

PERRY TWP MEMORIAL DAY SALUTE



A veteran is someone who at some point in their life, wrote a blank check payable to the United States of American for the amount of up to and including their life.

-Unknown

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HISTORY OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

The land now owned and operated by the U.S. Army, once belonged to Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Arlington, in fact, became U.S. property only after the federal government sized it when Lee's wife failed to appear in person to pay \$92.07 in taxes.

The Revolutionary War was underway. John Parke Custis, son of Martha Washington, bought 1,000 acres of land on the Virginia side of the Potomac River. When Custis died during the siege of Yorktown, Washington adopted Custis's two children, Eleanor and George Washington Parke Custis.

George Custis upon obtaining the estate, build a mansion to honor and commemorate the first president. The mansion later renamed the Arlington House. George Washington Parke Custis had one child, Mary, who married a promising West Point graduate named Robert E. Lee.

Lee turned down an offer to command a new Union army being formed to fight the seceding southern states, refusing to abandon his native Virginia. The Lees left Arlington House for good on April 22, 1861, and Union forces quickly moved in, turning the house into a headquarters. Fort Myers was built on the land.

The government officially took over the property in 1862 after Mary Lee attempted to pay federal tax on the land through intermediaries but not in person.

On June 15, 1864, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton designated Arlington House and 200 surrounding acres a military cemetery under control of the Army's quartermaster general. Shortly before that decree, the first soldier, Private William Christman of the 67th Pennsylvania Infantry was interred at Arlington.

Soon afterwards, burials began at Arlington for soldiers who died in Washington and Alexandria hospitals during the war. As the conflict continued, Union dead were gathered from the brutal battlefields of Bull Run, Bristol Station, Chantilly and elsewhere and placed in the new national cemetery, along with some Confederate dead.

The Lee family would once more exercise its claim to the land, ultimately winning a battle in the Supreme Court, which issued a decision essentially charging the federal government with trespassing on private property. In 1883, General Lee's son diffused the crisis by accepting a payment of \$150,000 from the government.

Section One, a seven-acre plot, is the resting place of veterans from every war America has fought from the American Revolution to Afghanistan. Not all funerals at Arlington look the same. Ceremonies with full military honors typically include a caisson, or wooden, horse-drawn wagon. Arlington National Cemetery contains the remains of more than 400,000 people from the United States and 11 other countries.

THE MISSING MAN FORMATION

The missing man formation has been rumored to have begun when British fighter pilots flew over the funeral of Manheim “The Red Baron” von Richthofen as a sign of respect by his fellow aces. During World War II, it evolved into a ceremonial tradition as part of RAF programs. The United States began the tradition in 1938 during the funeral for MG Westover with over 50 aircraft and one blank file. The Missing Man formation in the United States was still seldomly used until the Second Indochina War, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia when the public at large caught its first glimpse.

The USAF Thunderbirds were the first military aerobatics unit to ever perform the maneuver. They flew for the first time to honor the men and women who were the POW’s in Vietnam.

A classic aircraft maneuver used to honor the dead or missing. The simplest type of missing man formation consists of four aircraft that begin in what is known as the: fingertip strong “right” formation.

The formation most commonly used in the United States is based on the: “finger-four” aircraft combat formation composed of a pair of aircraft. That means they’re in the shape of a V, with the right arm – from the pilots’ perspective – longer than the left. As the V passes overhead, the plane on the right position peels away into the sunset, sometimes trailing a cloud of smoke.

In all cases, the aircraft performing the pull-up, split off, or missing from the formation, is honoring the person or (persons) who have died, and it represents their departure to the heavens. Or the missing man formation can also be performed with three planes, with the right position left vacant. Fifty fighters in three formations flew over the memorial of JFK – the last group had one spot missing.

As a general rule, only pilots or military personnel get the missing man tribute. The Challenger and Columbia shuttle disasters, for example, merited high-profile missing man formations.

MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT

Staff Sergeant Clinton L. Romesha

Former Staff Sergeant Clinton L. Romesha enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1999. He was twice deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and once to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Staff Sergeant Romesha was assigned as a section leader for Bravo Troop, 3-61st Cavalry, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

On October 3, 2009, during combat operations at Combat Outpost Keating, Kamdesh District, Nuristan Province, Afghanistan, Outpost Keating came under attack by 300 enemy fighters who occupied the high ground on all four sides of the outpost.

Staff Sergeant Romesha moved uncovered under intense enemy fire to conduct a reconnaissance of the battlefield. Staff Sergeant Romesha took out an enemy machine gun team and, while engaging a second group of enemies was wounded by a rocket-propelled grenade. Undeterred by his injuries, Romesha continued to fight.

Staff Sergeant Romesha with complete disregard for his own safety, continually exposed himself to heavy enemy fire, as he moved about the battlefield engaging and destroying multiple enemy combatants.

Throughout the battle, Romesha directed air support that destroyed over 30 enemy fighters. After receiving a report of seriously wounded soldiers and fallen comrades, Staff Sergeant Romesha and his team under overwhelming enemy fire recovered and prevented the enemy from taking the bodies of the fallen comrades. The extraordinary efforts of Staff Sergeant Romesha provided the opportunity for Bravo Troop to regroup, reorganize and prepare for the counterattack that allowed the Troop to account for its personnel and secure Combat Post Keating.

Staff Sergeant Romesha was issued the Medal of Honor in 2013 by President Obama. Other awards include Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Army Commendation w/ two Oak Leaf Clusters and Afghanistan Campaign Medal w/ two service stars. The book "Red Platoon" chronicles the battle to save Outpost Keating. Staff Sergeant Romesha lives in North Dakota with his wife and family.

