



OUR WWII STORY

TO HONOR THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY

A guide for American Legion posts
to pay tribute to the "Greatest Generation"

Contents



A time to collect, curate, honor and share

World War II stands as one of human history's most defining moments. The United States and its allies stood up to genocidal dictators who committed unthinkable atrocities in the name of global conquest. In the end, good prevailed over evil. Victory's cost is calculated in the tens of millions who lost their lives through combat, the Holocaust and disabling injuries.

At home, Americans rallied to support the war effort. The American Legion, whose membership consisted of veterans who knew firsthand what it was like to fight in World War I without adequate home-front support or a prepared military, later led their communities, states and the nation to maintain stability and provide the U.S. Armed Forces the backing they needed for the Second World War.

Men and women who served during World War II came home after discharge and dedicated themselves to The American Legion's timeless purposes. They joined local posts and began fighting for massive improvements to the VA health-care system, a stron-

ger military and readjustment services to help veterans resume normal lives.

Today, thousands of World War II-era Legionnaires continue to support the organization's purposes through membership and mentorship in The American Legion. They have spent decades strengthening the nation, instilling pride in citizenship, fueling the economy and inspiring new generations.

This year, The American Legion salutes them, to honor the 75th anniversary of World War II's conclusion.

At the Fall 2019 American Legion National Executive Committee meetings, a resolution was passed calling on the national Media & Communications and Marketing Commissions to honor the men and women who ended World War II and to provide guidance to help departments and posts educate "the American public on the significant accomplishments of this generation and The American Legion to the nation."

This is a guide to help Legionnaires capture and preserve those stories so they are never lost to history.

The process has three suggested steps:

Collect

Curate

Honor and Share

Collect the Stories



- ★ Identify World War II veterans in your community
- ★ Prepare questions and conduct interviews (via phone or email, if sheltering at home) or ask the veterans to provide written remembrances, with photos if possible
- ★ Ask interviewed veterans to sign a release form agreeing to allow their stories to be shared in media
- ★ Consider recording smartphone video interviews (if public health safety permits) that can be presented in digital and social media platforms
- ★ See if the veteran or family would be willing to share any personal artifacts for public display, such as a uniform, headgear, medals, canteens, maps or other items
- ★ Find the story of your American Legion post namesake, if named for a World War II participant, and document it
- ★ Research the history of your post and how it served the community during World War II and immediately afterward
- ★ Identify locations and meanings of local World War II memorials and monuments in your community
- ★ Work with VA, state veterans homes or other long-term care facilities to reach World War II veterans there
- ★ Search local newspaper archives at libraries or museums to find items of interest from the World War II era, particularly related to American Legion Family activities and local troop support

My WWII Story interviews

Interviews with World War II veterans should be conducted in a quiet indoor place at a convenient time of the veteran's choosing. If the veteran is sheltering at home, submit questions in advance, and conduct the interviews by phone or through email. Interviews should be recorded if possible and public health conditions permit. A newer model smartphone voice recorder or video camera is acceptable if more advanced equipment is not available. These recommended questions can help the veteran tell their story:

What was your branch of service?

How many years were you in the military?

How did you enter the military during World War II? Were you already in? Enlisted? Officer at the time? Drafted?

What was your rank at the beginning of the war? What promotions did you receive? What was your rank at discharge?

Describe your thoughts at the very beginning of your service.

Where did you have basic training?

What were some memorable moments from basic training?

Describe your deployments during the war. Where did you go, and what were some of the operations you were in?

Did you receive any medals or citations?

Can you remember any humorous moments during your service you would like to share?

Where were you and what were your feelings when the war ended?

Did you use the GI Bill for education or VA home or business loans?

What career path did you choose after the war?

When did you join The American Legion?

What activities or offices have you been involved with through The American Legion?

What other community activities have you been involved with?

Among your life's accomplishments, where does service during World War II rank and why?

What are the most important lessons from World War II that you want new and future generations of American Legion members to understand?



American Legion post WWII history

American Legion posts around the world conducted thousands of local support activities during World War II, from promoting war bonds to filling emergency-response roles in communities as so many young adults were sent to serve overseas.

Most local posts have scrapbooks or other records that document those activities. Now is a great time to look through that material and see how your post contributed to the war effort. Another resource is the American Legion Digital Archives at legion.org/library/digitalarchive which contains searchable information, from press releases to magazine articles; you can search by state, post, name or other criteria.



