

## Clovis will speak at local GOP fundraiser

Radio talk show host Dr. Sam Clovis will be the main speaker at a fundraiser at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 10, at the Valiant Vineyards Winery. The meeting is sponsored by the Clay County Republicans.

The title of the talk is "Why Democrats Ought to Vote Republican This Year." Democrats and Independents are welcome - no party identification is necessary, and admittance is free. Dessert and coffee are provided by the county's Republicans. Donations are encouraged, but not required.

Clovis is host of the radio talk show "IMPACT with Sam Clovis," which airs on KSCJ, 1360 AM in

Sioux City at 10 a.m. on weekdays.

Clovis is chair of the Department of Business Administration and Economics at Morningside College. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from the United States Air Force Academy, an MBA from Golden Gate University in San Francisco and a Doctorate in Public Administration from the University of Alabama.

Clovis spent 25 years in the Air Force, rising to the rank of colonel. He retired as inspector general at NORAD and the United States Space Command and was a command pilot, gaining readiness in the F-106, F-4 and the F-16.

## Merchants raise money for Vermillion Food Pantry



Downtown business representatives presented a \$600 check to Mary Berglin of the Vermillion Food Pantry. Included in the picture are Emma Drissen, Ronnie and Jessi Wilharm, Gloria Christopherson, Mary Berglin, Laura Hollingsworth, Tabatha Odens and Pat Flanagan.

The Downtown Vermillion Action Team (DVAT) presented a \$600 check to Mary Berglin of the Vermillion Food Pantry. The money was raised during the DVAT's annual "Change For Change" campaign.

Customers were encouraged to donate their change at 23 downtown Vermillion businesses to help make a change in the community.

Downtown business Pressing Matters chose to match the funds raised in their business this year. When the Meckling Livestock 4-H Club heard about Pressing Matters' plan they gathered donations and brought them to Pressing Matters, knowing their funds would be matched.

The DVAT would like to thank the Vermillion area community for its generosity and support of the "Change For Change" project supporting the Vermillion Food Pantry.

## DARREL

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to their battle stations.

"Those of us who were in sick bay weren't that sick so we got dressed and headed topside to try and do something to help," Christopherson said. "But the only weapon we had to fight back with was a 3-inch antiaircraft gun - and that jammed after the third round."

In the meantime, the Vestal was hit twice by armor-piercing bombs.

"We took two hits - one forward that exploded in a storeroom and another aft that went all the way out through the bottom," Christopherson said.

As a fire raged in the storeroom, Christopherson was one of the crew members who worked to put it out.

During one of the blasts, the Vestal's skipper, Captain Cassin Young, was thrown overboard. The executive officer then gave the order to abandon ship.

"But our captain was able to swim back and once he was back on board and heard the executive officer's order, he said 'Abandon ship - hell! We're going to get under way!'"

It took the Vestal's crew about 15 minutes to cut the cables that had attached them to the Arizona, which was under heavy bombardment and eventually sank with over 1,000 sailors on board. The Vestal then crossed the channel and was run aground at Aiea Landing.

"The Vestal wasn't a combat ship, so we weren't a target," Christopherson said. "They didn't bother us once we got away from the Arizona."

But all Christopherson and the Vestal crew could do was watch the horrible destruction taking place at Pearl Harbor. "Everyone who goes into the military service knows that at anytime they can be put in harm's way," he said.

In the days immediately

following the Pearl Harbor attack, Christopherson and his fellow crew members resumed their duties as soon as the Vestal was repaired.

"We were kept busy," he said. "We didn't have much time to sit and think about what had happened."

### ACTIVE IN THE COMMUNITY

After serving 20 years in the Navy, Christopherson returned to his hometown, and was a long-time member of the city police department.

His retirement years were busy times, as he devoted himself to telling of his own unique military experiences and the importance of patriotism to practically anyone who would listen. He regularly spoke to students and radio audiences.

He was interviewed by numerous newspapers, maintained an active role in the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association and appeared on two South Dakota Public Television programs, including the highly acclaimed "Pearl Harbor Survivors: South Dakota Stories."

"I'm a member of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association," Christopherson said. "Our motto has always been 'Remember Pearl Harbor.' Every time I'm asked to talk about it, I'll tell the story," he told in the Plain Talk in 2001. "I've never reached a point where I've said enough is enough. I don't want the memory to go away."

Regular listeners to Christopherson's story over the years have been the members of Cinda Passick's second grade class. He first began visiting with her students over a decade ago, when her classroom was located in Austin Elementary. The students' experience with him often would involve walking the few blocks to the Clay County Veterans Memorial, located on the grounds of the county courthouse.

Clay County Sheriff Andy Howe remembers that

Christopherson was instrumental in garnering community support to help the memorial become a reality. It was dedicated on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2000.

"We formed a partnership with him when we were at Austin School," Passick said. "The second graders could walk down to the courthouse, and we had him come and talk about being a veteran. We always tried to do this around Veterans Day - someday, it was right on Veterans Day. And we had him share the story of the monument, and how it was created, and his involvement there."

