

# VETERAN'S CORNER

## National WWII Memorial completed in 2004, dedicated to nation's "Greatest Generation" is "must see" attraction in our nation's capital

BY DALE POTTS

On my last visit to our nation's capital, in Spring, 2004, I was fortunate to visit the newly completed national World War II Memorial. It wasn't my specific destination but it was hard to miss when walking on the National Mall; an amphitheater with triumphal arches on the Southern and Northern ends and 56 pillars in a semicircle surrounding a plaza and fountain. It is in a beautiful setting, with the Washington Monument on one side and the Lincoln Memorial stretched out beyond the reflecting pool. Found it a great place to sit and watch people. You see elderly folks explaining, with pride, their activity/ role during the war to other members of their group. It is now a destination point for Honor Flights taking many WWII vets who might not otherwise get to see this Memorial. The VA estimates that there are 697,900 WWII vets in America, with 11,795 living in Oregon. Some 430 die daily, eight in Oregon.

The Memorial size is overwhelming when compared to the simplicity of nearby Vietnam Wall and Korean Memorial areas. But the difference makes sense when considering the enormity of what it represents. It is dedicated to all the Americans who served in the Armed Forces as well as the civilians during World War II, appropriately named as the Greatest Generation by Dan Rather. They survived the great depression and then united with other free nations to liberate the world from dictatorship (AXIS) powers. World War II caused 405,339 American deaths, second only to the 750,000 in the Civil War. Some 153,303 Americans lost their lives in Vietnam War and Korea had 92,134.

The arches represent the Pacific and Atlantic Theaters. The pillars outline USA in 1941; 48 states, seven federal territories and District of Columbia. The walls are covered with significant symbolic war scene pictures. One highlight is the Freedom Wall which has over 4,000 gold stars, each representing 100 Americans who died in the war. The wall is titled with the message "Here we mark the price of Freedom". The graffiti "Kilroy was here", under a drawing of a bald headed man with a big nose poking over a wall is depicted twice. They were still popular when I was a teenager. The easy humor provided a sense of home wherever GI's found them in the world..

I was in D.C. to receive a national Special Project Award for the Tualatin VFW Post as the Post Commander. The award was for spearheading Tualatin's adoption of the 671st Army Engineers when the unit was deployed for Operation Iraq

Freedom. That unit spent the first 40 days of the war in the desert, suffered Oregon's first fatality, and was extended twice. There was significant competition for this award. One VFW Post did a static display holding a Marine jet fighter plane at the entrance to their local airport. Another set up a USO type welcoming station at a major international airport where citizens enthusiastically welcomed veterans and their families and provided refreshments and assistance. The judges for the award were unanimous in our selection because we "literally involved everyone in town". The city council formally adopted the unit, followed by the Chamber of Commerce, civic groups, schools, churches and businesses. Personal care items barrels were set up at Haggen's Grocery, Library, and Fred Meyer. School children and church groups wrote letters of support. We sent 2,600 pounds of personal care items to the unit. Because they had little time to write home we helped draft their first unit newsletter and paid postage to mail to the families. We provided warm coats and toys for their children for Christmas. One wrote back, saying although life was hard in Iraq, knowing his family was being taken care of helped him concentrate on his duties. We even sponsored a homecoming parade, ending at Tualatin Community Park where Dave Dalton provided, at his own expense, a picnic with steaks for the families. Later that year, our VFW Post earned "All American" status, the only time in the history of the Tualatin Post.

VFW gave me a special assignment while in DC, to visit my US Congresswoman, Darlene Hooley. I made an appointment. When I arrived, she gave me a big hug, saying service people had a special place in her heart. Her Chief of Staff joined us. Her husband was serving as a US Army Officer in Iraq so I had their full attention to share concerns provided to me by the VFW Congressional liaison office. I left feeling that my visit had a positive impact.

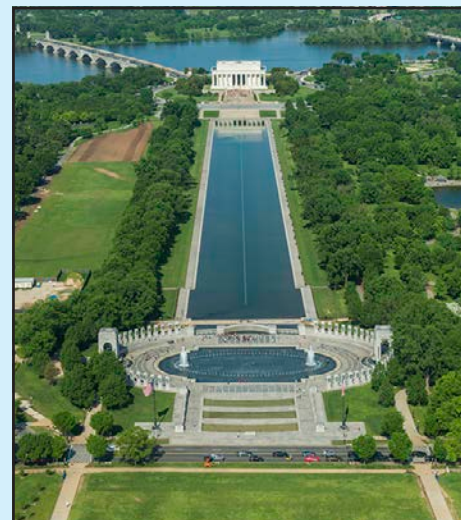
Dale G. Potts has organized and MC'd Tualatin's Memorial Day observance for the past 13 years. He is a Navy Vietnam vet, serving as the Public Affairs Officer of the Aircraft Carrier USS Yorktown. After active duty, he remained in the reserves, retiring as a Navy Captain (same rank as an Army Colonel). His civilian career was primarily as the Oregon Public Affairs Officer for IRS. Contact Dale at [vet.dale@gmail.com](mailto:vet.dale@gmail.com).



Lieutenant Dale Potts



Rainbow water display in center of WWII Memorial.



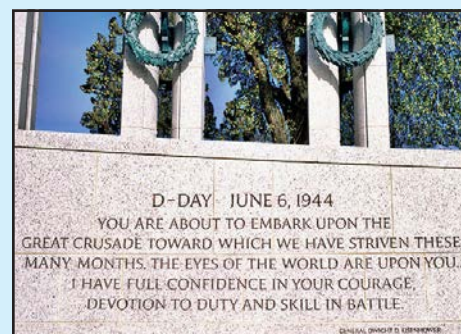
WWII Memorial is situated on National Mall between Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial.



The Pacific Arch is on Southern end of WWII Memorial, depicting Pacific Theatre actions.



The Atlantic Arch is on Northern end of WWII Memorial, showing Atlantic Theatre action.



General Eisenhower's words to troops on D-Day.



Plaque on Freedom Wall. Freedom Wall holds 4,048 gold stars. Each gold star represents one hundred American service personnel who died or remain missing in the war. The 405,399 American dead and missing from World War II are second only to the loss of more than 750,000 Americans during our Civil War.



During World War II this was a symbol for the American serviceman. Any place in the world where one of them went he would see it. It was found in restrooms, on trucks, tanks, ships, bombed out walls, and almost any place it could be painted, panned, scratched, or chalked. Even during an invasion or battle, someone would leave this symbol where those following would see it. It was a symbol of courage, pride, encouragement, and very definitely a morale booster. That is why it was selected to represent all the service personnel who served in World War II all around the world. This is a loving memorial embracing all who served during the World War II years from 1940 through 1945.

### Memorial Day Observance & Free Picnic

#### Commemorating Memorial Day, May 30 at Winona Cemetery.

The event starts at 10:45 am at Winona Cemetery and is followed by a free picnic at Tualatin Community Park.

George Hager served in the Navy in the Pacific as the ship's bugle master aboard the 530 foot long Submarine Tender, USS Fulton, from 1942 to 1945.

Other participants include US Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici, Tualatin Police Honor Guard, Tualatin High Crimsonnairs, State Senator Richard Devlin, State Representative Julie Parrish and Mayor Lou Ogden. Mike and Kathy Greene from Living Savior will open with a prayer. Please bring chairs as there is no seating.



Honored Veteran George Hager