

# Bio for Robert Frink for Chet Sorenson Award

- Born on December 19, 1945 in Kansas City, Missouri
- Raised in Schenectady, NY, graduated from Mohonasen High School in 1963.
- Attended and Graduated from Bowling Green State University Jan 1968.
  - Was Commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt upon graduation
- Entered Active-Duty May 28, 1968
  - Attended a 10-week Field Artillery Officers Basic Course. May-Aug 68
  - Attended a Field Artillery Survey Course at Fort Sill. Aug – Oct 68
  - Assigned as assistant G-2 at Fort Irwin, CA. Oct 68 – March 69.
  - Assigned to Fort Sill for a Field Artillery Officers Vietnam Orientation Class, March -May 69
  - Assigned order for Vietnam May 69 – May 70
    - Was assigned to D company, 1/6<sup>th</sup> Infantry, as a forward observer. May 19 – Sept 69.
    - Received order to C Battery, 1/14<sup>th</sup> Artillery, Americal Division Sept 69 – May 70.
      - Was the Senior XO in the battalion. When support was needed requiring, we were airlifted to a remote location. Our battery had 12 airlifts including one for the My Lai investigation.
      - I received several medals including the Bronze Star and an Air Medal.
- Entered Army Reserves – Sept 70 – Oct 78.
  - Assigned to 1/389<sup>th</sup> Basic Training Unit as the company XO.
  - Was promoted to Captain Oct 1974 and assigned as Company Commander.
  - Left reserves in Oct 78 due to being relocated for work.
- Married Dec 1977 to Judy Bagley.
  - We have 2 children Brad and Brianna, and 3 grandchildren.
- Worked in the Carpet Industry from Oct 1970 – July 2017 in various positions from research chemist, dyehouse manager, carpet industry dyeing trouble shooter, Guest Speaker at NC State for varied manufacturing areas, and Technical Director.
- I was awarded 7 of 8 technical achievement awards during my time with AlliedSignal and Honeywell.
- Worked in Amsterdam, NY; Dublin, Ga; Dillon, SC; Chester, VA; Cartersville, Ga and retired in Milbank, SD.
- We moved to Milbank 2013.
  - I joined VVA1054 in 2011 before we moved to Milbank full time. I liked what the chapter was doing, helping vets in need.
    - Was elected to the BOD in 2017.
    - Have been an active member of the Honor Guard.
    - Accepted the job as treasurer in Sept 2018 when our treasurer moved
      - Started using electronic options to pay bills and have another paper trail,
      - Was instrumental in our chapter getting VVA National “Chapter of the Year” in Oct 2021. I wrote a short newspaper and had it reviewed by several members. The article grew to a full page add in the Watertown Observer.
      - With information from the newspaper, A member nominated us for induction into the South Dakota Hall of Fame. Our Chapter was inducted in 2021.

- There was Resolution written by the South Dakota House and Senate recognizing our accomplishments. We had about 30 members that came to Pierre for the reading of the Proclamation in both Houses.
  - Started using ZOOM to allow the officers and BOD to meet during COVID when we couldn't meet in person.
  - During the time as treasurer, we've given \$125,000 to veterans in need or related groups over the last 5 years.
  - Have a financial reporting system to show all financial transactions for the month showing all income and expense and net worth.
  - We continue to work on streaming the meeting so all members can participate in our meetings.
- Have worked to increase awareness about the DAV Transportation System in Grant County.
    - The DAV Van has not transported veterans in over 2 years because we have no drivers. There is no other VA/DAV transportation to drive able bodied veterans to a VA health care facility. The DAV Van requires the passenger is not physical handicapped.
    - Part of the problem in getting drivers is the length of time it takes to get certified. For Grant County that was 3-4 visits over 3-5 months.
    - I made a presentation to the SD Veterans Council in Hot Springs to tell of the problems and possible solutions. It was well received.
    - The Sioux Falls hospital administrator, Sarah Akins, has resolved to correct this problem. The first meeting of the team to address the driver certification time recommended changes to get drivers certified in 1 trip. It would take a few months to make changes before changes could be implemented, The DAV Van still does not transport physically handicapped veteran.
  - Have worked with VSO's and SD Veterans Affairs members to come up with a way to help veterans in need for Christmas. Each year we give out approximately \$17,500 to 120 veterans in the 9-county area in ne sd. Gift cards ranging from \$50 - \$250 are given out based on need. The VSOs determine the need so veteran privacy is maintained.
  - Set up an online robo call system where so can notify members or meetings of specific events. We can send to certain members, i.e. honor guard, or by geographical locations.
- I joined the DAV Chapter 19 in 2015.
- I am the Chaplain for the Chapter 19 and have been since I joined.
  - I attend the state meeting in Sioux Falls and have been on the Resolution Committee.
  - I wanted to help so drove the DAV to take veterans to medical appointments. I started driving for the DAV in 2011 as we spent 3 months in GA and came back to SD. I drove for 5 years until I was disqualified with Sleep Apnea. I drove over 1000 hours and over 25,000 miles. I enjoyed visiting with vets and hearing the good stories about VA Care.
  - With COVID, we lost all of our drivers, and couldn't get drivers certified.
  - The Grant County DAV Van has not transported vets for over 2 years. We contacted Milbank Transit to transport veterans to the Sioux Falls VA or the Watertown CBOC, 2 times each week, for a total of \$18,000. We went to local businesses and have raised \$14,500 to date. All veterans needing the transportation are transported with this

