

AMERICAN LEGION CENTENNIAL MEMORIAL

The American Legion Centennial Memorial, a project created and sponsored by American Legion Post 76, honors all veterans and recognizes a century of service of its members in West Windsor, Princeton and the surrounding communities. The American Legion was created in the aftermath of World War I by a group of veterans from the American Expeditionary Force, who convened in Paris shortly after the war ended. On September 16, 1919, Congress chartered the American Legion and Post 76 was chartered later that year.

It is estimated that 10 million soldiers lost their lives in the war, including 116,516 Americans. This memorial marks both the centennial anniversary of the conflict's end on November 11, 1918, and the formation of the American Legion in 1919. The artistic program of the memorial weaves together poetry, stone and memory, and in so doing asks the visitor to remember and reflect, to consider for a moment the sacrifices of the fallen, to hear the voices of the veterans and to honor friends and relatives who have gone before us in service to their country.

The memorial design is based on a program of poetry fragments in stone. The verse addresses the subjects of service, sacrifice and loss with a focus on World War I poetry written during the period of the American Legion's formation. The poetry fragments are set in various positions and formats, creating a three dimensional experience for the visitor — some poetry is in the ground, some on the wall and some wraps around the cenotaph. The memorial also presents a mixture of stone-sculpture techniques and forms that creates an interplay with the war poetry — cenotaph, stele, keystone, block, bas relief, fragment, incising, striking, cutting, clawing, gilding, star drilling, pitching, dressing, rasping, carving, pointing, fracturing, cutting and fluting. This mixing together of poetry displayed in various spatial formats and the interplay of the sculptural forms with the writing itself, presents the visitor with an enriched context, a counterpoint to traditionally static and uniform monumental design and language.

The memorial is composed of three primary elements: a cenotaph; an introductory poem stone; and a wall. The cenotaph carries four poems and a star field created by friends and families of deceased veterans. The introductory poem, *Incised*, presents the themes of the memorial. Embedded in the wall are military relics and a concluding poem.

THE CENOTAPH ~ A cenotaph (Greek “empty or vacant tomb”) serves as a funerary memorial to those buried elsewhere. Here, this ancient sculptural form stands as the central stone of the memorial and presents the voices of World War I and the American Civil War in the form of four incised poetry fragments that wind around its marble monolith. These songs of war bring us the voices of the past. The star field on the cenotaph provides an opportunity for public participation in recording and remembering the stories of deceased veterans and American Legion members. Each star was incised

by a friend or relative of a veteran. The story of each star is listed on the memorial website. The cenotaph is Danby white marble from Vermont.



INCISED ~ The broken top of the cenotaph is the stone on which Craig Dworkin's poem is written. *Incised* takes up the voices of the earlier poems and the sculptural themes of the memorial and weaves them together into a new poem. As the poet writes below, the poem moves from definition to definition. The poem is in part about its own inscription, but also moves through definitions just as the sculptural forms of the memorial do. *Incised* reveals its meaning as the viewer studies the words of the poem and begins to sense their multiple definitions and inflections from other languages and sounds:

"Incised" plays the changes on a set of macaronic echoes. Scored in the key of *key*, it moves from definition to definition as it re-sounds a series of sonically related terms: keystone (the position from which its own substrate was struck); keen; key; κινεῖν - [Greek, "motion"]; keen; καινο- [Greek, "new"]; κενο- [Greek, "empty"]; and back to keen. In the process of this formal precession, it also attempts to be thematically appropriate and grammatically correct.

THE WALL ~ The wall serves as a backdrop for the passage through the memorial. The front of the wall is a mixture of white marble blocks from Vermont and Alabama with an

embedded Walt Whitman poem incised in granite. Also placed in the front face are four broken Indiana buff limestone fragments from a single bas relief of a flower (see below).



