



PRESS KIT

Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of D-Day



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Letter From the Secretary

Eighty years ago, on the shores of Normandy, the course of history was forever changed. D-Day is the turning point of the Second World War, and thus, a major turning point in both world and human history. The events of June 6, 1944, set in motion a series of actions that resulted in the Allied victory in Europe just under a year later, in May of 1945.

The importance of D-Day, and its anniversary each year thereafter, cannot be overstated. But this anniversary is more than just a remembrance for the events at Normandy and recognition of the great human toll this hard-earned victory demanded. It is also a reminder for us – today, in the present – that we as a people, as a nation and a humanity, must always be vigilant in standing up for freedom and against tyranny.

We must use days such as D-Day as solemn reminders of how these freedoms are preserved. At times, this preservation requires young and brave service members to make the ultimate sacrifice, as more than 2,500 Americans did on June 6, 1944. It is incumbent upon the rest of us to ensure that the democratic values they fought for are never lost or forgotten.

This duty is at the heart of what the American Battle Monuments Commission does. We are not the only agency who does this, but we have the honor of playing a small role in reminding Americans and citizens of the world the strength and goodness for which our country and her people stand. This goodness is evident in our fallen service members' bravery 80 years ago, and in the actions of every ABMC staff member, volunteer, visitor and person who has engaged with our agency in the time since.

Every individual who advocates for democracy, both for themselves and for others, contributes to the ongoing vigilance in defense of freedom. You are each an instrumental part of the legacy ABMC preserves through our sites, our events and our very being. I am truly grateful and humbled to be among you in this necessary work as we honor the war dead here at Normandy American Cemetery on June 6, and our fallen service members across the world in the days and years to come.

Thank you,



Charles K. Djou

Secretary and Chief Executive Officer,
American Battle Monuments Commission



Purpose of ABMC

Purpose of ABMC

OVERVIEW

ABMC — guardian of America’s overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials — honors the service, achievements and sacrifices of U.S. armed forces. Established by Congress on March 4, 1923, ABMC’s mission includes:

- Designing, constructing, operating and maintaining permanent American military cemeteries in foreign countries;
- Building and maintaining monuments, memorials, and markers overseas, where American forces have served since April 6, 1917, and in the U.S. when directed by public law; and
- Controlling the design and construction of both public and private U.S. military memorials, monuments and markers overseas, and encouraging their maintenance.

ABMC administers, operates and maintains 26 permanent American military cemeteries, and 31 federal memorials, monuments and markers, which are located in 17 foreign countries, the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the British dependency of Gibraltar; three of the memorials are located within the United States. These cemeteries and memorials, most of which commemorate the service and sacrifice of Americans who served in World War I and World War II, are among the most beautiful and meticulously maintained shrines in the world.



In addition to grave sites, the World War I and II cemeteries and three memorials on U.S. soil also commemorate by name those U.S. service members who were missing in action or lost or buried at sea during World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

There are more than 207,000 war dead from World War I and World War II commemorated in ABMC sites.

This includes:

- Nearly 31,000 interments and almost 4,500 memorials for World War I.
- Nearly 93,000 interments and almost 79,000 memorials for World War II.

Additionally, the names of more than 8,200 individuals listed as missing from the Korean War and more than 2,500 individuals from the Vietnam War are memorialized at ABMC’s Honolulu Memorial. ABMC also administers Mexico City National Cemetery in Mexico, Corozal American Cemetery in Panama and Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines. More than 15,000 members of the armed forces, veterans and others are interred in these sites.

ABMC HISTORY

ABMC is a federal agency that was created by President Warren G. Harding in 1923 with a mission to formally honor the American armed forces where they had served overseas and construct military monuments on foreign soil. General of the Armies John J. Pershing was appointed to ABMC's Board of Commissioners in 1923, and was elected chairman by the other members. He served in that capacity until his death in 1948. Nine additional chairmen have since served in this position.

More than 116,000 Americans lost their lives in Europe during World War I. In the aftermath of this conflict, the government recognized a need for a burial and repatriation policy for America's war dead. Under provisions of the law, families of fallen American service members were entitled to select permanent interment of a loved one's remains in an American military cemetery on foreign soil or repatriation of the remains to the U.S. for interment in a national or private cemetery. This allowed for acknowledgment of America's contribution to the war in Europe overseas while giving American families the ultimate decision about where and how to honor their fallen family members. The majority of families chose repatriation. Approximately 39% chose permanent interment in an American military cemetery in Europe. Immediately after World War I, these cemeteries were maintained by the U.S. Army. In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order transferring responsibility of these cemeteries to ABMC, and they remain in its care today.

ABMC's policy-making body consists of a board of commissioners comprising up to 11 members appointed by the president of the United States for an indefinite term and who serve without pay. The commissioners establish policy and ensure proper staff functioning to carry out the mission of ABMC. Daily operations are directed by an executive level secretary, who is appointed by the president.

ABMC headquarters is located in Arlington, Virginia, and an overseas office is located in Paris, France.

WORLD WAR I AND WORLD WAR II COMMEMORATIVE PROGRAMS



ABMC's World War I commemorative program consists of eight permanent American cemeteries in Europe and 13 separate memorials and markers erected in the 1920s and 1930s. Each cemetery was accented with nonsectarian chapels, sculptures, battle maps depicting the course of the war in the region and visitor reception facilities. The World War I commemorative program expanded again in January 2017 when ABMC acquired its 26th cemetery, the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial Cemetery near Paris.

