

# Happy anniversary!



Members of Aberdeens 40&8 chapter. PHOTO PROVIDED BY RON KROGMAN

## ABERDEEN'S 40&8 CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

Elisa Sand Aberdeen News | USA TODAY NETWORK

**O**ne of Aberdeen's veterans organizations is celebrating 100 years since the formation of the chapter. • La Societe des Quarente Hommes es Huit Chevaux, more commonly known as the 40&8, started as a selective organization for prominent members of the American Legion. • Its founding nationally dates back to 1920, shortly after World War I, with Aberdeen's local chapter No. 146 organizing a year later on Dec. 13, 1921. • The local chapter is celebrating 100 years today with a birthday celebration at City Lights Bar and Event Center, 316 S. Second St., at 7 p.m. The public is welcome. • Inspiration for the organization's name — and the French-inspired titles and terminology — came from a stamp on the French boxcars commonly seen in World War I. Those boxcars bore a triangle-shaped emblem with the numbers 40 and 8, which meant they could hold 40 men or eight horses.

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# Anniversary

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In the years after World War I, each of the then-48 states received a gratitude train boxcar filled with gifts from France and Italy. The contents of another boxcar were shared between the District of Columbia and Hawaii. The items were a way to show France's gratitude to the U.S. for its aid in World War I. South Dakota's boxcar is restored and on display at the state fairgrounds in Huron. The boxcars each reportedly contained dolls, statues, clothes, ornamental objects, art and furniture.

## Some terms to know

The French theme runs through the 40 & 8 organization from officer titles to how they refer to local chapters and meetings. Definitions of few of the commonly used terms follow.

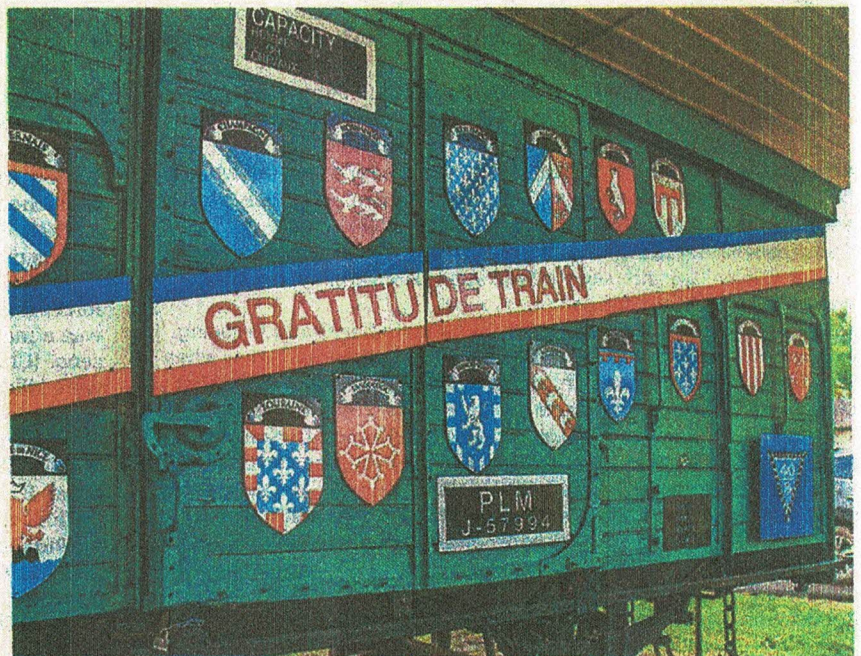
- A **voiture** is a local chapter. There are 11 in South Dakota.
- **Grande** is the state organization.
- **Voyageurs** or **voyageurs militaire** are members. Aberdeen's **voiture** has 70 **voyageurs**. In South Dakota, there are 561. Each joins by invitation from another member.
- Meetings are referred to as a **promenade**.
- The **chef de gare** is the leader of the **voiture**. At the state level, the leader is the **grande chef de gare**. Locally Ron Krogman is **chef de gare** for the Aberdeen **voiture**, a position he's had for the last five years. Currently serving as **grande chef de gare** for the state, Krogman said this is the second time he's held that position as he was previously elected 40 years ago.

## What does the local chapter do?

The local chapter provides scholarships for Presentation College nursing students, outreach to the New Beginnings Center in Aberdeen and, when contacted by an area fire department about a family that has been affected by a house fire, takes the children shopping for new clothes.

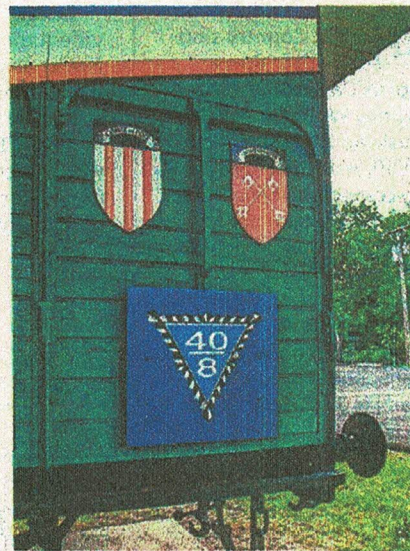
Krogman said the Aberdeen **voiture** has given out \$12,500 in scholarships to Presentation students in the last two and a half years. Four scholarships were given out this fall.

"We want to make sure there's never



This boxcar sent by France in 1949 and preserved by the 40 & 8 veterans organization is on display at the Huron Fairgrounds.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ABERDEEN MAGAZINE



This boxcar sent by France in 1949 and preserved by the 40 & 8 veterans organization is on display at the Huron Fairgrounds.

a shortage of nurses," he said.

Money for the scholarships come from the group's main fundraiser in October, which was supported this year by donations from 150 local merchants, Krogman said. Attendees purchase

tickets for dinner and a chance at door prizes and can then participate in other raffles and games that evening.

Scholarships are awarded to college sophomores, and those same students can continue to receive the scholarships as juniors and seniors, Krogman said. He said the organization starts with sophomores because by then the students know if nursing is a career they want to pursue.

The **voiture** also has a Christmas party at New Beginnings featuring pizza and banana splits.

The program with which the chapter buys clothes for children when their homes are lost to fire is a state once. Once he receives notice, Krogman said, he'll go shopping with the kids within 48 hours. Any Aberdeen-area fire department can let him know when there's a need.

## New nurse of the year program created

Krogman said the local chapter annually recognizes a law officer of the year and a hero of the year. The hero of the year can be a local firefighter or a citizen who provided a life-saving measure. The most recent honoree, he said, was a citizen who went into a burning



**Ron Krogman serves as chef de gare for the Aberdeen 40 & 8 and is grande chef de gare for the state organization.**

house to save a person inside.

Those recognized locally are then submitted to a state contest and, if selected as the state winner, continue on to the national level.

Now, Krogman said, there's a new award. The 40 & 8 has decided to honor nurses who demonstrate outstanding compassion, leadership success, innovation, achievement or clinical excellence as a resident or management care system provider. He's hoping to get some local nominees for that honor.

#### **40 & 8 is a low-visibility group**

Krogman is also commander of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post and vice chairman of Aberdeen Area Veterans Inc., a group fundraising to build a new veterans center in town.

While in the early days, American Legion membership was a prerequisite to being a member of 40 & 8, Krogman said that's no longer the case. But 40 & 8 members are often members of other veterans groups. Membership is, however, by invitation only, he said.

"We're a fun organization," Krogman said, also describing the group as a low-visibility group.

"We don't seek out a lot of recognition," he said.