fund. It includes vets with less than 30% disability. Work continues to get rides for veterans for medical appointments thru the VA.

- I volunteered to be the LVAP coordinator for SD, collecting the volunteer hours from each chapter and reporting them to National for the last 7 years. We've won 1<sup>st</sup> place in group 5, states of similar size, for 6 of the last 7 years.
  - I've been on the DAV resolutions committee for the last 3 years.
- I joined the American Legion, Post #9, in 2014.
- I was awarded the Chapter Legionnaire of the Year in 2016.
  - I was the Chapter treasurer in 2020.
  - The Legion had a bar with a banquet room that had been ignored for many years. I with another member spent about 1000 hours combined doing a complete remodel.



## Addendum to Bio for Robert Frink for Chet Sorenson Award

### VVA Communications Team –

- Co Chairman with Phil Braeger
  - Established Mass mailing to notify members of chapter activities, veterans passing, birthdays, and get-well cards, etc.
  - Established another group that focused on educating the public about the Vietnam War. We met with all of the school superintendents in N.E. S.D and got permission to go into the high schools to educate the kids about the war. We had a 10 min Vietnam Video made, narrated by 3 of our members, that was used as the introduction. The video was done professionally and is copyrighted in the chapter's name. After the video we had 4-5 Vietnam Era and Vietnam Veterans tell their story. We answered questions at the very end. To date we have done about 20 presentation and have expanded the presentation to Libraries and Church groups. We have reached out to veteran groups in S.D. to sell the video so they can do the same thing. At our National Conference we will offer this video to chapters across the nation. We've had excellent reception and are planning to start up again in the fall.

### Hobbies

- Music
  - I play piano at 2 churches on a fairly regular basis playing for the regular service or special music and obtain vocalists for special music.
  - Play piano at the Milbank Hospital every week or so. Recently have asked some of the vocalists to come in and sing. They have come and we draw a few people each time. We've expanded now to singing at nursing homes and other locations.
  - I put together our church's first Annual Fall concert last Nov featuring musicians from our church and the Milbank HS Honors Choir. Planning is starting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fall Concert.
- Sailing and other activities on the water.
- Computer work – helpful with the VVA monthly PowerPoint presentations
- Handyman fixes.
- And the best is the time with Judy and the grandkids.

# VETERAN OF THE YEAR APPLICATION

## CHET SORENSON VETERAN AWARD

### Candidate

FIRST NAME: Wosje LAST NAME: James

ADDRESS: 1406 S. Thecla Ave.

