



THE QUARTERLY DISPATCH



Featuring articles about our collection, captivating stories from our Nation's military history, and information on upcoming events at the National Museum of Military Vehicles.



Bu Dop, South Vietnam, December 1967: Spec. 4 Ron Brault of Kansas City, MO, eats dinner while sitting next to a Christmas tree sent to him by his family.

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A WORD FROM THE FOUNDER

We published the following message about Veteran suicide on Facebook for Veterans Day. We republish it now, in its entirety, along with a response from Jeffrey “Chief” Rogers, a combat Veteran who is Associate Dean of Men at Hillsdale College.

Please pass along both of these messages and consider taking action yourself to help prevent Veteran suicide.

Enough is Enough

We just lost another combat Veteran friend to suicide. He was loved. He was supported. He had children. He had a lot to live for.

He also was in pain. He had to have felt anguish and hopelessness. Now he is gone. It did not have to happen, but it did. We have to do better stopping Veteran suicide.

I am neither a mental health professional nor a Veteran, but I have lost family members and friends to suicide and considered suicide myself seriously enough to have planned it in detail. Here is what I see as some common threads.

- Anyone can commit suicide. There is no stereotype.
- People who commit suicide often give no advance clue to those around them. They assure family and friends they are fine.
- Reasons for suicide are diverse. They might include consequences of TBI and/or PTSD. There may be other changes in brain chemistry.

Hopelessness. Lack of purpose. Isolation. Failure to meet one's own expectations. Shame. Survivor's guilt. Veterans often check these boxes at a higher rate than non-Veterans.

Veterans served and sacrificed years of their lives to protect the rest of us. It is now our turn to return the favor. I do not have all the answers on how to do this, but I do have some ideas:

1. Eliminate the stigma surrounding suicide ideation.

In my view, it is common, normal, and part of the human condition, not a flaw or a sign of weakness. I disclosed my own suicide ideation to set an example.



Dan Starks, Founder of the National Museum of Military Vehicles.

Let's talk about suicide like we would talk about any other part of being human. Let's dispel this part of a Veteran's isolation or shame and get the visibility to intervene at exactly the right time.

2. Employ Veterans.

This can help provide purpose, connection, and self-esteem.

3. Facilitate connections, one-on-one or in groups.

Be creative. We can all help Veterans and their families be better connected.

4. Support the Wilderness Healing Project.

We recently founded a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to help Veterans and their families through outdoor wilderness experiences provided free of charge. This includes hunting, camping, equine therapy, horseback riding, side-by-side trips, hiking, mountain scenery and peacefulness, and staring into a camp fire with other Veterans. Consider donating at wildernesshealingproject.org to help us reach more Veterans. 100% of all donations go directly to funding Veteran services. The National Museum of Military Vehicles pays all administrative and overhead expenses.

5. Support other programs helping reduce Veteran suicide.

There are many private programs that could use more visibility and participation, such as the Veterans Talking to Veterans Program created by Mentor Agility (mentoragility.com) and supported by the Wyoming Military Department (wyomilitary.wyo.gov) as well as

Catholic Charities of Wyoming (charitieswyoming.org).

6. Start your own program to help Veterans.

Why not?

7. Thank Veterans for their service in a genuine and meaningful way.

Make sure they know we “see” them and appreciate their service and their sacrifice on our behalf. Make every day Veterans Day, not just November 11.

To everyone reading this: **What ideas do you have on what more we can do to stop or reduce Veteran suicide?**

We have to work together to do better. We lose more Veterans to suicide every single day.

In that post, I asked people to weigh in with ideas on what we can do to stop or reduce Veteran suicides. A friend who is a Navy Corpsman combat Veteran and Associate Dean of Men at Hillsdale College responded with great wisdom and gave me permission to re-post his letter. Below is his letter in its entirety. Please, spread the word and keep the ideas coming:

“

Dan,

I read your piece on Veteran Suicide, and it truly saddened me to hear about your friend.

I too have lost friends, co-workers, and fellow Sailors and Marines to suicide. Like you, I’ve thought long and hard about what can be done to confront this epidemic.

I agree completely that this conversation needs to happen more often—and not behind closed doors.

It should be a kitchen table topic, something we can speak about openly and honestly.

Some tangible steps I would recommend are:

Intergenerational Mentorship

- Pairing Veterans with at-risk youth, college RAs, or even ROTC students gives vets a chance to lead again.
- Passing on discipline and resilience reframes their experience as valuable — not tragic.
- This restores purpose and the “protector” role in a new context.

Spiritual and Moral Reconciliation

- Many Veterans carry unseen spiritual wounds — guilt, betrayal, or loss of faith.
- Chaplain-led retreats or Veteran-specific confession spaces can provide real healing.
- These programs focus not on diagnosis, but on forgiveness, meaning, and belonging — often the missing pieces in suicide prevention.

Veteran-Led Economic Cooperatives

- Giving Veterans ownership in small businesses or co-ops creates long-term stability and pride.
- Example: A Veteran-owned carpentry shop or auto garage where profits and leadership rotate among members.
- It meets three needs at once: employment, community, and dignity.

Training Civilians to Listen Differently

- Teaching civilians to “listen without fixing” or to invite Veterans into meaningful roles can be life-saving.
- Churches, campuses, and employers can host “Veteran Story Nights” or “Mission Debriefs” that allow honest conversations to happen naturally.

Restoring Tribe

- The loss of tribe after service is one of the most dangerous shifts.
- Rebuilding that tribe — through mission trips, leadership development, or service projects with civilians — can recreate the sense of belonging that prevents despair.

All of these ideas take time, but I believe it’s in the small things — in the simple moments, in the “little” — that much can be found. Sometimes healing begins not with a program, but with presence, a shared meal, or a listening ear. That’s what we do with student Veterans here at Hillsdale.

Very Respectfully,

Jeffery Rogers

Associate Dean of Men

Hillsdale College

”

If you or someone you know is struggling or thinking about suicide, help is available right now.

You’re not alone — please call or text 988, or chat via 988lifeline.org to connect with support 24/7.

—Dan Starks, Founder, National Museum of Military Vehicles

CURATORIAL DEPARTMENT



Rae Whitley, Curator of the National Museum of Military Vehicles

This past quarter has been a productive one for the NMMV Curatorial Department. Much of our focus has been on preparing for the upcoming exhibit changes in our galleries. This project includes identifying relevant artifacts, conducting research, taking measurements, and developing new displays organized around specific themes. The refresh will expand and enhance both our World War I and Vietnam War exhibits.