The back face of the wall incorporates stones (marble, limestone, granite, blue stone and sandstone) donated by Princeton University, which played a large role in the founding of Post 76. Among the founding members were: E. A. MacMillan '14, second commander of Post 76, who signed the original charter in 1919; John McClenahan '22; and Innocenzo Venta. MacMillan was the Superintendent of Grounds and Buildings (1921-1957), for whom the MacMillan Building at the University was named; McClenahan was a World War I veteran and son of Howard McClenahan, Dean of the College; and Venta, born in L'Aquila, Italy, in 1894, resided on Leigh Avenue in Princeton and worked at the University power plant.

Embedded in the back of the wall are relics of American Legion members and other veterans. A detailed description of each object can be found at the end of these pages.

The Poetry Fragments and the Poets ~

Thomas Campbell 1777-1844

To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die. 1825

Thomas Campbell was a Scottish poet born in Glasgow. He is most well known for “The Pleasures of Hope”, a didactic poem in heroic couplets, and his patriotic war songs, “The Soldiers Dream” and “Hohenlinden”. He was buried in Westminster Abbey at Poets’ Corner on July 3, 1844.

Walt Whitman 1819-1892

*Just as the dawn appear'd,
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his form,
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and
carefully under feet,
And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son in his
grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited. 1884*

*Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left,)
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand.... 1855*

Walter “Walt” Whitman, the great poet of the American Civil War, and one of the originators of free verse, will forever be remembered for his poetry collection, *Leaves of Grass* which he self-published in 1855. Whitman became acquainted with the difficulties of the Civil War when his brother George joined the Army in 1862. Believing his brother to be wounded, Whitman walked south from New York, passing on the way terrible scenes of wounded men, piles of cut-off limbs and hospitals full of suffering soldiers. He eventually found George with only minor wounds but his experiences walking among the wounded and dead changed him forever. He moved to Washington in December of 1862, and began volunteering in military hospitals as a nurse. His years in Washington were full of poignant moments — writing letters home for dying soldiers, mending their tears and breaks and dressing incisions, watching the unloading of the wounded at docks along the Potomac, standing on a street corner to catch a glimpse of Lincoln riding by in his carriage one evening and finally, writing *Oh Captain! My Captain!*, his song for Lincoln after his assassination.

Robert Ernest Vernède 1875-1917

*Ye sleepers, who will sing you?
We can but give our tears —
Ye dead men, who shall bring you*

*Fame in the coming years?
Brave souls . . . but who remembers
The flame that fired your embers? . . .
Deep, deep the sleep that holds you
Who one time had no peers.*

Robert Vernède was born in London and graduated from Oxford. He experienced some of the worst battles of the war. Thirty-nine years old when he enlisted at the start of the conflict, he joined the Third Battalion Rifle Brigade as a second lieutenant. The Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own) was an historic unit first formed in 1803, and known for its green uniforms. The unit, which served in WWI and WWII, became the Royal Green Jackets in 1966. Vernède was wounded in the 1916 Battle of the Somme. Like so many WWI soldiers he was sent back into action after release from the hospital. In September of 1917, Second Lieutenant Vernède, age 41, was killed in action when hit by machine gun fire at Havrincourt. His remains were interred in grave III. D. 16. at Lebuquiere Communal Cemetery Extension.

Robert Laurence Binyon 1869-1943

*But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;
As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

Robert Laurence Binyon, born in Lancaster, England, was a poet and scholar of art history worked at the British Museum. He served in France as a medical orderly for the Red Cross because he was above the military enlistment age. In 1916, he cared for soldiers wounded at Verdun. His poem, *For the Fallen*, is still used today during Remembrance Sunday services in England and Canada. He wrote the poem after the great British losses in the opening battles of WWI. In 1933, he was appointed Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard. His acclaimed

translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* was completed in 1943. Binyon's name is one of sixteen *Great War Poets* incised on a stone in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner. On the stone are the words of fellow war poet, Wilfred Owen: *My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity.*

Florence Van Leer Earle Nicholson Coates 1850-1927

Blithely he took the path
 Appointed him by Duty,
Whose face, viewed nearer, hath
 Such deeps undreamed of beauty, —
Love, hope, ambition—he put all aside,
And for the things that do not perish, died.

