

One in a *Ver*Million

Meet Donna Schafer

By David Lias

david.lias@plaintalk.net

Donna Schafer has worn a lot of hats during a very productive lifetime in Clay County.

Student. Wife. Mother. Teacher. A two-term member of the South Dakota Legislature, representing District 17.

Currently, Donna, who obviously can't stay still for too long, keeps busy with her duties as president of the VFW Post 3061 Ladies Auxiliary.

She also took it upon herself over a year ago to begin interviewing local military veterans. Her written accounts of the stories of local vets are now an occasional, but still popular, column in the Vermillion Plain Talk.

Donna is a lifelong resident of the Vermillion area. She was born and raised in Meckling, and attending country school for two years.

"I attended the Meckling school for grades 3 through 10, and then I went to Augustana Academy in Canton my last two years because I wanted to sing in their choir," she said. "I guess I haven't done everything exactly the same way

everyone else does."

Donna was a schoolteacher in Vermillion for 23 years. "I taught first and third grades, and I did my teaching at Jolley (Elementary School). I did not finish my degree until I was 35 years old," she said, laughing. "I had five kids first.

"I got my degree from USD, and my master's degree in elementary education," Donna said. "I also attended Yankton College for two years, and I worked at the Human Resource Center while I went to school there. I never did things the easy way."

In 2002, instead of living a quiet life of retirement in the Vermillion community, Donna decided to enter the world of politics, and became a candidate for District 17 representative in the South Dakota Legislature.

Her campaign was successful, and she won re-election to a second, two-year term in 2004.

"Contrary to what a lot of people say, I actually enjoyed the campaigning," Donna said. "I met a lot of terrific people, and I met some people who did not like me at all, and you just had to deal with that.

"What I liked about serving in Pierre were the interesting people you met, and just knowing that you were going to be part of making history for a few years," she said. "That was intimidating and exhilarating at the same time.

"I have a much greater appreciation of the Legislature than I ever had previous to that time," Donna said.

She now serves as both local president and district president of the VFW Auxiliary. Donna has served in that role for three years now.

She decided to begin the new and rewarding experience of chronicling the stories of local veterans in the fall of 2010.

"I probably enjoy doing the interviews more than the veterans enjoy telling their stories," Donna said. "But I've learned so much, and there's so many things that you never give a thought to about what has to go on during a war. You are enlightened in that area.

"There are times I've talked to people who have said, 'I never really did that much during the war,' and I've thought to myself, 'but you did a part that needed to be done. We can't all be heroes in the word that many people think of as heroes, but if that veteran hadn't been there to do that job, of if no



DONNA SCHAFER

one had done that job, it would have been very difficult to do without.' Every type of service done by every veteran is very important," she said. There are times when veterans, in telling their stories, admit that they aren't particularly proud

of some of the things they had to do, Donna said. "They are proud to serve their country, but they are saddened that people had to die, and they don't want to glorify that," she said. "That just

tells you the caliber of people that went into the service. They went because they needed to defend their country, and they had to do some very unpleasant things in the process."

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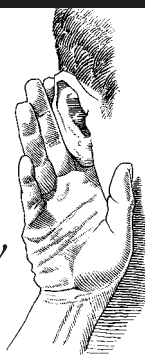
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For more information, contact:

Jennie Bellis
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
The University of South Dakota
(605) 202-1345 • jdbellis@usd.edu

Allison Root
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
The University of South Dakota
(775) 313-4449 • Allison.Root@usd.edu

Teri James Bellis, Ph.D., CCC-A, FAAA, F-ASHA
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
The University of South Dakota
(605) 677-5474 • tbellis@usd.edu

NOTICE

Norway Township Board of Equalization will meet **March 19, 2012** at 7:00 p.m. at the Clay County Highway Shop. Appeals must be submitted to the clerk by **Thursday, March 15, 2012.**

Jay Bottolfson, Clerk

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