ABMC's World War II commemorative program consists of 14 permanent American military cemeteries, 11 monuments on foreign soil and three memorials in the United States. The most recent monument was dedicated on Dec. 10, 2018 in Wellington, New Zealand. Similar to the World War I cemeteries, each of the World War II cemeteries include nonsectarian chapels, sculptures, other works of art, battle maps and narratives depicting the course of the war in the region and visitor reception facilities.

By the end of World War II, several hundred temporary burial grounds had been established by the U.S. Army on battlefields around the world. In 1947, 14 sites overseas were selected to become permanent cemeteries by the Secretary of the Army and ABMC. Following the precedent set after World War I, families of the deceased were offered an option for permanent interment overseas or repatriation. Once again, the majority chose repatriation. In some instances, next-of-kin requested isolated burials be left undisturbed, leaving their loved ones where they fell or were recovered. These graves continue to be maintained to this day by local communities.

Each grave site in the overseas American World War I and II cemeteries is marked by a headstone of pristine white marble. Headstones of those of the Jewish faith are marked by Stars of David; Latin crosses mark all others. Annotated on the headstones of the World War I servicemen who could not be identified is: “HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN BUT TO GOD.” The phrase “AMERICAN SOLDIER” was replaced with the phrase “COMRADE IN ARMS” on the headstones of servicemen who could not be identified from World War II.

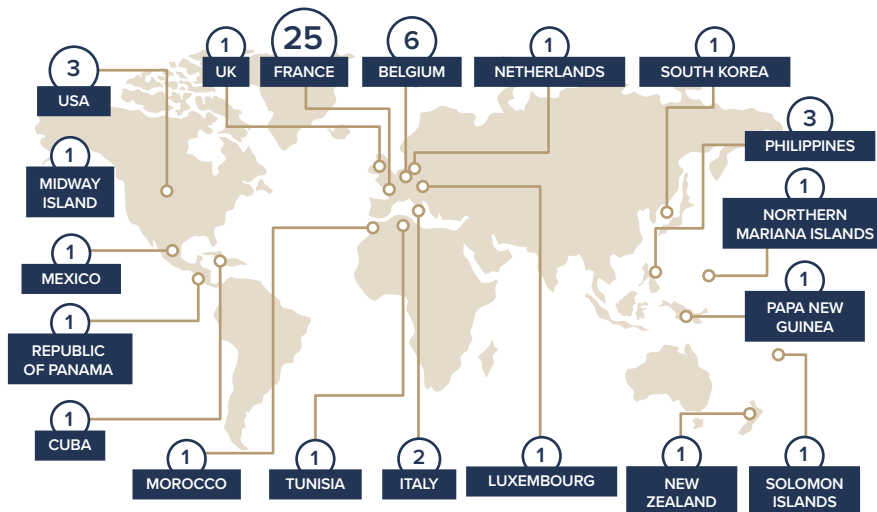
Individuals who are recorded as missing, or lost or buried at sea are memorialized by name on Walls of the Missing at the cemeteries or three domestic ABMC memorials. ABMC’s World War II cemeteries contain more than 5,000 “unknown” graves. ABMC actively supports the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency’s (DPAA) ongoing efforts in the exhumation of remains from unknown graves.

Use of both the World War I and World War II sites as permanent military burial grounds was granted in perpetuity by the host country. Burial in these cemeteries is limited by the agreements with the host countries to members of the U.S. armed forces who died overseas during the war. U.S civilians, technicians, Red Cross workers and entertainers serving the military were treated as members of the armed forces for burial entitlement. All of ABMC’s World War I and World War II cemeteries are closed to burials, except in cases when remains of American war dead are recovered and identified today.