Soul, was it tragedy to fall like this?
Oh, lovely, lovely, lovely, courage is!
 And death itself may be most sweet,
Though the lips thirst, and empty be the cup,
If won in climbing—climbing up—and up,
 To heights where vision and fulfilment meet:
If won at last, by deeds that glorify
Our lowly dust, where 'neath an alien sky,
Their service unforgot,
They sleep who, loving greatly, faltered not....

Born in Philadelphia, Coates was a prolific poet, publishing over 200 poems in the top literary magazines of the day, including *Harper's* and *The Literary Digest*. Coates was well known for her World War I poetry, much of it included in a self-published pamphlet, *Pro Patria*. In 1915, she was elected poet laureate of Pennsylvania. Her husband, Edward Coates, was president of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1890-1906). Upon his death in 1921, Florence donated their collection of American and French paintings and sculpture to the Pennsylvania Academy. Florence Coates died in Philadelphia in 1927, and is buried at the Church of the Redeemer churchyard in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania with her husband, her brother George Howard Earle and his son, George Howard Earle III, Governor of Pennsylvania (1935-1939).

Franz Janowitz 1892-1917

Nahe kommt/ dem Wort, um das die Welt sich dreht, nur Schweigen
[Only silence comes anywhere close to the word on which the world pivots]
Translation by Craig Dworkin

Janowitz, a Jewish Austrian poet, was born in Poděbrady along the Elbe. He was educated in Prague, Leipzig and Vienna. In 1914, after Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Janowitz's education was interrupted and he was inducted into the military in Bolzano. His first assignment was on the Galacian front before being sent to the Enns front. It was in Enns that he wrote much of his war poetry. During an assault on Monte Rombon he was seriously wounded and died in a military hospital on November 4, 1917. His remains were placed in a military cemetery in Central Breth.

Craig Douglas Dworkin 1969 -

INCISED

*The central stone of the arc resounds
a song accompanied with wailing
in lamentation for the dead. This
instrument for winding, for tuning
a tone or note or fluted portunal
portends the moving, mordant, recent,
vacant sharp.*

Craig Douglas Dworkin was born in Bloomington, Indiana and educated at Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley. He has taught literary history and theory at Princeton University and the University of Utah. The author of over a half-dozen books of poetry, Dworkin serves as Founding Senior Editor to the Eclipse Archive.

Building the Memorial ~

The Memorial was designed by Pietro del Fabro, sculptor, designer and writer. He has completed public art commissions in South Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C., New Jersey and New York. His novel, *Savages Station*, was published in 2016. Pietro's projects are designed as collaborative endeavors. The stars on the cenotaph were created by friends and families of deceased veterans and the broken top of the stele,

located near the bronze plaque, was sculpted by American Legion members. The members came to Pietro's studio in August of 2016, and worked on the stele with Peddie student Liam Cunningham. The sculptors included Post 76 Commander Bob Cox, Adjutant Michael McMahon, George Goeke, Joseph Leone, John L. Beglan, Jr., Eugene Freda and Colonel Gary Brickner. The memorial website was created with assistance of Gay Huber. The wall was built by mason contractor Earl Groendyke of East Windsor, NJ. All the poetry lettering was incised in stone by John Farrell of Farrell & Marino LLC, Ewing, NJ. John Farrell also installed the cenotaph. Landscaping was created with the assistance of Dan Dobromilsky, Landscape Architect, Dhiraj Chakravorty and DPW staff members. In particular the following DPW staff should be recognized for their diligent efforts on the project: Bob Ice, Andrea Ricketts, Wayne Hyers and Mike Gulotta. Tony Mangone contributed to the early rough earth work and grading. The support and guidance of West Windsor Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh and the Township Council in developing the project was critical to the origination and timely completion of the memorial.