Fall also brings a steady schedule of school visits. At NMMV, we aim to make each field trip both enjoyable and educational. To support this, we collaborated with the Director of Education to implement a “Scavenger Hunt” to be used on field trips. This activity helps students stay engaged while also reinforcing key information from their tour.

Along with school groups, we were pleased to welcome several private tours this quarter. Organizations such as Hunting with Heroes, Veterans Talking to Veterans, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department visited the Museum for tailored experiences designed to meet their specific interests. These personalized tours allow groups to connect more deeply with the collection and its history.

Our curatorial team also remains active on the Museum’s YouTube channel. Each video requires significant preparation, including research, scriptwriting, and filming. These videos are designed to offer viewers detailed insights into the vehicles and artifacts in our collection that they may not encounter elsewhere.

This quarter we said a bittersweet goodbye to a valued member of our team, Lucious Larsen. Lucious began working with us during his high school summers and grew into a full-time member of the curatorial staff. He contributed to tours, research projects, and YouTube production. Lucious has enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, and we are extremely proud of his service and all he accomplished during his time at NMMV.



Lucious Larsen swearing in at the enlistment ceremony held at the San Diego Entrance Processing Center in San Diego, California.

Looking ahead, our team will continue working on upcoming exhibit updates, educating visitors, and creating unique and informative content. We appreciate the continued support of our community and look forward to a productive and engaging season ahead. Happy holidays to everyone, and we will see you next year!

— Rae Whitley, Curator of National Museum of Military Vehicles

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



*Erica Harris, Director of Education,
National Museum of Military Vehicles*

Our educational programming at the National Museum of Military Vehicles continues to thrive. This fall, we've welcomed students from elementary through high school for immersive field trips that connect classroom learning with hands-on exploration of American military history, innovation, and service.

During each visit through, guided discussions on civic duty and sacrifice, we tailor to Wyoming's social studies standards and the developmental needs of our learners. High school students engaged in artifact analysis and oral history, while younger students explored themes of teamwork and resilience through interactive exhibits and storytelling.

Veterans Day

We're especially proud of our continued collaboration with Fremont County School District #2 for our annual Veterans Day programming.

Together, we honor local Veterans through student-led tributes, musical performances, and Veteran interviews that reflect our community's deep respect for those who've served.

Veterans Day, originally known as Armistice Day, was established to commemorate the end of World War I on November 11, 1918.

In 1954, it was renamed Veterans Day to honor all U.S. military Veterans, and today it serves as a powerful reminder of the courage and commitment of our armed forces.

This fall, we've introduced new lesson plans focused on communication advancements during World War I. Students explore the evolution from signal flags and carrier pigeons to field telephones and encrypted radio transmissions. These lessons not only highlight technological innovation but also underscore the critical role of communication in shaping battlefield outcomes and global diplomacy.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to providing transformative learning experiences that honor our mission and empower the next generation of historians, leaders, and changemakers.

— Erica, Director of Education
National Museum of Military Vehicles

A promotional graphic for the National Museum of Military Vehicles. It features a circular inset image of a military tank in a museum setting. The text is arranged around and below this image. At the top right, it says 'NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MILITARY VEHICLES'. To the right of the tank image are three bullet points: 'Private tour included in trip', 'Individualized for your group', and 'Aligned to your Social Studies Standards'. Below the tank image, it says 'Join us for FIELD TRIPS BOOK TODAY!'. Below that, it says 'TO BOOK PLEASE SEE THE SCHOOL VISITS PAGE ON OUR WEBSITE'. To the right of this text is a lightbulb icon inside a thought bubble. Below the lightbulb, it says 'Extend your learning outside of the classroom and into the world of history! One on one Q&A with our curatorial staff. Deep dive into content specific areas.' At the bottom left, there is a logo for the National Museum of Military Vehicles, which is a stylized mountain shape with a star. At the bottom right, in a yellow box, it says 'For any questions please call or email us! 307.455.3802 info@nmmv.org'.

FROM PEARL HARBOR TO PRESENT:

A HERO HONORED AT NMMV

By Libby Andrews

On the morning of December 7, 1941, the quiet calm of Pearl Harbor was disrupted by the roar of aircraft engines and the blast of bombs. In under 90 minutes, the Japanese delivered catastrophic destruction.

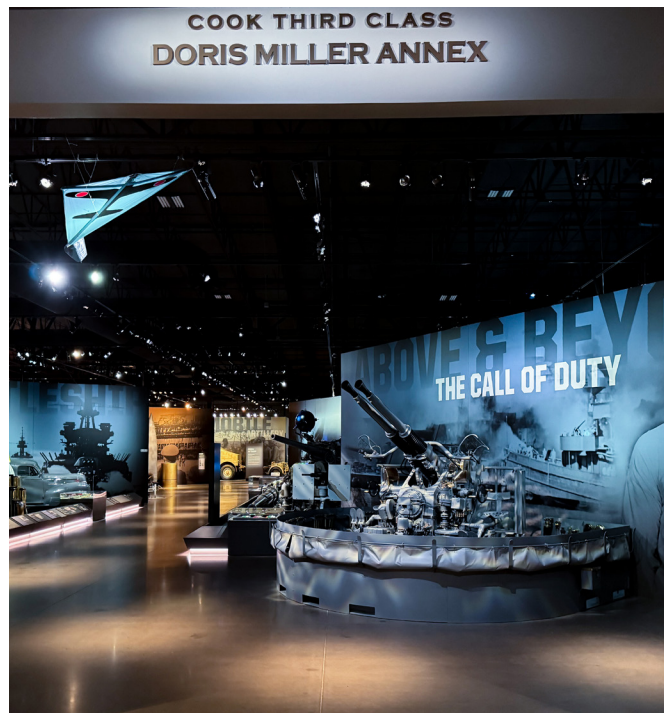
Out of the 102 ships present, 15 received minor damage, 11 suffered medium to heavy damage, and seven sank in the harbor, three of which were total losses. In this surprise attack, more than 2,400 Americans lost their lives.

Amid the chaos and destruction of that devastating day in American history, countless acts of heroism unfolded. At the National Museum of Military Vehicles, the actions of one young sailor from Waco, Texas, aboard the USS *West Virginia* are honored with the Doris Miller Annex to the Marshall Gallery.

