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# GOLD STAR DEDICATION

## A look at our most recent monument

“It’s something you never forget, especially when it’s your son or your child,” said one tearful Gold Star Mother. “Never [let] it be forgotten.”

“The first thing I see is the missing man. And, of course, my brother being missing - it just tears my heart up,” said the sister of a soldier, MIA since Vietnam.

These, and hundreds of other deeply-moved visitors, had just experienced the latest component of the National D-Day Memorial, the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument. This lovely and haunting tribute, to the families of those who gave their lives, was dedicated on Memorial Day to an appreciative crowd of over 1,500 people —including many Gold Star families.

The Gold Star Families Memorial Monument is the brainchild of Hershel “Woody” Williams, a Medal of Honor recipient who fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima. Williams, a longtime friend of the Memorial, personally chose our site for Virginia’s first Gold Star monument, and came to dedicate it on May 29.

“For the loved ones who lost a loved one in our Armed Forces at any time in our history, the war is never over, the loss never goes away,” said Williams. “America owes these people an honor and a tribute that we have never given them.”

The National D-Day Memorial now is a place where that debt of honor and tribute can be paid. Located on the east side of the Memorial, adjacent to our Gold Star Brick Garden, the monument is a superb addition to the grounds. Our Gold Star Memorial is the only one in the nation to feature scenes from D-Day, as well as photos of the Bedford Boys and their loved ones. Bedford, after all, had the highest per capita number of Gold Star families in the nation



(top) President April Cheek-Messier and Hershel “Woody” Williams with Gold Star Families.

(bottom) A closer look at our Gold Star Families Memorial Monument.



THE NATIONAL D-DAY MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

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resulting from Operation Overlord.

“The addition of the Gold Star Memorial allows us to educate others about what it means to be a Gold Star family, and how we as a nation should never forget the sacrifices they have made,” said April Cheek-Messier, President of the National D-Day Memorial Foundation. “This project was the result of the support of many donors whose generosity allowed this project to come to completion.”

At a future date, a bronze plaque will acknowledge donors who contributed \$1,000 or more to the project, including the most recent support from the Greater Lynchburg Community Trust.

Valor—fidelity—sacrifice. These are the keywords used when paying tribute to those who served on D-Day. These are not virtues unique to June 6, 1944, nor to those in uniform. Across the nation, there are grieving families who display valor, fidelity and sacrifice each day, as they mourn a loved one who paid the ultimate price. Because of your generous support, the National D-Day Memorial is humbled to be able to honor them.

## 73rd Anniversary: D-Day Recap

On Tuesday, June 6th, the crowd began to gather early, and soon Elmon T. Gray Plaza was filled with an enthusiastic crowd made up of supporters, school kids, families, foreign dignitaries, active duty military and honored veterans. Especially welcomed were about a dozen D-Day veterans—men who, 73 years before, helped to turn Operation Overlord into a crucial Allied victory. June 6th is always a poignant day of remembrance for the National D-Day Memorial, and this year’s commemoration was no exception.

his experiences in the war and his struggle to come to grips with it afterward. He also urged the audience to remember what the WWII generation accomplished.

“The world has to know that sixteen-million of us in America served, and eight million young women were Rosie the Riveters. Twenty-four million people served... [with] the purity of purpose for defeating evil,” Yellin said.

Yellin was very impressed with the National D-Day Memorial, having never visited before. He called it the most inspiring of all the WWII monuments he’s seen in his world travels.

June 6th also saw our annual pilgrimage to Homage with D-Day Veteran Ash Rothlein, pledging **“We will never forget!”** In addition, WWII veteran and longtime volunteer Bobbie Johnson was on hand, with fellow donor Peter Ring, to dedicate our new Quonset Hut, into which the gift shop and site offices will move later this summer. Because of the generosity of Bobbie Johnson and Peter and Fleda Ring, we were able to dedicate this new facility during the event.