Cenotaph Installation September 2016





Description of Relics Embedded In The Back Of The Wall

Upper Middle Section ~

Dog Tag ~ Staff Sergeant Bob Cox, USAF 1957-61, Post 76 Commander 2001-2016. The dog tag was first known in Ancient Rome. When a legionnaire enrolled he was given a lead disk (signaculum) with a leather sling. American Civil War soldiers pinned paper notes to their uniforms or scratched their identification into their belt buckle backs. The U.S. Army, in 1906, created the Kennedy dog tag, a round aluminum tag worn around the neck. In 1916, two dog tags were given to each soldier. In case of death, one was to remain with the body and one taken for record keeping and burial. During the 1930's a rounded rectangular notched tag was introduced. The notch on the metal dog tag was used with the Addressograph Hand Identification Machine. Dog tags are sometimes used in temporary battlefield memorials assembled by soldiers for their fallen comrades.

Dog Tag ~ Grant W. Hedricks served in Europe with the Army's 817th Tank Destroyer Division during World War II, and was a member of American Legion Post 34 in Columbia, PA. The dog tag was given by his daughter, Cynthia Hedricks of Princeton.

Carrara Marble ~ *White marble fragment with orange crystals* from Carrara, Italy. A second fragment of the Carrara marble is located in the left middle section. Carrara marble is the world's premier sculptural stone. The Carrara quarries were the source for Michelangelo's marble carvings and also part of the Gothic Line, German Field Marshal Kesselring's last line of defense against Allied forces moving north from Rome during late 1944 and early 1945. The marble was given by Milena and Anthony Troiano. When the war started, Milena was a resident of Bonassola, about 20 kilometers northeast of La Spezia and 30 kilometers from Carrara. As the bombing intensified during the war she was forced to flee into the mountains to live at her grandfather's house in Giucano. Anthony, an electrical engineer, was born in Manhattan and graduated from Brooklyn Polytech. He served in the U. S. Army Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth from 1954-56, working on ways to use transistors in military equipment.

Army Air Force Pin ~ *Army Air Force pin* from World War II, circa 1945. Given by COL Gary Brickner in memory of his father. Jack J. Brickner was attending Law School at St. John's University in New York when he entered the Army in August of 1942. He was assigned to

the Army Air Corps which became the Army Air Forces in 1943. He was trained in air operations and became an air tower controller, rising to the rank of Staff Sargent (E-6) by the time of his discharge in February of 1946. During the latter part of the war he was assigned to various installations where, among other duties, he trained airmen who would assume his former position in every theater of war. Upon discharge he returned to St. John's Law School on the GI Bill and obtained his law degree in 1948. He then returned to Brooklyn College and finished his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science. He practiced law in Brooklyn, NY until 1985. He passed away in 1990.

Embedding Relics ~ August 2016





Building the Wall ~ June - August 2016



Left Middle Section ~

Amber ~ *Eight amber fragments* from the Baltic region of Poland, found near the World War II German concentration camps Stutthof and Soldau. The amber is dedicated in memory of Lieutenant Colonel Pete Shaw, charter member of Plainsboro-West Windsor V.F.W. Post 925 and Post Commander, 1986-1987. LTC Shaw was also American Legion Post 76 Commander, 1990-1991, and Grand Commander of the Grand Pup Tent Massachusetts, Military Order of the Cootie, 2003-2005. In World War II Shaw was a Sergeant in the 28th Infantry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division, one of the units fighting in the Battle of the Bulge. Later his unit was involved in liberating the Wöbbelin concentration camp.

Red Stone ~ *Red stone* from the United States territory of Guam. The stone was found at the end of the runway at Anderson Air Force Base by Bob Cox who served as Flight Line and Base Fire Inspector in 1960 and 1961. Guam was seized by the Imperial Japanese Army on December 8, 1941, the day after their attack on Pearl Harbor. American troops retook the island after heavy fighting in late July and early August of 1944.