CITY: Sioux Falls STATE: SD ZIP: 57106-8465

PHONE: 6054138742 BIRTH DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

HIGH SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### SERVICE RECORD

BRANCH OF SERVICE: Navy HIGHEST RANK: E-6

DATE ENTERED: 10/25/1965 DATE DISCHARGED: \_\_\_\_\_  
11/1/1996

BRANCH OF SERVICE: NAVY HIGHEST RANK: E-6

DATE ENTERED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE DISCHARGED: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_

### VETERANS PARTICIPATION

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### POSITIONS ELECTED or APPOINTED

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## TIME SPENT HELPING VETERANS

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Jim's participation includes lifetime memberships in the DAV, VFW and American Legion. He is instrumental in the Disabled American Veterans Forget-Me-Not campaign and volunteers at our local Veterans health Care System. He also is out in the community promoting Veterans and Veteran activities by assisting and participating in parades and Veteran seminars throughout the year. He is present at the South Dakota State Fair promoting Veterans and Veteran causes along with assisting at several Air shows that come to Sioux Falls. He attends all DAV Chapter and Department functions and is also present at American Legion pancake feeds along with other events conducted by the various Veteran Service organizations.

Jim has served as Chapter One Commander for the DAV and is currently serving as the chapter quartermaster. He has also served on the DAV executive committee at the State level representing Chapter One on that committee.

Jim spends countless hours volunteering for various programs that directly help veterans. Just to mention a few, he is always present at the annual STANDDOWN conducted each September in Sioux Falls. During the past 5 years he has assisted Veterans through the DAV Moving program which moves veterans from homelessness to a decent and acceptable form of housing ensuring that our local veterans avoid the trap of being homeless. He spends countless hours volunteering at the Sioux Falls Health care system and assisting veterans over at the Outreach Center in Sioux Falls. He made sure coats and gloves were available during the winter time by delivering them to the center from the coat drive that Scheels in Sioux Falls conducted last year which resulted in acquiring over 200 coats for disadvantaged veterans.

# VETERAN OF THE YEAR APPLICATION

## CHET SORENSON VETERAN AWARD

### Candidate

FIRST NAME: MARK LAST NAME: WOLF

ADDRESS: 1409 16th AVE SE

CITY: ABERDEEN STATE: SD ZIP: 57401-7722

### SERVICE RECORD

BRANCH OF SERVICE: U.S. ARMY HIGHEST RANK: E-4

DATE ENTERED: 20 DEC 1971 DATE DISCHARGED: 03 DEC 1974

BRANCH OF SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_ HIGHEST RANK: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE ENTERED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE DISCHARGED: \_\_\_\_\_

### VETERANS PARTICIPATION

- 2022- 2023 DAV OUTSTANDING MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD.
- 2021 DEPT OF SD RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD.
- 2021 and 2022 DAV CHAPTER RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD.
- 2022 CIVILIAN ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR IN ABERDEEN, SD. by the Military and Veterans Committee of the Chamber of Commerce.

### POSITIONS ELECTED or APPOINTED

- Swanson O'Connor DAV Chapter 13, Aberdeen. Commander 4 terms. Adjutant 1 past term to present, Benefits Protection Team Leader ~present, Chapter Service officer 6 terms to present, Local Veterans Assistance program coordinator early fall 2019 serving 4 terms to present.
- Community DAV Transportation Shuttle Coordinator August 2020 to present.
- Department of South Dakota DAV one-year terms as 2<sup>nd</sup> Jr. Vice, 1<sup>st</sup> Jr. Vice, Senior Vice commanders to present.
- Appointed National Deputy Chief of Staff during Butch Whitehead's National commandership from 06 AUG 19 until 03 AUG 21.

### TIME SPENT HELPING VETERANS

- Local Veterans Assistance program participation volunteering since before 2020 to present.
  - 2020 ~ 874.25 HRS
  - 2021 ~ 1,466.83 HRS
  - 2022 ~ 1,849.67 HRS
  - 2023 ~ 714.45 HRS Present

