



# OUR VETERANS:

## SHARING THEIR STORIES



A Newspaper in Education Supplement to  
*The Washington Times*

# Who are Veterans?

They are men and women who, for many reasons, donned the uniform of our country to stand between freedom and tyranny; to take up the sword of justice in defense of the liberties we hold dear; to preserve peace and to calm the winds of war.

Your mothers and fathers, your grandparents, your aunts and uncles, your neighbors, the shop owners in your community, your teachers, your favorite athlete, a Hollywood star, and your political leaders... each one could be a veteran.

But as much as they may differ by gender, race, age, national origin, or profession, they share a common love for our great nation; a love great enough to put their very lives on the line, if need be, to guarantee the way of life we enjoy today, and to secure that way of life for tomorrow's generations.

The title "veteran" must be earned. It is a title endowed by a grateful nation on citizens whose shoulders were broad enough to carry the weight of our common defense.

It is a title that speaks of courage and sacrifice in the face of mortal danger.

It is a title that speaks of compassion and heartbreak in the wake of the terrible cost of war.

And it is a title that speaks of love of country, and of a belief in America's goodness, and our strength.

In each of America's struggles, heroes in uniform emerged to inspire and spur us on to victory. Our veterans' steadfast resolve to stand and fight for the American way of life is a constant reminder that the righteousness of our destiny overarches the anguish of our losses.

America's servicemen and women, who became our nation's veterans when they set their uniforms aside and resumed their civilian lives, distinguished themselves through their willingness to risk life and limb in defense of the freedoms we all cherish.

Those who have served our nation in uniform are the best people our society has to offer. We owe them our full support, and our sincerest thanks.

America's veterans did not shrink from battle; they did not yield to fear; they did not abandon their cause. All too often they paid the ultimate price.

By their example of courage under fire, they raised up a new nation, inspired by the dignity of the common man — a nation blessed with heroes and heroes' dreams.

*Credit: Excerpt from 2003 speech at the National Young Leaders conference in Washington, DC.*

## VETERANS DAY HISTORY

### Where does the term "veteran" come from?

Originally, the word veteran meant "a person of long experience" or skill. Derived from the Latin term *veteranus*, after the American Revolution the word veteran came to be associated specifically with former soldiers of old age who had fought for independence. As

time went on, "veteran" was used to describe any former member of the armed forces or a person who had served in the military.

In the mid-19th century, this term was often shortened to the simple phrase "vets." The term came to be used as a way to categorize and honor those who had served and sacrificed through their roles in the military.

## History of Veterans Day

World War I, also known as the "Great War," was officially concluded on the 11th hour of the 11th Day of November, at 11 A.M. in 1918. On November 11th of the following year, President Woodrow Wilson declared that day as "Armistice Day" in honor of the peace. (The term armistice means "truce" or the end of wartime hostilities.) This day was marked with public celebrations and a two-minute halt to business at 11 AM. In 1921, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was dedicated in Arlington Cemetery with a ceremony on November 11th. After this dedication, Armistice Day was adopted in many states and at the federal level as a day to honor veterans. This was made official in 1938 when an act of Congress made Armistice Day a national holiday.

If the idealistic hope had been realized that World War I was "the War to end all wars," November 11 might still be called Armistice Day. But only a few years after the holiday was proclaimed, World War II broke out in Europe. Sixteen and one-half million Americans took part. Four hundred seven thousand of them died in service, more than 292,000 in battle.

The first celebration using the term Veterans Day occurred in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1947. Raymond Weeks, a World War II veteran, organized "National Veterans Day," which included a parade and other festivities, to honor all veterans. The event was held on November 11, still designated as Armistice Day. Later, U.S. Representative Edward Rees of Kansas proposed a bill that would change Armistice Day to Veterans Day. In 1954, Congress passed the bill that President Eisenhower signed proclaiming November 11 to be Veterans Day. Raymond Weeks received the Presidential Citizens Medal from President Reagan in November 1982. Weeks' local parade and ceremonies have now become an annual event celebrated nationwide.

A law passed in 1968 changed the national commemoration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that November 11 was a date of historic significance to many Americans. Therefore, in 1978 Congress returned the observance to its traditional date.

Today, Veterans Day is still observed on November 11th as a national holiday to honor all veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Throughout the nation, Americans participate in parades, ceremonies, and observances to pay their respects to our former servicemen and women.



World War II Memorial, Washington, DC. Credit: (c) Richard Latoff/Latoff.com

## National Ceremonies Held at Arlington National Cemetery

The focal point for official, national ceremonies for Veterans Day continues to be the memorial amphitheater built around the Tomb of the Unknowns. At 11 a.m. on November 11, a combined color guard representing all military services executes "Present Arms" at the tomb. The nation's tribute to its war dead is symbolized by the laying of a presidential wreath. The bugler plays "taps." The rest of the ceremony takes place in the amphitheater.

The President's Veterans Day National Committee coordinates Veterans Day ceremonies at Arlington and elsewhere. Chaired by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the committee represents national veterans organizations.

Governors of many states and U.S. territories appoint Veterans Day chairpersons who, in cooperation with the National Committee and the Department of Defense, arrange and promote local ceremonies.

## Newspaper Activities:

Veterans have unselfishly made sacrifices for the sake of their country. Look in today's newspaper and find either a picture of or an article about a person or veteran who put someone else's needs above his or her own. What were the consequences of the unselfish act? What might have happened if the person had not acted?

Veterans exemplify good character qualities like loyalty, courage, responsibility, respect and other traits. Find stories in your newspaper about people that exhibit both good and bad character. What choice did they make? What was the outcome? What are the good or bad character traits that they exhibited? What can you learn from them?



Marine Corps War Memorial, Arlington, VA

# African Americans: Honor Deferred

African Americans have always fought in this country's wars, back to the American Revolution, and up through the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. But, they had not always been welcomed as full participants, and were relegated to segregated units throughout these conflicts. Despite the discrimination they faced, African Americans continued to fight willingly in the U.S. armed forces even as they struggled to achieve citizenship rights in U.S. society.

When World War II came around there was a general hesitance to employ blacks to fight in combat. There was no hesitation in employing them to do manual work. Those roles were acceptable to the military establishment.

But with the Battle of the Bulge and the threat that represented to U.S. forces, suddenly there was a huge demand for reinforcements. Eisenhower was pushed to turn to the black troops who were ready and eager to fight against the Fascists. Thousands volunteered.

Under a segregated military, more than one million African Americans served during World War II. In the Pacific and in Europe, on the ground, on the seas, and in the air, black troops demonstrated courage and valor in the face of battle that earned them numerous medals. But when the war books closed at the end of World War II, not one black soldier had received the military's highest award, the greatest symbol of selflessness, sacrifice and courage under fire: the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Fifty-seven African American soldiers had been awarded the Medal of Honor in previous wars. Why, after receiving many medals in other wars, did no black soldiers receive the Medal of Honor for their service in World War II?



There had always been a process through which Medal of Honor recipients were recommended in the military. But because of the climate of racism at the time, these recommendations were not being processed up the chain of command. Despite this unequal treatment, no concerted action was taken to research the problem until 1991 when then acting Secretary of the Army John Shannon, commissioned an archival study to investigate why no Medal of Honor was awarded to an African American during World War II.

A thorough 15-month investigation by a team of seven researchers revealed that there were no unprocessed recommendations for Medals of Honor. During the course of interviews, a number of white commanders made it clear that they understood they should not recommend an African-American for the Medal of Honor. It was a 'no, no'.

There was not an order. But within the ranks it seemed clear that no African Americans would be granted the Medal of Honor. Therefore, rather than see such soldiers get nothing, officers recommended them for the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest military honor, of which only five were officially awarded and five more had been recommended. This was a tragic injustice.

***"No African-American who deserved the Medal of Honor for his service in World War II received it. Now and forever, the truth will be known about these African-Americans who gave so much that the rest of us might be free."***

***President Clinton, Medal of Honor Ceremony for African American Soldiers, 1/13/97***

At the conclusion of the investigation, the team recommended that the Army's award branch review the 10 Distinguished Service Cross cases together with the cases in which the Medal of Honor was awarded. Without knowing names or racial backgrounds, a panel of military officers was asked to evaluate which actions of battle were deserving of the highest award for valor. The panel came up with the names of seven African American soldiers to receive the Medal of Honor.

**These are some of their stories.**

D - D a y  
— June 6th, 1944  
250,000 American troops



sent to Europe to help support the wide-scale war effort. Deployed to oppose Hitler's Army in Italy was the all-black 92nd Infantry Division, 15,000 strong. Though not the first black troops to be deployed to combat duty, the 92nd was the largest group of black combat soldiers to fight in World War II.

While eager to fight against the enemy, these soldiers lacked proper training for combat duty. They had been prepped for service jobs and manual labor. Training was hastily organized for them in Europe before they went into combat, but this training was not as good as it could have been, and certainly not of the same quality that would have been given to white troops. There were exceptions to this rule, such as the Tuskegee airmen, but for the most part black troops did not receive the same level of training or resources as white units. Despite the lack of training, the men of the 92nd were determined to contribute to the war effort once they were deployed to Italy.

December 26, 1944... A massive German assault was launched on the mountain village of Sommocolonia, Italy. Only two platoons from the poorly equipped and thinly supported 92nd Infantry division held out against an overwhelming German offensive. The German Fourteenth Army, following the official standards of the Nazi Party, was instructed to take no prisoners from the 92nd Division because its soldiers were black, therefore not fully "men". A mere 6 miles south, the 5th Army Division refused the besieged soldiers of the 92nd either reinforcements or blood transfusions for the wounded. They were black, and by official U.S. Army standards in 1944, not a priority.

Some historians make the case that black soldiers as a first line of defense, served as open targets for the German army. Their role was to occupy German forces in the south of Italy, making it possible to send other forces to France and Germany. Often the testimony



*Memorial at Sommocolonia, Italy*

of the black soldiers of the 92nd Division was that they felt they didn't receive the necessary support despite their dedication.

## Newspaper Activity

Even today individuals and groups are the targets of racism, stereotyping and discrimination. Watch your newspaper for stories about these issues. For each story create a web illustrating who is affected. Write an editorial or short essay about solutions to the issue.

