



# Freedom's Voice

The Monthly Newsletter of the  
Military History Center

112 N. Main ST  
Broken Arrow, OK 74012  
<http://www.okmhc.org/>



**"Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History"**

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## Important Date

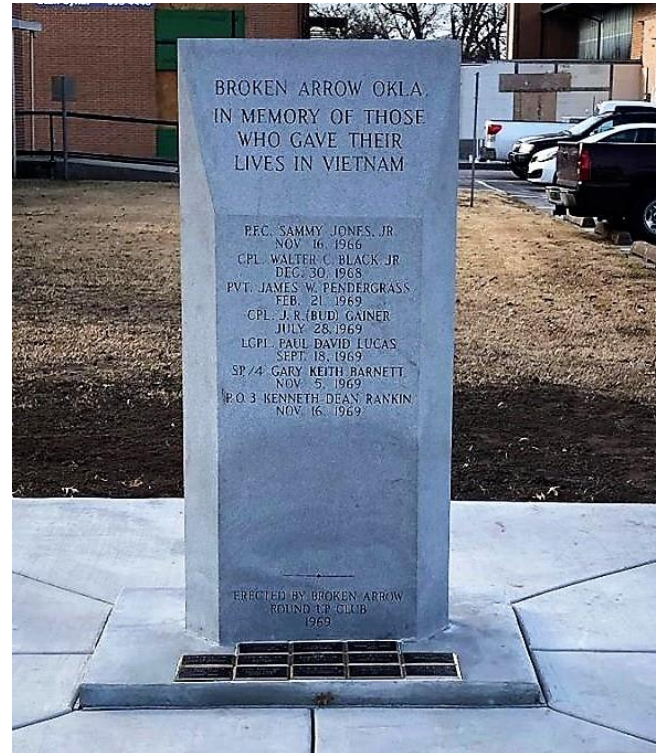
### March 21 – Vietnam Veterans Appreciation Day

The MHC will host its annual Oklahoma Vietnam Veterans Appreciation Day in the evening of Thursday, March 21. The February newsletter will contain detailed information. In the meantime, please mark your calendars, and plan to attend this important, patriotic event.



MHC volunteer, Susan Virdell, laid a Christmas wreath on the grave of former MHC docent and Vietnam War combat veteran, Lynn Burgess – December 21, 2018

## New Monument at the MHC



The MHC's newest veterans' monument is a memorial to the seven young men of Broken Arrow, who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. The monument was originally installed in Broken Arrow's Veterans Park, but when the city erected a new monument, it gave the original to the MHC. Board member, Ken Collins, took the lead in acquiring the monument, getting it installed at the MHC and overseeing the memorial's design.





## MHC Christmas and Awards Luncheon

On December 21, the MHC held its annual Christmas and awards luncheon for volunteers, spouses and friends. Prior to lunch, Executive Assistant Jean Bailie presented awards of appreciation to four MHC volunteers.



Jean Bailie presents an appreciation award to Ken Collins



Keith Browne viewing his award – Howard Coy in the center



Docent Michael Tarman showing his award



Docent Tim Decocq showing his award



## Meet the Docents



Dennis Hoch, Lead Docent

Dennis Hoch was born at Council Bluffs, Iowa, on March 4, 1947. He enlisted in the Navy in 1966. After basic training, he was deployed to the Vietnam war zone as a gunners mate on board the aircraft carrier, *USS Kitty Hawk*. His shipboard duties included ordnance handling and firefighting. He served aboard *Kitty Hawk* for about eleven months before he was transferred ashore to USN Support Activities-Da Nang. There, his duties included locating and disposing of unexploded enemy ordnance such as artillery shells and land mines. With the onset of the 1968 Tet Offensive, he was sent to Phu Bai, just south of Hue. During the Marine Corps operation to retake Hue from the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, he was deployed into the city as a firefighter.

After his enlistment expired, Dennis transferred to the active Navy Reserve, where he served for seven years. In 1985, he relocated to Tulsa, where he was employed as a restaurant manager until he retired in 2013.

Besides being a full-time docent at the MHC, where he has served for three years, Dennis is a Civil War reenactor portraying a corporal in the 77<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry. He is also a small arms enthusiast. He builds 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century replica infantry weapons. Several of his weapons are on loan to the MHC, where they are displayed in appropriate exhibits. Dennis currently lives in Tulsa.



USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV-63)

## In Memoriam



Richard Arvin Overton – 2017

When he died on December 27, 2018, Tech 5 Overton was, at 112 years and 230 days, America's oldest surviving World War II veteran. Overton was born in Bastrop County, Texas, on May 11, 1906. He enlisted in the U.S. Army at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, on September 30, 1940. During World War II, he served in the 1887<sup>th</sup> Engineer Aviation Battalion (Colored) in the central Pacific. The mission of aviation engineer units was airfield construction. The 1887<sup>th</sup> was formed on April 1, 1943, at March Field, California. It served on Guam from March 15, 1945, until it was disbanded after the end of the war. We could find no information about Overton's service prior to that with the 1887<sup>th</sup>. Overton separated from the Army in October 1945 as a Technician 5. He holds a Combat Infantryman Badge, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Asia-Pacific Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal and others

After the war, Overton worked at local furniture stores before taking a position with the Texas Department of the Treasury (now part of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts) in Austin, where he lived the remainder of his life.

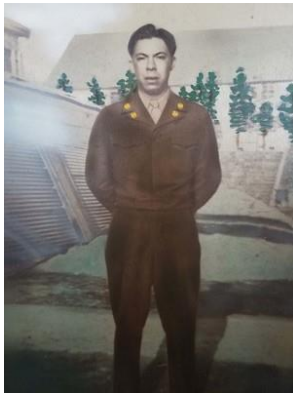


Richard Arvin Overton – ca. 1940-41



Aviation engineer units were part of the Corps of Engineers. Their insignia was the "bucking bulldozer".

## Korean War MIA Comes Home



PVT Charles Gibson Kaniatobe

In July 1950, PVT Charles Kaniatobe was serving in Co. A, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry "Taro" Division in combat operations against the North Korean People's Army near Chonui, South Korea. After the fighting, Kaniatobe could not be accounted for and was declared missing in action on July 10, 1950.

No list provided by the Chinese or North Koreans reported Kaniatobe as a POW, and no returning American POWs reported him as a POW. In December 1953, based on a lack of information regarding his status, Kaniatobe was declared KIA. In January 1956, he was declared non-recoverable. In early October 1950, a graves registration team attached to Kaniatobe's regiment recovered the remains of 164 Americans from the area between Chonui and Choch'iown. On October 6, 1950, a set of unidentified remains, designated Unknown X-173 and recovered in the vicinity of Choch'iwon were interred by the U.S. Army in present-day United Nations Military Cemetery, Taejou, South Korea. In March 1952, Unknown X-173 was exhumed and transferred to the U.S. Army Central Identification Unit in Kokura, Japan, for identification. When an identification could not be made, the remains were reburied as Unknown X-173 in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Hawaii. Kaniatobe's remains were recently re-examined and were identified by mitochondrial DNA and other evidence on September 13, 2018.

Charles Gibson Kaniatobe was born at Haworth, (McCurtain County), Oklahoma, on January 21, 1929. He registered for the draft on February 10, 1947. We could not find his date of induction, but it was probably in 1950. PVT Kaniatobe was buried on November 17, 2018, at Idabel, Oklahoma. A rosette will be placed next to his name on the Tablets of the Missing in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.



Regimental crest of 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry  
formed May 31, 1861

## Seventy-five Years Ago, This Month



SS *United Victory* was the first of 531 Victory ships built during World War II under the Emergency Shipbuilding Program. She was launched on January 12, 1944, and served in the Pacific participating in the Battle of Okinawa.



U.S. soldiers wading ashore at Anzio

On January 22, American and British forces began Operation Shingle, the Anzio landings. The campaign lasted until June 4, 1944, culminating in the liberation of Rome.



Soldiers of the Army's 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on Kwajalein

On January 30, U.S. Marines begin landing on Majuro in the Marshall Islands. Soldiers of the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division landed on nearby Kwajalein the next day.



## Alamo Scouts

The Alamo Scouts, officially Sixth Army Special Reconnaissance Unit, was the U.S. Army's premiere long-range recon unit in the southwest Pacific during World War II. LTG Walter Kruger, Commander of Sixth Army, had grown tired of receiving either untimely or faulty intelligence from outside Sixth Army. He wanted his own intelligence unit.

General MacArthur had separated Sixth Army from control of the multi-national force under his command so he could maintain more direct control over it. Basically, he didn't want Australian interference with Sixth Army. Sixth Army was then designated Alamo Force because of General Kruger's association with San Antonio and his admiration for the Alamo defenders, so Kruger's newly created recon unit became the Alamo Scouts. The Alamo Scouts were activated on November 28, 1943, on Ferguson Island, New Guinea. They reported directly to Kruger.