World War II post namesakes

Many American Legion posts dug into the stories of their namesakes to help celebrate the organization's 100th anniversary and are continuing to do so. Behind every name is a story, and many of those stories belong to World War II veterans who are immortalized as American Legion post namesakes. These histories make excellent additions to post histories housed at legion.org/centennial.

Memorials database

The American Legion's online database of military and veteran memorials and monuments contains nearly 2,800 sites, many of which are dedicated to World War II service and sacrifice. Contributors are asked to photograph, describe and provide locations of the memorials. Once approved, they are placed on legion.org/memorials.



VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

The Veterans History Project was established by the Library of Congress in 2000, with The American Legion's support, to collect oral histories from military veterans. The VHP website – loc.gov/vets/klt.html – offers a wealth of information on how to conduct oral history interviews that meet the high standards for inclusion in the Library of Congress. The VHP website provides lists of questions for each section, along with interviewing tips, such as:

Be respectful. Have a bottle of water and a box of tissues on hand in case the interviewee becomes emotional.

Keep questions short. Avoid complicated, multi-part questions.

Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." Instead, ask "how," "when" and "why" questions.

Do not ask leading questions. (questions that are asked to achieve a desired response).

Do not begin the interview with questions about painful or controversial topics.

Be patient. Give the interviewee time to reflect before he or she responds to each question.

Pause before moving on to a new question.

Use follow-up questions to elicit more details from the interviewee. For example: When did that happen? How did that make you feel? What did you think about that? What are the steps in doing that? Why did you make that decision?

Do not put the interviewee on the spot about specific dates and locations. It is more important to record personal reflections than specifics.

Curate the Stories



- ★ Transcribe interviews or personal stories, edit for clarity and accuracy
- ★ Scan or use newer-model smartphone cameras to prepare digital images to illustrate the stories and interviews
- ★ Organize the finished interviews and remembrances, along with photos, for presentation in print or digital media
- ★ Write and edit stories about the origins and meanings of local World War II memorials and monuments
- ★ Write and edit stories of World War II post namesakes and collect images of them for digital presentation, if available
- ★ Identify media channels to present the veteran, post, namesake and memorial stories through print, digital and social channels
- ★ One simple and effective treatment is to list the names, branches of service and time in WWII on a scroll of honor on your website or for display at the post

Prepare to share

Curation is the preparation, organization and development of material for presentation. This can be as creative as the interviewing, collecting and writing processes. When considering how you will present your materials, consider the following:

How do we physically display Our WWII Story for public appreciation?

What format should we use to present these stories in print, web and social media?

How can Our WWII Story materials support a public or school event?

How do we assemble it all into an organized document for posterity?

Physical display

Displays can take many shapes and sizes, from a simple tabletop display to a permanent memorial wall in a post or public space. When planning a display, consider the following:

Keep text as brief as possible

Be consistent about images on the display; select a standard size and stick to it, for instance, with veteran service portraits

Present material in a chronological order

Especially if the display is meant for permanent installation, double check spellings

Consider working with a local print shop or company that specializes in physical displays; they will have proven ideas and templates

Types of displays include:

- » Shadow box cases in local posts, which may include stories, photos and artifacts
- » Traveling exhibits can include display panels, pop-up displays or larger presentations that can be ordered from manufacturers that specialize in such exhibits
- » Engraved walls of honor or other types of outdoor exhibits

Format for print, web and social media

Our WWII Story can be assembled in a consistently designed format for print and digital media. Once the material is curated, written, edited and images scanned, begin by posting those stories on your website if available, and re-purpose that material for print and social media.



You are welcome to use "OUR WWII STORY" graphics from National Head-

quarters for your media presentations.

If "OUR WWII STORY" materials exceed space available for one post newsletter or newspaper, consider serializing the stories and images and publishing in multiple issues.



Event planning

Public, post or school events are a great way to honor the World War II story. Planning is a key to success.

Assemble an event planning committee and set a date(s).

Draft a simple mission statement for the event of no more than three sentences, expressing the event's purpose, both on the date it occurs, and its lasting impression

Contact other local groups and organizations for their input and support, including the business community, local media, government officials, schools, churches, other veterans groups and Scout units.

Brainstorm the event or events with the other community groups and see where they can help in promotion, volunteering, facility use or funding assistance.