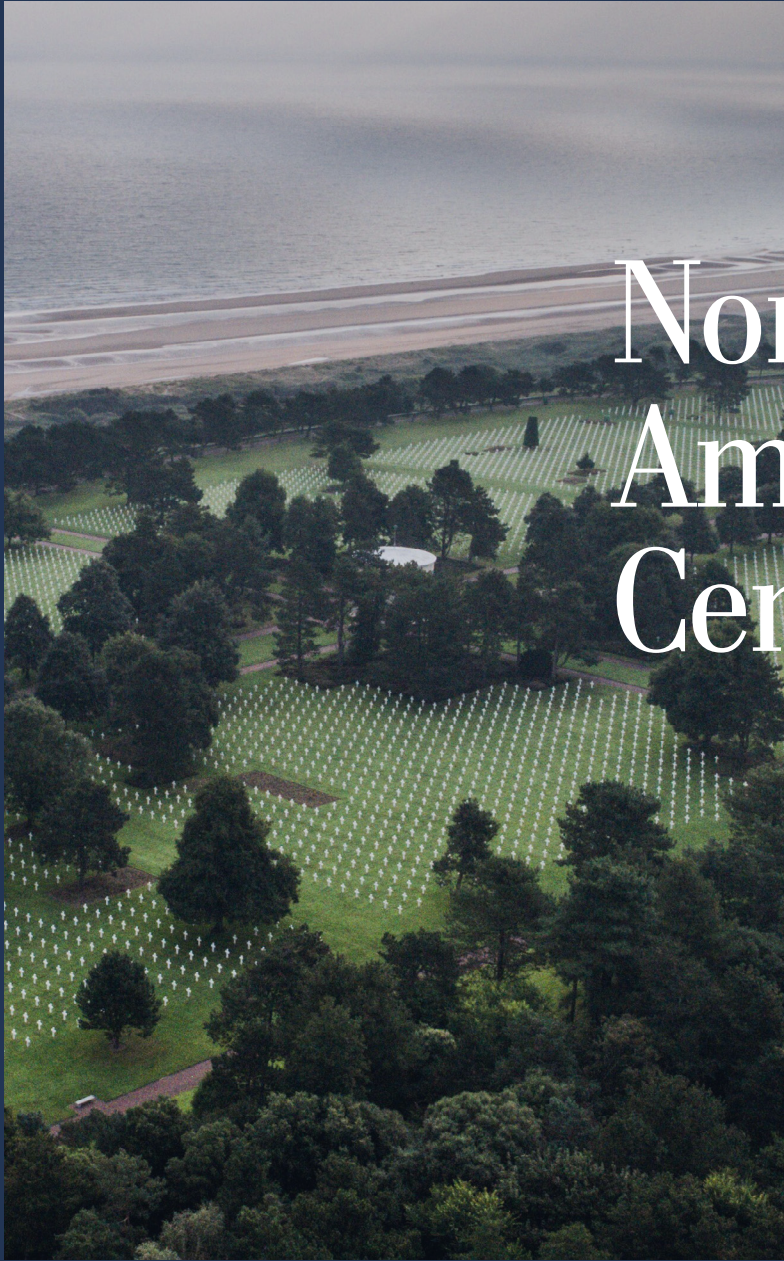
ABMC SITES IN THE WORLD

Number of Sites by Country



ABMC cemeteries and memorials commemorate the service, achievements and sacrifices of Americans who served in the following conflicts:

- Mexican-American War
- Spanish-American War
- World War I
- World War II
- Korean War
- Vietnam War



Normandy American Cemetery

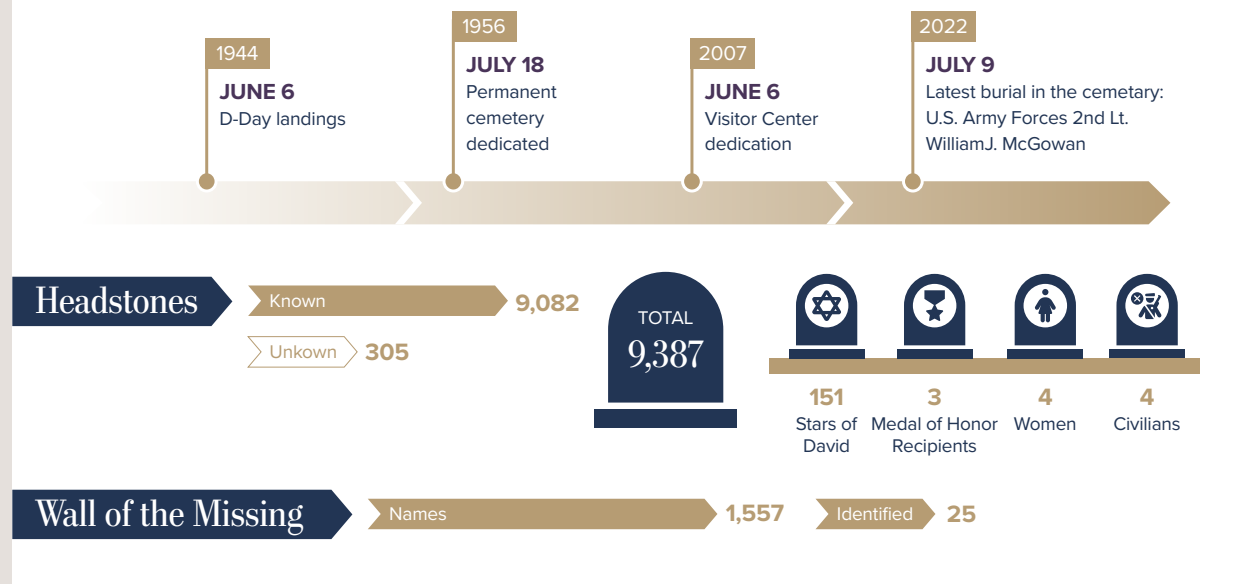
Normandy American Cemetery History



NORMANDY AMERICAN CEMETERY

IN BRIEF

The Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial, in Colleville-sur-Mer, France, sits on the shores of Omaha Beach. Most of those buried and memorialized here lost their lives in the D-Day landings and ensuing operations in World War II.



ABOUT NORMANDY AMERICAN CEMETERY:

Normandy American Cemetery was dedicated July 18, 1956, to honor American loss from World War II. It sits on a cliff overlooking Omaha Beach and the English Channel. Normandy American Cemetery covers 172.5 acres and includes approximately 9,400 burials. It includes one service member from World War I.

Approximately 1,600 Americans who were declared missing, or lost or buried at sea are honored by name in the Garden of the Missing.

Most of the Americans who rest at Normandy American Cemetery lost their lives in the D-Day landings and the following fight for the liberation of Paris.

Architects for the cemetery’s memorial features were Harbeson, Hough, Livingston and Larson of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The landscape architect was Markley Stevenson, also of Philadelphia. Donald de Lue of New York City was the sculptor for the memorial statue and other statues in the cemetery.



THE VISITOR CENTER OF THE NORMANDY AMERICAN CEMETERY

Inaugurated June 6, 2007, and renovated in 2019, the Normandy American Cemetery visitor center plays an important role in the experience of every visitor. Through interactive exhibits in French, English and Braille, the visitor center illustrates the scope of the invasion and connects visitors with personal stories of sacrifice. It gives visitors context to the approximately 9,400 headstones in the cemetery and the incredible stories of courage and sacrifice of those who took part in the landings and the Normandy Campaign. Narrative text, photos, films, interactive animations, maps, graphics and artifacts help educate visitors about the Normandy landings and the role of those memorialized at the Normandy American Cemetery in the war effort.