All of the Alamo Scouts were volunteers drawn from existing Army units in the southwest Pacific. They went through a rigorous selection process and intensive training. They learned to operate all the weapons they were likely to use, learned various ways to kill the enemy, how to properly gather intelligence and how to operate stealthily behind enemy lines. A further selection process followed graduation from training school. Many of the Scouts' tactics and operational techniques, such as operating in small units, with every man knowing every other man's job, were later adopted by Special Forces, who consider themselves descendants of the Alamo Scouts. Nine classes of Alamo Scouts were graduated, but the war was over before the ninth class graduated. The Scouts were organized into twenty-one teams of seven men with a first lieutenant in command. They first operated in New Guinea and later in the Philippines.

The Alamo Scouts completed 106 known missions. Their most notable mission was acting in support of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment in rescuing 489 POWs and twenty-three civilians at Cabanatuan, Philippines, in January 1945. The Scouts provided reconnaissance and tactical support for the rangers.



General MacArthur posing with a group of Indian Alamo Scouts. Vergil F. Howell of Pawnee, Oklahoma, is second from the left – 1943.

First Sergeant Vergil Fox Howell was born at Pawnee on November 24, 1915. He enlisted in the Army on September 16, 1940. He graduated in the first Alamo Scout class and was assigned to 1LT Michael Sombar's team. The team's most memorable mission was the rescue of thirty-nine civilian prisoners on Fuga Island in the Philippines on July 1945. 1SGT Howell went

on to serve in Korea and Vietnam. He died on January 11, 1978, and is buried in Pawhuska City Cemetery, Pawhuska, Oklahoma.



The enlisted men of the Littlefield Team – 1944  
Zeke McConnell is at the far left in the first row.

Zeke McConnell was born at Stillwell, Oklahoma, on January 1, 1920. His mother died when he was five, and his father could not be located. He and his siblings were declared orphans and sent to the Cherokee operated Sequoia Indian School at Tahlequah. McConnell graduated from Bacone Junior College at Muskogee in 1941. He was drafted into the Army on March 3, 1942.

McConnell graduated from the third Alamo Scout class. He was assigned to 1LT Wilbur Littlefield's team. Almost all of the team's missions were in the Philippines, including Cabanatuan. Staff Sergeant McConnell was discharged at Fort Lewis, Washington, in 1945. He decided to remain in the area and took a job at Cushman Indian Hospital, where he met his future wife. He later worked for JC Penney Company and the City of Seattle.

SSGT Zeke McConnell died at SeaTac, Washington, on February 4, 2007. He is buried in Tahoma National Cemetery, King County, Washington.



Zeke McConnell – date unknown

The third Oklahoma member of the Alamo Scouts was Elijah Parish, born in Atoka County, Oklahoma, on November 20, 1920. He entered the Army on June 7, 1942. He graduated from the ninth class and was retained as an Alamo Scout, but since the war was over, he saw no action with the Alamo Scouts. Parrish went on to serve in the Korean War. He died at Wilburton, Oklahoma, on May 23, 1984. He is buried in Mountain Station Cemetery in Latimer County. (No photo available)

## James Abel Bell



Major James Abel Bell – 1920s

James Abel Bell was born in Mississippi on January 14, 1873. He enlisted in the Mississippi militia<sup>1</sup> on June 11, 1898, just short of two months after the opening of the Spanish-American War. He was posted to Co. I, 1<sup>st</sup> Mississippi Volunteer Infantry. He joined the regiment at its encampment at Camp Thomas, Georgia, located on the grounds of Chickamauga Military Park. By the time the 1<sup>st</sup> Mississippi arrived at Camp Thomas, the short war was practically over. The regiment was never sent to Cuba. On September 8, 1898, it was relocated to Lauderdale Springs, Mississippi, and later mustered out at Columbia, Tennessee, on December 20, 1898. Bell ended his short activation as a corporal.

CPL Bell remained in the militia after it was mustered out. He was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant on August 10, 1900, promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant on July 15, 1902, and captain on May 28, 1903. On March 12, 1915, Bell was promoted to major in the Mississippi National Guard. Sometime between then and 1918, he relocated to Tulsa and entered the Oklahoma National Guard. On September 30, 1918, he was on the roster as a captain commanding Co. B, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment. The 2<sup>nd</sup> IR was organized in 1918, but World War I ended before the regiment could be deployed. At some point after the war, Bell was transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, which had been recognized as a National Guard regiment on September 3, 1918, and re-designated the 180<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment on October 14, 1921.

Bell was commissioned a major in the United States Army Reserve on September 8, 1921. He graduated from the Infantry School, National Guard Officer's Course 27 in 1927. It was probably after his promotion to major that Bell was transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, probably as a battalion executive officer.

