

WWII veteran publishes a book about Pine City's role

Harold Kick shares the stories of local people who served, as well as his own

by C.J. Gustafson
Freelance writer

Over the course of his life, Harold Kick has seen many sights and experienced many things. He has lived through the Depression, the Dust Bowl and numerous wars.

He has been a farm boy, a fighter pilot, a federal postal employee, a husband, a father and a grandfather. He has been a researcher and a guest presenter. Now he can add published author to the list.

In 1991, Pine City Schools asked Harold Kick to help put together a presentation commemorating the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. He agreed and set to work researching Pine City's involvement with WWII.

In reading through newspapers from that time and talking to veterans, he realized that the people of this community contributed on a level far and above what could be expected of a small town.

They enlisted in record numbers, they organized Red Cross efforts, and they produced much-needed food commodities. They helped in any number of ways, and many made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives in service to their country.

Kick, who served as a fighter pilot, knew firsthand that many men and women from Pine City were involved in WWII, including four of his own brothers. Of the 33 men who graduated from high school with him in 1942, 32 of them were in the military. But Kick was shocked to learn that over the course of the war, 30 men from our community lost their lives in the conflict.

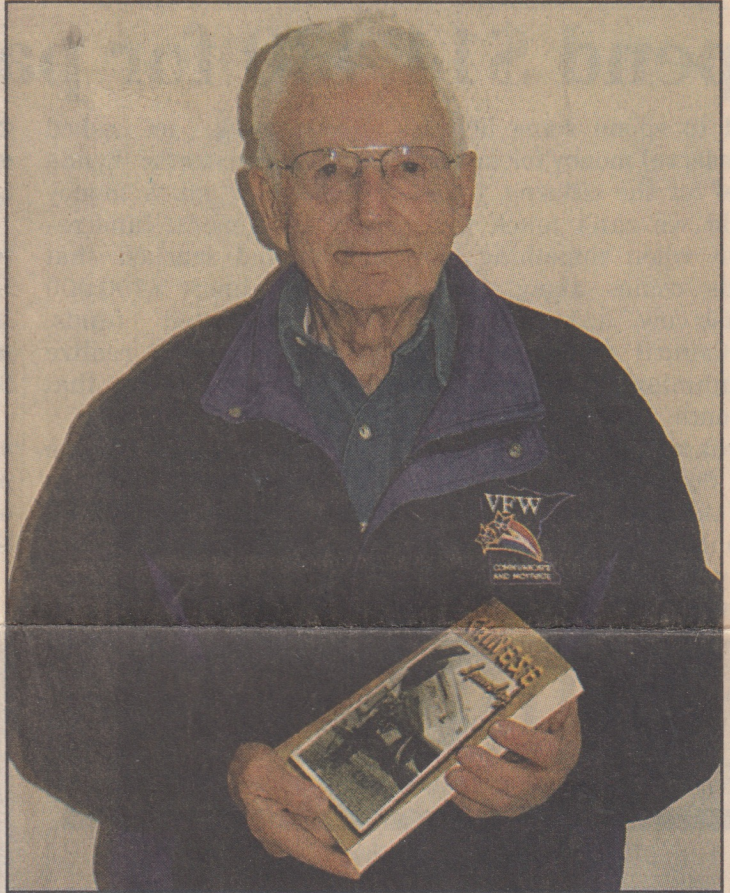
"I remember there were many," he wrote, "but I certainly didn't remember all thirty."

Other than by the families and friends of the soldiers, "many of these deaths are nearly forgotten," he added, pointing out that even those who came home safe and sound wanted to put things behind them and get back to "normal" life. They didn't want to talk about what they considered lost years away from family and friends.

Their stories are inspiring, touching and important, and Kick felt they needed to be documented.

"To my knowledge, very few stories or accounts of the war years in Pine City have ever been written," he wrote in his book. "I believe these stories are worthy of being recorded and kept as part of the history of the community."

Over the course of a decade, Kick made contact



There's even a story behind the title of WWII veteran Harold Kick's book, "Chinese Laundry."

with as many veterans and their families as he could find, and he put their stories, along with his own, into notes. His writings were then typed into the computer by his daughter, Becky (Hallan), and compiled in a loose-leaf notebook that was given to Kick's family and friends. He continued to gather stories, and those who read them encouraged him to make the information available to the public.

This past year, Kick used his own money to have his work published. He brought his materials to Sunray Publishing in St. Cloud, where the editor took one look at the stories and agreed to work with Kick. The result is a 280-page soft-cover book titled, "Chinese Laundry," which, as the author explains in an entertaining

Kick's book, Page 6

Kick's book

Continued from Page 1

story, was the name of the plane he flew.

The book is filled with personal accounts of WWII, along with fantastic photos of airplanes, war scenes and people who served. There is also a section listing all the men and women from Pine City who were involved in military service, including those who gave their lives. The names are familiar, since many of the families, such as the Sausers, Seedorfs and Frances, still live in Pine City. It is wonderful to read through the book

and recognize people and places, and it is heartening to learn about the patriotism and courage of our community.

Kick had 200 copies of the book printed and has promised many of them to friends and family. He also plans to donate copies to the schools, library, historical society, military organizations and other interested groups. People have approached him about purchasing the book, and he has set aside a number of copies for this purpose, although he emphasized that he never

intended to make any money off the project.

"I just felt it was important that the stories be recorded," he stressed.

A limited number of copies of the book, which sell for \$16, will be available at the grand opening of Picturing Pine on Saturday, Nov. 11 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Picturing Pine, on 5th St. next to Cornerstone Photo in Pine City, is an art and gift shop focusing on images and history of the Pine City area.

Kick feels it is an appropriate location, and he plans to attend the opening to sign books and talk with interested community members. He can also be contacted by telephone.