, took second place with a flatbed full of musicians, who provided some cheerful Irish tunes along the route.

The most timely entry for the day got third place. It featured sunbathers reclining in the pleasant weather on a wagon with the message "Life is a Beach at Pickerel Point." No word on whether there were contingencies for snowy weather.

The parade offered an opportunity to display patriotism, with the Association's color guard as well as American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars members from Antigo; pride in community with units from volunteer fire departments and rescue squad; and a bit of whimsy, with everything from "leprechaun hunters" on horseback to a caged green goose and a "take a gander" entry from Grose Excavating.

There were over 30 entries in all, many including multiple vehicles.

## **Wes Westmoreland's Letter to the Antigo Daily Journal**

The proud troops of the 5th of the 7th Cavalry set the standard for all to follow when it comes to leading a parade in the town of Pickerel Wisconsin. On March 15th (19) members of our association wearing our special jackets and caps formed up behind the 5th Battalion 7th Cavalry color guard. Six of our wives as six of our wives observed to lead the parade in Harry Clark's (C-Co-66) home town. Under the watchful eye of our association vice president Karl Haartz and staying in step to the cadence of Harold Dannewitz we entered the town as the highest number of spectators ever to attend a St. Patrick's Day Parade in the town's history over (1500) strong cheered us on. At the end of the parade we were selected as the best marching unit and Told a 5th of the 7th Cav. streamer would be made and permanently placed in the town's main diner in our honor.

Its hard for me to put in writing the welcome and treatment we received from the citizens of Pickerel, Wis. It could not of been better from the time we entered the town until we departed. We were treated like honored guest. At the end of the parade a letter was read to the crowd that Colonel Swett had written honoring Sergeant Clark. Then we were given free beer and soda sometimes a case at a time. Plus hugs and pats on the back along with hand shakes. One lady said that when we marched by she felt cold chills run down her spine.

When we returned to our room's, we found a case and 1/2 of cold beer placed in front of our door. One lady on the second floor was dropping candy on Maruice Goulet's head and telling him she liked his jacket.(For a guy over (50) "Not bad Moe")

Below are members who took part in this parade, some of them traveling over 1000 miles. One association member who has never attended an association event Terry Barger drove in from Cary Illinois with his wife Ann. The other members we need to thank are, Harold Dannewitz, George Hannaford, John Goodpaster, Darrell Martin, Don Shipley, Karl Haartz, Ron Henning and his wife Betty, Pat Fox, Roger Olsen and his wife Deb, Maruice Goulet, Wes Westmoreland, George Porod, his wife Marilyn and daughter Debbie, Ed Coon's and his wife Patty, Bob Lotto, Michael Lynch, Harry Clark and his wife Marianne.

A Good time was had by all.

**Wes**