Inside the new Q Hut, Jerry Yellin’s sister, Maxine Giannini, welcomed visitors to an exhibit of her late husband’s artwork. D-Day survivor Ugo Giannini sketched the only known drawings of D-Day done at the time, and the exhibition inspired many visitors who came in to take a glimpse back in time.

“Best June 6th event ever!” several people told us afterward. But don’t worry—we’re working on how to top it next year!



*WWII reenactors take a break during our D-Day Commemoration.*

The keynote speaker before the crowd of some 1,100 was Jerry Yellin, a decorated combat pilot who flew the final mission of WWII on the last day of the war. He delivered a riveting talk on



*Ash Rothlein receives a hug from General Vincent Cousin, French Air Force Defense Attache following our D-Day commemoration.*

# DESMOND DOSS JR

## APPEARANCE BREAKS LECTURE ATTENDANCE RECORDS

Desmond Doss Jr. appeared at the National D-Day Memorial on July 4th, speaking about the life and legacy of his father, the Hero of Hacksaw Ridge. It was an unexpectedly large crowd for a national holiday with hundreds turning out for an inspiring message of redemption and love.

Some 250 people came out to hear from Doss Jr., a resident of Washington State. So many showed up, in fact, Doss offered a second talk that morning to accommodate the crowd, and then stayed until mid-afternoon to meet people and sign books about his father. "Unconditional love," Doss said was the legacy of his father. "It's that altruistic attitude. The unselfish caring for the welfare of people. All people."

Desmond Doss Sr., a native of Lynchburg, VA, was the first conscientious objector to receive the Medal of Honor for actions taken as a medic during the Battle of Okinawa. His story was the subject of the recent critically-acclaimed movie *Hacksaw Ridge*, allowing

a new generation to be inspired by his heroism and convictions. He died in 2006.



*Desmond Doss Jr. takes a moment to reflect at the Memorial.*

## Veteran Brick Campaign



Orders are currently being taken for veterans' bricks to be part of the 2017 Veterans Day dedication. The inscribed bricks are a permanent tribute to the men and women who have served. These lasting tributes are not limited to service in World War II, they can encompass any service period. Placed prominently on the Memorial grounds, they will be viewed by thousands of visitors each year. The placement of each brick is not only an investment in the legacy of a loved one, but also an investment in the future of the Memorial. Proceeds from the brick campaign will assist the Foundation in maintaining the Memorial for many years to come.

At a cost of \$250 each, the bricks are an affordable way to give permanent recognition to a veteran at the National D-Day Memorial. The deadline for Veterans Day dedication is September 1st; call our office today at (800) 351-DDAY or visit our website for more information at [www.dday.org](http://www.dday.org).

## Overlord Society

If you find the National D-Day Memorial and the story it tells meaningful, please consider becoming a member of the Overlord Society. The Overlord Society serves as the membership program for the Memorial and by joining, you can show your support for the Memorial's mission; recognizing the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of the Allied forces who stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day.

The many levels available to choose from include benefits such as: admission and tours, a discount at the Memorial store, exclusive member items, and discounted special event tickets depending on your chosen level.

We are grateful for all our members, and we hope that you will consider joining the Overlord Society. You can make a significant impact on the research, educational initiatives, and other work being accomplished at the National D-Day Memorial. Please visit [www.dday.org](http://www.dday.org) for more information or call (800) 351-DDAY.

# Donor Spotlight

## Dr. Thomas Nygaard



*Dr. Thomas Nygaard and his wife speaking with Maxine Gianni at a special event.*

For Dr. Thomas Nygaard, support of the National D-Day Memorial is a family affair that spans nearly two decades. Dr. Nygaard and his family first gave to the Memorial before groundbreaking in 1999. To honor his parents' 50th wedding anniversary and his father's 90th birthday, he, his two sisters, and brother (Dr. Loisa Nygaard, Lila Nygaard Greene, and Thor Isak Nygaard) funded the first statue created by Jim Brothers for the National D-Day Memorial – “Across the Beach”.