Doris “Dorie” Miller was a Mess Attendant, Second Class while aboard the battleship USS *West Virginia* (BB-48) in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. When the attack on Pearl Harbor began, Miller rushed to his assigned battle station at the ship’s anti-aircraft battery, only to find that the guns had been destroyed by enemy fire. After receiving orders to assist the wounded, Miller carried several sailors to safety, including his mortally wounded captain, Mervyn Bennion.

However, this was not where Miller’s heroism ended. After evacuating crew members, he manned a .50-caliber machine gun, firing at enemy aircraft until he ran out of ammunition. Despite having never been formally trained to use this weapon, Miller helped defend his ship in one of the most desperate moments of the war’s opening hours.

Although Miller was nominated to receive the Medal of Honor, Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox opposed this idea due to the belief that Black sailors should not serve in combat. Ultimately, Doris Miller was awarded the Navy Cross and became the first African American sailor in U.S. history to receive that honor.



Entrance to the Doris Miller Annex.

Miller continued to serve in the Navy, and was promoted to Cook, Third Class (Petty Officer) in June 1943. Unfortunately, he did not see the end of World War II. He later lost his life on November 24, 1943, during the Battle of Makin aboard the escort carrier USS *Liscome Bay* when the ship was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine.

In addition to Miller, 702 officers and sailors lost their lives, and this tragedy is considered the deadliest sinking of a carrier in the history of the U.S. Navy.



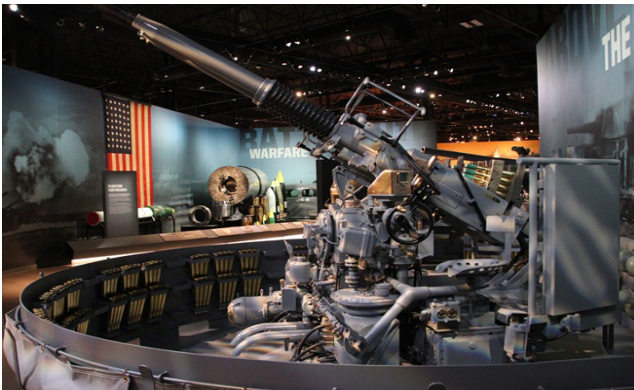
Miller receives Navy Cross from Admiral Nimitz aboard the USS Enterprise.

THE DORIS MILLER ANNEX

Doris Miller was recognized as one of the first U.S. heroes of World War II. His courage became a symbol of determination, equality, and patriotism, representing the many Black servicemen who showed bravery in combat despite segregation laws.

The U.S. Navy honored Miller with a destroyer escort, USS *Miller* (FF-1091), and a future aircraft carrier, USS *Doris Miller*, is scheduled to be launched in 2029. Many streets, schools, and parks throughout the U.S. also bear Doris Miller's name, and in May 2022, the National Museum of Military Vehicles honored the Pearl Harbor hero with the opening of the Doris Miller Annex to the Marshall Gallery.

At NMMV, the Doris Miller Annex serves as a lasting tribute to Miller's heroism. The annex showcases naval, aviation, and artillery weapons from World War II, focusing on both military technology and the stories of resilience, sacrifice, and courage that emerged from global conflict.



40mm Bofors Twin Mount on display in the Doris Miller Annex.



40MM BOFORS TWIN MOUNT

Upon entering the Doris Miller Annex, the first weapon visitors see is a 40mm Bofors Twin Mount, a gun that became the U.S. Navy's primary close-range air-defense weapon World War II.

Each Bofors twin mount required a seven-man crew and fired 120 rounds per minute per barrel. Its 1.9-pound shells provided defense against air attacks, with a maximum range of 11,000 yards and a ceiling of 22,800 feet. The reliability, rate of fire, and stopping power of the Bofors made this weapon indispensable against enemy aircraft.

The Bofors on display in the Doris Miller Annex came from the USS *Downes* (DD-375), which was damaged during the attack on Pearl Harbor, but later repaired and returned to service in the Pacific campaigns at Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima.

16-INCH GUN CHAMBER AND AMMUNITION

The Doris Miller Annex also displays a 16-inch gun chamber from the USS *West Virginia*, the battleship Doris Miller bravely defended during the Japanese attack.

From inside the battleship's armored turret, more than 150 men worked to keep the cannons firing at a rate of one and a half rounds per minute. Gunners loaded 2,100-pound shells by hand, followed by six 100-pound bags of propellant.



"Battleship Warfare" display in the Doris Miller Annex.

USS *West Virginia* (BB-48)

During the attack on Pearl Harbor, the USS *West Virginia* was struck by seven torpedoes and two converted 16-inch naval shells dropped as bombs. The ship, nicknamed the “Wee Vee,” went up in flames as it sank into the harbor, and 66 men perished below decks.

Among these fatalities were three sailors who survived for sixteen days. They could be heard tapping a distress signal but were unreachable.

Raised and repaired, the *West Virginia* rejoined the fleet in 1944. She continued to serve in the Pacific until 1945 and was present to witness the war’s end in Tokyo Bay during Japan’s surrender on September 2, 1945.



The USS West Virginia burning in Pearl Harbor.

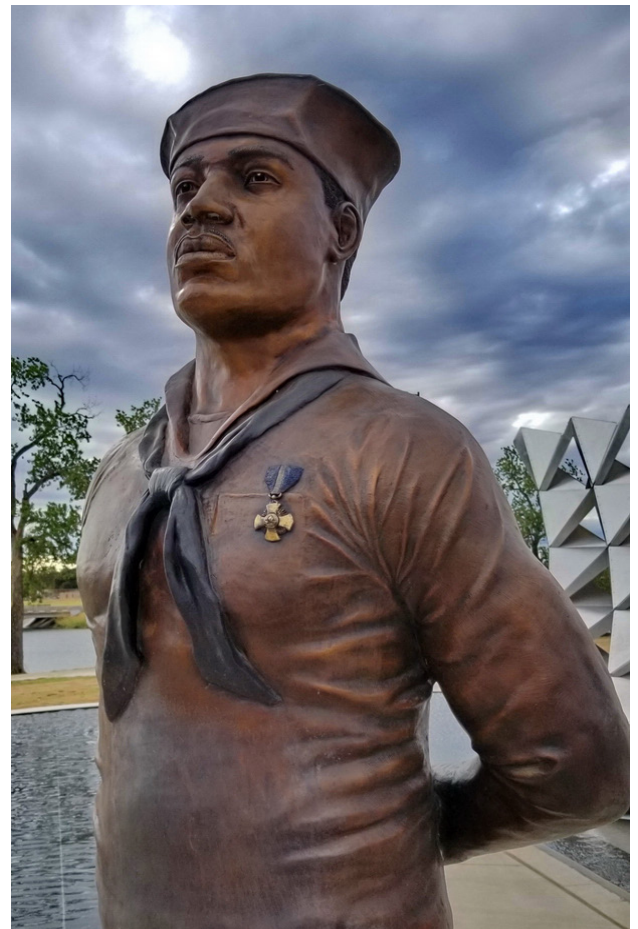
MILLER’S LEGACY AND PEARL HARBOR’S REMEMBRANCE

The attack on Pearl Harbor was the beginning of America’s involvement in World War II, leading to thousands of casualties but also many stories of valor. Doris Miller’s actions of courage, selflessness, and strength have inspired many.