Develop a media plan. An initial news release to put the event on community calendars, a follow-up news release no less than a week before the event, flyers, social media memes and other channels.

Develop a step-by-step "run of show" script of the event(s) itself, including suggested remarks for the master of ceremonies, and timing estimates to keep the event/s flowing.

Schedule an after-action meeting with your committee to discuss what worked and what did not in order to improve future efforts.

Honor

- ★ Plan a community recognition event, inviting World War II veterans and their families; consider a post open house; a moderated panel discussion; musical tribute; or display of WWII vintage vehicles or other memorabilia
- ★ Distribute and post flyers and other graphic presentations to honor the World War II generation and/or promote the special event
- ★ Conduct a remembrance ceremony at a local World War II memorial/monument or other appropriate location
- ★ Work with VA, state veterans homes or other facilities to conduct recognition events with World War II veteran residents there
- ★ Request opportunities to present the stories of World War II veterans, and perhaps veterans themselves, at local military installations, to include National Guard armories, Reserve Centers and bases
- ★ Provide local media outlets a list of story ideas and names of veterans so they can honor the 75th anniversary of the war's end, with firsthand accounts, local post histories and summaries of local and national American Legion accomplishments during and after the war
- ★ Coordinate with area schools to conduct "Veterans in the Classroom" appearances where the story of World War II can be told, to include the stories of local veterans, memorials and history
- ★ Post interviews with World War II-era Legionnaires on the national www.legion.org/legiontown website; this platform provides easy sharing options for social media
- ★ Make available to local newspaper, television, radio and web media the stories and materials you have collected and curated so they can reference the post as the source
- ★ Work with local museums or libraries to set up lasting displays to honor the end of the war and to present the local stories
- ★ Deliver WWII stories or messages on a rotational basis in print, web and social media from the post
- ★ Add the World War II stories and other materials to the American Legion Legacy and Vision website at www.legion.org/centennial/histories
- ★ Submit interviews with local World War II veterans to the Veterans History Project database at www.loc.gov/vets or other local, state and national archive and oral history platforms



Sample media releases

1. Calling for interviews, remembrances

American Legion honoring the legacy of World War II

American Legion Post (xx) in (City) is honoring the 75th anniversary of World War II's conclusion by collecting the names and stories of living veterans of the war and gathering other historical information and artifacts to share with the community.

Interviews or personal accounts from World War II-era members, former members and survivors will be archived and considered for publication in local and national American Legion media. Selected items will be published in The American Legion Magazine, with a monthly international readership of over 3 million.

Post (xx) also intends to have a public event in (September or month of choosing) to honor local World War II veterans, display historic artifacts and share the story of that pivotal time in American history.

Veterans or families wishing to participate in Post (xx)'s Our WWII Story commemoration are urged to contact (Name, office, email address, phone number) or contact the post directly.

The American Legion, with a membership of more than 1.8 million, is the nation's largest organization of wartime veterans.

2. Brief announcement early

American Legion to recognize WWII veterans

American Legion Post (xx) in (City) is honoring the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War with "Our WWII Story," a program to recognize local veterans of the war, share the history of community support during that time and highlight local memorials and monuments that honor the "greatest generation." The event is scheduled for (Month, Day, time, location). Admission is free.

3. Longer announcement of event

American Legion plans event to honor area's World War II veterans

American Legion Post (xx) in (City) is honoring local World War II veterans (date, time, location) as part of a nationwide effort called "Our WWII Story" to recognize the 75th anniversary of the war's end. The event is open to the public and free of charge.

All World War II veterans and their families are invited to participate.

Veterans will be asked to share their stories, which have been recorded and documented by Post (xx). Stories and photos can be found at (www.legionpostXX.org) or by visiting the post's Facebook page. Veteran profiles are also published in a printed booklet.

Included among the profiled veterans are: (Joe Veteran), (Branch of Service), (Years in Service); (Mary Veteran), (Branch of Service), (Years in Service); etc., etc.

Selected profiles will be shared nationally on The American Legion's website, www.legion.org, and some will be published in The American Legion Magazine, which has a monthly international readership of more than 3 million.

For more information, contact (Post xx) Commander (Name F. Commander) at (phone number, email address).