Dr. Nygaard's father, SSgt Isak Nygaard, was a WWII veteran who received five battle stars, one of which was for his service in Operation Overlord. SSgt Nygaard served in the 774th Tank Destroyer Battalion with the 3rd Army. He was also an interpreter, speaking fluent German.

SSgt Nygaard's military journey began in Norway, his native country, in 1929 when he was drafted into the Norwegian army. In 1931, he came to New York and worked in a bakery. He spent some time in Germany for school from 1937 to 1939. It was during this time Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power and he decided to leave Germany. He made his way back to Norway, and found himself in New York by December 1939. In October 1940 SSgt Nygaard received notice he was being drafted into the US Army as a foreign national. He was inducted in March 1941 and spent three years training for the landing in Europe. His service in Europe included Operation Overlord, the Battle of the Bulge, and numerous other battles.

In October 1945, SSgt Nygaard was released from the Army and returned to Norway to revive the family bakery that had been taken over by the Nazis during the war. In 1949, while visiting Bill Bailey, an old Army buddy, he was introduced to his future wife Bernice Thomas. They were married and moved back to Norway. When Mrs. Nygaard's sister became ill, she made her way back to the States with her 2 young children; however, SSgt Nygaard found that his American citizenship had been revoked and he was denied a green card. After visits from his wife to her congressman and two senators, they were able to issue a green card in January 1953. SSgt Nygaard and his family eventually settled in Georgia and bought a bakery.

This is a story of a man who endured so much to ensure his family was cared for. His service also ensured our freedom. Due to his incredible work ethic, his two sons and two daughters learned the meaning of hard work. Because of his desire for them to have a better life, he put a premium on education for his children.



*Isak Nygaard, 1944*



*Isak and Erik Nygaard pay tribute at the Normandy American Cemetery.*

Dr. Nygaard and his siblings honored their mother and father with a beautiful statue at the National D-Day Memorial representing a soldier carrying a fellow comrade-in-arms across the beach to safety. For them, the sculpture is a visual reminder and personal thank you for the sacrifices their parents made over the years.

Dr. Nygaard's continuing support of the Memorial, as a donor and board member, helps ensure the Memorial is sustainable into the future. His support, and yours, will help guarantee the stories of those who gave their lives, or served in any aspect of WWII, are preserved and shared daily. Thank you!

# ARTIFACT HIGHLIGHT

## THE GERCHKOFF COLLECTION



Among the more moving and historically significant items in our collection are the artifacts, photos, and documents from the family of David Daniel Gerchkoff.

Gerchkoff was born in Aachen, Germany to Russian Jewish emigres from Odessa, Russia. In childhood the family moved to France, and when the Second World War erupted in 1939 David found himself a soldier. After France fell, he was active in the French Forces of the Interior (FFI—the French Resistance). David was

eventually captured and sent to the concentration camp Buchenwald as a political prisoner. Amazingly enough, his captors remained unaware of his Jewish roots—a fact which almost certainly saved his life.

Although his father and uncle perished at Auschwitz, David and his mother would survive the war. Eventually the surviving Gerchkoffs emigrated to the United States, later anglicizing their last name to Gary. In 1998, the family heard of the planned National D-Day Memorial, and donated their priceless mementos to the Foundation.

Included in the Gerchkoff collection is a striped beret worn by David while at Buchenwald, a British uniform coat converted for use by the FFI, and an armband from his French resistance unit (perhaps made postwar, since to wear or even

possess such an item during the German occupation would have been extremely dangerous).

In the Gerchkoff collection, and thousands of other items in the collection of the National D-Day Memorial, we find history in tangible form - poignant reminders of dark and desperate days, and of the resilience of the human spirit that allowed civilization to survive.



## Flames of Memory

It's never too early to purchase your Luminary for this year's Flames of Memory event! Over the years, the Memorial has worked diligently to place 4,413 luminaries (the number of Allied fatalities on June 6, 1944) throughout the Memorial grounds. These luminaries can be purchased in honor or memory of anyone, D-Day veteran or not, and will be placed at the Memorial from December 8th through December 10th. It truly is a sight to behold as evening falls over the horizon at the Memorial.

