

Valley City WWII Ties to Norway



Barnes County Backs Their Norwegian Soldiers

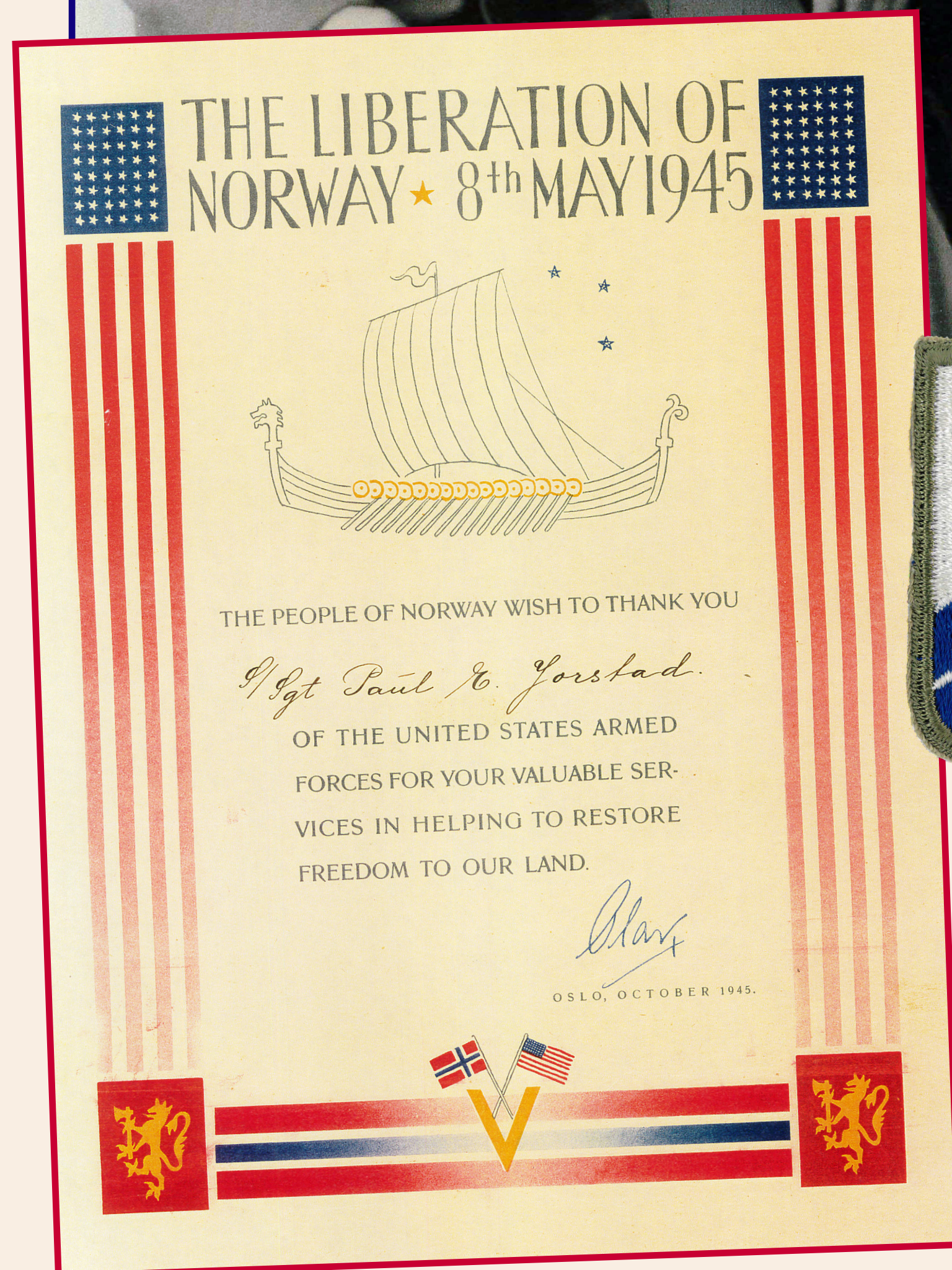
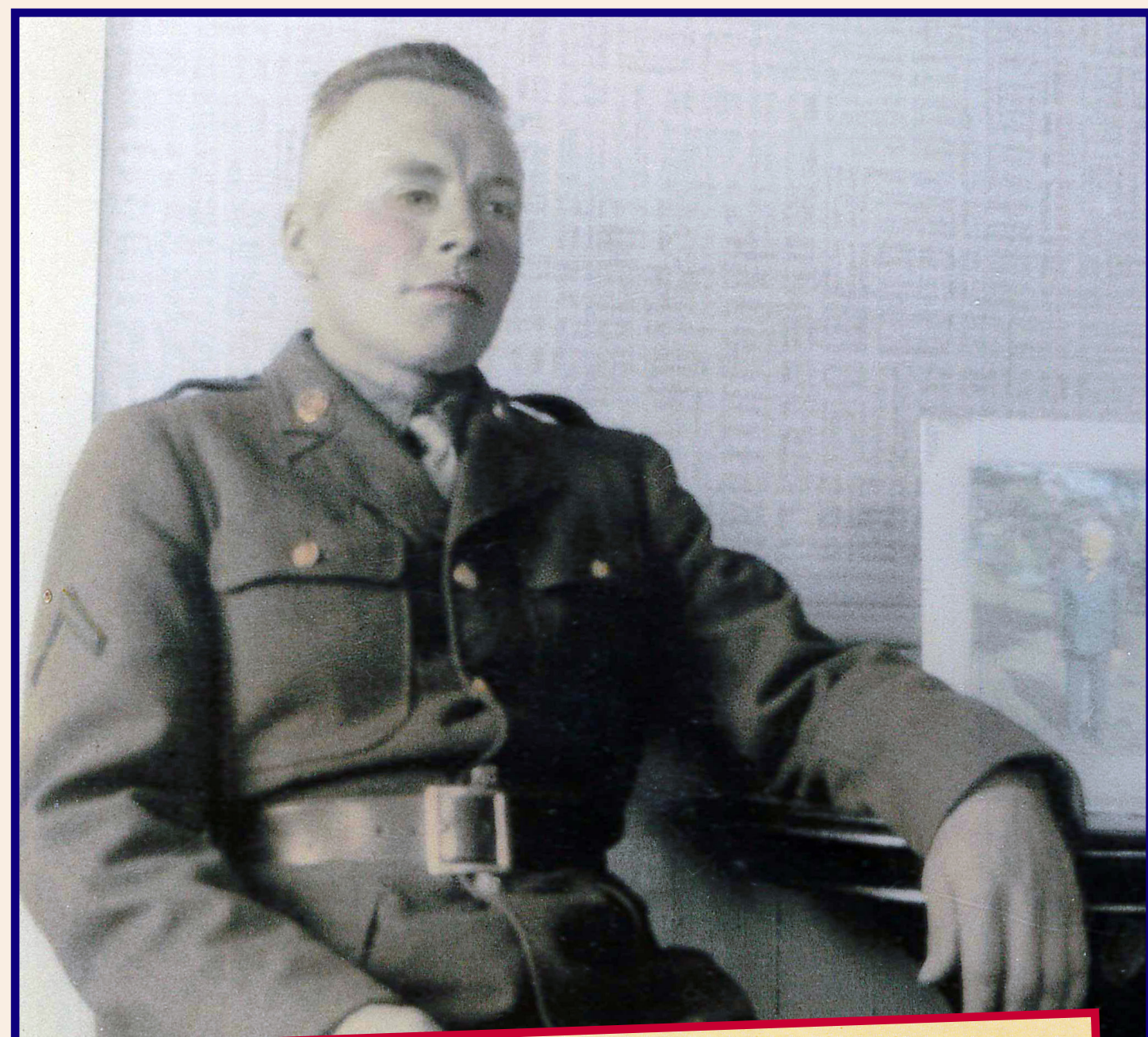
The 99th infantry Battalion (Separate) was activated at Camp Ripley, Minn. on July 19, 1942, by the War Department. This elite unit was to consist only of Norwegians and those with direct Norwegian descent. Soldiers picked out for this unit had to have a working knowledge of the Norwegian language and know how to ski. Soldiers from this area of first or second generation Norwegian immigrants chosen for this unit include Arne Mickelson, Olaf Aarseth, Eugene Bekkenwold, Adolph Aarstad, and Paul Jorstad.