"He also talked about his tour in Korea, and during World War II, and what had happened," she said. "The kids had opportunities to ask him questions about it, and we talked about the flag and each of the different monuments there."

His immense impact on Vermillion's young people is difficult to measure.

"I was just talking with another second grade teacher, and we weren't able to get him to speak to the students this year," Passick said. "But otherwise, he's talked to every one of our students who was in second grade, from now up to the seniors at the high school."

In other words, the first group of second graders he spoke to will graduate this spring from Vermillion High School.

"That's how long we've been doing this," she said. "It was always very moving. We really got to know him. He would always wear one of his (VFW) hats, and the kids would ask questions about that. They always liked his mustache, too. It was quite unique - his handlebar mustache."

Students would always ask him how old he was when he was at Pearl Harbor, Passick said. "He would always tell them that he was 17, and that he needed his father's help to

enlist. And he would tell them about everything that happened during the attack."

Christopherson was Passick's neighbor while she was growing up in Vermillion, and she affectionately refers to him as Chris. "He was also in law enforcement, and because both my husband and son are in law enforcement, I got to know Chris in that venue."

"One day at school, we got to talking about taking the kids to the veterans memorial, and somebody asked if anyone knew a veteran who might like to participate. I said, 'I know Darrel Christopherson' and it just kind evolved from that. We had him come, and it became an annual thing. He loved to talk to the kids; he loved to share his experiences."

"And after the first couple times he spoke to students, we better knew what he would be talking about, so we, the teachers, could pointedly ask him about different things that we wanted him to share with the kids," Passick said. "He took great pride in having served in the military, and also in helping with the memorial. He wanted to share that - that pride in our country - with our children."

Howe remembers the active role Christopherson played in Vermillion after retiring from the military.

"Darrel was involved in the saddle club that they had many years ago that organized the Little Britches Rodeo that we had in the '70s. There used to be a lot more rodeo ... we would have a couple of rodeos a year, and I remember Darrel was involved in that because I rodeoed when I was in high school. His son, Rick, was a cowboy back then, too."

"By the time I got involved in law enforcement, he was retired (from the Vermillion Police Force)," Howe said. "But I've known him ever since I was a little kid."

Howe's relationship with Christopherson continued through the years. Both are

military veterans and members of the local VFW post. "He was post commander for, I think, two years. He was commander before I was."

"He loved to speak, and he would talk to the school kids," he said. "Darrel would speak to them about patriotism and flag etiquette, and when we would do our monthly or quarterly reports on community service activities, we would always ask, 'Ok, Darrel, who did you talk to this time?' He was always invited to speak, and he was always willing."

When talking about Christopherson, Howe instantly thinks of all of the things he did locally. "There's a lot more to him than just Pearl Harbor," he said, noting that the veterans memorial became a reality by the efforts he contributed to the project.

"It (Pearl Harbor) was his identity more than all of the other things," Howe said. "And you can't not think about that, because that's what he was all about. But he did a lot of other stuff - the veterans memorial, the rodeo club, his career in law enforcement, and all of these other things he did in town besides the fact that he was a Pearl Harbor survivor."

Fuller said he ended up delving into the history of the attack on Pearl Harbor, in part, because of Christopherson's strong influence.

"Here's this 17-year-old kid from South Dakota, and he was witness to all of that," Fuller said, adding that he and his wife

plan to visit Hawaii soon, and one of their first stops will be the USS Arizona Memorial.

"He really sparked an interest in me about that event, and to really top everything off, I look at this gift, this clock that he made for me, and wow - he's quite a guy," Fuller said.

"It's going to be a sad day when we realize we know longer will be able to use his talents," Passick said. "Just his background, and his involvement in the veterans memorial, and his being there at Pearl Harbor. I think it instills in the children a better idea of what Veterans Day is. Prior to having him come visit our class, Veterans Day seemed more like a day off from school to them."

"He helped them understand just what a veteran is," she said, "and would point out that it's anyone who serves in the military, that you don't have to be in a war like he was. We always wrote letters to him afterwards thanking him."

As the number of World War II veterans continues to dwindle, Passick observed that Christopherson looked at his unique role as a veteran and survivor as something to celebrate.

"It was so valuable for us to be able to talk with him, and learn about that firsthand," she said.

"I'm just delighted that he got to visit Pearl one more time. If there is a life to be celebrated, it had to be Darrel's," Fuller said.

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**MEN - 7:30PM**

Vermillion High alumnus **Annie Roche** (1,000 career points) and her Coyote teammate **Jodie Boss** (USD Shot Block Record) will be honored at halftime of the Coyote men's UMKC game.

Purchase a ticket from Vermillion High Athletic Department at the special price of \$10 (1,000 pennies to honor Roche) and save off the regular gameday doubleheader price. Make it a great day for VHS and the Coyotes!

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