The cost for each luminary is \$20 or \$100 for 6; all gifts are tax-deductible and all proceeds benefit the National D-Day Memorial. A printed program will be distributed throughout the weekend with the names of those luminaries purchased in honor or memory of specific men and women who have served. To purchase a luminary please contact our office at (800) 351-DDAY or visit us at [www.dday.org](http://www.dday.org).



# Mark Your Calendar

## for the 2017 Golf Classic



*Jerry Yellin gives the thumbs-up while golfing.*

Famed WWII fighter pilot Jerry Yellin joins an impressive list of guest golfers for the third annual National D-Day Memorial Golf Classic, **Monday, September 25th** at the **Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Virginia**. Yellin flew the final combat mission of WWII and recently spoke at our D-Day commemoration. Now at age 93, he plays 18 holes every day at Champions Gate Course in Orlando, FL. Yellin boasts a 22 handicap, breaks his age every time he plays.

Also participating for the first time this year will be former #1 world LPGA ranked golfer, Donna Andrews. The Lynchburg native became the first female inducted into the Virginia Golf Hall of Fame earlier this year. Donna is currently the leading golf instructor at Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club in Pinehurst, NC.



Former Virginia Tech football coaching legend, Frank Beamer, will join us for the second year in a row. After his retirement in 2015, Virginia Golfer Magazine featured Beamer in an article about his competitive spirit both on the football field and golf course. This event is special to the Beamer family, as Beamer's wife, Cheryl, is the daughter of a D-Day veteran. "It is always a privilege for me to be involved with the D-Day Golf Classic in honoring those who sacrificed so much for our country," said Frank Beamer. "I support the National D-Day Memorial Foundation in all they do to show our veterans just how much we appreciate them."

Registered foursomes will join our special guests for a 10 a.m. shotgun start on the magnificent Cascades Course, one of America's finest mountain courses. Exclusive opportunities are available to play with Jerry Yellin, Donna Andrews, or Frank Beamer. Hole sponsorships and opportunities to honor a loved one who served are also available.



*Former #1 world LPGA golfer, Donna Andrews*



Registration in the National D-Day Memorial Golf Classic includes greens fees, cart, use of driving range, morning coffee and pastries, a boxed lunch, and an awards reception. All participants are invited to a welcome reception on Sunday, September 24th from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom Foyer.

Get to Hot Springs early for a Sunday practice round on either the Old Course or Cascades Course. The Old Course practice round has an 11 a.m. shotgun start. Tee times for the Cascades Course will be assigned from noon – 1:30 p.m. Practice rounds are \$100 per golfer.

Brush up on your golf game at a complimentary Sunday afternoon golf demonstration with

Donna Andrews, PGA great J.C. Snead, and the Omni Homestead's golf professionals. The demonstration starts at 4 p.m. at the Old Course driving range.

To register for the National D-Day Memorial Golf Classic, and to secure your preferred practice round selection, contact Angela Lynch, Associate Director of Marketing, at (800) 351-DDAY or [alynch@dday.org](mailto:alynch@dday.org).

The Omni Homestead is offering overnight accommodations starting at \$145 per night, September 23rd, 24th, and 25th. These special rates are available through August 18th or until the room block fills, whichever comes first.

All proceeds from the event benefit activities at the National D-Day Memorial. Participation is limited, so don't miss out! We look forward to seeing you September 24th -25th in Hot Springs!



*President April Cheek-Messier with former Virginia Tech Football Coach, Frank Beamer*

# SAVE THE DATES FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

The National D-Day Memorial exists to pay tribute to the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of those who have kept, and still keep, us free. We know you share that noble goal, so plan to join us this fall for events designed to honor heroes and remind us of the debt of remembrance we owe to those who served. Information about these and other events can be found at [www.dday.org](http://www.dday.org). We hope you will join us for these great events!