The number of visitors who have come to the visitor center – more than 20 million since its opening – shows how interested the public still is in this chapter of history. Guided tours of the cemetery take place every day in English and French and are accessible to visitors with limited mobility.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Normandy Offensive

At dawn on June 6, 1944, a fleet of 4,266 transport vessels and 722 warships protected by over 10,000 airplanes approached the coast of Normandy. Spread out across a 22-mile-long front, this convoy was transporting 130,000 men.

This air and sea operation, which had the code name “Overlord,” was the largest in history, and stood out for the quantity of its participants in addition to what it represented in terms of industrial, technical and logistical achievements. France, Belgium and other European nations had been anticipating the Normandy Offensive for over a year while struggling to resist Nazi occupation on the continent. It allowed the Allies to open a new front in western Europe against the troops of the Third Reich.

The campaign began Tuesday, June 6, 1944 — D-Day — with the landing (code-named Operation Neptune) and parachuting of the first Allied troops to the west of Calvados and to the east of Cotentin. It ended between Aug. 19 and Aug. 29, 1944. Paris was liberated on Aug. 25, 1944.

A PLACE THAT WENT DOWN IN HISTORY: POINTE DU HOC

By mid-1944, German forces manned formidable defenses along the French coast. German 155mm artillery positions on Pointe du Hoc, on the coast of Normandy, were of particular concern to the Allies. These positions could endanger the landings planned at Utah Beach and Omaha Beach.

Lt. Col. James E. Rudder, commanding the 2nd Ranger Battalion, received the mission to land at 6:30 a.m. June 6, 1944, scale the 100-foot cliffs, and disable the German positions.

TIMELINE OF OPERATIONS



JUNE 6, 5:50 A.M.

Naval bombardment of Pointe du Hoc began, including guns of the battleship USS Texas. Three companies of 70 men from Rudder’s 2nd Ranger Battalion were to land at Pointe du Hoc at 6:30 a.m. but were delayed.



JUNE 6, 7:10 A.M.

Two landing craft were lost, but the Rangers debarked and started up the cliffs. They pressed upward, supported by the destroyer USS Satterlee. One of the Rangers’ DUKWs, an amphibious vehicle, was disabled by enemy fire en route to Pointe du Hoc. The engine failed. Three Rangers were wounded and one was killed.



JUNE 6, 9:30 A.M.

The Germans had previously moved the guns southward from their initial prepared positions. Despite fierce resistance, Rangers found and destroyed the guns, pushing onward to cut the highway south of Pointe du Hoc.



JUNE 6-8

After two days of fighting, only about 90 Rangers stood when relieved.



JUNE 6, 7:40 A.M.

Most of the remaining Rangers reached the top.

The Normandy Offensive

A PLACE THAT WENT DOWN IN HISTORY: UTAH BEACH

The Utah Beach terrain differed from other invasion beaches: its dunes were relatively shallow, followed inland by expanses of flooded and marshy terrain crossed by narrow causeways. German defenses included multiple obstacles along the beaches, plus infantry and artillery capable of blocking exits inland.

The Germans also reinforced their units throughout the Cotentin Peninsula and enhanced fortifications around Cherbourg.

TIMELINE OF OPERATIONS





Exceptional Fates

EXCEPTIONAL FATES

Six Personal Service Member Stories from Normandy



▀ Direct Descendant of The 26th President of The United States
Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.

Theodore Roosevelt Jr. was born Sept. 13, 1887, in Oyster Bay, New York. The eldest son of 26th President of the United States Theodore Roosevelt's six children, he was an outstanding student at Harvard University and began a career as a skillful businessman. In the early 1920s, he began his political career as a representative in the New York State Assembly for the 2nd district of Nassau County. He was appointed assistant secretary of the Navy in 1921, named governor of Puerto Rico in 1929 and governor general of the Philippines in 1932.

In active service during both world wars, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Silver Star. He died July 12, 1944, of a heart attack, but was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor "for gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty on June 6, 1944" while leading his men at Utah Beach on D-Day. He was buried in a provisional cemetery at Sainte-Mère-Église, and his remains were transferred to the Normandy American Cemetery after the war at his family's request.

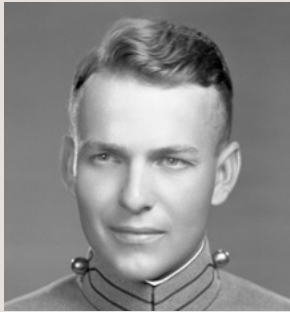


▀ Direct Descendant of The 26th President of The United States
1st Lt. Quentin Roosevelt

Quentin Roosevelt was born Nov. 19, 1897, in Washington D.C., during his father's presidential terms (1901-1909), when his family lived at the White House. The youngest of President Roosevelt's children, Quentin was known for his funny and sometimes philosophical remarks. He was a second-year student at Harvard and a promising writer when he decided to join the Army Air Service during World War I.

A pilot in the 95th Aero Squadron, he was shot down behind enemy lines July 14, 1918, during a dogfight with three German pilots. He crashed in Chamery, near Coulonges-en-Tardenois, in the Aisne department. He was 20 years old. His body was buried with full military honors by the German troops near his plane.

When the Normandy American Cemetery was founded in Colleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, after the war, the Roosevelt family received permission to transfer Quentin's remains there where he was buried next to his older brother in Plot D.