## Vernon Baker

At 77 years old, Vernon Baker was the only African American soldier still alive to receive Medal of Honor at the White House ceremony on January 13, 1997.

Baker recalls his own experience as a 24 year-old combat soldier in the high mountain



Italian campaign.

"Our mission was to take Castle Aghanolfi — one of three high ground fortifications the Germans fall back and fight from — rules the mountainous passes into Northern Italy.

"The Germans knew we were there. The Germans knew every route that we could send the people up. They had to put Southern born officers in charge because they thought they knew how to handle African Americans.

"Captain John Runyon ordered, 'I'm taking command of your troops. Get your men geared up and ready to move — today you're gonna take this hill or your gonna die tryin.'

"I knew that that day was gonna be a challenge. Because they kept sending us up the same old way. They didn't know what else to do. They were moving in open formation, open ground, no cover. This is disastrous tactics. And when we got up to the top we spread out. Somebody behind us stepped on some mines back there which I thought was the artillery, which was supposed to be ahead of us. And when I heard the explosions behind me I just

told everybody, 'Let's go, move.'

"And we got separated. And I lost sight of my mortar squad. And then as we got a little bit farther up I lost sight of my light machine gun squad. We were behind the enemy lines. Then I saw movement. And I looked and it was helmets moving. I didn't have to move in because when I shot them, they fell. I made sure. I looked. I hesitated after I shot and made sure there's nobody raised up to shoot at me.

"And that's when Runyon caught up with me. So we sat down and we're talking about how we're gonna get the troops together — and get up to the castle. And to our left a German soldier came out on our on a path we couldn't see, we didn't know it was there, and he came out and tossed a potato masher [German stick grenade] at us. And Runyon



jumped up and flailed his arms out and almost knocked my rifle out of my hands. I caught it and I caught it just in time to shoot the soldier in the back, which I did not want to do.

"I want to explain to you why I didn't want to do it. I was born and raised in Cheyenne, Wyoming where the cowboys rode the white horses and wore the white hats and the bad cowboys rode the black horses and wore the black hats. From reading those Western stories, the good guy in the white hat never shot anybody in the back. But the black guys did. The ones that wore the black. And that was sticking in my mind when I put the sights on this soldier's back. And I shot him.

"And, the first thing I did I went down to look at the soldier and see what he looked like because I had never seen a German soldier up close. I went down the path and it was nice and quiet. And I found these other, other dugouts. So I stuck a grenade in there and blew it open.

"I went back looking for Runyon. He's the commanding officer. He's supposed to tell me what to do. And, Runyon was sitting down. He was pale as hell. His face looked like parchment. And he had the nerve to ask me, 'Baker can't you get those soldiers together out there?'

"And my answer was to him, 'I'm doing the best I can.' And he says, 'I'm going back for reinforcements.' A commissioned officer, a captain in command of a company, going back for reinforcements! So I'm not gonna tell you what I was thinking then. I told him, 'OK Captain we'll be here when you get back.' He said, 'Right, good.' And he took off.

"I never saw Runyon again. We had three or four wounded men he took along with them. And the radio... I had no communication. No

communication at all. What troops I had up there, I gathered together and we moved on up. At one time one of the my soldiers looked up and said, 'Hey look there — a flock of birds coming up over there.' And I looked up and I said, 'That's not a flock of birds, that's a bunch of mortars. So move. Take cover!'

"If they've got you pinpointed there isn't a heck of a lot you can do. And, they had us pinpointed. The best word to describe it would be 'deadly.' You can't hear the shells coming from a mortar...just a whoosh, then hit. After every two barrages, the Germans would send up a bunch of foot soldiers. They just kept coming. I had seen so much blood spent, arms and legs blown off.

"And then our ammunition began to get low. And, I would look at the soldiers and they kept looking at me and nobody said a word. But I knew what was what that look meant. Are we gonna stay here and die or what are we gonna do? We never did get any 'reinforcements'. That was our mission. To go up there and take that ground, and we took it. I went up with twenty-six. And when we got back I had six men with me...six out of twenty six."

### Staff Sergeant Edward A. Carter



In March 1945 American forces pushed into Germany, and into the Rhineland where Hitler's Nazi troops were making a last ditch stand. The Rhine River was the barrier they hoped would stop the American advance.

On March 13th, 29-year-old Infantry Staff Sergeant Edward A Carter was among the black combat soldiers of an armored group making the push under Patton and his Third Army.

As they advanced on route towards the town of Speyer, German artillery guns opened up on their position.

They were fired upon by German artillery and mortar fire, which stopped the armored column and forced them to disperse and calculate what to do next. At this point, Sergeant Carter stepped forward and volunteered to lead a squad to mark the German positions and, if possible, to initiate an attack against them.

They had to cross 150 acres of bare flat

land, making them easy targets. As soon as Sergeant Carter and three men started out, one of them was killed outright. There was heavy fire from the Germans. Sergeant Carter, seeing what was happening, ordered the other two to return to the American lines, before they made it back, one of them was shot and killed, the other was wounded. Carter himself was running fast but he was wounded in the arm.

He advanced on. Catching one of the German gun positions by surprise, he was able to lob a hand grenade in and silence that gun position. He was hit again and knocked into the air. He crawled behind a berm, where he was able to hide while figuring out what to do next. Looking up, he saw a German squad advancing towards his hiding place.

Eddie lay there. He had been shot, maybe 5, 6, 7 times. He waited for the Germans to approach him. The Thompson machine gun was his weapon of choice. He had mastered it. He never shot from the shoulder. He always shot from the hip. So he wouldn't have to really line you up in the sights. He could kill you and not take his eyes off you.



He stood up with his trusted Tommygun, firing on the Germans, killing all but two, who he then captured and took back to the American lines. American officers and everyone were astonished to see him still alive. The two prisoners knew where the German positions were in the town of Speyer and gave valuable information to the American forces, enabling them to advance through Speyer.

There were some who said that the officers actually considered recommending Eddie Carter for the Medal of Honor, but then decided not to, since they knew that he would not be granted the medal.

His, son Edward A. Carter III, accepted the Medal of Honor for SSGT Carter on January 13, 1997.

### Staff Sergeant Rueben Rivers and the 761st Tank Battalion

In the fog of war, the truth is often lost, memories fade, actions are embellished, sometimes diminished. But in the case of the 761st tank battalion unit of WWII, their extraordinary record was almost erased from history.

On October 1944, the 761st — 700 strong and equipped with M4 Sherman Tanks — was deployed to Europe and greeted by General George Patton himself. Patton said, "I'm damned glad you're here. We've been waiting for you."



On November 7th 1944 in France, operating with General Patton's Third Army, the men of the 761st got their first taste of battle and soon realized what kind of fight they were up against.

A soldier said about the Germans, "They were good. The only thing we could do is outrun them. You couldn't stand up there and fight with them suckers. That German tank was much more superior than ours. Even that 88mm gun — you could hear that sucker coming. Weeeeeee. Whooo, I said, '... how the hell anybody gonna live through this?'"

One tank commander emerged as a leader among the men of the 761st. Staff Sergeant Reuben Rivers' unparalleled bravery in the face of battle gained him the respect of both his fellow tankers and his white commander.

On November 16th 1944, during an advance toward the town of Guebling, France, the vehicle Rivers was commanding hit an anti-tank mine. A metal shard from the damaged turret slashed his right leg, severely wounding him. His thighbone was visible.

The medic joked, "...you got a million dollar wound, you can go home now."

Rivers replied, "I'm not goin' anywhere. Fix me up doc."

"Rube, this looks pretty bad. I've got to get you out of here."

Rivers again told the medic, "I said I'm not going anywhere."

"At least let me give you somethin' for the pain..."

"I don't need it."

Capt. Williams, the white commander of the unit, asked, "What's the situation here?"

And Rivers told him, "Ain't no situation Cap'n — it's nothin'."

The medic informed him, "Captain, this soldier's hurt pretty bad. We've got to get him out of here."

Rivers again confirmed, "It's nothing."

The Captain ordered, "Rivers you get your butt back on that jeep and to that aid station! That's an order soldier!"

And Rivers calmly told him, "Can't do that Cap'n — You're gonna be needing me around." And he refused to go even though he knew the gravity of the situation. Reuben was a tough man. He would not give up.

Rivers fought on, — even when his wound became infected and in danger of gangrene. He would not leave the men of Company A.



Three days later, on November 19th, Company A's tanks advanced toward their next objective: the town of Bourgaltruff, France. Dug in — heavily armed and waiting for them — were elements of the crack German 11th Panzer Division.

Before the tanks could even reach the town, an overwhelming enemy force confronted them. The Germans had anti-tank guns and tanks dug in.

Capt. Williams got on the radio frantically ordering his crews to fall back and take cover yelling, "Withdraw! Withdraw from your positions! Move back! Move back!"

Rivers ignored the command. He and his crew spotted the German tank positions and in a daring maneuver advanced on them — covering the other tank's safe withdrawal.

Rivers fired his cannon as he continued to move forward.

Capt Williams ordered, "Rivers! Pull out! Pull out!"

Rivers replied, "NOOO!"

Rivers and his crew were killed instantly. A soldier commented, "He put himself out there. He saved a lot of lives by putting himself out there. And, he went down swinging."

Two days after the battle, Captain Williams, though aware of the Army's unwritten policy of denying black soldiers the highest award for courage under fire, recommended that Sergeant Reuben Rivers receive the Medal of Honor.

However, he recalled, "After I recommended, they just put it aside. Didn't mean a thing."

Though Rivers' courage and sacrifice on November 14th 1944 unquestionably demonstrated actions that went above and beyond the call of duty, he did not receive the recognition he deserved until much later.

By war's end the all-black 761st had captured, destroyed or liberated more than 30 major towns, 34 tanks and 4 airfields. But their contributions to decisive battles were not widely known until 1978. The U.S. military officially acknowledged the unparalleled performance of the 761st with a Presidential Unit Citation. And almost two decades later, Reuben Rivers was honored with the Medal of Honor for being the hero that he was.