Minie Ball ~ *Minie ball* from the Battle of Gettysburg. The Minie ball was a conical bullet with grooves, a battlefield design innovation that led to the introduction of the rifle as a replacement for the smoothbore musket. The new bullet created spin for greater accuracy and better barrel seal to improve velocity (see the round ball in Right Middle Section of wall).

Red Brick Token ~ After the guns fell silent at Gettysburg, there was an immediate need to bury the thousands of dead still lying where they fell near the Evergreen Cemetery, a key position in the Union defenses. Immediate funds were required and this red brick token, incised with the words *Gettysburg 1863 July 1.2.3*, was given to contributors. Post 76 member, John Beglan writes: *This token has been passed down from my great grandfather LTC James Gwyn, who commanded his regiment with distinction, from the wheat field to Little Round Top. At the dedication of the new National Cemetery on October 19, 1863, President Lincoln took only two minutes to remind us that the sacrifices that our soldiers made will continue to inspire the nation through all the trials to come.*

Dog Tag ~ *Round Dog Tag* from World War I belonged to Edward W. Kirchmaier who was sent to France with the American Expeditionary Forces. During the war he was stationed at Clichy and Romorantin with the Air Balloon Service. In January, 1918 the first American military balloon went up at Cuperly, Marne, France and in February the first facility for assembling American made airplanes began operations at Romorantin. After the war's end on November 11, 1918, Edward was stationed in Cologne with the Army of Occupation and assigned to the 462nd Air Squadron and HQAS 3rd Army. Upon his return to the United States he became a lifelong member of the American Legion. Edward's dog tag and adjacent coin given by Pietro del Fabro in memory of his two grandfathers, Edward Kirchmaier and Henry Bennett Smith. On June 8, 1915, at the age of 19, Henry enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force of the British Army serving four years until his discharge on May 16, 1919. During his service, he was wounded on six occasions, each time requiring extensive hospitalization. Here is Henry's war diary:

1916 ~ 3/28 move to front line Sanctuary Woods - first shell fire. 3/29 casualties - real war. 3/31 Capt. Shawnessy killed. 4/1 Ypres Salient early AM gas alarm. 4/12 heavy casualties - bury dead at night under shell fire. 4/21 heavy shellfire - casualties - rain and mud - soaked. 4/27 night bombs and strafing - German artillery blows up our grenade store. 4/30 camp - bath - pay - drinks. 5/5 Ypres camp shelled 17 killed 8 wounded. 6/2 3rd battle of Ypres - heavy German attack on woods and Hodge - brigade badly mauled - move up to line at night. 6/3 Ypres - living hell - terrific fire from German batteries - lost 50 % of men getting into line - heaps of dead - 3rd Div. mauled but holding line. 6/9 Woke up in hospital, gun shot wound head and shell shock.

1917 ~ 5/11 Varny Ridge, France under scorching fire from heavies. Move up 9 PM, reached front line 2 AM. Trenches full of dead and wounded. 5/12 heavy shell fire - no cover and no water. 5/14 gun shot wound right hand - close quarters - walked out. 5/17 hospital Lerster, England.

1918 ~ 8/12 we go to fight again. 8/13 arrive Beaucourt France. 8/14 shelled long range - nightly air raids strafing. 8/26 sleep in rain and mud. 9/2 Follow 5 min. barrage by attack. Tank and shelling help - many casualties. Objective at 11 AM 6 mile advance. 2nd attack 11:30 AM. I'm hit hard - gun shot wounds chest and side - drag myself to dressing station. 9/3 Arras France hospital - bad - on table - operation. 9/4 out of ether - severed ulna nerve and artery - chest blood transfusion.