As visitors walk through the Doris Miller Annex, these weapons bring the history of World War II beyond the pages of history books. They are tangible connections to that December morning and the sacrifice of the men who operated them.

On this Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, we honor those who served, sacrificed, and stood their ground on that fateful day.

Men such as Doris Miller overcame prejudice and exemplified extraordinary bravery, inspiring generations to follow. Their legacy lives on, and in the National Museum of Military Vehicles, their courage will never be forgotten.



Statue of Doris Miller standing “on deck” as he appeared having just received the Navy Cross pinned to his chest; at the Doris Miller Memorial in Waco, Texas.

A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE: HOW THE SS *MEREDITH* VICTORY EARNED THE NAME THE “SHIP OF MIRACLES

By Rae Whitley

In an unprecedented display of humanitarian effort, the UN, led by the United States, would show the world its resolve to provide freedom in what was known as The Christmas Miracle.

The Evacuation Begins

By December 9, 1950, beleaguered UN troops began to enter the North Korean east coast port city of Hungnam, where U.S. Navy and Merchant Marine ships were preparing to evacuate them.



Wounded 7th Infantry Division soldiers and Marines await evacuation during the retreat from the Chosin Reservoir.

In the following days, more UN troops poured in as ground was being lost to the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) and North Korean People's Army (NKPA) units. Beginning late November, men of the U.S. Marines and the Army had been pushed from the Chosin Reservoir to the coast. The free world waited to hear if their fate would be reminiscent of Dunkirk.



Weary, cold, and exhausted troops evacuating Chosin Reservoir.



North Korean Refugees leaving with the U.S. withdrawal from Hungnam.

In those second and third weeks of December 1950, it was all the artillery and air support could do to hold the port. The evacuation was on a strict timetable: two weeks to get men, their equipment, supplies, and vehicles out of Hungnam. For the 100,000 North Korean refugees now trapped at the port, the Americans were their only hope of escape.



Convoy of U.S. troops evacuate at the Port of Hungnam.

The Evacuation Dilemma

While planning the evacuation, U.S. military leaders quickly learned they faced a serious dilemma. U.S. Navy ships, already loaded to capacity with troops, supplies, and vehicles, had no room for civilians. Even if they did, critics argued that it was too risky to take them. Americans had already caught enemy soldiers disguised as refugees trying to get into the port and onto the ships. A single saboteur with a few explosives could spell disaster for a packed Navy troop carrier.



Communist collaborators are held as POWs on board.

During the second week of December, a small number of civilians were evacuated. It was then hoped that if the Chinese didn't attack Hungnam and shipping became available, an additional 25,000 refugees would be evacuated before December 24.

As military personnel withdrew throughout December, the refugees began to lose hope. With the December 24 operational deadline quickly approaching, their chances of survival didn't look good. The Chinese were getting closer by the day.



Chinese POWs of the U.S. forces, on the march to Hungnam.



Troops Evacuating Chosin Reservoir.

Saving the Refugees

Finally, after much prodding and perseverance by key members of the military, specifically Col. Forney, the decision was made to evacuate "as many civilians as possible." With few ships available for civilian passengers and time running out, no one was sure how many refugees would be saved.



Loading refugees at low tide, Hungnam, North Korea.

The evacuation fleet included WW2 era "Victory Ships", which were provided by the Merchant Marines. Victory-class ships were cargo ships built between 1944-1946 to transport supplies and equipment overseas.

The S.S. Meredith Victory and Task Force 90

One of the Task Force 90 Victory Ships used in the Hungnam Evacuation was the SS *Meredith Victory*. This ship was named in honor of Meredith College to credit its completion of the Schools at War Program and the monetary pledges by students and faculty in War Loan Drives. The S.S. *Meredith Victory* was christened in California on June 23, 1945.



S.S. Meredith Victory.

Victory ships had been designed to accommodate only 35 crew members and 12 passengers.

Nonetheless, the SS *Meredith Victory* managed to board more than 14,000 North Korean civilians and steamed south unescorted while navigating a mine field and dodging air attacks. Refugees were packed chest-to-chest on deck and in the cargo holds, while others rested on top of jet fuel drums.

The ship sailed for two days to Pusan, South Korea, without additional food, water, or protection. In fact, the only weapon on board the ship was Captain Leonard LaRue's service sidearm.

Miraculously, there were no casualties, which later earned S.S. *Meredith Victory* the nickname "Ship of Miracles." In fact, First Mate D.S. Savastio, who only had first aid training, delivered five babies during the refugees' passage to safety.

James Robert Lunney, Staff Officer on the ship at the time and a Navy Veteran of World War II, stated in an interview years later:

"There's no explanation for why the Korean people, as stoic as they are, were able to stand virtually motionless and in silence. We were impressed by the conduct of the refugees, despite their desperate plight. We were touched by it."



Leonard LaRue is still revered in Korea for saving 14,000 North Korean civilians.



Bob Lunney (far left) with three of his fellow officers, 1950: (from left to right) Merle Smith, Al Kaufold, and Burley Smith.

Lunney continued in the interview, "War is also about preserving the integrity of a Nation and the dignity of its people – we felt we had done that."

Captain LaRue stayed in command of the S.S. *Meredith Victory* until 1952. In 1954, Captain LaRue, became a Benedictine monk of St. Paul's Abbey in New Jersey. He would spend his life as a humble monk, until his death, almost 50 years later in 2001.

To this day, the S.S. *Meredith Victory* holds the Guinness Book of World Records for the "Largest evacuation from land by a single ship."

