



## HISTORY

**The National Order of Trench Rats** was conceived by a group of disabled World War I veterans who were patients in the United States Public Health Service Hospital No. 54 located at Arrowhead Springs, California. Because of the shortage of beds following WWI, this hospital, like many others, had been converted out of a building formerly used for other purposes. This particular building in which the hospital was housed had been a well known hotel located on the side of the mountain about seven miles from the city of San Bernardino. The name "Trench Rats" was adopted as it is symbolic of the rats, which the World War I veterans encountered in the trenches in France.

Some of the patients were members of the Los Angeles Chapter of the DAV. The hospital was isolated and there were no activities for the patients to pass the time, the majority of whom were ambulatory. A few members of this DAV Chapter conceived the idea of organizing a group of the most active members as a secret, fraternal society and devised an initiation ceremony for fun and amusement and invited for membership only those DAV members who were most active in the Chapter. As a result of this, most of the patients became members of the DAV and its delegates to the National Convention in Salt Lake City in 1924 were able to get the N.O.T.R. officially recognized as an Auxiliary of the DAV.

In the beginning, the N.O.T.R. was a secret, fraternal and honor organization limiting its membership by selection only to those who show their devotion and meritorious service to the DAV and the welfare of the disabled veterans, his widow and orphans. In time the N.O.T.R. was re-designated as a fraternal and philanthropic organization. As result of this limitation, non-members have been encouraged to become more active in their Chapters and sign up new members in the DAV, this being one of the qualifications for membership.

The Trench Rats were proud of their contributions to the DAV and the fact that many projects adopted by Dugouts in their local communities have helped publicize and enhance the name and prestige of our organization. The National and State Rendezvous of the Trench Rats have long been recognized as the highlight of

the entertainment programs of DAV conventions and have contributed greatly to the attendance. In the early years of the DAV, when it was in financial trouble and having a difficult time supporting and extending its Service Officer program, the N.O.T.R. raised and contributed funds for this purpose. In recent years they have contributed to the Disabled American Veterans Service Foundation to assist the Legislative Programs of the DAV and to the Memorial Honor Roll of Beneficiaries of the Perpetual Rehabilitation Fund.

**As of the 2008 DAV National Convention over \$320,000.00 has been contributed.**

Much could be said about the difficulties the organization encountered in the early struggle to survive. Recognition should be given not only to those who participated in its founding, but to all of those members who worked so hard over the years helping build the N.O.T.R. to the high position it now holds and to those who continue to sell its aims and purposes. Their names are legion, many have passed away and even to mention a few would be unfair to all the others, but recognition must be given to the responsible for it all and that is the founder, **Volney P. Mooney**, who was the first Imperial Golden Rodent. He later became Commander of Chapter No. 5 in Los Angeles, Department Commander of California, National Judge Advocate for eight years and was elected National Commander of the DAV in 1934. To him and to all of those living and dead who contributed over the years of its existence, this history is dedicated. Their names are inscribed in the archives of this Order, they were tried and found true to their trusts, to their obligations and their own consciences.

We know that membership in this Organization inspired all of them with the incentives to further the welfare of our disabled comrades and there will always remain in the minds of all members those immortal words.

**"Semper Idem et Semper Fidelis"**