A Play List of American Legion Videos, 2010-2020



To Strengthen a Nation Series (2019-2020) The American Legion's story is told in an ongoing series of documentary episodes – from the formation of the organization through programs and services, many of which were developed by World War II veterans.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHMR9MmnivfN-hSkkWYIBiLM7rNFq8sehZ>

The American Legion salutes all of those who served on D-Day (2019) The American Legion pays tribute to all who fought in the greatest amphibious invasion in history, one that would lead to victory 11 months later in Europe.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/HMR9MmnivFOVletF1K-4F4KVrjH6pdeZH/KG2Q48IAvRk>



Pearl Harbor survivor shares his story (2019) Legionnaire Sterling Cale describes the “day of infamy” that brought America into World War II.

https://www.legion.org/legiontv/FLIEg8BvcEH4ZVvK6f9s_Z6Q/_i0FHBpG1CE

Past National Commander Detweiler honored at Victory Ball (2019) National WWII Museum pays tribute to the late American Legion leader who helped guide the museum from initial groundbreaking to international acclaim.

<https://www.legion.org/veteransday/videos/PLF2674FC30BF76B6C/WlCgDwJ00Pg>

How the GI Bill Launched Legion Commander's Career to the Stars (2018) Pioneering physicist explains how his education benefits led him to a career in aerospace engineering, including critical work on the Voyager program.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/videos/PLD-74653C32937FDD6/-6cHA-EiQ4U>

“I’m a Part of Fred Brock” (2018) American Legion Post 828 member Al Alford shares the story of his San Antonio post’s historic namesake.

<https://www.legion.org/member-ship/240804/%E2%80%98I%E2%80%99m-part-fred-brock%E2%80%99>



Solemn Dignity (2017) Families share their feelings about the first and most likely last double interment ceremony at Pearl Harbor.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/237076/solemn-dignity>

Kansas salutes Eisenhower (2018) Legionnaires explain the inspiration they find by annually honoring Ike’s memory.

<https://www.legion.org/honor/243343/kansas-salutes-its-favorite-son-eisenhower>

Playing patriotism (2017) World War II veteran and Missouri Legionnaire explains why he played taps nightly for years in Webb City, Mo.

<https://www.legion.org/honor/videos/PLHMR9MmnivFOVletF1K4F4KVrjH6pdeZH/axL3zbJQeZ0>

I Am The American Legion: George Blume (2017) World War II Army veteran and longtime American Legion Boys State volunteer tells how tried to make differences after discharge.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/238329/i-am-american-legion-george-blume>

Two Bouts with Infamy (2017) Pearl Harbor survivor Jim Leavelle describes his place in two of U.S. history’s most meaningful moments: the beginning of World War II and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/videos/PLD-74653C32937FDD6/JtnXCniDSV>

Play List Continued

Father of the GI Bill immortalized (2016) Memorial plaza in Topeka ensures the story of American Legion Past National Commander Harry W. Colmery, architect of the GI Bill, is not forgotten.

<https://www.legion.org/news/videos/PLHMR9MmnivfN-h74ldXa0kA9urmSj-eAL/ZenyXJtL9oc>

Medal of Honor Story: Hiroshi H. Miyamura (2016) U.S. Army veteran of Japanese descent began service during World War II and went on to fight in Korea where he earned the highest U.S. military decoration and survived captivity as a POW.

https://www.legion.org/medalofhonor/videos/PLHM-R9MmnivfPEHKG6CSDJEBn3yF6jm5HM/_Q0bTwHVWvg

“You’re Home” A Story of Repatriation (2016) DNA testing brings back World War II aviator, shot down by the Germans just short of his home base.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/videos/PLD-74653C32937FDD6/GJN0i0hQtoU>

I Am The American Legion: Medal of Honor recipient Woody Williams (2015) Iwo Jima Marine hero explains why he backs today’s Gold Star Mothers.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/230221/i-am-american-legion-hershel-woody-williams>

PNC Perspectives: Richard M. Pedro (2014) Past National Commander and longtime New York department adjutant describes his time in the Navy during World War II, service in The American Legion that followed.

<https://www.legion.org/library/videos/PLCBD-BA12207563F8C/XbB4MmGO5jk>



Chester Nez: Last of the Original Navajo Codetalkers (2014) In his final interview before his death, World War II Marine Chester Nez reflects on his unique place in military history.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JU7H4-_OAs&feature=emb_rel_end

PNC Perspectives: William E. Galbraith (2014) The American Legion’s leader in 1967-68 describes his time as a Marine in World War II and his years of service that followed.

