What makes us different?
Our distinct point of view and approach gives us unique advantages:

We see differently: Our multidisciplinary perspective helps us see challenges in unique ways.
We think differently: We apply leadership and expertise to social issues—and find unique solutions.
We act responsibly: Our passion and perseverance create lasting change.
We make a difference at home and around the world: Our members can be found in your community and across the globe.

How do we work?
Our impact starts with our members — people who work tirelessly with their clubs to solve some of our communities’ toughest challenges. Their efforts are supported by Rotary International, our member association, and The Rotary Foundation, which turns generous donations into grants that fund the work of our members and partners around the world. Rotary is led by our members — responsible leaders who help to carry forward our organization’s mission and values in their elected roles.

How did we get here?
We’ve been making history and bringing our world closer together for over 100 years. Since forming in 1905, we’ve taken on some of the world’s toughest challenges and helped a wide range of international and service organizations—from the UN to Easter Seals—get started.
What it means to be an American

What does it mean to be an American? The immediate reaction and answer to the question is both emotional and very meaningful to explain.

My first thought is how blessed we are to be able to live in such a great country all the while being able to do so at the hands of those military personnel that have paid the ultimate sacrifice to ensure our daily freedoms.

My second thought, especially during these challenging times in the United States, is that we should not be taking anything for granted and appreciate all the opportunities that we have been given. I firmly believe that in order to honor our flag, we as individuals must earn our fruits of labor and protect our shores coast to coast.

Lastly and probably the best way to express my feelings of being an American, is that I am very proud to say that I will always stand for our national anthem and make sure that I will forever be grateful for all that I have been blessed with.

David Dixner is the president of the Rotary Club of Fenton. He is the owner of Woodhaven Senior Living Community.

COVID-19 cancels Veterans Breakfast

Rotary co-chairs look forward to bigger, better event next year

For the last six years, the Fenton Rotary Club has sponsored a Veterans Breakfast event on Veterans Day at Spring Meadows Country Club in Linden to honor our Veterans.

We have had wonderful keynote speakers each year, with entertainment and breakfast. This popular event has grown yearly. We are sad to announce that we will not be having it this year because of COVID-19.

We look forward to a bigger and better event next year.

Once again, thank you, Veterans, for your service.

Noah Morgan and Scott Ward

Rotary co-chairs for the Veterans Breakfast

Resources for Veterans

Linden VFW
Post #4642
P.O. Box 668
Linden, MI 48451
(810) 836-0141

Fenton VFW
1148 N. Leroy
Fenton, MI 48430
(810) 629-3700

Holly Area Veterans Resource Center
300 East St.
Holly, MI 48442
(810) 348-9960

University of Michigan Dental School Victory For Veterans
Free Dental Clinic for Veterans
• Veterans w/no dental insurance
• 200 percent under poverty level

Call Lori Gurke, veteran’s advocate navigator or Casey Ward, assistant veteran’s advocate navigator at (800) 833-3865.

This free clinic is on Fridays at the VINA Dental Clinic in Brighton Michigan.

The Fenton Rotary
PO Box 1184
Fenton, MI 48430
info@fentonrotary.org

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An interview with a local hero

Nick Koulchar, an Iraqi War veteran, shares his inspiring, life-changing story

By Noah Morgan

Nick Koulchar is an Iraqi War veteran. He was a U.S. Army sergeant, 3rd Platoon alpha company 40th Engineer.

Morgan: What was your journey?
Koulchar: My journey to the Army was interesting. After high school, I explored the military but my father was ill at the time so we decided to postpone enlisting. My father was sick and I began taking care of him for about four years before he passed away. After that, I really tried to take care of things and be the parent for my younger brother. I ultimately ended up losing the house and did not have a place to live so I was looking for a big change in my life. I was making small changes but wasn’t really where I should have been, so at that time I decided to join the Army.

I remember the recruiter asking me how soon I wanted to leave, and I said as soon as possible. I got my affairs in order and a few days later, I was on the bus to Ft. Leonard, Missouri for boot camp and basic training.