Bell had entered the Oklahoma National Guard at the beginning of its transition from a small state military force to additional infantry regiments and other combat and support units to become the federally recognized 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on August 3, 1923. During the 1920s and '30s, the division filled out and trained up to become a first-class combat division. MAJ Bell was

instrumental in this process within the 180<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. He was eventually promoted to lieutenant colonel. (We could not find the date of his promotion.) LTC Bell was executive officer of the 180<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment until his retirement in 1939.



Lt. Colonel Bell – 1930s

After his retirement, Bell refused to sit back and take it easy. He took a position with the federal government's employment service during World War II. He used his administrative and organizational skills to recruit workers for war industries and to funnel them into the industries that could best use their skills.

LTC James Abel Bell died at his home in Tulsa on August 7, 1949. He is buried in Memorial Park Cemetery in Tulsa. We are grateful to LTC Bell's family for the donation of his artifacts.



LTC Bell's footstone



Regimental crest of 180<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment  
now 180<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment

<sup>1</sup> State military units were called militia until passage of the Dick Act in 1903, which recommended that organized militia (active) be called national guard. The National Defense Act of 1916 required the designation – National Guard.



## The Sack Lunch

Anonymous

I put my carry-on in the luggage compartment and sat down in my assigned seat. It was going to be a long flight. "I'm glad I have a good book to read. Perhaps I will get a short nap," I thought. Just before take-off, a line of soldiers came down the aisle and filled all the vacant seats, totally surrounding me.

I decided to start a conversation. "Where are you headed?" I asked the soldier seated nearest to me. "Petawawa. (Petawawa is a Canadian army garrison in Ontario.) We'll be there for two weeks for special training, and then we're being deployed to Afghanistan."

After flying for about an hour, an announcement was made that sack lunches were available for five dollars. It would be several hours before we reached the east, and I quickly decided a lunch would help pass the time. As I reached for my wallet, I overheard a soldier ask his buddy if he planned to buy lunch. "No, that seems like a lot of money for just a sack lunch. Probably wouldn't be worth five bucks. I'll wait till we get to the base." His friend agreed.

I looked around at the other soldiers. None were buying lunch. I walked to the back of the plane and handed the flight attendant a fifty-dollar bill. "Take a lunch to all those soldiers". She grabbed my arms and squeezed tightly. Her eyes wet with tears, she thanked me. "My son was a soldier in Iraq; it's almost like you are doing it for him."

Picking up ten sacks, she headed up the aisle to where the soldiers were seated. She stopped at my seat and asked, "Which do you like best - beef or chicken?" "Chicken," I replied, wondering why she asked. She turned and went to the front of plane, returning a minute later with a dinner plate from first class. "This is your thanks".

After we finished eating, I went again to the back of the plane, heading for the restroom. A man stopped me. "I saw what you did. I want to be part of it. Here, take this." He handed me twenty-five dollars. Soon after I returned to my seat, I saw the Flight Captain coming down the aisle, looking at the aisle numbers as he walked, I hoped he was not looking for me, but noticed he was looking at the numbers only on my side of the plane. When he got to my row he stopped, smiled, held out his hand and said, "I want to shake your hand." Quickly unfastening my seatbelt, I stood and took the Captain's hand. With a booming voice he said, "I was a soldier, and I was a military pilot. Once, someone bought me a lunch. It was an act of kindness I never forgot." I was embarrassed when applause was heard from all of the passengers.

Later, I walked to the front of the plane so I could stretch my legs. A man who was seated about six rows in front of me reached out his hand, wanting to shake mine. He left another twenty-five dollars in my palm. When we landed, I gathered my belongings and started to deplane. Waiting just inside the airplane door was a man who stopped me, put something in my shirt pocket, turned, and walked away without saying a word. Another twenty-five dollars!

Upon entering the terminal, I saw the soldiers gathering for their trip to the base. I walked over to them and handed them seventy-five dollars. "It will take you some time to reach the

base. It will be about time for a sandwich. God bless you." Ten young men left that flight feeling the love and respect of their fellow travelers.

As I walked briskly to my car, I whispered a prayer for their safe return. These soldiers were giving their all for our country. I could only give them a couple of meals. It seemed so little.

A veteran is someone, who, at one point in his life, wrote a blank check made payable to his country for an amount of "up to and including my life." That is Honor, and there are way too many people in this country who no longer understand it.