### Newspaper Activity:

Over a period of time, through the newspaper and research at the library or

online, locate articles about Veterans Day, an important veteran, or military unit in history (like Rivers and/or the 761st). Write a short essay or prepare a poster-board about that veteran or unit and include relevant dates and facts such as which branch of the military they represented, where the veteran or group was stationed and any honors or decorations they received.

### Army Lt. John R. Fox



By nightfall, the Germans had all but taken the Italian village. Only a few GI's remained. Army Lt. John R. Fox, a forward observer for the 598th Field Artillery Battalion, was one of them. Calling in artillery positions from his observation post, Lt. Fox was the last defense against the German assault.

Otis Zachary, battery commander with the division's artillery unit, was one of Fox's closest friends and was on the receiving end of this radio transmission.

ZACHARY: Battery ready on your command — over.

FOX: (watching German troops in streets below) Fire!

ZACHARY: Shot-over. John, do you read? Over.

FOX: Bring it in 60 yards!

ZACHARY: That's gonna be right on top of you.

FOX: Let's give em hell, Otis. There's more of them than us.

He called the artillery down on him because he was surrounded and that was the only way that he had any chance to get out.

Zachary: I said 'Hell no. Get out of there Fox!'

FOX: There's no place to go...but home now.

"And when our [U.S] forces recovered the position they found his riddled body among that of 100 German soldiers... Accepting the award for Lieutenant Fox is his widow, Arlene Fox." —President Clinton, Medal of Honor Award Ceremony, 1/13/97

(Credit: This article is adapted from *The HISTORY Channel* documentary "Honor Deferred.")

### Tuskegee Airmen



The Tuskegee Airmen were dedicated, determined young men who enlisted to become America's first black military airmen, at a time when there were many people who thought that black men lacked intelligence, skill, courage and patriotism. Each one possessed a strong personal desire to serve the United States of America to the best of his ability. Those who possessed the physical and academic qualifications were accepted as aviation cadets to be trained initially as single-engine pilots and later to be twin-engine pilots, navigators or bombardiers.

No standards were lowered for the pilots or any of the others who trained in operations, meteorology, intelligence, engineering, medicine or any of the other officer fields. Enlisted members were trained to be aircraft and engine mechanics, armament specialists, radio repairmen, parachute riggers, control tower operators, policemen, administrative clerks and all of the other skills necessary to fully function as an Army Air Corps flying squadron or ground support unit.

From 1941 through 1946, nine hundred and ninety-six pilots graduated Tuskegee Army Air Field (TAAF) in Tuskegee Alabama, receiving commissions and pilot wings. Black navigators, bombardiers and gunnery crews were trained at selected military bases elsewhere in the United States. Mechanics were trained at Chanute Air Base in Rantoul, Illinois until facilities were in place in 1942 at TAAF.

Some 450 of the pilots who were trained at TAAF served overseas in either the 99th Pursuit Squadron (later the 99th Fighter Squadron) or the 332nd Fighter Group. The 99th Fighter Squadron trained in and flew P-40 Warhawk aircraft in combat in North Africa, Sicily and Italy from April 1943 until July 1944 when they were transferred to the 332nd Fighter Group in the 15th Air Force.

The outstanding record of black airmen in World War II was accomplished by men whose names will forever live in hallowed memory. Each one accepted the challenge, proudly displayed his skill and determination while suppressing internal rage from humiliation and indignation caused by frequent experiences of racism and bigotry, at home and overseas. These airmen fought two wars — one against a military force overseas and the other against racism at home and abroad.

Learn more at [TuskegeeAirmen.org](http://TuskegeeAirmen.org)  
(Credit: *Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.*)

### Activities:

1. How are these veterans' stories different from what you've seen on T.V. and in movies?
2. Reflect on these veteran's and their stories: Patriotism, life in the service, and discrimination. Why don't we hear more about these men? Explore further why no African American soldier receive the Medal of Honor during WWII?
3. Select and research one of the following topics:
  - a.) 761st Tank Battalion
  - b.) Red Ball Express
  - c.) Segregation of the military in WWII
  - d.) Life of General George S. Patton Jr.
4. Take part in the Veterans History Project by identifying one or more local WWII veteran and interview them about their service. See information, tips, and examples of interviews at: [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets)

### Executive Order 9981 Desegregation of the Armed Forces (1948)



The following is the executive order signed by President Harry Truman ending segregation in the armed services and calling for the complete integration of the military. This order was the culmination of efforts among members of the military and their supporters, and it is remembered as one of the initial victories for integration, which ushered in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s.

### Executive Order

Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services

WHEREAS it is essential that there be maintained in the armed services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country's defense:

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States, and as Commander in Chief of the armed services, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy

shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.

2. There shall be created in the National Military Establishment an advisory committee to be known as the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, which shall be composed of seven members to be designated by the President.

3. The Committee is authorized on behalf of the President to examine the rules, procedures and practices of the armed services in order to determine in what respect such rules, procedures and practices may be altered or improved with a view to carrying out the policy of this order. The Committee shall confer and advise with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Air Force, and shall make such recommendations to the President and to

said Secretaries as in the judgment of the Committee will effectuate the policy hereof.

4. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are authorized and directed to cooperate with the Committee in its work, and to furnish the Committee such information or the services of such person as the Committee may require in the performance of its duties.

5. When requested by the Committee to do so, persons in the armed services or in any of

the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall testify before the Committee and shall make available for the use of the Committee such documents and other information as the Committee may require.

6. The Committee shall continue to exist until such time as the President shall terminate its existence by Executive order.

— Harry Truman, *The White House*,  
July 26, 1948

## VETERANOS

### Hispanic Americans and the Medal of Honor

Hispanic Americans have given their all in the U.S. military through many eras and conflicts, and in return have gained the awards and acceptance for their service. For actions above and beyond the call of duty, Hispanics have been awarded our nation's highest award for battlefield valor, the Medal of Honor. Since its inception during the civil war, only 3,440 Americans have received the medal. Of this select group, forty-two are Hispanic Americans.

Many Americans have shown a special dedication to the U.S. through their military service. Many Hispanic Americans immigrated to the U.S. with no more than a hope and a prayer, which is the tradition of America. As a result the young people who have come to the U.S. filled with the idealism of finding a better way of life in America have been among those most readily willing to serve and defend that way of life. Service in the military has been a path to a better life, and a way to earn respect for Hispanic Americans from many backgrounds.

Here are several stories of Hispanic Americans awarded the Medal of Honor.

#### Alfred Rascon



Alfred Rascon exemplifies the loyalty

and commitment of many Hispanic-American Medal of Honor recipients who fought for this country while being the citizen of another.

Al was born in Chihuahua, Mexico in 1945. Soon after, he and his parents moved to the United States and settled as legal permanent residents in Oxnard, California, a coastal town north of Los Angeles.

"The primary reason why my parents came here was for a better life. But then also to try to contribute to this country."

While growing up in Oxnard, Al came into contact with servicemen stationed at nearby military bases who were getting ready to fight in Korea.

"One of the particular things that I saw were jump wings for the paratroopers. And that's what really got me into the military. When I was probably seven years of age, I ended up finding half of a sheet, putting a rope with it, and jumping from the roof of my house. Didn't exactly make the best parachute in the world. It, it didn't ever open. [LAUGHS]. I think I landed on my head but I did end up breaking my wrist."

That boyhood fantasy of being a paratrooper became reality when Al graduated high school and enlisted in the army in 1963.

"I wanted to be something, and I felt the military offered me an opportunity not to look at me, what color I was, or the race. But to look at me for what I can do."

After graduating from airborne school, Al was assigned to the first battalion of the 503rd paratroopers, 173rd airborne brigade. In 1965 he arrived in Vietnam and served as a medic in the battalion's reconnaissance platoon.

"I carried an M-16 with three hundred rounds of ammunition. I was a grunt like they were, up until the time that somebody got hurt. Immediately when somebody got hurt, I went back to the professional role of medic."

"Al had an excellent reputation in the platoon, which is why we all referred to him as 'Doc.' You normally didn't call your medic Doc unless he deserved that term. It was a very respectful term. And Al was our Doc, always taking care of us."

— Larry Gibson, fellow soldier

Al never took better care of his platoon than during what he's called "ten minutes of pure hell." His supreme display of courage took

place on March 16, 1966 when his platoon, moving to reinforce its sister Battalion in Long Khanh Province, came under heavy enemy fire. One of the platoon's machine gunners, William Thompson, went down and yelled, medic.

"I was afraid. I didn't want to go. But one of my friends is hurt. I knew they, they would do the same thing for me. People have to understand that being in combat, it's not saying, 'Yeah, god, this is great, let's raise the flag and god and country.' Well that's B-S. Once you get into an environment where people are trying to kill you, it's a matter of your survival, and a matter of trying to save... those that are next to you. And there's no other reason other than to survive for each other. Period."

Not even an exploding grenade could deter Al from performing his duty. He placed his own body between the mortally wounded Thompson and enemy fire, sustaining numerous shrapnel injuries and a serious wound to his hip. A few yards away, Larry Gibson, the platoon's other machine gunner, was fast running out of ammunition.

"I hear Gibson yell, 'I need ammo, I need ammo.'" I crawled up to him, and first thing that happened to Gibson, he, he's shot. And he's not yelling, 'Oh, Doc, I'm hurting,' he's yelling, 'I want ammo.'"

Gibson: "I told him to leave me alone, I wanted the ammo. If you can imagine just a quick staccato of crack-crack-crack, just all the time, right by your head. Al says, 'We gotta get Thompson's gun and his ammo.' So he gets up and he goes back."

"As I leave Gibson, another hand grenade goes off and all I remember was my head literally going around in circles like you see, you know, in a comic book. I thought I had lost my face. I told myself, 'Gee, my good looks are gone' and 'Hell, I'm going to die right here.' And then I ended up gathering my composure, until I said, 'No, you gotta keep on going. You have to do what you have to do.'"

Gibson: "I couldn't believe that he was still alive. Then he goes back, gets the spare barrel bag and another can of ammunition that was up there and brings it back. It was — it was incredible. Had Al not gotten me that ammunition, we probably would have been overrun and everyone up front killed. So you know, I'm here to tell ya that Al probably saved

at least 11 of us. We all owe our lives to Al Rascon."