I wanted to be an engineer, which was a 16-week basic training program. I was 24 at the time so my perspective of the drill sergeants was a little different than the 18-year-old kids training alongside of me. I distinctly remember writing down my initials on my socks, shirts, pants and boots and the drill sergeant saying to us look to the left and now look to the right, “One of you will be blown up and that’s the job you decided to enter. If you are not comfortable with that you may want to leave now.” Little did I know I was on both sides.

Morgan: After boot camp, what happened?
Koulchar: I and one other soldier from my unit had been chosen to join another unit in Germany. That unit we joined had just gotten back from Iraq in 2006 and 2007 when the tensions in the war were really escalating. The unit was in a big transition as new privates, E1’s, like me, were just entering and some soldiers were leaving so we were awaiting our next deployment. The experienced, E3, guys with combat experience, would give the new guys all the jobs and errands no one really wanted to do so I had to earn my stripes with the more seasoned soldiers.

We spent about 10 months in Germany training for deployment to Kuwait in March 2008. We were supposed to be in Kuwait doing specific training for 45 days, however after about a week they were marched out into the dessert and asked to go into Sader City, a suburb of Baghdad, which at the time was a pretty hostile area. The local militia had taken over the area at that time, so we were going into a siege the city from Al Sader. Everyone bootstrapped and we were ready to serve.

Morgan: What happened when you arrived at Sader City?
Koulchar: We were replacing a unit and we needed to get familiar with the lay of the land. Our job was to look for roadside bombs and make sure the roads were clear so other units and operations could navigate their vehicles. Supplies and other units depended on our unit to do their jobs. We would sweep roads and bridges to ensure they were safe travel ways. To give you the context, the movie “American Sniper” in the third scene operating out of Sader City, Nick’s crew would clear those roadways for troops and teams like Cris Kyle’s.

Morgan: How long were you there and what happened?
Koulchar: So after about five or six months, on Aug. 26, 2008, the vehicle I was gunning was struck by an IED. In the front we had two vehicles that were designed to shelter the person in the vehicle in case of an explosion. I was in the third vehicle as the first gunner in a MRap RG33, which is an armored, longer vehicle used to carry additional personnel. It was a normal night when the unexpected and worst-case scenario happened.

We got hit by an Improvised Explosive Device, aka IED, roadside bomb from the side of the vehicle. Everything was clear and calm to dark and dusty. I was still upright at the time and still holding onto to my machine gun. At the time, we thought I may have a broken leg. They lost lights. The vehicle had then veered off the road and hit a wall. I remember calling in that I was injured. My squad leader could not get out of the car because the bomb came in so hot it actually welded the door shut. I remember talking with him and telling him to crawl over me when he let me know I was seriously injured. I let go of my machine gun and fell straight back and that’s when I realized it for myself. At this point, I told him to crawl over me as there is nothing he could do and I dragged myself back to the back of the vehicle where I was met by a medic from the infantry. I remember the medic was trying to put a tourniquet on my legs. He couldn’t get them on and I was starting to lose feeling in my arms and hands. I told them to hurry up as I needed to get out of there. I was still conscious. My driver was critical at the time and had taken shrapnel to the head and ultimately did not make it. I was lucky we got to the closest medical station.

At the medical station, I was treated and they stopped the major bleeding. They cut all my clothes off and wrapped me in a thermal blanket. I was ultimately airlifted to another major medical clinic. I went through four major surgeries and at some point, I fell into a coma and I was in a coma for a few weeks.

Morgan: What happened after you woke up from your coma?
Koulchar: I woke up after a few weeks. Honestly, I felt like I wanted to get back to my unit. I felt like I was letting them down as I was not there. The next several months, I had several surgeries. I sustained a double above-knee amputee injury. I was as Walter Reed Hospital for about 2.5 years where I had a lot of surgeries, physical therapy and learned how I was going to get my life back. During this time, I had severe bacterial infections and I coded out nine times. I joke around that a cat has nine lives, but they call me a Panda bear as they have 12.