■ The Tragic Fate of a Father and Son

Col. Ollie W. Reed and 1st Lt. Ollie W. Reed Jr.

Ollie W. Reed was born in Norton, Kansas, July 18, 1896. He went to West Point and served in World War I. After being stationed along the Texas-Mexican border, he was sent to Germany, where he served as a lieutenant in the 50th U.S. Infantry Regiment. After World War I, he was posted to various places in the U.S. and moved around frequently with his family. When World War II began, Reed joined the 175th Regiment of the 29th American Infantry Division and was promoted to the rank of colonel.

With the men in his unit, he landed at Omaha Beach June 6, 1944. Throughout the month of June, the 29th Infantry Division suffered heavy losses while approaching its vital objective, the French town of Saint-Lô. On June 11, a commanding officer of the 175th Infantry Regiment was taken prisoner, and another was wounded on June 17. Reed was named as their replacement. On July 30, having reached the southwest of Saint-Lô with his men, he went to visit the 2nd Battalion.

As he got out of his Jeep at a crossroads in Villebaudon, an artillery shell landed between him and the vehicle. Seriously wounded in the right side, Reed died later that day.

Ollie W. Reed Jr. was born in Manchester, Connecticut, Jan. 15, 1919. He chose to follow in his father's footsteps and joined the Army. In 1933, Reed Jr. became a cadet at Wentworth Military Academy, where his father was stationed. He was soon admitted to West Point and after his graduation, he was sent to Morocco (which was then a French protectorate) April 18, 1944, for training with the 91st Infantry Division.

Reed Jr. then joined the 363rd Infantry Regiment near Riparbella, Italy, July 4, 1944. On July 5, the regiment received orders to take a small hill in the mountains to the southwest of Chianni. When they reached the hill, Reed Jr. and his men were attacked by German troops and came under intense artillery fire. Reed Jr. was killed on the spot July 6 at age 25. Mildred Reed received two terrible telegrams on the same day, within 45 minutes of each other. At her request, her husband and son rest side by side in Plot E at Normandy American Cemetery.



■ Supporting The Troops' Morale

Civilian (American Red Cross) Elizabeth Ann "Liz" Richardson

Elizabeth Ann "Liz" Richardson was born June 8, 1918, in Akron, Ohio and grew up in Mishawaka, Indiana. After graduating from high school in Mishawaka in 1936, she went to Milwaukee-Downer College, where she graduated in 1940 with a double major in art and English. A visual artist and a creative writer, she found work in advertising in Milwaukee.

Like many Americans of her generation, Richardson initially thought that America should not get involved in European disputes. The attack on Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, soon changed her mind. In May 1944, she joined the American Red Cross with two friends. As a member of a Clubmobile unit, Elizabeth helped serve coffee and doughnuts to the American service members stationed in England and France.

On July 25, 1945, Elizabeth was heading to Paris on a small plane in heavy fog when it crashed near Rouen, killing her and the pilot instantly. She is buried in Plot A at Normandy American Cemetery, one of four women interred in the cemetery.



■ A Young Patriot Lost at Sea

Steward's Mate 1st Class Ferdinand A. Glapion, Jr.

An African American born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1926, **Ferdinand A. Glapion, Jr.** was the eldest of nine children. He grew up in a French-speaking Creole family and worked at a market before joining the Naval Reserve.

He wanted to serve his country by joining the Army but was too young to do so without his parents' consent. Although reluctant at first, his father finally agreed to let him join the Naval Reserve, and he served during World War II.

In late June 1945, his father received a telegram stating that June 19, 1944, his son was on board Landing Ship Tank-523 when it hit an enemy mine as it approached Utah Beach. Severely damaged by the explosion, the ship sank almost immediately.

Glapion's body was never found. He was declared missing in action and officially dead June 20, 1945, one year after his presumed death. He is honored on the Walls of the Missing at Normandy American Cemetery.



🚩 Brave Twins Together for Eternity

Radiomen 2nd Class Julius and Ludwig Pieper

Julius and Ludwig Pieper were twin brothers born May 17, 1925, in Esmond, South Dakota to parents of German origin who had just emigrated to the U.S. In the early 1930s, the family moved to a farm near Creston, Nebraska. Only 17 years old when they enlisted in the Navy, they had to obtain their parents' consent and became radio operators.



During World War II, Julius and Ludwig served on Landing Ship Tank-523, posted to Force B, the Western Operational Force. LST-523 and its crew participated in Operation Overlord, transporting men, vehicles, supplies and equipment to Utah Beach and Omaha Beach, and taking the dead, the wounded and prisoners of war to England.

On June 19, 1944, the 19-year-old Pieper twins lost their lives when LST-523 was sunk by an underwater mine off Utah Beach. Ludwig's remains were identified after the disaster and buried at Normandy American Cemetery while Julius, whose body was not found, was honored on the Wall of the Missing. In 1961, bodies of the crew members of LST-523 were found, but it was not possible to identify them. They were buried in the Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium in 1965 as unknowns.

Aided by technological advances, the Defense Department increased its efforts to identify the thousands of service members who were missing during World War II. Julius' remains were exhumed in 2017 and a series of analyses confirmed his identity. As Ludwig was already buried at Normandy, his family chose to bury Julius alongside him in Plot E, 74 years after his death, on June 19, 2018.