Gibson laid down suppressive fire with the ammunition Al retrieved, giving the platoon relief from the enemy. Al, reverting to his role as medic, braved exploding grenades to give life-saving cover to Grenadier Neil Haffy and Squad Leader, Ray Compton.

Compton: "I felt this thump. And what had happened was, Al had jumped on me. Covered me with his body and protected me from, you know, the grenade. And his rucksack just went all to pieces. You know. And I thought Al was dead. But I think the first thing out of Al's mouth was, 'Are you okay?'"

After the enemy broke contact, Al, barely able to walk and bleeding from his ear and nose, declined aid for himself and instead treated his wounded comrades and arranged for their evacuation.

Gibson: "The platoon sergeant, had to, to physically grab him and set him down and say, 'Look, no more! You know, you need to treat yourself here. You know, we'll get some help up here.' Finally we were able to get him up and taken for medical aide by medevac. And quite frankly that was the last I was going to see of him. The chaplain had come over and given him last rites, right before he got in the helicopter. So we didn't expect to see him again."

Al was then taken by medevac to Japan where he spent three months in an orthopedic ward, undergoing intensive physical therapy. Upon returning home from the war he became a U.S. citizen in 1967.

"I never knew that I was not a U.S. citizen. I had always felt in my heart that I was an American. American by choice, you know."



Though Al had resumed his military career, including volunteering for a second tour of duty in Vietnam, his buddies had never forgotten his extraordinary act of valor. Unbeknownst to him, they had filed the required eyewitness reports needed to award Al the Medal of Honor.

Gibson: "When I left Vietnam in, in June of '66, rotated back to the States Sergeant Compton and I sat on the, the steps of the barracks there at Fort Campbell and had a beer, talking about it. And one of the things we said was, 'Yeah, hey, I'll see you again at, you know, at, at Al's, uh, at Doc's, uh, Medal of Honor ceremony.' Well, it never happened."

Compton: "I think it just got lost in the shuffle. I don't believe anybody intentionally did not turn that paperwork in because we were so disorganized about the administrative end."

Determined to see Al get his medal, the recon platoon and their comrades from the 173rd airborne launched an eight-year campaign to, as one of them put it, "not change history but to correct it."

They had many obstacles to overcome, including a statute of limitations restricting the time that could pass between an action taken and a Medal of Honor given. After countless letters and visits to congress, Al's platoon succeeded.

Gibson: "Congress, because of, of our insistence on this, they changed the law; Al got his Medal of Honor, which he deserved, and there have been since then numerous other recipients of the Medal of Honor who have got their Medal of Honor that they deserve."

In February 2000, 34 years after he acted above and beyond the call of duty, Alfred Rascon finally received the Medal of Honor at the White House, making him one of the fourteen Hispanic Medal of Honor recipients for extraordinary service performed during the Vietnam War.

"Place yourself in the White House with your family, in uniform, about to receive this nation's highest award for valor. And most of all, to be given the opportunity to meet the President of the United States, to be there in his presence. It's pretty humbling. Immediately, before the ceremony I looked around and I said, 'Hmm, not bad for an immigrant.'"

Compton: "When President Clinton presented the Medal of Honor to Al Rascon, it was just like he was putting it around all of our necks."

"Thank you very much. The honor is not really mine. It ends up being with those who were with me that day. Mr. President, thank

you very much for giving me at least a couple of seconds to thank those who were with me that day. Would my recon platoon please stand up...(applause)."

"What you see before you is common valor that was done every day. And those of you served in the military and continue to serve in the military are very much aware of that. What you do everyday it is duty, honor, and country and I'm deeply grateful to be here. Thank you very much. (applause)."

"For me the war ended right there. It was the homecoming that, that I never got."

"As far as being a, a recipient who happens to be Hispanic, it ends up being a great honor. And that makes me very proud. I'm able to accomplish something to show that we as Hispanics are able to do things in the military with dignity and honor also."

(Alfred Rascon finished his distinguished military career with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.)

## Lucian Adams



Lucian Adams embodies the strong family bonds that have given many Hispanic Americans the inner strength to achieve medal-worthy greatness on the battlefield.

Lucian was born in Port Arthur, Texas in 1922, one of twelve children in a lower income family. The scrappy and resourceful youth worked odd jobs to provide for and protect his siblings. "Since we were such a large number, it was just a struggle to exist. But, we did. I was a little tough when I was a youngster. I never allowed anyone to run over me. I was a leader. I was an achiever."

That drive would distinguish Lucian when he entered the Army in December 1942. The twenty-year old Army Staff Sergeant was sent overseas where he joined the third infantry division, one of the first American units to see combat in Europe.

On October 28, 1944 near St. Die, France, German forces stopped Adams' company in its effort to reopen a supply line to the isolated Third Battalion in the Montagne Forest.

"We advanced 10 yards when the machine guns opened up on us. So everybody

start hollerin' for the medics..."

Enemy guns killed three of Lucian's buddies and wounded six more. In that bloody instant, he sprang into action.

Leaving his injured buddies behind, Lucian charged forward, moving from tree to tree, firing a borrowed Browning automatic rifle. According to an eyewitness, Lucian stalked the woods like a "wild man" in pursuit of the enemy. Despite intense machine gun fire directed at him and grenades which struck trees, showering him with splintered branches, Lucian made his way to within ten yards of the first enemy gun emplacement.

"So I shot that direction and used my hand grenades and demolished the first machine gun nest. Then, uh, just a few yards from that I discovered the second one and the second one was demolished and the third one. I knocked out the three machine guns and I told the company, you know, to advance. And we made a breakthrough."

In ten minutes Lucian had killed nine enemy soldiers, forced the surrender of two more, and eliminated three machine guns, all without sustaining any injuries to himself despite the full force of enemy fire aimed at him.

"My buddies, they all said that I had done somethin' outstandin'. That I was going to be rewarded, the highest medal, that the country can offer. And, uh, I was very happy to hear those sentiments from them that, uh, they thought that I was going to receive the Medal of Honor."



In April 1945 Staff Sergeant Adams was due to receive his Medal of Honor at the White House, but when President Roosevelt took ill and died, Army officials changed the site of the presentation to dramatize the nation's victory.

"I didn't receive my Medal of Honor in Washington DC. I received it in Nuremberg, Germany, in a Zeppelin Stadium. It's a stadium with a beautiful gold swastika in the background. And you could see that swastika for miles and miles away. And that is where I and four other Medal of Honor recipients received our medal on April 23rd 1945. That was an event that will forever live in my mind. It's a feeling of amazement, surprise; just the little Texan from Port Arthur bein' up there where Hitler used to make his speeches, being awarded the nation's highest medal."

## Rodolfo "Rudy" Hernandez

Rudy Hernandez's son had this to say

about his father, "I feel that God spared him, spared his life, that he might be an example to other people here and help other people."

Rudy still bears the scars and lives with the injuries he suffered in Korea more than fifty years ago. An enemy grenade blew off part of his head, severely damaging his brain, impairing his speech and causing him to lose control of his right arm.



Rudy's will to survive and determination to overcome difficult circumstances were embedded in him from his humble beginnings. He was born in 1931, during the depression, in Colton, California, a tough time to be the son of a migrant farm worker.

Rudy's parents eventually separated, leaving his mother, Guadalupe, the sole breadwinner of the family. To bring in more money, seventeen-year old Rudy enlisted in the army in 1949. After completing jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia, Rudy was assigned to the 187th airborne and shipped out to Korea in August 1950.

His mother said, "When he first went over to Korea, he said he felt like Rambo. He felt like he was ten feet tall. He said the first shot he heard, he felt like an ant crawlin' on the ground. And he said he did a lotta prayin', even on the way over there and while he was over there."

On May 31, 1951 Corporal Hernandez and his unit faced their toughest assignment — maintain control of Hill 420 near Wongtong-Ni, South Korea. At 2 a.m. Rudy's platoon came under ruthless attack. Heavy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire rained down, inflicting numerous casualties on the platoon. Outnumbered and overpowered, Rudy and other men from his unit returned fire from a foxhole where they had taken refuge.

All Rudy remembered next was a loud boom. Then silence. Intense heat and pain engulfed his head. Blood streamed into his eyes. Rudy reached to adjust his helmet and discovered part of his head had been blown off.



# What We Can Learn from Our Veterans

**“Take a Veteran to School Day”™**

**by Libby O’Connell, Ph.D., Chief Historian, SVP, Corporate Outreach, HISTORY**

Four years ago, HISTORY developed an outreach initiative called Take a Veteran to School Day™ as a national program to link veterans with students in our schools and communities. Schools and organizations invite veterans of all ages and backgrounds to share their stories and receive thanks for their years of service. This initiative has been warmly received, with hundreds of schools hosting veterans each year, and with participation from all fifty states. From a community picnic at Clear Creek Elementary near Ft. Hood, Texas to smaller one-class discussions, this program has connected young people and veterans in powerful ways.

There are many reasons Take a Veteran to School Day resonates so broadly. We can’t all agree about wars, but we can agree that our veterans deserve our support — from the greatest generation to the latest generation. Inviting veterans to share their stories helps illustrate our interest in their experiences while helping young people learn about our past. We designed the program so that participation doesn’t have to be complicated. Holding a Take a Veteran to School Day event can range from a small program in a library with one or two family members of students who have served in the military to a district-wide observance kicked off by all-school assemblies joined by many veterans and elected officials.

Many history and social studies classes

have done an impressive job of linking students with veterans for powerful oral history projects. We have worked with the Library of Congress Veterans History project to help schools learn how to record these stories officially. You can find out more about this effort at [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets).

There are also great ways to bring this program into the classroom for younger students. From their special veteran visitors, students can learn vocabulary (“What does the word veteran mean?”), geography (“Where is Seoul? Where is Fallujah? Where is Ft. Benning?”) as well as concepts such as service. Reading comprehension, always an important focus in classrooms, can be another key component. Even small school libraries include stories children find compelling, from the Revolutionary War onward.