<https://www.legion.org/library/videos/PLCBD-BA12207563F8C/ctXUs7fqQWs>



Battle of the Bulge Remembered: Mike Levin (2014) Field artillery forward observer Mike Levin reflects on his time in the cold, bitter fight that led to victory over Germany, along with an amazing discovery of wine and liquor at the end of the fighting.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/videos/PLD-74653C32937FDD6/slrc4r9XGUK>

Battle of the Bulge Remembered: Kate Nolan (2014) Battle of the Bulge nurse remembers the harsh weather, brutal conditions treating the wounded in pivotal part of the war.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/iIQ7VINq6cA?rel=0&autoplay=1&width=700&height=394&iframe=true>

Battle of the Bulge Remembered: Irving Locker (2014) World War II staff sergeant describes the difficulties of fighting, while low on ammo, boots and food, in the icy winter of 1944-45.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLHMR9MmnivfOVletF1K-4F4KVrjH6pdeZH/vHP6AiAZUYO>

PNC Perspectives: Joe L. Matthews (2014) World War II Navy veteran shares his story of service and American Legion leadership.

<https://www.legion.org/library/videos/PLCBD-BA12207563F8C/KvQixjhU5UO>

Medal of Honor Story: Hershel “Woody” Williams (2014) Retired Marine discusses his upbringing in rural West Virginia and the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II.

<https://www.legion.org/medalofhonor/videos/PLHM-R9MmnivfPEHKG6CSDJEBn3yF6jm5HM/lj-fZu7Y9DE>

Play List Continued

PNC Perspectives: Clarence Bacon (2014) Former American Legion leader describes his Navy experience, beginning in World War II, which included service aboard President Truman's vessel.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/WJ2eonYfhyQ>

I Am The American Legion: Henry Parham (2013) World War II balloon crew soldier and Pennsylvania Legionnaire shares his unique place in military history.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/217620/i-am-american-legion-henry-parham>



Living Legends: The Doolittle Raiders (2012) Four of those who flew in the historic raid reunite for the 70th anniversary of their mission most believed could not be accomplished.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/7cLyocCCgRw>

A Gun from Mighty Mo (2012) Georgetown, Del., Legionnaires welcome historic 16-inch gun from the USS Missouri at a special event.

https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/t4uY_cbpPsw

PNC Perspectives: Michael Kogutec (2012) Leader of The American Legion in 1980 and 1981 reflects on his time as a ship cook in World War II.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/r7-kR7NwDVs>

Pearl Harbor – Veterans Remember (2011) Survivors describe the pandemonium of Dec. 7, 1941, that pushed the United States into World War II.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/BZCgbXxlVuE>

Pearl Harbor – Remembering Sacrifice (2011) A look into four museums that commemorate the historic attack in Hawaii.

https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/oOCMVpKa_lc

Full Circle (2011) Holocaust survivor Werner Kleeman of New York explains “the night of broken glass” when Jews were taken into custody, how he got out of Dachau and returned later as an American soldier to liberate his hometown.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/96790/full-circle>

PNC Perspectives: John H. Geiger (2011) Former American Legion leader talks about nearly having his legs amputated while fighting in the Bastogne area during World War II's final year.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/HrJQ8D1J6lc>

Still at Attention (2011). Wisconsin Legionnaire and World War II veteran explains why he played taps from childhood into his 90s.

<https://www.legion.org/magazine/videos/PLD-74653C32937FDD6/4XExJibP0TM>

Women Air Force Service Pilots (2011) More than 1,000 women historically trained and got their wings to serve as combat pilots in World War II.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/7cLyocCCgRw>

The Americans in the Bulge (2011) Segment from documentary film tells the story of the bitter winter fight of 1944 and 1945 that broke the back of Hitler's resistance.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/pCUkZHnXhgc>

Navajo Code Talkers (2011) Native Americans confounded the Germans by using their tribal languages.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/j3j2EBkTA-o>

U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (2011) The story behind the iconic scene of the flag raising at Iwo Jima and the massive monument that stands in Arlington, Va.