▀ The Last Service Member Buried at Normandy American Cemetery
2nd Lt. William J. McGowan

2nd Lt. William J. McGowan was born in Benson, Minnesota, in 1921. In June 1944, McGowan was a member of the 391st Fighter Squadron, 366th Fighter Group, 9th U.S. Air Force. He was killed on June 6, 1944, when the P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft he was piloting crashed while on a mission near the city of Saint-Lô, France.

In 1947, based on information provided by a French citizen, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC) investigated a crash site near the village of Moon-sur-Elle that was possibly associated with McGowan's loss. An AGRC team removed wreckage from the impact crater but failed to locate McGowan's remains. As a result, on Dec. 23, 1947, his remains were declared non-recoverable.

In July and August 2018, a team from the St. Mary's University Forensic Aviation Archaeological Field School, located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, excavated the site at Moon-sur-Elle and recovered possible osseous material. The remains were sent to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency laboratory for analysis. To identify McGowan's remains, scientists from DPAA used dental and anthropological analysis, as well as circumstantial and material evidence.

McGowan's name is recorded on the Walls of the Missing at the Normandy American Cemetery, along with the others missing from WWII. A rosette was placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for. McGowan was then buried in the Normandy American Cemetery July 9, 2022. When asked about 2nd Lt. McGowan's final resting place, McGowan's nephew, Paul Stouffer, said "...we did not hesitate." Referring to Lt. McGowan's parents and siblings, Stouffer remarked "We feel they would be comforted knowing that their son and brother is buried here."



Spokespeople Biographies



Charles K. Djou Secretary & Chief Executive Officer

In May 2022, President Joe Biden appointed **Charles K. Djou** to serve as the secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

An Afghanistan war veteran, Djou served for over 20 years in the U.S. Army Reserve, achieving the rank of colonel. In Operation Enduring Freedom, Djou deployed with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) to Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 2011-12. In the Army, Djou served with units based in Hawaii, California, Alaska, South Korea and Germany.

Djou is a former member of Congress representing Hawaii's 1st Congressional District, where he served on the House Armed Services Committee and House Budget Committee. He was also elected to serve as the minority (Republican) floor leader for the Hawaii State House of Representatives and chair of the Zoning Committee for the Honolulu City Council. Outside of politics, Djou has taught at the University of Hawaii Law School and Hawaii Pacific University.

Djou earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science and a Bachelor of Science in economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, a J.D. from the University of Southern California Gould School of Law and an M.A. in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College.

He has lived in Hawaii since early childhood and currently resides in the Aloha State with his wife, son, two daughters and a dog.



Scott Desjardins Normandy American Cemetery Superintendent

Scott Desjardins was appointed superintendent of the Normandy American Cemetery in June 2017. As superintendent, he is responsible for planning and executing all cemetery operations and maintenance, historical research and interpretation, and engaging with next of kin and distinguished visitors. He supervises a staff of approximately 90 employees. He is also responsible for operating two ABMC federal monuments: Pointe du Hoc Battlefield and Utah Beach Monument. Prior to Normandy, Desjardins has held several ABMC assignments, including superintendent of the Luxembourg American Cemetery (2010-2017), superintendent of the Rhone American Cemetery (2009-2010) and assistant superintendent of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery (2007-2009).

Before ABMC, Desjardins had a successful career with ALTEC Industries. Beginning as a welder, fabricator and press operator, Desjardins became a team leader of a final assembly line and finished his tenure as the group leader of five final assembly lines managing the largest ALTEC customer contract with Verizon.

Desjardins also served 20 years in the U.S. Army as an armor crewman. His assignments include time with the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division; 16th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Division; 194th Independent Armored Brigade, 10th U.S. Cavalry; U.S. Army Armor Center; 7th Army Training Command OPFOR Battalion; 5th U.S. Army Headquarters Operational Readiness Evaluation Combat Team; and Division G-3 Sergeant Major and Division Master Gunner 4th Infantry Division. He deployed to Operation Desert Shield as a member of the 3rd Special Forces Mobile Training Team embedded with the Joint Arab Task Force to specialize in weaponry and tactical training. His military awards include the Bronze Star Medal, Presidential Unit Citation for the Unit's actions during the Battle of Khafji, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia National Defense Service Medal, four Meritorious Service Medals, six Army Commendation Medals and six Army Achievement Medals. He is a graduate of both the M60 Series and M-1 Series Master Gunner Courses.



Ben Brands ABMC Historian

Ben Brands, a Ph.D. candidate in History at George Mason University, specializes in the history of the United States Army in the nineteenth century. He received his B.A. from the College of William and Mary in 2004 and his M.A. from George Mason University in 2015. From 2015 to 2017 he served as an Assistant Professor at the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY, where he taught courses on Military History and the American Civil War. He has also taught American and European Military History for Oregon State University's e-campus. He has previously served as an infantry officer in the United States Army, and worked at the U.S. Army's Center of Military History helping to writing the official history of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Since 2019 he has been employed full time as a historian for the American Battle Monuments Commission.



Stéphanie Le Bris Interpretive Guide Normandy American Cemetery

Stéphanie Le Bris is an Interpretive Guide at Normandy American Cemetery. Stéphanie was born in Bayeux, Normandy, in the 70's, and grew up next to Omaha Beach where her grandparents lived as farmers in Colleville sur mer. They saw the construction of the cemetery.

She studied tourism with the specialty of the sale techniques. She then became a travel agent in Paris for six years. Returning to Normandy, she worked for the Tourism County of la Manche where she oversaw a tourism office for three years. Since 2007, she has been an Interpretive Guide at Normandy American Cemetery and completed the CIG training.