Arriving at Pusan on Christmas Eve, S.S. *Meredith Victory* was only allowed to evacuate the wounded and a few suspected Communist sympathizers and take on interpreters and a small supply of food and water before being redirected to the island of Koje-Do, where it disembarked the refugees on Christmas Day.

By Christmas 1950, the U.S. ships of Task Force 90 had embarked and evacuated to safety 105,000 military personnel, 17,500 tanks and other vehicles, 350,000 measurement tons of cargo, and 91,000 Korean civilians.

A Christmas Miracle

On Christmas Eve, the last day of the Chosin-Hungnam saga, the lead story in *The New York Times* read: "Evacuation of Hungnam Completed... UN Fleet Brings Out 105,000 Soldiers and 100,000 Refugees."

The United Nations' first humanitarian rescue operation and the largest sea-borne, military evacuation of civilians, under combat conditions, in American history was over.

President Harry Truman was ecstatic.

"I thank God for the success of the Hungnam operation. It is the best Christmas present I've ever had," he proclaimed after receiving a Christmas call at 1:00 a.m. from Omar Bradley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Truman, America, and much of the world breathed a sigh of relief. A likely UN withdrawal from the Korean peninsula and a possible larger conflict with China and the Soviet Union had been avoided.

It is estimated that nearly a million descendants of those rescued at Hungnam live in freedom today in South Korea, the United States, and other countries around the world.



Col. Edward H. Forney, Deputy Chief of Staff, X Corps, receives Legion of Merit by MG Edward M. Almond, Commanding General X Corps, for his part in the Hungnam Evacuation in December 1950.

S.S. Meredith Victory's Gallant Ship Citation

On August 24, 1960, the S.S. *Meredith Victory* was awarded the U.S. Merchant Marine Gallant Ship Citation for her effort during the Hungnam evacuation.

The following text is from the citation:

At the height of the epoch-making evacuation of Hungnam, Korea, by the United Nations Forces in December 1950, the *MEREDITH VICTORY* was requested to assist in the removal of Korean civilians trapped and threatened with death by the encircling enemy armies. Most of the military personnel had been pulled out, and the city was aflame from enemy gunfire. Despite imminent danger of artillery and air attack, and while her escape route became more precarious by the hour, the *MEREDITH VICTORY* set her course through enemy minefields, and although having little food and water, and neither doctor nor interpreter, accomplished the three day voyage to safety at Pusan with her human cargo, including several babies born enroute, without loss of a single life.

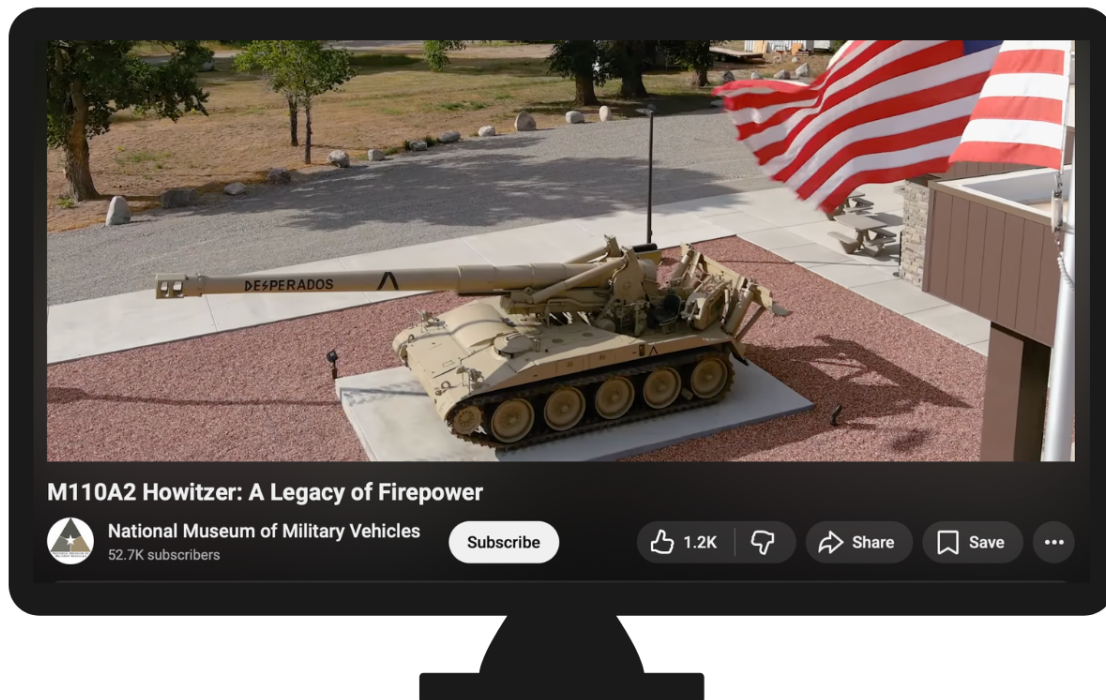
The courage, resourcefulness, sound seamanship, and teamwork of her master, officers and crew in successfully completing one of the greatest marine rescues in the history of the world have caused the name of the *MEREDITH VICTORY* to be perpetuated as that of a Gallant Ship.



S.S. Meredith Victory



Subscribe to our YouTube Channel for original content created and produced by the National Museum of Military Vehicles!



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Vehicles and Military History!**

Scan here to visit our channel!



“FOOD WILL WIN THE WAR”: WWI RATIONING AND CREATIVE RECIPES OF CHRISTMAS, 1917

By Erica Harris

As American families gathered to celebrate Christmas in 1917, the shadow of the First World War appeared large. On the home front, holiday traditions took on new meaning, with citizens rallying behind the war effort through acts of sacrifice, most notably, conserving food to support troops overseas.

Today, it is hard to think of anything but the norm of our “holiday traditions”. During the fall of 1917, rationing and scarcity transformed Christmas from a feast of abundance into a celebration of ingenuity. Although rationing was highly encouraged rather than mandatory, many Americans banded together to do all they could to support the war effort.

In August 1917, the U.S. Food Administration was established to ensure food supplies for the war effort through voluntary agreements and conservation measures. During this time, America experienced a critical reduction in food availability.



Cushman Parker, United States Food Administration, 1917. Color lithograph.



Chambers, Charles Edward, lithograph color poster, New York, 1917.

This was because domestic agricultural output was prioritized for troops overseas, which led to shortages and rising prices in civilian markets across America.