As part of this program, students can create posters about the branches of service, and listen to music that was popular during wartime eras. To encourage these classroom connections, we have developed free activities and curriculum suggestions with links to all state standards. A short video about the history of Veterans Day is also offered free of charge via streaming video. You can find all of these resources and more online at [www.veterans.com](http://www.veterans.com).

Take a Veteran to School Day gives your students the chance to meet and talk

to men and women from many walks of life. For some children, this alone is an important learning opportunity, and can help them bridge generations. This program also serves as a reminder to all of us that veterans need our support all year round. We have identified several not-for-profit organizations and agencies that help veterans in a variety of ways. America’s Vet Dogs and the Wounded Warrior Project are just two of these organizations. To find out how you can give back to veterans, and start planning your own Take a Veteran to School Day event, please visit us online at [www.veterans.com](http://www.veterans.com).



## Thank a Veteran at Work

HISTORY invites businesses large and small to take time out of the day to thank the many veterans in our workplaces. HISTORY has developed the Thank a Veteran at Work program to provide employers with easy ways to honor veterans. The days and weeks before Veterans Day, November 11th, is an ideal time for companies and organizations to participate in this program.

Through the Thank a Veteran at Work program, HISTORY offers “Thank You Veterans” stickers to distribute and posters that can be downloaded and printed free of charge. You can find these materials at [www.veterans.com](http://www.veterans.com). View our “How-To” guide on this site for ideas about how you can honor veterans in your workplace. Some companies have organized a lunch for all employees, and others have simply sent an email expressing their thanks on behalf of the company to their former servicemen and women.

Whether it is a company-wide event or small gesture of thanks, Thank a Veteran at Work is a great way to acknowledge veterans and involve all employees in an important initiative.

Tips for how to participate in Thank a Veteran at Work:

1. Organize a morning get-together at your workplace with coffee, juice, and donuts. You may want to hang up a sign of thanks to veterans, or ask someone to say a few brief words of thanks at your gathering. Alternatively, you could host an informal buffet lunch or afternoon cookies or cake and coffee break in their honor.
2. In some workplaces, veterans have filled out info sheets about where and when they served, and in what branch, to have posted in the office so other employees can learn more about their service. This is optional since not all veterans wish to share their experiences.
3. HISTORY has created Thank A Veteran at Work stickers. Visit [www.veterans.com](http://www.veterans.com) and look for the section on Thank A Veteran at Work to find out how to request them, while supplies last (we offer 100 per company free of charge).
4. Ask your CEO or senior staff member to send an email message thanking the veterans in your workplace and the vets who are family

members of employees.

5. HISTORY offers online flyers for employers to print – with the option of adding their logo or seal to personalize them and display them in

offices, kitchens, or other public locations.

Interested in getting more involved in this program or have additional questions? E-mail us at: [veterans@aetn.com](mailto:veterans@aetn.com).



*Time Warner employees celebrate “Thank a Veteran at Work Day” in Killeen, TX (near Ft. Hood) honoring veterans among the staff for their service.*

# General Dwight D. Eisenhower's Order of the Day — D-Day, June 6, 1944

After the Nazis conquered France in 1940, the Allies immediately started preparing a plan to assault German forces there. Code-named Operation Overlord, this plan was years in the making. President Roosevelt named General Dwight D. Eisenhower to be Supreme Allied Commander, noting his rapport with troops and his effectiveness as a military strategist. On the morning of "D-Day," June 6, 1944, Eisenhower delivered the address below to troops. Over 150,000 soldiers participated in this unprecedented assault, which proved to be a major turning point in the liberation of Europe. Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force.

"Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hope and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the

elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened.

He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good luck! And let us beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking."



# World War II: What Were We Fighting For?

Before the United States officially entered World War II after the Pearl Harbor bombing in December of 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt outlined four freedoms he felt were critical American values in an international world. The preservation of these freedoms later became a primary justification for the U.S. to become involved in World War II as the spread of fascism threatened these democratic ideals. Full speech is at: [www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrthefourfreedoms.htm](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrthefourfreedoms.htm)

An Excerpt from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms Speech" Delivered to Congress on January 6, 1941

"In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression — everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way — everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want — which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants — everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear — which, translated into world terms, means a worldwide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act

of physical aggression against any neighbor — anywhere in the world."

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called "new order" of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.

To that new order we oppose the greater conception — the moral order. A good society is able to face schemes of world domination and foreign revolutions alike without fear.

Since the beginning of our American history we have been engaged in change, in a perpetual, peaceful revolution, a revolution which goes on steadily, quietly, adjusting itself to changing conditions without the concentration camp or the quicklime in the ditch. The world order which we seek is the cooperation of free countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society.

This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women, and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God. Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights and keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose.

To that high concept there can be no end save victory."



**HERNANDEZ , from page 7**

Undaunted, Rudy continued fighting. When his rifle jammed he charged the enemy armed only with a bayonet.

Before he collapsed from bullet, knife and shrapnel wounds, Rudy had single-handedly killed six of the enemy, stopping their advance long enough for his regrouped unit to counterattack and retake the hill. Rudy was so badly injured that field medics declared him dead.

"I was hit in the head and my vocal chords and I couldn't speak and I was hit on this side and my whole right side was paralyzed and I had a shrapnel wound here and my back."

Field medics shipped Rudy to the nearest medical facility where personnel detected some movement in his hand. Rudy was indeed alive. But his biggest battle was about to begin, years of procedures to reconstruct his skull, face, right arm and legs.

In April 1952 Rudy Hernandez interrupted his recovery program to receive the Medal of Honor from President Truman, becoming one of eight Hispanic Americans to do so for service in Korea. As Truman draped the Medal

around Rudy's neck, he said, "I'd rather have this Medal of Honor than be President of the United States."

*(Credit: HISTORY — This article adapted from The HISTORY channel documentary "Hispanics and The Medal of Honor.")*

**Ernest Gallego****A Hispanic American Veteran**

February 16, 1945 Sortie #16 Mission #28

Mama Mia! How much can the human body stand? Assorted hell broke loose in the wild blue yonder today. My glass plate on my

turret was shattered by flack today. I pinched myself to see if I was coming or going. Flak was so thick you could have stepped out and walked on it. We bombed the rail yards and ammo dumps in Bolzano, Italy. By far my roughest mission to date. What's worst this was supposed to be a "milk-run" — guess the Heinies [Germans] fooled us on that.

Lt. Foster's ship got a direct hit and broke in two. Two parachutes seen. Ship burst into flames and crashed in mountains. Tail gunner and co-pilot reported Prisoners of War. — Altitude 23,000 feet Temp 41 7 hours 40 minutes

To watch video clips of his story and those of dozens of other Hispanic veterans of all U.S. conflicts, visit [www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-hispanicveterans.html](http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-hispanicveterans.html).

**Newspaper Activities:**

Many of our soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve the liberties we hold dear. Discuss First Amendment rights and other liberties we enjoy in America. Find newspaper stories about other countries where the rights we enjoy are withheld or are being violated. Write an editorial about what you think should be done.



## Native American Code Talking

The Code Talkers' role in war required intelligence and bravery. They developed and memorized special codes. They endured some of the most dangerous battles and remained calm under fire. They served proudly, with honor and distinction. Their actions proved critical in several important campaigns, and they are credited with saving thousands of American and allies' lives.



"Indian Code Talkers," painting by Wayne Cooper depicting Comanche Charles Chibitty during the D-Day landings at Utah Beach

### American Indian Warrior Tradition

For thousands of years, American Indian men have protected their communities and lands. "Warrior" is an English word that has come to describe them. However, their traditional roles involved more than fighting enemies. They cared for people and helped

in many ways, in any time of difficulty. They would do anything to help their people survive, including laying down their own lives.

Despite everything that American Indians had endured in the past, the warrior tradition — the tradition of protecting their people — called many of them to serve in the United States military. They cared about their communities and the lands on which their people had lived for thousands of years. Many of them also served out of a sense of patriotism, wanting to defend the United States. For some American Indians, the military offered economic security and an opportunity for education, training, and world travel.

More than 12,000 American Indians served in World War I—about 25 percent of the male American Indian population at that time. During World War II, when the total American Indian population was less than 350,000, an estimated 44,000 Indian men and women served.

In World War I, Choctaw and other American Indians transmitted battle messages in their tribal languages by telephone. Although not used extensively, the World War I telephone squads played a key role in helping the United States Army win several battles in France that brought about the end of the war.

Beginning in 1940, the army recruited Comanches, Choctaws, Hopis, Cherokees, Navajo, and those from other Native American tribes to transmit messages.

The Marine Corps recruited Navajo Code Talkers in 1941 and 1942. Philip Johnston was a World War I veteran who had heard about the successes of the Choctaw telephone squad.

*All I thought when I went in the Marine Corps was going to give me a belt of ammunition, and a rifle, a steel helmet, and a uniform. Go and shoot some of those Japanese. That's what I thought; but later on they told us differently, you know different style, purpose of why they got us in. —Chester Nez, Navajo Code Talker.*

*That was about 1940, and when I got home I said, I found out they was recruiting 20 Comanches who could talk their tribe fluently for a special unit, and I told dad, "I'd like to go." —Charles Chibitty, Comanche Code Talker*

*We were drafted. They made us go. I didn't volunteer. —Franklin Shupla, Hopi Code Talker (National Museum of the American Indian interviews, 2004)*

Johnston, although not Indian, had grown up on the Navajo reservation. In 1942, he suggested to the Marine Corps that Navajos and other tribes could be very helpful in maintaining communications secrecy. After viewing a demonstration of messages sent in the Navajo language, the Marine Corps was so impressed that they recruited 29 Navajos in two weeks to develop a code within their language.

After the Navajo code was developed, the Marine Corps established a Code Talking school. As the war progressed, more than 400 Navajos were eventually recruited as Code Talkers. The training was intense. Following their basic training, the Code Talkers completed extensive training in communications and memorizing the code.

Some Code Talkers enlisted, others were drafted. Many of the Code Talkers who served were under age and had to lie about their age to join. Some were just 15 years old. Ultimately, there were Code Talkers from at least 16 tribes who served in the Army, the Marines, and the Navy.