<https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLCBDBA12207563F8C/HrJQ8D1J6lc>

The GI Bill history (2010) World War I veterans, who had to fight for help during the Depression, vowed to give opportunities to those who would follow in their footsteps, through the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944.

https://www.legion.org/legiontv/PLHMR9MmnivfOowiAxl-WofwWsM4sjxtzT/_MJ70d6JcqU

A Chronology of American Legion World War II Moments

Aug. 22, 1941: The U.S. Navy commissions the USS *American Legion*, and her World War II career soon begins, including landing some of the first troops at Guadalcanal, supplying a hospital, conducting rescue missions and training exercises. *American Legion* receives two battle stars before she is decommissioned in 1946.

Dec. 7, 1941: Japan's attack at Pearl Harbor brings the United States into World War II. Soon, more than 150,000 members of The American Legion (World War I veterans and career officers) return to wartime service. In addition, nearly 400,000 Legionnaires serve as air-raid wardens, 300,000 as volunteer police officers and 50,000 as volunteer firefighters to fill wartime needs in their communities.

Dec. 8, 1941: The Japanese Imperial Army moves into Shanghai, China, to secure the area and prevent an underground resistance. Many of those captured and held prisoner are members of China American Legion Post 1.

Dec. 10, 1941: The U.S. Naval Governor of Guam surrenders the island territory to the Japanese, who had invaded just hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. American Legion Mid Pacific Post 1 on the island, established in 1930, is the target of enemy brutality. Seven post members are accused of espionage and beheaded.

Jan. 1, 1942: The January American Legion Magazine, published just three weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack, features a call to action for all members of the organization to "give our utmost to our beloved country." National Commander Lynn Stambaugh reports that he has assured President Roosevelt that the Legion stands ready to serve under the direction of civil and military authorities.

May 1, 1942: The American Legion National Executive Committee passes a resolution, as wartime demand soars, to expand local blood-donation efforts across the country. Thus is born the Legion's Blood Donor Program, which continues today.

Sept. 15, 1942: Camp White is dedicated near Medford, Ore., in memory of Maj. Gen. George A. White, one of the earliest American Legion founders.

Sept. 19-21, 1942: The American Legion National Convention votes to change the Preamble to the organization's Constitution for the first and only time during its first century, pluralizing "association" and "war" to "associations" and "wars" to reflect the fighting of World War II and the imminent addition of a new generation of veterans in the organization.

Oct. 29, 1942: Congress approves a change in The American Legion's federal charter that will make eligible for membership World War II personnel and honorably discharged veterans who served in the U.S. military beginning Dec. 7, 1941.

Dec. 7, 1942: One year after the United States entered World War II, The American Legion reports that 34,132 of its members had trained and volunteered to serve as volunteer firefighters in their communities. More than 350,000 Legionnaires nationally graduate from air raid warden training in their states, and 337,941 serve as active air-raid wardens. Another 330,456 Legionnaires became first-aid responders.

Feb. 3, 1943: The USAT *Dorchester* is struck by a German torpedo and sinks in the north Atlantic Ocean. Onboard are four Army chaplains – Methodist Church minister George L. Fox; Reform Rabbi Alexander D. Goode; Reformed Church in America minister Rev. Clark V. Poling and Roman Catholic priest Father John P. Washington – who give up their own life jackets to others before drowning. Their bravery leads The American Legion to call for their Medal of Honor recognition, and American Legion posts worldwide begin conducting annual Four Chaplains Day ceremonies in early February to honor them.

June 20, 1943: Ten crew members of the USS *American Legion* lose their lives near New Zealand's Paekakariki Beach after their landing craft – which had

been separated from the ship during a fierce storm – capsizes. Fifteen survive, and the deadly incident prompts orders requiring all Navy personnel on landing crafts to wear life vests.

Sept. 23, 1943: With more than 600 unpassed bills languishing in Congress that aim to address the needs of disabled World War II veterans coming home to a lack of support at a rate of about 75,000 per month, newly elected American Legion National Commander Warren Atherton of California makes the correction of this problem the organization's No. 1 priority. The Legion soon determines that one omnibus bill is needed.

Mid-December 1943: American Legion Past National Commander Harry W. Colmery consolidates – writing in long-hand on Mayflower Hotel stationery in Washington, D.C. – dozens of resolutions and congressional measures into 10 key provisions that become the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, soon called the "GI Bill of Rights."