During the winter of 1917, Christmas celebrations continued, though the ideal Christmas meal changed with what was possible under rationing. Some of the ideas created by the U.S. Food Administration were Meatless Mondays, Wheatless Wednesdays, Fish Fridays, and even Porkless Thursdays and Sundays.

Along with those initiatives, children were encouraged to “clean their plates” as there were “starving orphans” in Europe. The idea was not to limit food but to find substitutes for foods in high demand, like beef and wheat.

With food shortages tightening and patriotism stirring in kitchens, home cooks and domestic scientists rose to the occasion with ingenuity, thrift, and a deep sense of duty.

Home economists and women's clubs distributed pamphlets and hosted demonstrations, teaching families how to stretch rations and substitute ingredients without sacrificing nutrition or morale.

Cooks were encouraged to use barley, cornmeal, and rye in place of wheat flour. Sugar was substituted with molasses, honey, and corn syrup. Vegetable oils and drippings replaced butter. Beans, lentils, and nuts were protein-rich meat alternatives.

Traditional Christmas dishes were not abandoned; they were transformed. A pre-war Christmas pudding might have been rich with suet, eggs, sugar, and imported dried fruits. By 1917, however, wartime versions relied more heavily on grated carrots or mashed potatoes to add moisture and sweetness and breadcrumbs and oats to stretch flour.

In addition to ingredient substitutes, cooking methods were adjusted to conserve fuel. Some dishes would be steamed rather than baked. Roasts, once the centerpiece of the holiday table, were often replaced with vegetable cutlets or fish.

Many families also found ways to contribute and give back to their communities.

Particularly in cities like New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, vacant lots, schoolyards, and backyards were transformed into productive home and community gardens.

These gardens provided fresh vegetables for holiday meals, helping to offset shortages. Despite the constraints, the spirit of the season endured. Families gathered, candles flickered, and songs were sung.



Save Wheat, Meats, Fats, Sugar. Color lithograph.

The Christmas of 1917 was not defined by what was missing, but by the creativity and solidarity that filled its place. In kitchens across the country, Americans proved that even in times of hardship, love and resourcefulness could still make the holidays bright.

At the National Museum of Military Vehicles, we honor the sacrifices made for American freedom, not just on the battlefield, but also on the home front. The story of Christmas 1917 offers a powerful lens through which we can explore themes of scarcity, creativity, and resilience.

It reminds us that patriotism was practiced in kitchens, gardens, and community halls, where ordinary citizens adapted with exceptional resolve. Resilience is not only forged in combat but cultivated in community.

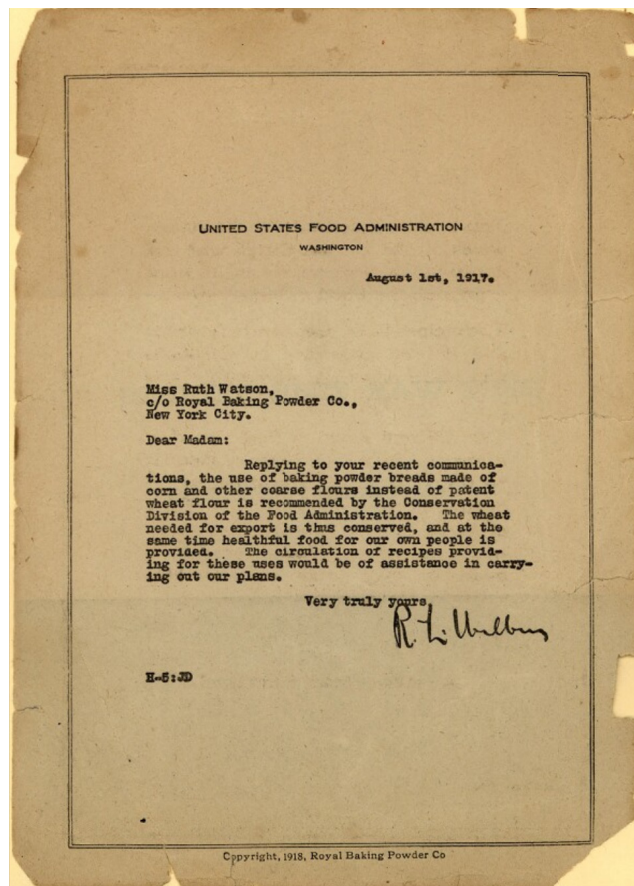
Christmas of 1917 was shaped by war and rationing, but also by innovation, hope, and tradition. Families didn't abandon celebration; they reimagined it. With fewer ingredients and tighter budgets, they leaned into creativity, shared what they had, and found joy in togetherness.

Wartime Christmas Recipes, 1917

As we reflect on what a “traditional holiday feast” means under restriction, we might ask ourselves, what truly makes a celebration meaningful? Perhaps it’s not the richness of the table, but the spirit around it.

These authentic recipes reflect how home cooks in 1917 adapted to food shortages and rationing during World War I. Despite scarcity, creativity and tradition kept the Christmas spirit alive. Each recipe offers a glimpse into the ingenuity and resilience of the home front.

To honor that legacy, consider trying a wartime-inspired recipe this season and share the story behind it. In doing so, we connect past and present, reminding ourselves that even in the hardest times, tradition and togetherness endure.



Letter from the U.S. Food Administration inside “Best War Time Recipes” Royal Baking Powder Co.

APPENDIX

Cool the milk by adding the rest of the water cold, stir in the yeast and flour, and knead. Let rise until double in bulk. Knead again and shape into rolls. Let rise until very light and bake.

CAKE AND COOKIES

Apple Sauce Cake (4)

Sugar, 1 cup	Soda, 1 teaspoon
Butter, 2 tablespoons	Cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon
Apple sauce, 1 cup	Cloves, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon
Flour, 2 cups	Salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon
Raisins, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup	Nutmeg, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon

Sift together the soda, spices, salt, and flour. Cream the butter, add sugar, apple sauce, dry ingredients, and seeded raisins. Bake in a moderate oven.

Buckwheat Cookies (8)

Butterine, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	Buckwheat, $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups
Sugar, 1 cup	Salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon
Eggs, 2	Cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon
Clove, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	

Beat the eggs, add the sugar and melted butter, and beat until thoroughly mixed. Sift the buckwheat, spices, and salt together and add very slowly. Mix well; roll on a floured board one-eighth to one-sixteenth inch thick. Cut the cookies and bake on a

APPENDIX

greased baking sheet in a moderate oven about 10 minutes.