After returning to the trenches in late Oct 1918, Henry was severely wounded in the upper right arm by 13 machine gun bullets. Repair of

the wounds and shattered bones required lengthy hospital stays. As a result, his discharge from the Canadian Army and repatriation to the United States were delayed until May, 1919 when he returned to Newport, NY.



Coin ~ *French emergency coin (monnaie de nécessité)* found with Edward Kirchmaier's dog tag. As World War I wore on changes were made to the currency system, especially to the traditional coinage metals which were in short supply. This 1918 Neuilly S/ Seine 20 centimes coin is made of aluminum and was issued by Solidarité Commerciale et Industrielle in Neuilly-sur-Seine.

Right Middle Section

Afghanistan Challenge Coin ~ *Afghanistan Challenge Coin* from COL Gary Brickner's Afghanistan deployment 2004-05. Gary R. Brickner, MD, is a physician in Hamilton Township New Jersey who, at the age of 52, sought and was commissioned a major in the New Jersey Army

National Guard Medical Corps in the aftermath of 9-11. Between 2004 and 2011 he served three tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is currently assigned to the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team as Brigade Surgeon and attached to the NJ State Medical Command as its Deputy Commander. He joined the American Legion, Lawrence Twp., NJ Post. Here is the story of his challenge coin in his own words:

Gardez (or Gardiz) is the capital of Paktia Province. It is southeast of Kabul on the main road to Pakistan. Due to its strategic importance The Afghan National Army (ANA) had a large base there. RCAG (Regional Corps Advisory Group) - Gardez was assigned to mentor and train those troops. Together with the ANA it was also tasked with providing security for the civilian population and interdicting Taliban infiltrators coming across the border. The RCAG was commanded by a detachment of Wisconsin Army National Guard soldiers assigned to the 76th Brigade of the Indiana Army National Guard (as I was.) The commanding colonel was the Sheriff of Madison County, Wisconsin and the best commander I ever served under. The Badger is the Wisconsin state animal and also the mascot of the University of Wisconsin hence our forward operating base (FOB) was named "Badger Forward". I was sent to Gardez to assist the RCAG in training ANA doctors and medics and of course to care for our troops. I also did daily duty on combat patrols due to a shortage of Combat Medics. Our FOB was a cross between the Arabian Nights and Ft. Apache. We were 250 soldiers (and a few Marines) short of everything except morale. To this day, due in great part to the efforts of those servicemen and women, the Gardez region remains one of the most peaceful in Afghanistan.



Stone Shards ~ *Sixteen marble shards from the gravel roads surrounding Montepulciano, Italy.* After the liberation of Rome on June 4, 1944, the Allies advanced north toward Tuscany, pushing the Nazi forces into the North Apennines mountains. Montepulciano, which had been occupied by German forces, became the scene of fighting against American Army units around July 4, 1944.



Buckle ~ *Copper ammunition pouch buckle* found on West Windsor Township property. It is believed to be a late 19th century belt buckle for a musket ammunition pouch.

Round Ball ~ *.69 caliber round lead shot* from Gettysburg Battlefield. In the early years of the Civil War, smoothbore muskets using .69 caliber round shot were common. The ball was often combined with buckshot pellets (buck and ball) for close range fighting. Later in the war, as long range and siege fighting became the norm, the rifled musket with Minie ball bullets became the weapon of choice (see Minie Ball in Left Middle Section of wall). Given by Post 76 Commander Bob Cox.

Right Lower Section ~

9th Infantry Division Challenge Coin ~ The division insignia is a red-and-blue 'octofoil', a design of eight petals with a white center. The 'octofoil', based upon the heraldic the rules of the 15th Century, was the mark of the ninth son. Red and blue are designating colors of an Infantry division headquarters flag; white is for the numbers used in divisional flags. The circular background is olive drab.

The 9th Infantry Division was created during World War I, but never deployed overseas during the Great War. Before Vietnam, the division was an important unit of the United States Army in World War II when it was among the first U.S. combat units to engage in offensive ground operations. In Vietnam the division's units often served with the Mobile Riverine Force and other US Navy units that made up the Brown Water Navy. Its area of operations was in the rivers and canals of the Mekong Delta from 1967 to 1972.