# VETERAN OF THE YEAR APPLICATION CHET SORENSON VETERAN AWARD

## Candidate

FIRST NAME: Derek D. LAST NAME: Besler

ADDRESS: 12186 SD-34

CITY: Whitewood STATE: SD ZIP: 57793

PHONE: 605-580-0654 BIRTH DATE: 02/05/1964

HIGH SCHOOL: McAlester HS, McAlester OK DATE: 1982

## SERVICE RECORD

BRANCH OF SERVICE: USAF

HIGHEST RANK: Master Sergeant

DATE ENTERED: 11/28/1984

DATE DISCHARGED: 12/01/2010

TOTAL SERVICE: 26 years

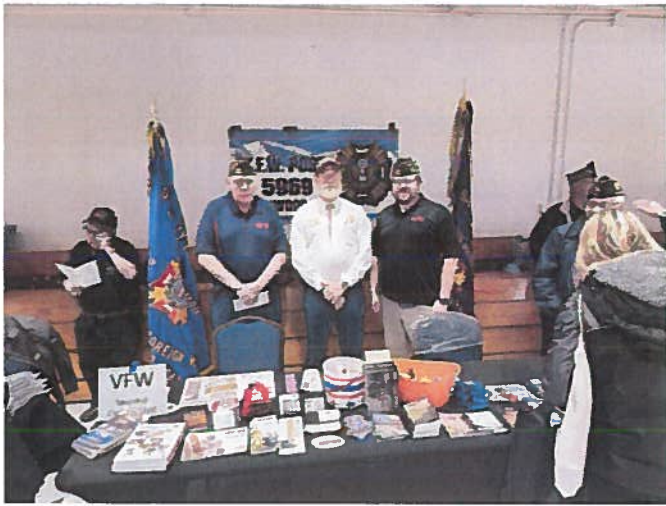
## VETERANS PARTICIPATION

Derek isn't just a paying member, he is active member in the American Legion #164, American Legion Riders #164, Sons of the American Legion #164, the DAV #11, and the VFW #5860.

### **Some examples of his participation:**

November 5, Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair – We've Got Your Six in Sturgis – Derek volunteered to set-up a VFW information booth for Spearfish, Deadwood and Sturgis. After setup he helped staff the booth. After the fair, he volunteered to take down the tables.





He was the Chaplain for the six Memorial Day Services and Ceremonies



Second from the left in white

Helped prepare gift bags for the Salute to Veteran Patients at Ft. Meade.



Back row

Holiday Wreaths of Remembrance first weekend of December at BHNC

Derek donates the use of his truck and trailer and helps pick up an estimated 1000+ wreaths at BHNC each January.



- The third Friday of each month goes to the Ft. Meade VA to make popcorn for all Veterans.
- Attends the DAV quarterly sessions to help with claims
- Attends and reports on the activities and projects at the Black Hills National Cemetery, on the second Wednesday of each month.
- Funeral escort and Flag lines for veterans at local churches, funeral homes, cemeteries, and the Black Hills National Cemetery.
- Shops for Ft. Meade VA residents when they are short of specific items.
- Found temporary housing for a Veteran,
- Made personal monetary donations to help Veterans in need in the community,
- Helps Veterans with mowing, building a fence, carrying out debris, and many more.
- Coordinated a recent Eagle Scout project which added an ADA-compliant ramp to the VFW Club in Spearfish.

### **POSITIONS ELECTED or APPOINTED**

- Spearfish Queen City VFW #5860 Commander
- 2023-2024 VFW Department Committees
  - Legislative
  - Convention
  - SD Veterans Council
- American Legion Riders #164, Representative to the South Dakota Cemeteries Support Council (BHNC)
- South Dakota Cemeteries Support Council (BHNC), President
- Spearfish Veteran Monument Council, Board Member
- Northern Hills Militiamen VMC treasurer 2022 – Present
- Elks Lodge #508 Trustee 2022 – Present

### **TIME SPENT HELPING VETERANS**

A minimum of 150 hours known.



**Department of South Dakota**

1600 W Russell St, Ste 135

Sioux Falls, SD 57045

605-332-7441

Email: [anna@vfwdeptsd.com](mailto:anna@vfwdeptsd.com)

June 21, 2023

To: Veterans Council of South Dakota

From: Department of South Dakota Veterans of Foreign Wars

It is my distinct honor to nominate Dr. Martin Christensen for your consideration for the Chet Sorenson Award. He is an exceptional Veteran, leader and is a very strong candidate for this Award. He constantly and tirelessly works with and for Veterans.

Attached you will find the completed application form for your review. If there is anything else you need assistance with, please contact me.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Hafner", is written over a horizontal line.