Since that time, I have chosen not to let the injuries I sustained define who I am as a person. I have dedicated a substantial portion of my time to getting back into shape. Not only for health reasons but to break down barriers of what “disabled” looks like. I have successfully competed and completed marathons to date including Boston, New York, Detroit and the Marine Corps marathons as a handcyclist. I also have taken on a role as an adaptive athlete in CrossFit and as a public speaker, sharing my story and providing inspiration for others. I have a powerlifting background and I won the 1998 USAPL Junior National Powerlifting Championship at 15 in the 242-pound division.

I currently work full time as a veteran’s service officer for Livingston County.

I met my current wife through mutual friends and got married in 2013. Life has been good especially the last seven, eight years. I had my first child, Finnegan, in 2016 and my second son, Crosby, in 2018.

I am now 38 and I have had my share of ups and downs, honestly, but I enjoy staying busy. A few years ago, I learned how to downhill ski on a mono ski, so I am looking forward to getting out west. I am passionate about working out with my kids and my family. We play catch and they are playing soccer. We like to travel and do things with our kids.
Fenton High School graduate, Robert (Bob) G. Harris decided to pursue higher education at Michigan State. Harris was a freshman at State when the horrific attack on Pearl Harbor occurred Dec. 7, 1941.

Immediately following this infamous day, Harris and many of his classmates began the process of enlisting for military service. The recruiting office instructed Harris to return to school and wait for a service advocate to contact him. He was able to stay in school until March 9, 1942. Since Harris wished to join the U.S. Marine Corps, he was sent to Parris Island, South Carolina for basic training. While in the service, Harris was part of one small group of Marines, four company grade officers and eight highly qualified enlisted NCOs, who conceived, developed, and deployed the first version of ground directed bombing (GDB) during the Korean War. This small group stationed at the naval air missile test center, developed and built an all-weather close air support bombing system, which became a tactical unit in the Marine Corps and was an integral part of both marine and naval aviation.

Harris served 13 months in Korea utilizing this system. He was recognized on two occasions for his outstanding performance of duty. He served with distinction with the Marine Corps Development Center and the Advanced Research Project Agency in the Department of Defense. Harris finished out his military career serving at the Pentagon. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel after 25 years with the Marine Corps.

During his earlier years, Harris had received a B.A. (mathematics) from Michigan State and an M.S. in electrical engineering from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. Later Harris earned a PhD from Michigan State University.

Following retirement from military service, he was the founding president of Johnson Community College in the Kansas City area. He later served as president of Middlesex County College, the largest college in the state of New Jersey. He later became president of McHenry County Community College in Illinois. Returning to his hometown in 1980, Harris established the Harris Financial Corporation, which provides investment, mortgage, and other financial services.

Harris was a founding member of the Fenton Rotary Club in 1985 and is past president of that organization. Harris married his high school sweetheart, Marie Durant, during World War II and together they had two children, Robert and Patricia. Son Robert also served as a Marine Corps officer, and after leaving the Corps, the younger Harris became an FBI agent for 19 years. After leaving the FBI, Robert joined his father as a member of the Harris Financial Corporation.

At age 97, Lt. Colonel Robert G. Harris shows that he is very mentally alert and politically astute. It was an honor to interview this true American Patriot.

SEMPER FI

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**‘THE WALL’**

A poem written by Vern White

“If you’ve never flown a sortie or walked on a patrol, lay your hands upon the panels, you can feel it in your soul.

Just close your eyes and stand there, very soon you’ll see a face, a kid right out of high school in a scary far off place.

He’s not sure why he came here, why his country’s in this fight, but a soldier follows orders and then proves to God he’s right.

They were sent to help a people who just wanted to be free, to have the basic human rights afforded you and me.

Vietnam was over years ago, but the memories never fade. We’re here today to thank them for the sacrifice they made.