The size and military significance of 99th at first glance seems insignificant. But seen from the Battalion's ac-

complishments and ethnic composition as well as its history, it emerges as a successful and true multinational unit within the United States Army.

The unit was set up for a possible invasion and liberation of Norway, but saw combat action in France, Belgium and Germany before becoming part of the 474th Infantry Regiment. They were sent to Norway in June 1945 to disarm the German occupational force.

The Battalion received specialized mountain training with the 10th Mountain Division at Camp Hale, Colo., and was a potent unit capable of taking on specialized missions not suitable for the average Army unit. The 99th Battalion was therefore given "Separate."



(Left) Paul Jorstad of the 99th shared his certificate from Norway with the museum as well as the Battalion's patch.

(Right) This 1945 clothing drive in Valley City was bound for Norway. Local businessmen Herman Stern and Fred Fredrickson were part of the statewide Norwegian Relief, Inc.



VC Sculpture Unifies Norway Protests

During Germany's occupation of Norway in World War II, the Abraham Lincoln statue in Oslo's Frogner Park became the site of silent anti-Nazi protests. Each July 4, beginning in 1940 and until the war ended in 1945, Norwegians turned out by the thousands to gather around the statue with their heads bowed in silence.

The bust along with the inscription of Lincoln's words in his Gettysburg Address, "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth," served as an inspiration for the oppressed Norwegians. Lincoln's bust was a gift from the citizens of North Dakota, and was presented to Norway on July 4, 1914. It was given to mark the 100-year celebration of Norway's independence from Denmark.

North Dakota gave Valley City resident and sculptor Paul Fjelde, who was studying at the Valley City State Teacher's College, his first commission - that of making a bust of Lincoln to be presented to Norway. Governor Hanna took the finished bust to Norway and made the presentation in Oslo.

An artist's proof of the Lincoln statue by Fjelde was donated to the State Teachers College; it sits on a pedestal in Valley City State University's Allen Library. In 1973, Fjelde became the first recipient of the Distinguished Alumnus Award at VCSU.

Still today, on the Fourth of July, Norwegians gather around Fjelde's statue of Lincoln to reflect on what it symbolized during the dark days of World War II.



(Left) A young Paul Fjelde at work; he would become one of America's best and most prolific sculptors.

(Left) An artist's proof of Norway's gift from North Dakota, a bust of Lincoln, is on display at Valley City State University.

(Below) The sculpture as it appears in Oslo, Norway. It is the only statue in Frogner Park by an American sculptor.



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