Tom Hafner  
State Commander  
Department of South Dakota VFW  
605-332-7441

# VETERAN OF THE YEAR APPLICATION CHET SORENSON VETERAN AWARD

## CANDIDATE

FIRST NAME: Martin LAST NAME: Christensen

ADDRESS: 25044 413<sup>th</sup> Avenue

CITY: Mitchell STATE: SD ZIP: 57301

PHONE: 605-933-2220 BIRTH DATE: September 8, 1952

HIGH SCHOOL: Sturgis, SD DATE: Graduated May 1970

## SERVICE RECORD

BRANCH OF SERVICE: Army HIGHEST RANK: Colonel (O-6)

DATE ENTERED: July 26, 1974 DATE DISCHARGED: October 10, 2007

BRANCH OF SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_ HIGHEST RANK: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE ENTERED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE DISCHARGED: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL SERVICE: 33 years

Dr. Christensen retired from the United States Army at the rank of Colonel after thirty-three years of service including three tours in Iraq. His duty stations also included assignments at Ft. Bragg (Family Practice Residency), Ft. Polk (Staff Physician), 82<sup>nd</sup> Field Hospital (Staff Physician and Chief Medical Services), 4223<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Army Hospital (Chief Medical Services and Hospital Commander) and 3d COSCOM (COSCOM Surgeon).

## VETERANS PARTICIPATION

Dr. Christensen's career as a Physician continued in Mitchell, SD retiring from Practice in 2019. During his storied career Dr. Christensen's achievements included Chairman of Statewide Immunization Committee during which time his Committee developed a Digitalized Immunization Program still in use today; Clinical Associate Professor, Sanford School of Medicine; President SD Academy of Family

Physicians; President University of South Dakota Alumni Relations Council, Sanford School of Medicine; Medical Advisor, City of Mitchell; Medical Director, Avera Queen of Peace Advanced Cardiac Support Program; Instructor Advanced Trauma Life Support; Medical Director Mitchell Emergency Medical Technicians/Paramedics; President Methodist Hospital Board of Directors, Mitchell, SD; Member Avera Queen of Peace Hospital Board of Directors, Mitchell, SD; Preceptor, Sanford School of Medicine students and local high school/college students; Member South Dakota Governor's Task Force on Trauma; Medical Director, Plankinton Ambulance Service, Plankinton, SD; Medical Director, Aurora-Brule Nursing Home, White Lake, SD; Chief of Medical Staff, Avera Queen of Peace Board of Directors, Mitchell, SD; Member of Scholarship Committee for Sanford School of Medicine USD; Alternate Delegate South Dakota State Medical Association, District 6; and Avera Queen of Peace Board of Directors, Mitchell, SD.

## **POSITIONS ELECTED OR APPOINTED**

Dr. Christensen's selfless service in the community continues as he is a State-wide Board Member, SD Fellowship of Christian Athletes; Elder and Sunday School Teacher, First Presbyterian Church, Mitchell, SD; Chairman of Friends of NRA, Mitchell; Life Member and Past Commander and current Adjutant/Quartermaster of VFW Post #2750; Past Commander of VFW District #7; Current Department of South Dakota VFW Junior Vice Commander; Commander DAV Chapter #27, Mitchell; Member Voiture Locale 481 (40&8); and Life Member of American Legion Post #18, Mitchell serving as Historian and on Executive Committee. Dr. Christensen was instrumental in the relocation and remodeling of VFW Post #2750's Post Home, personally raising approximately \$500,000 for this project either in cash or in-kind labor; the establishment of a Veterans Museum and Community gathering center, which is currently utilized by Mitchell Service Clubs for their monthly meeting to include: VFW Post #2750 and Auxiliary, American Legion Post #18 and Auxiliary, DAV Chapter #27, 40&8 Voiture Local 481, Servicemen's Cemetery Committee and Mitchell Friends of NRA.

## **TIME SPENT HELPING VETERANS**

Dr. Christensen was recently named "Mitchell Republic Person of the Year" where he was described as "He just does Everything." As noted above, Dr. Christensen is heavily involved in virtually every Veterans Organization in his community including being involved in planning and developing local Veteran's park; driving Veterans approximately 70 miles to the Sioux Falls VA Hospital; created a local Chili Cook-Off to recognize families of deceased Veterans; in conjunction with local shoe store was involved in collecting and distributing socks to Veterans; and planned and organized several Memorial Day and Veterans Day Programs. The time spent helping Veterans cannot be measured. He has had an impact on countless lives from nurturing new doctors and students to Veterans support groups area wide. Dr. Martin J. Christensen is an exceptional leader deserving of this Award. He leads from the front and his involvement in numerous Organizations both Military and Civilian demonstrates his commitment to Veterans and the Citizens of his Community.