So tell them that you’re grateful as they look down from above, tell them we’re a nation that remembers them with love.”

Vern White is a 1970 graduate of Linden High School, and served in Vietnam. He is a member of the Linden VFW Post 4642.
An interview with Bill Lindhout

By Scott Ward

The following is an interview with Bill Lindhout, a 96-year-old Navy veteran of World War II.

Ward: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

Lindhout: I wanted to join the Air Force, but struggled with the eye exam, at the age of 17. While I was attending Michigan State University, I got drafted into the Navy. I ended up as an aviation air crewman.

Ward: Where did you end up in the Navy?

Lindhout: I ended up on an aircraft carrier — the USS Bennington on a torpedo bomber squadron. It was a new carrier in the Essex Class.

Ward: Where did the Navy take you?

Lindhout: The Bennington took off from New Jersey. We took a shake down crew to Trinidad and back, and then we took the big trip through the canal and out to Hawaii through the Panama Canal into Tokyo. The aircraft carrier barely fit through the canal, I remember the ship hitting the cement embankments when we went through. I will never forget that. Our first bombing mission was to hit Tokyo (it would have been the first Navy strike on Tokyo). We got clouded in, so we hit an airfield just west of Tokyo. I remember the ship hitting the cement embankments when we went through. I will never forget that. Our first bombing mission was to hit Tokyo (it would have been the first Navy strike on Tokyo). We got clouded in, so we hit an airfield just west of Tokyo. There were 16 carriers, four groups of four. Each carrier had fighters, dive bombers and torpedo bombers. I was on a torpedo bomber.

I was a radar operator and a tail gunner, but mostly I did photography. When the Bombay doors opened up, there was a window that I looked through. I had a huge camera, a K 20, with a pistol grip that enabled me to take quick photos.

My other role was radar, which we mostly only used to return us back to the ship. I also was a tail gunner. I used a 30-caliber machine gun, mostly used as close air support on Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Ward: What was that like taking off on an aircraft carrier?

Lindhout: Haha … taking off wasn’t so bad, it was the landing, my back is still sore! There was a cable that ran across the deck that would catch the hook off the tail of the aircraft. That was a little tricky. Many of the aircraft was stored below deck.

Ward: Were there many casualties in your unit?

Lindhout: The worst mission I was ever on was the bombing of Chichi-jima. We lost eight planes that day. That’s where George Bush was shot down. Chichi-jima was so fortified, it had aircraft guns everywhere.

Ward: What was life like on the carrier?

Lindhout: Well, there were about 3,500 of us. We had 100 planes. We had a pretty soft life on our ship. I was a lucky one. Normally, the bunks were stacked three high, but because of an air condition duct above my bunk, I was just about the only person able to sit up in his bunk. I had a porthole as well. I considered myself privileged.

Ward: Tell me about yourself after you got out of the service.

Lindhout: I was discharged from Great Lakes in October of ’45. I got into the University of Michigan in November ’45 in the school of architecture. It was an accelerated program. We even had to go to school on New Year’s Day and Thanksgiving Day. I got married two days after graduating from U of M. I was with Detroit Architect for seven years before opening my own practice, Lindhout and Associates. My family comes from four generations of architects, starting in Belgium. My son, Pete, took charge when I stepped down, but I still do work occasionally.

Ward: We are fortunate to have one of your partners as our fellow Rotarian, Brad Alford. We are thankful for all of your years of service to our country. We are amazed by your outlook, energy, and great sense of humor. Thanks again.
I entered the Navy in June 1965, two days after high school. I had a high score on the initial testing and was sent to electronics school at Great Lakes Illinois. After school, it was on to Long Beach, California and the USS Arnold J. Isabel DD 869.

My duties on the ship were maintenance of sea and air search radar systems. In early 1967, the ship went to Vietnam and our ship’s assignment took on multiple duties. At this time, we were the fastest destroyer on station and therefore spent a lot of time in plane guard duties following a carrier around Yankee Station during flight operations.