Honey Bran Cookies (5)

Bran, 3 cups	Ginger, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon
Sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	Honey, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Soda, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	Milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	Melted butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Soft Honey Cake (5)

Butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	Soda, 1 teaspoon
Honey, 1 cup	Cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon
Egg, 1	Ginger, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon
Sour milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	Flour, 4 cups

Rub the butter and honey together; add the egg well beaten, then the sour milk and the flour sifted with the soda and spices. Bake in a shallow pan.

Molasses Cakes (4)

Sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	Egg, 1
Fat, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	Flour, $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Molasses, 1 cup	Soda, 2 teaspoons
Ginger, 1 teaspoon	Hot water, 1 cup
Cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	Salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon

Sift together the salt, sugar, flour, soda, and spices. Melt butter in hot water, add molasses, egg well beaten, and dry ingredients. Mix well. Bake in small cup cake tins in a moderate oven for about 25 minutes.



THE CANTEEN

Conveniently located on campus in NMMV's Poolaw Building, The Canteen is a great dining spot for both museum visitors and tourists. Choose from a variety of meals and treat yourself to one of eighteen flavors of ice cream!



TOMATO BASIL SOUP WITH GRILLED CHEESE



WINTER HOURS

OPEN 11AM - 5PM
WEDNESDAY-SUNDAY





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From Christmas tree ornaments to cozy sweatshirts, the NMMV Gift shop is sure to have the perfect souvenir to remember your visit... or make the perfect Christmas gift!

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**NMMV
TANK ORNAMENT**

BLACK FOREST GREEN YETI® COLLECTION

THE HELLO GIRLS: AMERICA'S FIRST WOMEN SOLDIERS BY ELIZABETH COBBS

Review by Libby Andrews

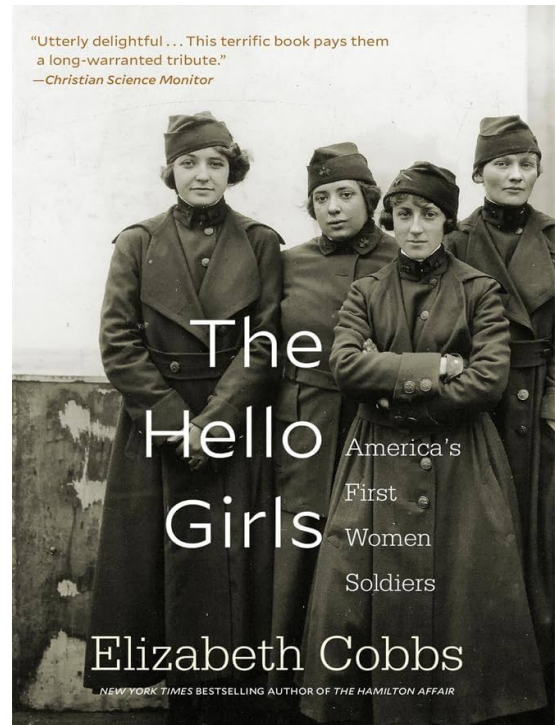
When the United States entered World War I, women still possessed citizenship only through their fathers and husbands. To most men, the idea that one day women would have active roles in the U.S. military was inconceivable. However, new opportunities for women were born from the Army's desperate need for a talent that women could provide in abundance: communication.

Upon General John J. Pershing's arrival in France in 1917, he discovered that one of the Army's biggest challenges was communication. Since its invention, telephone operating had been largely sex segregated, and Pershing recognized that women could operate switchboards instinctively. He ignored the laws stating only men could serve in the Army and began recruiting female telephone operators to manage complex and fast-paced switchboards.



"Want Women Telephone Operators in U.S. Army, from South Bend News-Times, Jan. 9, 1918.

In 1918, at Pershing's request, 223 women were sent to France to serve in the U.S. Signal Corps, a specialized branch of the U.S. Army responsible for communication and information systems. These women, most of whom had years of switchboard experience and were fluent in both English and French, became essential to battlefield communication, working day and night within range of artillery. They were known as "The Hello Girls."



Available in the NMMV Gift Shop and Online Store.

The Hello Girls: America's First Women Soldiers by Elizabeth Cobbs highlights not only their skill and courage under fire but also their long struggle for recognition as official Veterans. These skilled switchboard operators swore the same oath of service as male soldiers, wore uniforms, and operated under military command, only to be denied Veteran status after war's end.

Upon returning to the U.S., these women found that although the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had been ratified, the Army would deny that they were ever soldiers. The U.S. government refused to grant them bonuses, Victory Medals, honorable discharges, and flags on their coffins. It wasn't until nearly sixty years later, in 1977, that Congress finally granted them official Veteran status.

The pages of *The Hello Girls* are filled with stories of women like Merle Egan Anderson, who led the campaign for Veteran status well into her eighties.

The persistence of women like Anderson made one thing clear: the voices that once connected armies across continents would continue to be heard loud and clear until they received the honor and recognition they deserved.

Cobbs draws on the diary of Grace Banker, the 25-year-old chief operator who led the Hello Girls to France, to provide a firsthand view of the exhaustion, stress, and pride these women felt as they handled thousands of calls daily.

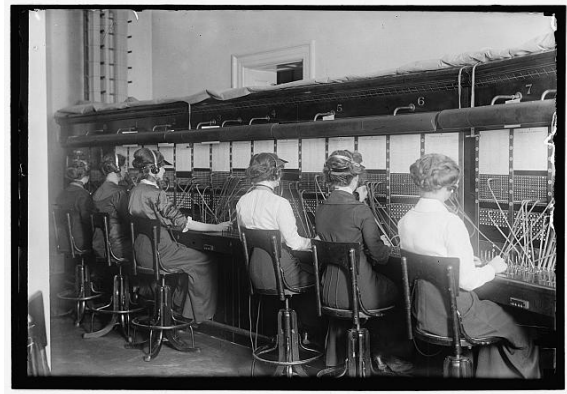
By blending extensive research with attention to human detail, Cobbs weaves together the personal and political dimensions of the Hello Girls' story.



Chief Operator Grace Banker in uniform receiving a Distinguished Medal of Service for her role in the US Army. Signal Corps in WWI.

Cobbs recounts events such as the Meuse-Argonne offensive, during which the Hello Girls maintained communications to keep operations running smoothly under relentless fire at one of the war's most decisive moments.

Balancing big-picture military history with personal narratives, she illustrates how these women became an indispensable part of the U.S. war effort, in command tents and cramped switchboard stations.



