

LEGACY JOURNAL

Dixon Historic Center Update

Spring 2011

*You are cordially invited to tour
President Ronald Reagan's
boyhood South Central Grade School,
in his hometown of Dixon, Illinois,
during the Ronald Reagan
Centennial Celebration of 2011.*



Dixon Riverfront Commission's Reagan Birthday Lunch

Kay Miller, Riverfront Executive Director, organized an honorary lunch at the Historic Center on February 4th to celebrate the 100th anniversary of President Reagan's birthday. By noon, the gathering grew to fill the auditorium to capacity. To kick the celebration off, Happy Birthday was sung to honor "Dutch." Members of the Dixon Riverfront Executive committee helped serve a fabulous lunch topped off with birthday cupcakes. The crowd was accompanied by pleasant piano and harp music. A fun raffle was held with two fantastic prizes given away.

After lunch, several television news crews interviewed dignitaries and two local ladies who knew young Reagan – one who had actually been saved from drowning by him. The Associated Press sent a representative who wrote a wonderful article about the event and the Center. Attendees very much appreciated the extra effort that went into organizing this wonderful Ronald Reagan 100th Birthday Centennial kick-off event.

Importance of Veteran Interviews

Please help preserve history by taking part in the Veterans History Project. The project's mission is to collect and archive the personal recollections of U.S. wartime veterans in order to honor their service and share their stories with current and future generations. We're losing veterans daily. Wartime stories are important so that current and future generations will be able to relate to what it truly means to fight for democracy and our way of life.

Long-time interviewer Tom Tegge has completed hundreds of veteran interviews. He's interested in every story and excited about recording every remaining saga in the Rock River Valley region. If you or a loved one were in the service or worked in support of the armed services, please call the center to set up an interview appointment. When you participate you are making history.

Battle of the Bulge Veteran Forrest Grobe, of Dixon, shared his World War II exploits with interviewer Tom Tegge. Forrest distinguished himself during the war with heroic acts that garnered him Silver Star recognition.

... the Silver Star was awarded per General Orders ...

Sergeant Forrest L. Grobe, Infantry, United States Army, for distinguishing himself by gallantry in action on 17 August 1944, in the area of Chartres, France. During the battle of Chartres, Sgt. Grobe was the gunner of a light tank engaged in a reconnaissance of enemy positions in the sector occupied by Company "A" of the 31st Tank Battalion.

After destroying one anti-tank gun, the crew discovered numerous dug-in enemy infantry troops, supported by a large number of strategically placed 88-mm guns. Upon receipt of this report, the commander of Company "A" decided the German position was too strong for a single company to attack without further support. Sgt. Grobe's crew thereupon volunteered to assault the enemy emplacements with their lone light tank.

Receiving fire support from Company "A", they ventured against the organized resistance and, with their single vehicle, succeeded in knocking out ten anti-tank guns, taking fifteen prisoners and killing an undetermined number of Germans. In voluntarily risking his life against such overwhelming odds, Sgt. Grobe exhibited rare courage and aggressiveness which merit the highest praise.

By order of the COMMANDING GENERAL: ROBERT W. BURNHAM

Fall of 1996 brought about an interesting discovery for Forrest Grobe and his son, Dennis. Illinois recognized Bronze and Gold Star recipients with an honorary license plate but had not yet recognized those honored with the Silver Star. Discussions between Forrest, Dennis and Representative Jerry Mitchell got the ball rolling. With the

help of Senator Todd Sieben House Bill 1105, to recognize the plate, was introduced and later passed by the Illinois House and Senate in November of 1997.

The first of its kind Silver Star license plate was produced and on March 6th of 1998, Forrest received the first plate from Representative Mitchell on his 79th birthday.



Reagan Forever Stamp Dedication Ceremony



A photograph of Reagan taken in 1985 is the basis for the stamp art by Bart Forbes of Plano, TX.

The Historic Center is proud to be chosen one of four locations that released a new postage stamp dedicated to the memory of President Reagan. On February 10th, at a well-attended event, the United States Postal Service released the commemorative Forever Stamp to the public. The local ceremony was a fitting tribute in the year commemorating the 100th anniversary of “Dutch” Reagan’s birth, in his home town and at his boyhood grade school.



The event commenced with the Marine Corp. League presenting the colors and Ashley Elmendorf singing the national anthem. The dedication was hosted by Dixon Postmaster Kris Asselborn with Northern Illinois District Manager Bob Hart and Dixon Mayor Jim Burke summarizing why Ronald Reagan garnered such respect and recognition. Dixon Reagan Centennial Commission Chairwoman Ann Lewis along with Historic Center Director Bill Jones spoke of Reagan’s relationship to the region and helped unveil the new stamp.

Many folks took the opportunity to purchase stamps or First Day of Sale cancelled envelope collector’s items.

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You will find these Reagan memories at the Historic Center:

- A striking wall mural portrays his life journey.
- His wonderfully restored 6th grade classroom.
- Actual grade and high school diplomas.
- Numerous photos follow "Dutch" through his life.
- Many colorful and original movie posters.
- An original bronze statue of Ronald on a palomino during Dixon's 1950 "Injun Summer Days."
- Wonderful portraits of his parents, Nelle and "Jack", and brother Neil.
- Personal, political and presidential memorabilia from his days in Dixon through the presidency.
- A room dedicated to the memory of his close friend, Charles "Chuck" Walgreen, Jr.
- Books about the President, statuettes and other Reagan items can be found in the Museum Store.

DIXON HISTORIC CENTER

205 W 5th St
P.O. Box 345
Dixon, IL 61021



We've taken videos of many folks in the area that knew Ronald Reagan. They all shared time with Mr. Reagan or were in an activity that involved Ron. Most grew up with him in Dixon while some connected with him during his career adventures across the country. If you know of anyone who knew Dutch, please let us know. We'd love to interview them. Simply call Jerry at 815-288-5508 to arrange a date and time to record their story.

Ronald Reagan
Oral History
Project

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The Historic Center is a proud affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, honored to be associated with the Library of Congress, and is designated a regional interview center for the Veterans History Project.

Open weekdays all year 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Please call for holiday and special event hours.