In these cases, usually two destroyers were stationed 2,000 yards off from the carrier as escorts and in case a plane had to ditch for any reason we could move to pick up the pilot if a chopper didn’t reach him before we could.

There were several jets who couldn’t land back on the carrier due to anti-aircraft damage to the jets during their missions. It was always alarming to watch a jet ditch close to the carrier and praying the pilot could eject and be rescued. It didn’t always work out well.

Other assignments required patrol of the coast of Vietnam about 1,500 yards out at 10 knots moving 10 miles north and then returning 10 miles south to monitor enemy radar sites. Both SAM missile sites and long-range (300 miles) radar were in play at this time. The number one concern was to alert the carriers if we detected a SAM site so that the flight operations could be diverted in another direction during flight operations. They were long and very boring hours but critical for flight operation’s safety. At one point during heavy air strikes, we had three destroyers stationed along the Vietnam coast for this air support activity.

One last assignment involved shore bombardment while helicopters dropped off marines on the coast for missions inland. Two or three destroyers lined up along the coast providing fire support at the same time as jets provided air cover inland.

On one occasion, a destroyer was hit by a shore battery and had to limp back to Japan for heavy damage repair. Mines in the water were always a concern but we never encountered one. A big reminder that there was always the possibility of being hit but on the ship we were never in as much constant danger as the guys on the ground or the pilots providing air support.

Everyone had a role to play but some were more dangerous than others.

By May 1968, I was discharged and spent my 45-year working career in engineering thanks to a solid start in the U.S. Navy.

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Veterans Day, formerly known as Armistice Day, was originally set as a U.S. legal holiday to honor the end of World War I. This holiday is generally regarded as the end of “the war to end all wars” marked by the treaty of Versailles that was signed June 28, 1919. However, fighting actually ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied nations and Germany was signed into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month November 18, 1918.

An Act approved May 13, 1938 made the 11th of November in each year a legal Holiday — a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace. As it was originally to honor WWI, but as time went on and the US fought in WWII, and American Forces had fought aggression in Korea, the 83rd
The Great Lakes National Cemetery is approximately 50 miles northwest of downtown Detroit, in Holly Township, Oakland County. The cemetery borders Fagan Lake, and is located on a portion of a land grant from the Federal Government to Terrance Fagan in 1836.

Historically, the property served as farmland until it was acquired by the National Cemetery Administration in 2002.

In the 20th century, the property was purchased by Bryson Dexter Horton, a Spanish-American War veteran-turned-industrialist who invented the “Square D” switch. Horton’s invention dramatically improved electrical safety, by encasing the switch in steel and protecting users from the live electrical current. Horton constructed a small house on the property in 1927, and reportedly entertained such preeminent locals as Henry and Edsel Ford, who both hunted and fished there.

Great Lakes National Cemetery was established in 2005, and the first burial took place on Oct. 17 of that year. The cemetery is 544 acres, and 92 of those acres are developed.

There are 130 National Cemeteries in the United States, and only two in Michigan. The Veterans Administration considers the Great Lakes National Cemetery among the top 10.

There is an average of 18 burials every day. Our tri-county area should be very proud to be the home of this beautiful cemetery.

Our Memorial Day Ceremony is held at 1 p.m. the Sunday before the federal holiday. The Veterans Day Ceremony is held on Veterans Day at 11 a.m. Both programs are held at the cemetery assembly area and are sponsored by the Great Lakes National Cemetery Advisory Council.

Amongst many responsibilities, Miller oversaw his company’s intramural athletics. After just celebrating his second year of war time battle, he unfortunately broke his ankle while sliding into second base during a highly contested baseball game between fellow servicemen. This was extremely hard to take as he did not want to leave his tank crew behind, but the extent of the break forced him to an early medical discharge.

Upon further reflection, Miller was very proud to serve his country. He learned a lot about himself as well as what it takes to fight through very tough situations. These life skills have assisted him during his lifetime.
Rotary Club of Fenton

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