

World War One Stories

Research on WWI and the history of the American Legion is going well, but slowly. I've had some wonderful help from the staff at the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County in the Hjemkomst Center. I hope to have at least one story per month on my findings. Today is the first. Melvin E Hearl, for whom Legion Post 21 in Moorhead is named was born on November 6, 1896 in Houston, MN and died of wounds on November 3, 1918 while fighting in France. He is buried at Riverside Cemetery in Moorhead. His grave marker included a photo and his nickname of 'Babe'. I wonder if the nickname came from George Herman Ruth Jr, also known as Babe Ruth who played major league baseball from 1914 through 1935. According to Ancestry.com and the Minnesota History Center, his parents were Charles and Marion (Studlien) Hearl. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America Records shows confirmation of Melvin Elmer Hearl on May 7, 1913. The original record was in Norwegian showing "konfirmationsdatum" meaning Confirmation Date. A book compile in 1919 on Clay County soldiers in World War I has the following "Died of wounds received in action. His death occurring Nov. 1, 1918. Entered military service with Co. E. 353rd Inf and went overseas in 1918. He was the son of M. Hearl and entered service from Moorhead."

While looking through WWI Veterans from Moorhead Normal School, I saw the name Frank E. Weld. Since I knew that Frank Weld was a past president of MSUM and that Weld Hall was named after him, I wanted to know more about his service. Luckily, Friday evening at the Rourke Art Museum, I talked with former MSUM president Frank Weld's great grandson, Peter Geib. He told me that Frank A. Weld, former president had a son name Frank E. Weld and the son served in WWI in naval aviation and continued to serve in the naval reserve following the war.

Speaking of the Rourke, currently there is a wonderful exhibit "Walking for Aesthetic Reasons" by Trygve Olson, well known artist and editorial cartoonist. The museum is open Friday – Sunday from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

On Saturday, Sept 9, I had the honor to attend the Homes for Our Troops Community Kickoff for their project to build Eric Marts' forever home. Please check out the story in this issue. The event was held at the Moorhead American Legion.

Happy 69th Birthday to the US Air Force on September 18, founded in 1947. I am a proud Air Force Veteran!

The Annual Veterans Conference of Cass and Clay County will be held Friday, September 16 at the Moorhead Armory located on Bearcat Way!