Working at the cemetery is a way for her to link Americans' stories with her family's story. Her grandparents lived the war and gave a part of their land for the creation of the cemetery. As she often says to visitors, she is not only a guide but the guardian of their stories.



Commissioners



Michael X. Garrett Chairman

In June 2023, President Joseph R. Biden appointed retired U.S. Army Gen. **Michael X. Garrett** to the American Battle Monuments Commission, and he was elected chairman by his fellow commissioners in August.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, and raised on military installations across the world, Garrett has spent his entire life in and around the U.S. Army. He is the proud son of Lola Garrett, a U.S. Army spouse and lifelong public servant, and Command Sgt. Maj. Edward Garrett, a Vietnam War combat veteran and Silver Star recipient.

An alumnus of both the Department of Defense High School in Baumholder, Germany, and Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, Garrett began his own Army journey in 1984. He served his formative years in the elite 75th Ranger Regiment, and over the course of a decade was assigned to and wore the scrolls of the Regiment's headquarters and each of its three Ranger battalions.

Garrett went on to command his own formations in the 82nd Airborne and 25th Infantry Divisions, served multiple combat tours in the Middle East and ultimately led 750,000 combat and support personnel within the Army's largest organization: Forces Command. After 38 years of active service, he retired as an Army four-star general, and continues to build connections with U.S. service members and their families, patriotic communities across America, and soldier-friendly universities and businesses. Upon retirement, he was inducted by his own son as a Distinguished Member of the 75th Ranger Regiment and is the recipient of the Ellis Island Honors Society Medal of Honor along with honorary degrees from Methodist and Xavier University.



Daniel P. Woodward Vice Chairman

Daniel P. Woodward retired from the U.S. Air Force as a brigadier general, following more than 28 years of distinguished service. While in the Air Force, Woodward served in a variety of operational and staff positions, including tours as a wing commander and as a flag officer on the Joint Staff and the Air Staff. He is a command pilot with more than 3,000 military flight hours and is married to his college sweetheart, retired U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Maggie Woodward.

Following retirement from the Air Force, Woodward served as vice president, Integrated Solutions for General Dynamics Information Technology. After leaving his position with General Dynamics, he became executive director of Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings, a nationwide collegiate nonprofit that builds young military and civilian servant leaders through the lessons found in community service, unique professional development experiences and education. He continues to serve in this position as well as a planning commissioner for Placer County, California.



Darrell L. Dorgan Commissioner

Darrell L. Dorgan is a North Dakota native and an award-winning journalist who worked as a television news director and anchor for 25 years. He is married with two daughters and currently chairs Dakom Communications/Dorgan Films, a corporation involved in real estate and television documentary production. Dorgan is a Vietnam Veteran who belongs to AMVETS, VFW, DAV and the American Legion. He was appointed to the American Battle Monuments Commission for eight years by President Barack Obama and to the Kennedy Center Advisory Board by President Bill Clinton. He has also been a board member of the North Dakota Historical Society Foundation for 25 years, served as the head of the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame and chaired the recent North Dakota World War I Centennial Commission.



John L. Estrada Commissioner

Ambassador John L. Estrada emigrated to the United States from Trinidad and Tobago at the age of 14. He went on to serve 34 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, attaining the rank of 15th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps from 2003 to 2007. After retirement, he went on to work for Lockheed Martin Corporation as the senior manager for Training Solution Incorporated from 2008 to 2016. He was nominated by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the Senate to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, the country of his birth, from 2016 to 2017. He also served as a volunteer member on the Joe Biden Presidential Transition Agency Review Team for the Department of Defense from November 2020 to January 2021.

Estrada is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Southern Watch. His personal awards include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with three gold stars, the Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Joint Service Achievement Medal and Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal. He is a former board member for Operation Homefront, a nonprofit organization that provides emergency assistance for members of the military, those wounded and the families they leave behind. He is also a former member of the board of governors for the USO, a former member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, a former member of the Executive Advisory Council for Mission Readiness and a former commissioner with the American Battle Monuments Commission. Estrada is a lifetime member of the VFW, the Marine Corps League and the Montford Point Marine Association. He resides in West Palm Beach, Florida.



Florent Groberg Commissioner

Florent “Flo” Groberg served in the U.S. Army from 2008 to 2015 and is a recipient of the Medal of Honor, the United States’ highest military honor, for his extraordinary gallantry, intrepidity and heroism while serving in combat operations in Afghanistan in 2012.

Today, Groberg leads the Microsoft Azure Global Government M360 Mission Solution Team. He is responsible for working with governments worldwide to identify key missions and systems that should operate on the Azure Cloud. He holds a master’s degree in management with a specialization in intelligence policies from the University of Maryland University College in College Park, Maryland. He is married to Carsen Groberg, with whom he has a dog named V and a cat named Ranger.



Amy Looney Hefferna Commissioner

Ever since her late husband, U.S. Navy SEAL Lt. Brendan Looney, was killed in Afghanistan on Sept. 21, 2010 and awarded the Bronze Star with Valor, **Amy Looney** has served as an inspirational champion for families of fallen service members, military families, veterans and American troops. Serving as vice president of the Travis Manion Foundation, Looney leads a national movement focused on empowering veterans and families of the fallen to foster the next generation of leaders in the mission to unite communities to strengthen America's national character. She is dedicated to carrying on the legacy of her late husband and his friend, Travis Manion, who are buried side by side in Arlington National Cemetery. A personal tragedy fueled Looney to become an impassioned advocate to inspire, motivate and empower individuals, communities and a nation to honor the fallen by challenging the living. A consistent voice in the national conversation and advocacy of veterans and families of the fallen, Looney is frequently invited to address national audiences on Fox News, CNN, CBS, TED-X and in written publications such as The Washington Post and through multiple personal appearances across the U.S. She is the co-author of "The Knock at the Door." Amy received her bachelor's degree in business management from Johns Hopkins University and her master's in public administration from George Washington University. She lives in Chicago with her husband, Joel, daughter, Grace and dog, Payton.



