



AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

February 5, 2015

When the ABMC Flower Fund program began after World War II, it provided a way for families to place flowers at overseas graves when there were no other alternatives available. Today, commercial florists process and place floral orders much more quickly and efficiently than we ever could. Many of our visitors already take advantage of the services offered by the floral industry. The opportunity to place flowers in our overseas cemeteries is not going away; it is simply time for the ABMC staff to refocus.

Our focus is shifting where it belongs—preserving the memories of our fallen. Visitor feedback in recent years informed us that younger Americans lacked the understanding of why and under what circumstances our fallen had made the ultimate sacrifice. We realized we needed to provide context to properly honor our nation's war dead.

Coupled with increases in visitation, we are obligated to adapt to meet the needs of our visitors. As such, ABMC is growing its interpretation program; we are building one similar to the National Park Service, an organization dedicated to public history education/awareness.

Several years ago, we opened a visitor center at Normandy, which greatly enhanced the visitor experience. Last year, we opened visitor centers at Pointe du Hoc, Cambridge, and Sicily-Rome.

Future visitor centers are in progress for Flanders Field, Meuse-Argonne, and Manila, along with a smaller visitor center or "contact station" at our Chateau-Thierry American Monument.

In addition, we are training our staff on how to present information to the visiting public on those we honor. In essence, they are learning techniques and methods to better ensure that *"time will not dim the glory of their deeds."*

You may have noticed that we solicited information on the fallen from family members in a recent letter. We plan to use this information to inspire and educate a new generation of Americans.



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We are using these resources via the website and via our social media channels to put a face and story to the memory of those buried and memorialized at our sites. These biographies and photos will put the campaigns and battles into perspective for our online users.

I can assure you that ABMC's commitment to the men and women we honor is stronger than ever. Our zeal to tell the story of why America's overseas cemeteries exist and to tell the story of the achievements and sacrifice of America's armed forces is unwavering.

Our intent is not to slight anyone or any group by closing the flower fund. ABMC was created to perpetuate the memory of our fallen heroes.

Please feel free to contact me directly with further concerns or contact my lead, Alan Amelinckx at 703-696-6412 or amelinckxa@abmc.gov.

My Sincere Regards,

Robert J. Dalessandro
Deputy Secretary