June 6, 1944: American Legion founding leader Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr., 56, lands on Utah Beach in the first wave of the Allied D-Day invasion of World War II. His Higgins boat misses the landing area by approximately a quarter-mile, and Roosevelt, Jr., is famously quoted as telling his men, "That's OK. We'll start the war from here!"

June 9-10, 1944: The American Legion works feverishly to find U.S. Rep. John Gibson, who is at home in Georgia while the fate of the GI Bill is hung up in a House-Senate conference committee in Washington, deadlocked 3-3. The Legion, assisted by military and police escorts, finds Gibson and takes him on a 90-mile high-speed trip through a rainstorm to Jacksonville where he is flown to Washington to cast the vote to send the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 to the president's desk.

Chronology Continued

June 22, 1944: President Franklin D. Roosevelt, flanked by The American Legion special committee that drafted the bill, signs the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, which would drive the U.S. economy for over a half-century.

June 27, 1944: The Veterans Preference Hiring Act is signed into law after fierce lobbying from The American Legion. The bill is seen as a breakthrough and a foundation for future veteran employment policy by the U.S. government.

July 12, 1944: Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., founding leader of The American Legion, dies of a heart attack in Normandy, France. He is buried in France alongside other heroes who died there after D-Day.

July 18, 1944: Past American Legion Department of France and Paris Post 1 Commander George Aubrey is shot and killed by Nazi soldiers, during World War II German occupation of Paris, while on patrol with the French Resistance.

Sept. 20, 1944: The 26th American Legion National Convention passes Resolution 138, primarily as a plan to educate and enthuse World War II veterans about the organization they are rapidly joining. The resolution leads to the first American Legion College in 1946.

Sept. 28, 1944: American Legion founder Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr., is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions on D-Day at Utah Beach, having repeatedly led soldiers across the beach and past the seawall, without concern for his own safety, under fire.

October 1944: Building off a program begun in the aftermath of World War I, the Ford Motor Co., works in unison with The American Legion at "Camp Legion" (a 500-acre facility for training amputees and other disabled veterans). The camp employs more than 11,300 disabled veterans.

Nov. 8, 1944: Germans seize, pillage and set ablaze the French town of St. Die-des-Vosges, where a delegation of 200 Legionnaires had unveiled a plaque in 1921 commemorating the place where the term "America" was first published on a map in 1507. A week after the German rampage six months before the end of World War II, American troops arrived to find the ruins, followed later by many of the women and children of the town who had been left homeless and were starving. Upon learning this, American Legion posts and units throughout the United States collect hundreds of packages of food, clothing and supplies and ship the goods urgently to the town.

April 12, 1945: Harry S. Truman, a member of Tirey J. Ford American Legion Post 21 in Independence, Mo., becomes the first Legionnaire to serve as president of the United States. He steps in after Franklin D. Roosevelt's death, during the final weeks and months of World War II, seeing it end in Europe on May 8, 1945, and in the Pacific Theater Aug. 14, 1945. Truman becomes the first – and so far, only – world leader to authorize the use of atomic weapons, ending the war in Japan.

Sept. 2, 1945: President Truman declares this date as the official V-J Day, the date upon which Japan signs surrender papers in a ceremony onboard the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, and it becomes a commonly celebrated anniversary at American Legion posts worldwide.

Nov. 18-21, 1945: At The American Legion National Convention in Chicago, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander Europe in World War II, and life member of The American Legion in Abilene, Kan., receives the organization's prestigious Distinguished Service Medal.


Oct. 12, 1950: Erle Cocke, Jr., of Dawson, Ga., who was wounded three times and escaped German captivity three times during World War II, becomes the youngest American Legion national commander at 29.

March 28, 2000: Contributions from The American Legion Family – The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion – stand at over \$2.7 million to help build a new National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. By the end of the year, the figure will exceed \$3.4 million.

Print Resources

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11" x 17" Posters



The American Legion
Salutes the Men and Women Who
Fought and Won World War II

Join us for a special event to recognize our local
WWII veterans, the role our American Legion
post played during the war, and more.

Date and Time
Location

OUR
WWII
STORY



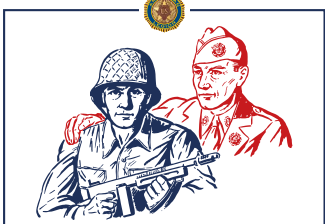
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8.5" x 11" Flyers




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Digital Resources

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