Matthew E. Jones Commissioner

Brig. Gen. Matthew E. Jones commands the 89th Airlift Wing, home of Air Force One, where he is responsible for worldwide special air mission airlift, logistics and communications support for the president, vice president, cabinet members, combatant commanders and other senior military and elected leaders. A three-time combat airlift commander, Jones also served in numerous headquarters, U.S. Air Force and joint positions including as the special assistant to the director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

Prior to his current assignment, Jones was the installation commander at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, home of the Department of Defense's largest mortuary. In this role, he fulfilled the nation's sacred commitment of ensuring dignity, honor and respect to the fallen and care, service and support to their families.

An Arizona native, Jones resides at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, with his family. He is a distinguished graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy and has master's degrees from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, the Army War College and the University of Pittsburgh's KATZ Graduate School of Business.



Raymond D. Kemp Sr. Commissioner

Raymond D. Kemp Sr. is a U.S. Navy veteran who culminated 33 years of service as the Fleet Master Chief of Europe and Africa. While on active duty, he served six presidents, completing 11 combat deployments, with 19 years of sea duty. In times of high conflict, he provided training and mentorship for sailors during the execution of their lethal duties. As the Fleet Master Chief of Europe and Africa, he had oversight and influence over 56,000 service members, civilians, contractors and family members.

He is the founder of Kemp Solutions LLC, a leadership development and resilience-building company. With an ever-present heart for the warrior, he also serves as vice president on the board of Mystic Warrior Foundation. This organization helps transitioning service members cope with the challenges of PTSD and combat-related stress. Raymond also serves on the Bob Feller Act of Valor Foundation and Wings Over America boards, which provide scholarships to service members and their families.



Bud Pettigrew Commissioner

Bud Pettigrew is a former U.S. Marine and teacher who has acted as Chair of Chairs of the Nebraska Democratic Party since 2009. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1982-1983 before being medically discharged as a result of a broken neck.

Pettigrew taught history and coached football, wrestling and track in various Nebraska public schools from 1989 to 2009, then was a project manager at the Minnechaduza Foundation in Valentine, Nebraska, from 2010 to 2020. The Foundation develops and supports scientific, clinical and community initiatives that support improved health of Great Plains dwellers while promoting and preserving their unique cultural and historical values. He is a three-time Morrison-Exon Award winner for the Nebraska Democratic Party and was a 2012 Nebraska national delegate for President Barack Obama and 2020 Nebraska national delegate and whip captain for President Joe Biden's 2020 presidential campaign. Pettigrew holds a bachelor's degree in history and social science education from Hastings College, Hastings, Nebraska and did his graduate work in history at Wayne State College. He and his wife Angela have two sons, Arthur and Evan.



Michael E. Smith Commissioner

Michael E. Smith is a retired U.S. Navy rear admiral who co-founded and led the American College of National Security Leaders, a national security think tank committed to strengthening the United States' national security initiatives by informing the debate, influencing decision-makers and educating the public.

During his 32-year naval career, he commanded at all operational levels, from the commanding officer of the Navy's newest destroyer to command of an aircraft carrier strike group.

He served as the special assistant to two Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, where his team conducted independent research and provided unfiltered direct advice on the most strategic and pressing national security topics. In his first flag officer assignment, he was the director of the Navy's Strategy and Policy Division, where he oversaw a broad Pentagon, legislative and Navy-wide portfolio, including responsibility for integrating emerging national strategy with Navy and defense policy initiatives.

Smith is currently an adjunct research associate for the Institute for Defense Analysis, where he leads a diverse international team facilitating defense transformation efforts through in-country advisory and consulting services to the most senior Indonesian military and government officials. He also chairs the board of MVLE, a dynamic non-profit that caters to the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities through specialized services that foster personal and professional growth.



Gail Berry West Commissioner

Gail Berry West is a retired attorney who formerly headed both the Washington office of Armstrong World Industries and Bell Communications Research. She was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and received her B.A. in history from Fisk University, graduating magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. She continued her education at the University of Cincinnati, receiving her M.A. in History and her J.D. degree from

Howard University School of Law.

She began her career as a corporate attorney in the Office of the General Counsel of IBM. She was an appointee of the Carter Administration where she held positions of special assistant to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Patricia Roberts Harris; staff assistant to the Interdepartmental Task Force on Women under Sarah Weddington; assistant to President Carter; and completed her public service as deputy assistant secretary of the U.S. Air Force in Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

She has served on numerous boards during her career, including the Arena Stage, WETA and the Corcoran Museum of Art, where she was Secretary of the Board for five years. She served on the Board of the District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities, the Board of the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, the Fisher Foundation, the White House Historical Association, Hillwood Museum and Gardens, The Dean's Council of the National Cathedral and as Vice Regent for the District of Columbia to the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

She is the widow of the Honorable Togo D. West, Jr., an attorney and former Secretary of the Army and Secretary of Veterans Affairs in the Clinton Administration. She is the mother of two daughters, who are also both attorneys.



For drone footage and images of the Normandy American Cemetery, please visit
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usabmc/albums/72177720315961369/>

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Normandy American Cemetery

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