Challenge coin given by Michael G. Mahon. In January 1969, he was drafted into the United States Army after graduating from St. Francis College ('68) in Brooklyn NY. After 8 weeks of Basic Combat Training and 8 weeks of Advanced Infantry Training he received orders for Vietnam. Arriving in country in early June 1969, he was assigned to a unit of the 9th Infantry Division also known as the "Old Reliables". His unit operated in the Mekong Delta in the area south of Saigon and west to the Cambodian border called the Parrot's Beak. During his service with the Division he attained the rank of sergeant, and received several military commendations including the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Since retiring he has been very active in volunteering on issues involving Vietnam. Since January 2003, he volunteers as tour guide for school field-trips and other organized tours of the NJ Vietnam Veterans' Memorial and the Vietnam Era Museum & Educational Center. From 2009 to 2012 he served as a Trustee of the NJ Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation.

He is also a National Park Service volunteer at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall), and volunteer with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund in Washington DC. The Wall Volunteers are committed to sharing the legacy of all Vietnam veterans, spreading the healing power of the Memorial and educating future generations. In 2012, he was the recipient of the 'Libby Hatch Volunteer Recognition Award' presented by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. National Park

Service volunteers at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedicate their time to assisting more than four million annual visitors at The Wall. In an effort to thank these volunteers, VVMF presents this annual award in which the recipient is nominated by their peers.

In June 2015, he received the “Patriot of the Year” award from the Bishop Griffin Assembly, a fourth degree Assembly of the Knights of Columbus. This award was “in recognition of his service to our Church, Community and Country, as well as his exemplary commitment to sharing the legacy of all Vietnam Veterans.”

In all of his volunteer activities he is especially proud to have served with the 9th Infantry Division and continues to wear the division shoulder patch on his shirt or jacket.

Welcome Home September 12, 2015 – 50th Anniversary Coin ~ Coin given by Thomas Polino, Sergeant Major Retired, U.S. Army, 30 Years of service. Thomas entered basic training in the Military Police Corps in 1979. He was stationed in Germany during the Cold War from 1982-1985. In 2008 he deployed to Iraq then to Afghanistan in 2011.

The coin was issued by Veterans of Foreign Wars - Post 3020 Delran, New Jersey. Here are comments about the coin by Thomas: Something that always touched my heart was how my fellow brothers from Vietnam War were treated when they got home. What really inspired me was when I came home from Afghanistan for my two week leave the Vietnam Veterans were there at the airport to escort me home. I decided to chair an event with Veterans of Foreign Wars - Post 3020 on September 12, 2015. We hosted a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Parade for the 50th Anniversary that included my fellow Veterans, Auxiliaries Members and other Departments.

Bulldog Challenge Coin ~ Coin given by Post 76 member John Beglan. On June 6, 1918, the newly arrived American 2nd Division was arriving in support of the French XXI. The exhausted French started to retreat under severe pressure from the oncoming German assault. As they streamed past the Americans (nominally under French command) a French officer ordered them to also retreat. The American answer came back, “Hell no, we just got here!” Although the Americans took heavy casualties they held and the Germans started to move back from their “high water mark” until the November 11 Armistice. John Belgan writes: *The increasing weight of the American forces, symbolized by the Bulldog with the helmet, symbolized American determination, and has been a symbol of our pride ever since.*

New Jersey Revolutionary Crossroads Coin ~ This recent version of a Marine challenge coin represents the continuity of American fighting forces since the American Revolution. Challenge coins became popular in the U. S. military after WWII. John Belgan placed this Challenge Coin in the wall to symbolize military pride and fraternity into the new millennium. The coin is from Quantico, VA, and honors retired Marines.



Groundbreaking ~ July 15, 2016