Telephone operators, between 1914 and 1917.

The voices of these operators were undoubtedly instrumental in blazing the trail for the women who serve in the U.S. military today. Now, roughly 15 percent of the U.S. armed forces is composed of women.

Their role in combat remains controversial, and it was only in 2016 that women were permitted to serve in all ground combat roles. The Hello Girls is a reminder that women have always played vital roles in America's military history, even if recognition came slowly.



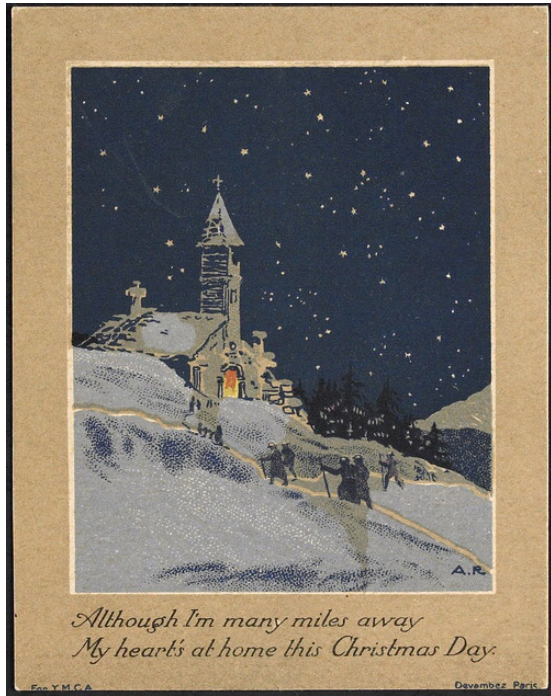
Signal Corps Telephone Girls receive decorations. Germany. 8 July 1919.

For readers interested in World War I, women in service, or the evolution of gender roles throughout American history, *The Hello Girls* checks all the boxes. By blending military and social history with personal stories, this book is both engaging and inspiring.

Cobbs' tribute to both their wartime service and continued perseverance connects the battlefields of World War I to the ongoing fight for gender equity not only in the military but also in civilian life today.

CHRISTMAS IN UNIFORM: A COLLECTION OF CHRISTMAS IMAGES FROM U.S. MILITARY HISTORY

Despite being away from their families in unfamiliar countries, America's service members have found ways to celebrate Christmas, no matter where they are stationed. From makeshift decorations in trenches to Santa Clause arriving on tanks, this collection of images captures moments of joy, celebration, and fellowship as U.S. military personnel found ways to bring the Christmas spirit to wherever duty called.



A Christmas card sent home from France in WWI.



Troops with the 32nd Division receive Red Cross Christmas packages on Christmas Eve 1917.



6th Armored Div. GIs decorate a Christmas tree in Saarbrücken, Germany, 1944.



Sgt. Hiram Prouty of US 175th Infantry Regiment dressed as Santa Claus, arriving on a M3 medium tank, Perham Down, England, 5 December 1942.



US soldiers celebrate Christmas on the Lexington aircraft carrier in late World War II.



Soldiers decorating a Christmas tree in a trench during Vietnam War, 1969.



F7F-3N XMas 1950 Korea.



Men of Co "B", 4th Signal Bn, X US Corps, prepare to decorate the Christmas tree at Bn HQ. Korea. Dec. 11, 1951.



Nicholas Phillips with beer can Christmas tree, Korean War.



Homer Litzenberg Addresses Marines on Christmas Day, 1950.



Vietnam, December 25, 1967. Soldiers from the 9th Infantry Division, William Dowell and Ronald Hull, observe a 24-hour Christmas truce.



Santa Claus (Sgt Robert Youmans, Advanced Airborne School) lands at Fort Campbell. 16 December 1963.



US Marines deliver Christmas gifts for children during Vietnam War.



US soldiers resting on Hill 875 with a Christmas tree during the Vietnam War against bombed forests.



1967 Vietnam. Merry Christmas from the 22nd Infantry Regiment, nickname "Boonies."



Hundreds of U.S. Marines gather at Camp Commando in the Kuwait desert during a Christmas eve visit by Santa Claus on Dec 24, 2002.



Specialist Hernandez Lorie from the 4th Infantry Division of the US army sets lights on a Christmas decoration at her base in Tikrit, 23 December 2003.



U.S. military members celebrate Christmas early with Romanian children. 12/19/2015.



U.S. soldiers and Santa at Forward Operating Base Clark, Afghanistan, in 2013.



U.S. service members deliver boxes of drinks, snacks, and stockings filled with gifts to service members deployed in support of Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) in eastern Syria. Dec. 23, 2019.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

In the Museum's Patton Gallery, you have the opportunity to "Share Your Thoughts." With prompt cards, guests often reflect on their visit to the Museum, Veterans' service and sacrifice, and the price of American freedom.



Here's what guests are saying...

REFLECTION

What thoughts or feelings did your visit today inspire?

PATRIOTISM

What does patriotism mean to you?

FREEDOM

How do we preserve American freedom?

"My visit today inspired feelings of pride. Reading about the women and people of color who wanted to serve our military despite, through, and in spite of the social norms and political limitations of the time. Thank you for making their place and part in history known."

"Loving your country and serving your country in any capacity. Thank you so much for this beautiful Museum. We brought our 7 & 8 year olds here, and it prompted conversations about freedom, service, and loyalty."

"Through places like this. Educating all of those who benefit from the sacrifices made by those who died to keep freedom preserved. This means learning and teaching this to the younger generations. Thank you for a great place to visit!"



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MILITARY VEHICLES



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Please fill out the form available on our website, and the correct staff member may contact you directly. This is required so the curatorial department may review your potential donation.

SUBMISSIONS AND COMMENTS

We accept and appreciate your feedback and submissions regarding *The Quarterly Dispatch*. Suggestions and submissions should be sent to libby@nmmv.org.

OUR MISSION

TO HONOR THE SERVICE AND SACRIFICE OF OUR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES.
TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ON THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN FREEDOM.
TO PRESERVE AND SHARE HISTORIC MILITARY VEHICLES.

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MUSEUM HOURS

Wednesday–Sunday

9:30 AM–5:00 PM

Closed Monday–Tuesday.

NMMV will be closed from December 22–January 1. The Museum will reopen Friday, January 2, 2026.

THE CANTEEN HOURS

Wednesday–Sunday:

11:00 AM–5:00 PM.

Closed Monday–Tuesday.