## POW/MIA DAY September 16th

On September 16th our annual POW/MIA commemoration will honor those who are absent among us. Join us at 11 a.m. for a ceremony to honor our nation's POWs and MIAs with a special Missing Man ceremony, a wreath laying, stirring music, and an inspiring challenge to remember those who were POWs as well as those still unaccounted for today. Michael Dolski, a historian at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency in Alexandria, Virginia will deliver the keynote address. Russell Scott WWII POW will also be on hand to say a few words. This will be our first POW/MIA program with our Gold Star Families Memorial in place, so it promises to be a moving day. Further details coming soon! Gates open at 10 a.m. and admission is free until noon.



*Rolling Thunder pays tribute during our 2016 POW/MIA Commemoration*

## Special Program October 26th



The National D-Day Memorial is pleased to offer an extra Lunchbox Lecture this autumn so our supporters can experience an inspiring tale of heroism and endurance. At noon on October 26th, at the Bedford Area Welcome Center, Regine Nozyce Archer will share her unique WWII experiences in war-torn Belgium. Born in 1924 in Krakow, Poland, Regine's family moved to Liege Belgium when she was a young girl, little knowing that by 1940 they would be caught up in a great global conflict. Forced to hide her Jewish heritage from the Nazi occupiers, Regine and her sister took refuge in a Belgian convent, where only the Mother Superior knew the truth about the refugees. When the war returned to Belgium in 1944, she became a nurse for wounded soldiers and civilians, and eventually an interpreter for the US Army—where she met her

future husband. This inspiring and captivating story will leave you amazed and profoundly moved. The program is free and open to the public, and guests are invited to bring a lunch.

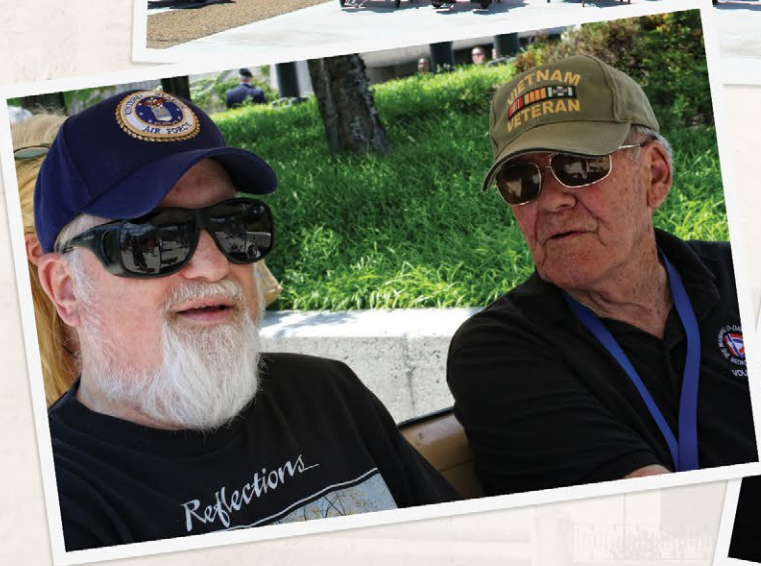
## Veterans Day November 11th

This year will mark the 99th Anniversary of the end of World War I. For decades school children were told to “Remember the Elevens”—at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, the “War to End All Wars” came to an end. We now use this day to honor all our nation's veterans, and we will “Remember the Elevens” with our own commemoration at the National D-Day Memorial. Among the special emphases, this year will be the dedication of a new plaque recognizing the often-overlooked role of the US Marine Corps in the European Theater during WWII. Our keynote speaker, Lt. General Robert “Rusty” Blackman, USMC Ret., President and CEO of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation is sure to give a moving speech. With patriotic music, recognition of all veterans' present, and the unveiling of the newest veteran's bricks, this day promises to be particularly poignant.



# Thank You

to our veterans



**THE NATIONAL D-DAY MEMORIAL FOUNDATION**

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