### Creating Code

Many American Indian Code Talkers in World War II used their everyday tribal languages to convey messages. A message such as, "Send more ammunition to the front," would just be translated into the Native language and sent over the radio. These became known as Type Two Codes.

However, the Navajos, Comanches, Hopis, and Meskwakis developed and used special codes based on their languages. These became known as Type One Codes.

To develop their Type One Code, the original 29 Navajo Code Talkers first came up with a Navajo word for each letter of the English alphabet. Since they had to memorize all the words, they used things that were familiar to them, such as kinds of animals.

*So we start talking about different things, animals, sea creatures, birds, eagles, hawks, and all those domestic animals. Why don't we use those names of different animals — from A to Z. So A, we took a red ant that we live with*



Comanche code talkers.

all the time. B we took a bear, Yogi the Bear, C a Cat, D a Dog, E an Elk, F, Fox, G, a goat and so on down the line. —Chester Nez, Navajo Code Talker, National Museum of the American Indian interview, 2004

Here are some of the words they used:

Letter	Navajo word	English word
C	MOASI	Cat
D	LHA-CHA-EH	Dog
E	DZEH	Elk
I	TKIN	Ice
O	NE-AHS-JAH	Owl
R	GAH	Rabbit
V	A-KEH-DI-GLINI	Victor

See if you can translate the following coded message using the letters above:  
MOASI NE-AHS-JAH LHA-CHA-EH DZEH GAH DZEH MOASI DZEH TKIN A-KEH-DI-GLINI  
DZEH LHA-CHA-EH

This is the English translation:  
C-O-D-E R-E-C-E-I-V-E-D

### Be a Code Talker

Can you YIL-TAS, TSAH-AS-ZIH, A-KHA, NO-DA-IH, GAH, A-KHA, GLOE-IH, TSAH, HANE-AL-NEH?

That's Navajo code for "code your own message?"

Navajo Code Talkers memorized 17 pages of code as part of their training. Imagine the pressure that was on the Code Talkers. First, they had to develop a code that the enemies would not be able to translate. Then they had to memorize it. In battle, they had to transmit their messages with the utmost care and accuracy under difficult circumstances. Their work saved lives and helped the United States achieve victories.

The Navajo Code Talkers developed their own code dictionary. This dictionary was kept secret for many years and was only made public in 1968. To find a copy of the Navajo Code Dictionary, go to this web page:

<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq61-4.htm>

Here's how the message is decoded:

MOASI (C-Cat), NE-AHS-JAH (O-Owl), LHA-CHA-EH (D-Dog), DZEH (E-Elk), GAH (R-Rabbit), DZEH (E-Elk), MOASI (C-Cat), DZEH (E-Elk), TKIN (I-Ice), A-KEH-DI-GLINI (V-Victor), DZEH (E-Elk), LHA-CHA-EH (D-Dog)

The Navajos, Comanches, Hopis, and others also had to develop special words for World War II military terms, such as types of planes, ships, or weapons. They were given picture charts that showed them the items. After looking at the pictures, they came up with words that seemed to fit the pictures.

Native word	Literal meaning	Code meaning
tushka chipota (Choctaw)	warrior soldier	soldier
atsá (Navajo)	eagle	transport plane
paaki (Hopi)	houses on water	ships
wakaree'e (Comanche)	turtle	tank

On the battlefield, the work of sending coded messages was extremely serious. Being able to keep messages secret could make the difference between winning and losing a battle — or affect how many lives were saved or lost.

Code Talkers did more than speak into a hand-held radio or phone. They had to know how to operate both wire and radio equipment, and often had to carry it on their backs. They had to know how to set up and maintain the electronic communication wires, or lines. Sometimes their messages were broadcast over a wide area, helping to direct bigger operations. At other times, messages related to a smaller group, such as a platoon.

Code Talkers were given the messages in English. Without writing them down, they translated and sent them to another Code Talker. After the message was transmitted and received, it was written down in English and entered into a message logbook. The Code Talkers also sent messages in English. Messages were only coded when absolute security was needed.

The Navajo and Hopi were assigned to service in the Pacific in the war against Japan. The Comanches fought the Germans in Europe, and the Meskwakis fought them in North Africa. Code Talkers from other tribes fought at various locations in Europe, the Pacific, North Africa, and elsewhere.

Learn more about Native American Code Talkers at:

[www.nmai.si.edu/education/codetalkers](http://www.nmai.si.edu/education/codetalkers)

(Credit: National Museum of the American Indian, [www.nmai.si.edu](http://www.nmai.si.edu))

### Coding messages

Use the Navajo Code Dictionary to code this realistic message.

Code at <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq61-4.htm>.

Copy the message in English to your workbook. Then, write the Navajo code version: "Fierce action at forward position. Intense mortar attack. Request reinforcements immediately!"

Then, in your workbook, make up and write your own coded message to a friend.

### Newspaper Activity:

During World War II and beyond, Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, other ethnic groups, and women have experienced prejudice and/or racism in the military and society. Based on facts and information from local print and national online newspaper stories, write an editorial or essay on what you believe is the current status of racism and prejudice in America.



# Merrill's Marauders

## Japanese American Nisei helped shorten World War II

by Col. Renita Foster

*"As for the Nisei group, I couldn't have gotten along without them. Probably few realized that these boys did everything that an infantryman normally does plus the extra work of translating, interrogating, etc. Also, they were in a most unenviable position for identification, almost everyone from the Japanese to the Chinese shot first and identified later." —Maj. General Frank Merrill "Merrill's Marauders"*

The mission was deemed "dangerous and hazardous" from the start. The predicted casualty rate was a whopping 85 percent. Yet, nearly 3,000 volunteers eagerly began the quest on Feb. 21, 1944 that would take them over 700 miles of savage terrain through the jungles of Burma. A land cursed with blistering heat, poisonous snakes and spiders. Worst of all, a deadly, highly experienced, and well-equipped enemy force was waiting.

Accepting the challenge was the newly designated 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional). Better known as Merrill's Marauders for their commanding officer, then Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill, the task demanded the defeat of the Japanese 18th Division and capturing the town of Myitkyina, a strategic location with an all weather airfield and land route to China. Success meant World War II in the South Pacific was one step closer to victory.

The march began after extensive training operations in the jungles of Central India.

The unit had no tanks or heavy artillery; they would only fight with what they could carry on their backs and pack mules.

But the unit possessed a secret weapon that would make a huge difference.

Carefully chosen from 200 applicants were 14 Nisei (second generation Japanese American) Soldiers.

Called the "Marauder Samurai," they served in both the infantry and intelligence, and provided the crucial edge in discerning enemy activities and tactics.

Tech Sgt. Grant Hirabayashi was one such

Soldier. He had lived and attended school in Japan but he had volunteered because he was an American.

"Some of us had come from internment camps. Others had been in the service, but were removed from duty because of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor," said Hirabayashi. "Though we never spoke a lot about the situation, it was painful and confusing. I was confused because I said the Pledge of Allegiance every day in school which ends in 'with liberty and justice for all' and yet, my parent's farm was confiscated and my parents and siblings were interned behind barbed wire without due process of law."

To avoid detection by the Japanese, the Marauders simply went around them and through the jungle. Cutting through the bamboo and vegetation was exhausting work, and at times it required ten hours just to go one mile.

Cutting through elephant grass while they marched gave Hirabayashi a harrowing experience with insects. Leeches were rampant in the grass and one morning, Hirabayashi suddenly noticed his team leader covered in blood.

"I quickly woke him and we burned the leeches off with cigarette butts," said Hirabayashi.

Hirabayashi's duties included interrogating prisoners of war (POWs). One Japanese officer called him a traitor and refused to answer any questions. Stung by the POW's accusation, Hirabayashi offered a resourceful reply.

"If we were to cut our veins open, I guess the same blood would flow," he said calmly. "You're fighting for your country and I for mine. So we do have our differences, but I'm the interrogator and you're the POW."

Hirabayashi then had the officer, who was wounded after an escape attempt, placed in the center of the stockade with enlisted soldiers.

A short while later, Hirabayashi felt the Japanese officer pulling on his pant leg as he walked by. Begging for a weapon to kill himself, Hirabayashi explained that bullets couldn't be wasted like that. However, there was a sword if he wished to demonstrate the Japanese method of doing away with oneself. The prisoner declined. Within a few hours he asked to be moved and eventually talked.

"Because he was an officer, he had some valid and useful information," said Hirabayashi.



Eighty-six days after they started, the Marauders completed their mission. The predicted survival rate proved accurate as only an estimated 200 of 3,000 could be counted fit to carry on for another couple of days or weeks.

Their ranks had been depleted by disease, physical and mental fatigue, and casualties. However, all 14 of the Nisei survived.

Thanks to the Marauder Samurai's brilliant execution of intercepting and interpreting Japanese communications, captured documents, and plain old eavesdropping, potential disasters became successful operations.

Examples include a platoon changing its position in the direction of an enemy ambush and a Japanese ammunition dump located and destroyed by aircraft.

One radio interception saved an entire battalion that had fought for 36 hours and was without food and very little ammunition from a surprise enemy attack.

One Nisei bravely crawled out beyond his perimeter and overheard orders for an enemy attack at dawn. Thanks to the information, his platoon leader withdrew his men from their positions and "booby trapped" their foxholes.

Surprised to find the American Soldiers gone the next morning, the Japanese charged forward only to be met by a barrage of automatic weapons. The second enemy wave stopped their advance when they realized what had happened. Fearing they would retreat, the same Nisei boldly stood up in his foxhole and gave the command to "Charge!" in Japanese. Following what they thought was their officer's

order; the second set of enemy soldiers suffered the same fate as the first.

Some months later, while questioning a Japanese scientist, Hirabayashi was astonished to learn Japan was developing an atomic bomb.

While it was difficult understanding the technical language, Hirabayashi learned the weapon could destroy an entire city.

"I felt sure this was something my superior officers would be interested in but they dismissed the report," said Hirabayashi.

When the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, both Hirabayashi and the scientist were stunned. The POW even guessed using the weapon meant the war was over. Hirabayashi said no, but he felt sure the atomic bomb would be instrumental in bringing the hostilities to a close.

Hirabayashi was thankful for the chance to exercise his rights and duty as a citizen to serve his country and fight for freedom and equality.