THE MEDAL OF HONOR: 6 SURPRISING FACTS

1. At first, the Medal of Honor was dismissed as too “European.” When the Civil War broke out in 1861, proponents of a new award made their case to Winfield Scott, General-in-Staff of the Union Army. Scott, a respected commander despite being too feeble and corpulent to mount a horse in the waning years of his career, scoffed at the suggestion, saying it smacked of European tradition. It was only after his retirement that Medal of Honor supporters in Congress could introduce bills providing for the decoration.

2. Only one woman has received the Medal of Honor, and her award was temporarily rescinded.

A medical doctor who supported feminist abolitionist causes, Mary Edwards Walker volunteered with the Union Army at the outbreak of the Civil War. Known to cross enemy lines in order to treat civilians, she may have been serving as a spy when Confederate troops captured her in the summer of 1864. On November 11, 1865, President Andrew Johnson presented her with the Medal of Honor, making her the only woman to date to receive the decoration. In 1917, the Army changed its eligibility criteria for the honor and revoked the awards of 911 non-combatants, including Walker. An Army board restored Walker’s Medal of Honor in 1977, praising her: distinguished gallantry, self-sacrifice, patriotism, dedication and unflinching loyalty to her country, despite the apparent discrimination because of her sex.”

3. Theodore Roosevelt is the only U.S. President to have received the Medal of Honor, which he was awarded posthumously. When the Spanish-American War broke out, Theodore Roosevelt famously quit his job to lead a volunteer regiment known as the Rough Riders. Roosevelt and his men played a decisive role in the Battle of San Juan Hill. In 1916, less than three years before

his death, he was nominated for the Medal of Honor, but the Army passed him over, citing a lack of evidence for his heroic actions at San Juan Hill. President Bill Clinton posthumously awarded him the decoration in 2001.

4. The youngest Medal of Honor recipient earned his award at 11 and was granted it at 13.

11-year-old Willie Johnston enlisted in the Union Army alongside his father, serving as a drummer boy with the 3rd Vermont Infantry during the Civil War. Overpowered by Confederate troops, his unit retreated down the Virginia Peninsula. Along the way, the men discarded their equipment to hasten their pace. Young Willie, however, clung to his drum throughout the march and later asked to play for his entire division on July 4. When President Lincoln heard about the drummer’s bravery, he recommended him for the Medal of Honor, and Willie received the award in 1863.

5. The Award is not called the Congressional Medal of Honor. Contrary to popular belief, the official title of the highest U.S. military distinction is simply the Medal of Honor, not the Congressional Medal of Honor. The confusion may have arisen because the President presents the award “in the name of Congress.”

6. It’s illegal to wear someone else’s Medal of Honor, but it’s not illegal to pretend you have one. U.S. criminal law forbids the unauthorized wearing, manufacture and sale of military decorations, and misuse of a Medal of Honor carries a particularly heavy penalty. In 2006, President Bush signed into law the Stolen Valor Act, which imposed a prison sentence of up to one year on anyone falsely claiming to have received a Medal of Honor. The Supreme Court struck down the act in 2012, ruling that it violated the right to free speech guaranteed by the First Amendment.

SKY SOLDIERS – FIRST AIRBORNE UNITS

Few have probably heard of Gleb Kotelnikov, the genius behind the first modern backpack parachute. In 1911, the 39-year-old Russian actor turned inventor set out to create a more perfect chute after watching a stunt pilot fall to his death from an airplane at a St. Petersburg aerobatic display.

While parachutes had been conceived as far back as the 15th Century, with one model being successfully tested in 1617, these original iterations were conceived long before the advent of the airplane. Such designs would prove inadequate when deployed by a wearer who was traveling at high speeds when jumping. Koteninikov's invention was designed to deploy successfully, even when the user pulled the rip cord after leaping from a moving cockpit.

During the First World War, some military visionaries saw them as a way of also breaking the bloody deadlock of trench warfare. As early as 1917, Churchill proposed forming entire regiments of infantry that could be dropped by aircraft behind enemy lines. In World War I, Billy Mitchell, planned to equip elements of the American 1st Infantry Division with parachutes and drop them from converted bombers. Planners envisioned that these "sky soldiers" would be carried aloft on the wings of aircraft. When reaching the target area, the soldiers would simply slide off the wings and deploy their chutes.

In 1933, the Soviets undertook the first large-scale airborne infantry operation in history. France also formed a number of parachute units, including a company of 200 women paratroopers that were trained to serve as frontline nurses. Germany was the first nation to drop infantry into combat. History's first wartime jumps came during the 1940 invasions of Norway and Denmark. On Feb. 27, 1942, the British 1st Airborne Division had its first taste of combat during Operation Biting. By the end of the year, the 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment would complete America's first ever combat mission in history.

An unprecedented 20,000 Allied airborne and glider troops were parachuted into France on D-Day. Three months later, the British, Americans and Polish dropped staggering 41,000 paratroopers into Holland. While the advent of the helicopter diminished the need for parachute drops, several have still been undertaken even in the 21st century.

The Parachutist's Badge was formally approved on March 10, 1941. The senior and master parachutist's badges were authorized by Headquarters, Department of the Army in 1949. The badge is an oxidized silver badge consisting of an open parachute on and over a pair of stylized wings displayed and curving inward. A star and wreath are added above the parachute canopy to indicate the degree of qualification.

SOLDIER'S CREED

I am an American Soldier.

I am a warrior and a member of a team.

I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills.

I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.