

DAKOTA BULL SESSION

★★★ ENDOWMENT ★★★

The Dakota Bull Session was started in 1991 with the goal of providing a time and place for local Navy veterans to reminisce about their military service. The first Bull Session was a great success, and over the next several years it expanded to include members of all the armed services. As word spread, the number of participants grew to include veterans from all over the United States and Canada. It became the largest gathering of US veterans in the Midwest. Generational groups of WWII veterans and Korean Conflict veterans were most numerous. Often participants brought items for display and to use as they told stories of their service. Story-telling was encouraged, and the first issue of "The Log" was distributed at the second annual Bull Session. Each issue was filled with personal accounts as written or told by individual veterans. Paid advertisements helped with the cost of printing and distribution of the book. Copies of *The Log* are available in LRSC's Paul Hoghaug Library and at the North Dakota Maritime Museum located in the World War II Veterans Memorial Building in downtown Devils Lake.

Bull Session participants and families of deceased veterans offered to gift special artifacts to the Bull Session organizing committee so they could be displayed annually. Finding suitable storage for the artifacts was problematic. Fortunately, in 1996, the Ramsey County Commission signed an agreement to provide space within the Memorial Building, and the North Dakota Maritime Museum was created.

With space available and a management structure in place, the number and quality of gifted artifacts in-

creased. One of the museum's prized displays is a beautiful, hand-made "Anchors Aweigh" quilt, created and copyrighted by Anna Mae Stellen. Another gift received as a bequest is a collection of WWII war bond posters that were preserved by John Thompson. Funds

to purchase appropriate display cases and frames for the

posters were raised through the sale of Bull Session "dog tags."

Grant funding was secured to install a "stair chair" which makes the museum, located on the second floor, more accessible. The museum main-

tains membership with the American

Association of State and Local History (AASLH) to

facilitate multi-media access to the

collection. Through the years, many com-

mitted volunteers have contributed countless hours, working to create an interesting and well-organized display that tells the story of the experiences of Lake Region area veterans during World War II and in other campaigns.

In September of 2012, the leadership of the Dakota Bull Session organization voted to suspend the annual event. Age and health concerns were impacting many of the traditional volunteers, and a new generation of leadership could not be found.

In April 2013, \$10 thousand of Dakota Bull Session resources were gifted to the Community College Foundation of Devils Lake for the purpose of establishing an endowed scholarship fund. The gifted funds will be held in perpetuity, and earnings will be awarded annually to a student enrolled at Lake Region State College. Recipients will be exemplary students with preference given to individuals who are military veterans. ★