"We fought side by side, shoulder to shoulder, alongside fellow Americans of many cultures and proved that being an American has nothing to do with your ancestry or color of your skin, but everything to do with spirit and conviction and love of freedom."

*(Credit: Permission for use by the U.S. Army and JAVA: The Japanese American Veterans Association, [www.javadc.org](http://www.javadc.org))*



# World War II: Women and the War



war when they were sent to the territories of Hawaii and Alaska—then considered overseas duty because they were not yet states. Women earned Purple Hearts, Bronze Stars and Legions of Merit. Some were held as prisoners of war and some died in the service of their country.



Four female WASP pilots leaving their ship, *Pistol Packin' Mama*, at Lockbourne AAF, OH, were trained to ferry the B-17 Flying Fortress Bomber. L to R are Frances Green, Marget (Peg) Kirchner, Ann Waldner and Blanche Osborn. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Women's participation in the US Armed Forces during World War II was a major turning point in the relationship of women to the military. The initial response to the idea of enlisting women met enormous resistance. As the war escalated and the national pool of qualified male draftees dwindled, it became clear that for every woman recruited, one less man had to be drafted. Women volunteers came to be viewed not just as a source of women's skills, but as a valuable source of high-quality personnel to meet overall manpower requirements for the massive military buildup.

Commanders who had once stated that they would accept women "over my dead body" soon welcomed them and asked for more. Gen. Eisenhower told Congress after the war, that when the formation of women's units was first proposed, "I was violently against it." Then he added, "Every phase of the record they compiled during the war convinced me of the error of my first reaction." Eisenhower went on to fight for a permanent place for women in the US Armed Forces.

After the war, Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz told Congress that when the formation of the WAVES was first contemplated, "I was one of the doubters in the early days ... and I was definitely reluctant to see this women's program started. However after it [the WAVES] started and after I saw it work, I became a convert."

The information in this section summarizes articles from *In Defense of a Nation: Servicewomen in World War II*, edited by Major General Jeanne M. Holm, USAF (Ret.) and Judith Bellafaire, Ph.D., Chief Historian of the Women's Memorial Foundation (Arlington, Virginia: Vandamere Press, 1998).

## Women's Army Corps (WAC)

Beginning in Oct. 1940, men between 21 and 35 were drafted for military service. The United States declared war on Japan on Dec. 8, 1941, in retaliation for the attack on Pearl Harbor, HI, and on Dec. 11 the United States declared war on Japan's allies, Germany and Italy. The draft was extended to include men aged 18-38, and in 1942 the upper age limit was extended to age 45. As their husbands, sons and brothers left home, many American women asked, "how about us?" Acting as their spokeswoman, Massachusetts Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers introduced a bill in May 1941 calling for the creation of an all-volunteer women's corps in the Army.

Initially, members of Congress, the press and the military establishment joked about the notion of women serving in the Army, but as America increasingly realized the demands of a war on two fronts (Japan and Germany), leaders also faced an acute manpower shortage. In May 1942, the House and the Senate approved a bill creating the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and Oveta Culp Hobby, Chief of the Women's Interest Section in the Public Relations Bureau at the War Department and a lobbyist for the WAAC bill, became its first director. Although the women who joined considered themselves in the Army, technically they were civilians working with the Army. By the spring of 1943, 60,000 women had volunteered and in July 1943, a new congressional bill transformed the WAAC to the Women's Army Corps (WAC), giving Army women military status.



WAC training class at Ft. Des Moines, IA. — Women's Memorial Foundation Collection

The Army opened five WAAC/WAC training centers and in July 1942, the first group of 440 women officer candidates (40 of whom were African-American) and 330 enlisted women began training at Ft. Des Moines, IA. Except for weapons and tactical training, the women's courses paralleled those for Army men, as did their training circumstances.

In late 1942, WAACs began deploying overseas. Five WAAC officers had a harrowing experience en route to reporting for duty at Allied Headquarters in Algiers, North Africa. A German U-boat in the North Atlantic torpedoed the troop ship on which they traveled from England to North Africa. A British destroyer came to the rescue and saved the women officers and other survivors from the burning, sinking ship and delivered them safely to Oran,

Algeria. Within a few days they were at work in Allied Headquarters. As the war continued, most overseas assignments were to the European Theater of Operations and over 8,300 served in England, France, Germany and Italy. Others deployed to the Pacific and the Far East.



WACs assigned to the Eighth Air Force in England operate tele-type machines. (DOD photograph)

WAC training class at Ft. Des Moines, IA. — Women's Memorial Foundation Collection

Women performed their duties like seasoned troopers — even amid unhealthy and uncomfortable conditions. One woman stationed in the Philippines explained:

"We were warned to keep our sleeves down, wear our wool socks ... watch out for wallabies (small rodent-like kangaroos that bumped under our cots at night), tarantulas (dump boots every morning), and snakes. ... The tents were hot during the day and cold at night because we were sitting right on the Equator."

Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Allied Commander, was among high-ranking officers praising the women. Gen. MacArthur "praised the WACS highly, calling them 'my best soldiers,' and alleged that they worked harder than men, complained less and were better disciplined."

The information in this article is excerpted from "Women's Army Corps: WAAC and WAC" by Colonel Betty Morden, USA (Ret.). Colonel Morden's essay appears in *In Defense of a Nation: Servicewomen in World War II*, edited by Major General Jeanne M. Holm, USAF (Ret.) and Judith Bellafaire, Ph.D., Chief Historian of the Women's Memorial Foundation (Arlington, Virginia: Vandamere Press, 1998).

## Newspaper Activities

Find newspaper stories about veteran's military service, but also people who chose to fulfill their civic responsibility by serving in other ways such as firefighters, police, teachers, volunteers, etc. What is it about their service that makes it stand out beyond being a regular job? What sacrifices may they have to make as part of their service? Discuss ways that you and/or your class can serve your school or community.

# Air Force Pilot Lorraine Rodgers Shares Her Story



1,074 women. That's the number of the first large group of women pilots — Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) — officially recognized as having flown in service of the United States military. Measured against all of military history, that's a small number. But, measured against the history of the acceptance of women in the military, 1,074 is a significant group. One of them was Lorraine (Zillner) Rodgers of Alexandria, VA. She joined the WASP shortly after it formed in August 1943, under the direction of Jacqueline Cochran via a merger of the existing Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS — a small group of experienced volunteer women pilots ferrying aircraft) and the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD — volunteer women pilots training to fly military aircraft).

Rodgers was an experienced pilot before she joined the WASP. After college, and during weekend time off from working at Douglas Plant in Park Ridge, IL, where she helped to build military aircraft, Rodgers flew as a recreational pilot at a nearby airstrip.

It was at the airstrip that Rodgers heard about the WASP program, she told oral historians in February 2008. "Someone at the airport told me Jacqueline Cochran was in town interviewing women pilots to fly military aircraft. 'I said, 'where is she?' and called down at the hotel ... and was interviewed by her. The only woman I had ever heard of flying airplanes was Jacqueline Cochran, and she's the one that interviewed me so, needless to say, I was very inspired."

Initially, there were more than 25,000 WASP hopefuls. Only Rodgers and 1,074 of her sister WASP earned their wings by meeting the previous flight-time experience requirements; passing mental and physical exams; and completing 23 weeks of physical training, military flying and ground school, math, physics, and Morse Code, radio, map reading, navigation, meteorology, engine repair and military regulation lessons.

Before the WASP were disbanded by Congress Dec. 20, 1944, Rodgers and her fellow WASP had flown 60 million miles in 60,000 hours across the country for the war effort. WASP tested new airplanes and tested planes after new or repaired parts were installed. They ferried and delivered planes, performed check flights on repaired planes, towed targets for anti-aircraft gunnery practice, flew searchlight-tracking missions, simulated bombings and even instructed male cadets.

"We flew seven days a week," she recalled. "I would get up in the morning and have breakfast and be at the squadron office at 7am. I would pick up my orders and say it was, 'go to Kansas City and pick up a new plane and deliver it to California.' I'd go over,

pick up this new plane, take it up and test it (if it had just come off assembly), accept it for the Army Air Force and start my trip. You're alone the whole time. I'd chart my course, take off and start flying ... watch the gauges, figure out where the next closest field is and dog in and have them refuel, take off and keep going and going. ... As the sun went down, behind the horizon, that's when you went down and landed. We flew all day long, seven days a week.

While her time in the WASP was always both thrilling and exhausting, there were times it was dangerous as well. In all, 38 WASP died in service. Rodgers was very nearly one of them while completing basic school in Waco, TX.

After she'd gone on a practice run with her instructor he told her to, "take the plane up and practice" on her own. "I was half way out and suddenly my plane flipped upside down and went into a spin, an inverted spin," she recalled. "I'm inverted upside down, going down and I worked with it. I did everything I had been taught, (and) things I hadn't been taught. I did anything I could think of to get that plane (righted).

Her efforts were in vain. Nothing the seasoned pilot tried seemed to have any effect on the plane. "Then, I looked out and saw how close I was to the ground. I knew I had to get out," she said. "As I bailed out of the plane, you're supposed to count to 10 (before pulling the ripcord), so I said 'one, two, ten!' and pulled the ripcord. I was too close to that ground."

Rodgers somehow survived and after a few bandages, she was called before a board of review. She assumed the worst; she would

be kicked out of the WASP for crashing the plane. After repeating her story many times for the board, she was called to the flight line. "I thought, 'uh, oh. This is where I get the word,'" she recalled. Instead, Rodgers was met by her instructor who gave her a more shocking announcement. "Your rudder cables had been cut," he told her solemnly. "They never told me who did it (the saboteur)." But after all the BT's (trainer aircraft) were checked for similar issues, Rodgers was back in the air.

Hers was not the only incident of sabotage on WASP planes. Though her case was never proven, others cases were proven to have been committed by male pilots or crew resentful of women flying military aircraft. Still, such incidents were rare. Much more frequently, WASP encountered men who either couldn't believe women could be, and actually were, pilots or men who outright didn't want them to be pilots.

Being a WASP — or a woman serving in a man's military in World War II — wasn't always easy but it was always rewarding, Rodgers stressed. "My time as a WASP was just another world to learn all these marvelous things and what these airplanes can do," she said. "Oh! It was great! I really enjoyed it!"

Excerpts in this piece are taken from the Lorraine Rodgers interview by Ali Reed of the Connelly School of the Holy Child History Documentary Project, Feb. 12, 2008, transcript; Women's Memorial Foundation Oral History Collection. Material used for this piece is with the permission of the Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc., [www.womensmemorial.org](http://www.womensmemorial.org).

## A Tale of Survival and Duty *From the Wounded Warrior Project*

"I remember the ground coming really quick and there was nothing I could do," Claude Boushey said, reflecting on the helicopter crash in Iraq that broke his leg, shattered and compressed his vertebrae, and compromised 80 percent of his spinal canal.

It was June 13, 2004. The mission started as support reconnaissance, but he was soon called to assist troops in contact with insurgents. Claude was in the left seat operating the systems when the pilot warned him something was wrong. The fuel control had failed, and the entire rotor drooped off, and was unable to sustain flight. Claude was quick to send a mayday call out before crashing.

They hit hard and landed in a swamp, rolling, fuel spilling all over them. Upon impact Claude felt a shriek of pain up his spine. The helicopter ended on its side, the cyclic pinned against Claude's leg.

"I was in water up to my neck. I actually tasted the fuel in my mouth. I saw the engine smoking. I tried to get out, and I couldn't. I was pinned."

It's a person's worst nightmare and

greatest fear combined—drowning or being burned alive.

But thanks to Claude's mayday call, help arrived quickly. The area was secured, and shortly after the MEDEVAC landed.

Initially, Claude was taken to Baghdad Combat Surgical Hospital and later taken by MEDEVAC out of theatre to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. After four surgeries, one lasting 14 hours, doctors didn't think he would make it, and if he did, would probably never walk again. Determined to beat the odds, Claude was eventually sent back to his native Hawaii to recover at home on convalescent leave. "It took me eight months to start walking straight again, so that was challenging, but I appreciate things now," says Claude, "I can walk."

Walking wasn't enough for Claude. Fifteen months after the crash and several Army medical waivers, he was approved to fly again and accepted a deployment back to Iraq. "I needed to go back because I felt I didn't finish the job the first time. It was important for me to deploy again both mentally and emotionally."

Claude's second tour of duty lasted from July 2006 to October 2007. "It fulfilled me as a soldier, a pilot, and a person. I'm fortunate I made it back, because a lot of my friends didn't. I think about them every day."

Claude retired in December 2008. Today, he serves as a civilian pilot assigned to MEDEVAC missions for the Maryland State Police. He also works part time as a peer specialist with Virginia's Wounded Warrior Program.

"My first priority is my family, but I make

time to volunteer as a DAV driver for the DC VA Medical Center. It's really fulfilling. I'm a fish back in the water and helping fellow veterans."

Claude became involved with the Wounded Warrior Project as a peer mentor because he wanted to do something for injured veterans. "A combat veteran understands another combat veteran's emotional and mental state. I had a lot of close calls. I appreciate what a soldier goes through."

To learn more about the Wounded Warrior Project, visit them online at [www.woundedwarrior.org](http://www.woundedwarrior.org)

### Newspaper Activities

In the days leading up to Veterans Day, November 11, read through your newspaper to discover celebrations that are planned in your area. Talk to your family about attending some of them.

Create a classroom Veterans Day bulletin board or poster by clipping newspaper articles and photographs of veterans and active duty military personnel.



# The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Teacher Resource Guide, Available Online now!

The **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Day National Committee** are pleased to offer a Teacher Resource Guide for schools. Veterans Day, observed each year on November 11th, offers a chance to thank America's Veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice.

There are nearly 24 million Veterans living among us, in every state and from every walk of life. Many students today are the sons, daughters, cousins, neighbors, or relatives of a Veteran or current service member. The **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Teacher Resource Guide** provides information, activities, and reproducible handouts to assist schools in teaching their students about the history of Veterans Day. This guide also provides an array of suggestions for schools to organize events to honor and thank the Veterans in their communities. You can download the guide free or charge at [www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday](http://www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday)

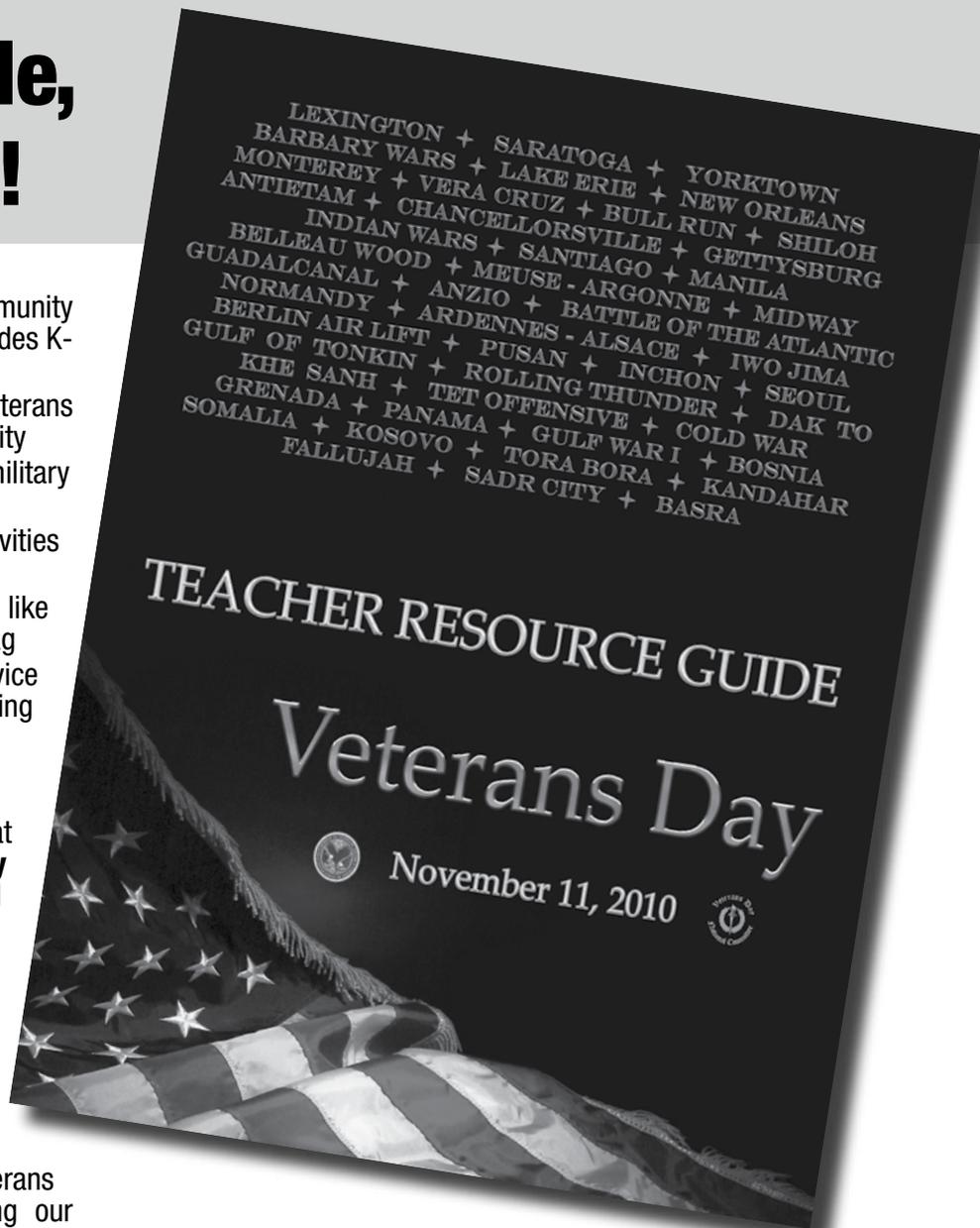
The VA's Teacher Resource Guide includes:

- Background information on the history of Veterans Day

- Classroom and community activities for students in grades K-12
- Suggestions for planning Veterans Day events in your community
- A timeline of U.S. military engagements
- A "Kid's Packet" with activities for younger students
- Instruction on civic skills like how to fold the American flag
- Links to Veterans Service Organizations, including scholarship information

Visit us online at [www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday](http://www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday) to download this guide and to find free downloadable Veterans Day posters. Teachers and parents can also learn about national and local Veterans Day events in their communities.

Join us this Veterans Day in remembering our veterans from all eras, and rewarding our veterans today with the honor they so richly deserve.

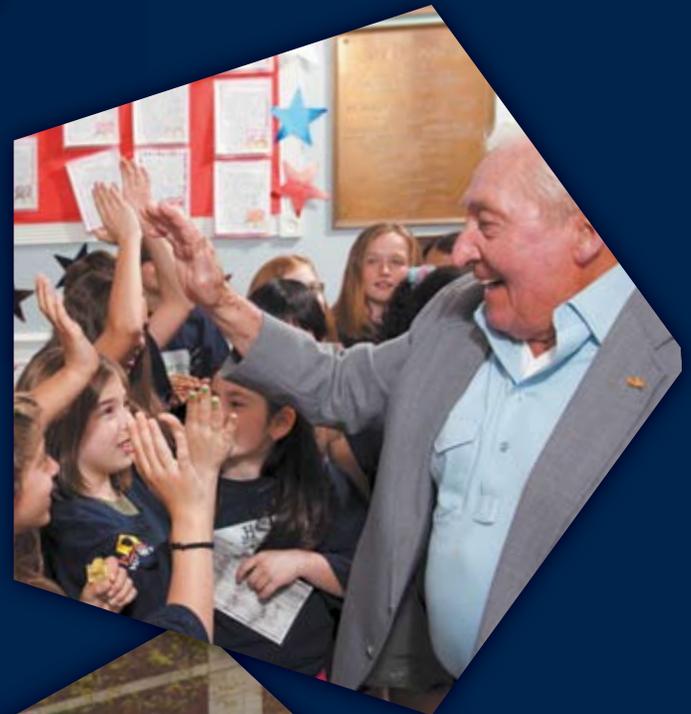


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