(Courtesy of Kevin Easterling – Oklahoma City)

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## Congressman Hern Makes Donation to MHC



Congressman Kevin Hern presents a donation to MHC President Tom Mancino

Congressman Kevin Hern represents Oklahoma's First Congressional District. He was elected last November 6 to fill a vacancy, so he took office shortly after his election. As such, he was in office during the partial government shutdown during 2018. He chose not to accept his Congressional salary for his personal benefit, but rather to donate it to charity. The Congressman calculated his salary during the shutdown period in 2018 to be \$5,000. He selected ten organizations related to veterans' causes and equally divided the \$5,000 among them.

We are deeply thankful for Congressman Hern's selection of the Military History Center as one of the recipients worthy of his generosity.

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## Pascal Cleatus Poolaw, Sr.



Pascal C. Poolaw in the Korean War

Pascal Cleatus Poolaw (Sr.) was born at Apache (Caddo County), Oklahoma, on January 22, 1922. He came from a long line of Kiowa warriors. His grandfather, Kiowa George Poolaw was a member of the all-Indian Cavalry Troop 1 at Fort Sill – 1893-95. On August 27, 1942, Poolaw followed his father and two brothers into the Army and World War II.

Poolaw entered the war at Utah Beach on June 6, 1944, as a member of Co. M, 3<sup>rd</sup> BN, 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry "Ivy" Division. He fought with the 4<sup>th</sup> ID across France, Belgium and into Germany. It was near the hamlet of Recogne, Belgium, near Bastogne that Poolaw, a staff sergeant in command of a machinegun squad, where his heroic actions in breaking up a German counterattack on September 8, 1944, gained him a Silver Star. (See the Citation below.) Poolaw finished the war with the 4<sup>th</sup> ID, receiving two Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart in addition to the Silver Star.

After the war, Poolaw remained in the Army. When the Korean War broke out, he was serving with the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry "Tropic Lightening" Division on occupation duty in Japan. His unit was immediately sent to Korea to help defend the Pusan Perimeter. In Korea, Poolaw was awarded two more Silver Stars and another Purple Heart.

After twenty years of service, Poolaw retired from the Army in 1962. His son Pascal, Jr. had also joined the army and was serving in Vietnam. In February 1967, he was wounded in both legs by a landmine. His right leg was amputated below the knee. Poolaw's youngest son, Lindy, was drafted and was set to deploy to Vietnam. Poolaw rejoined the Army to prevent Lindy from having to serve by taking his place. Lindy had already shipped out and Poolaw hoped to catch up with him in time, but when he arrived on the west coast, he discovered his son had shipped out the day before. He decided to follow him to Vietnam and was deployed on May 31, 1967, as the First Sergeant of Co. C, 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry "Big Red One" Division.

On November 7, 1967, while on a search and destroy mission near Lộc Ninh, Viet Cong ambushed Poolaw's company. 1SGT Poolaw was mortally wounded by an RPG, while attempting to pull one of his wounded men to safety. He was posthumously awarded a fourth Silver Star and a third Purple Heart.

At the time of his death, 1SGT Poolaw was just short of completing twenty-five years of service. Along the way, he had received a battlefield commission, but had relinquished it and remained in the enlisted ranks. During his nearly twenty-five years of service, Poolaw was awarded four Silver Stars, five Bronze Stars and three Purple Hearts, one in each war in which he had served. With over forty decorations, citations and awards, most of them combat related, 1SGT Poolaw is credited with being the highest decorated American Indian in the history of the U.S. Army. Poolaw Hall at Fort Sill is named in his honor. In 2008, he was inducted into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame.

First Sergeant Pascal Cleatus Poolaw, Sr. was buried in Fort Sill Post Cemetery. His gravestone shows him a first lieutenant. It seems the Army posthumously restored his commission and promoted him.



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### Staff Sergeant Poolaw's World War II Silver Star Citation

"The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918, takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Staff Sergeant Pascal Cleatus Poolaw (ASN: 18131087), United States Army, for gallantry in action against the enemy while serving with Company M, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, near Recogne, Belgium, on 8 September 1944. While attacking in support of a rifle company, Sergeant Poolaw displaced his machine gun squad forward across an open field under heavy mortar and small arms fire in such a manner as to affect a minimum number of casualties among his squad. After reaching his new position, Sergeant Poolaw saw the enemy advance in a strong counterattack. Standing unflinchingly in the face of withering machine gun fire for five minutes, he hurled hand grenades until the enemy force sustained numerous casualties and was dispersed. Due to Sergeant Poolaw's actions, many of his comrades' lives were saved and the company was able to continue the attack and capture strongly defended enemy positions. Sergeant Poolaw's display of courage, aggressive spirit and complete disregard for personal safety are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service."

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## This Month's Featured Exhibit



### World War II Women in the Military

From left to right, the mannequins are wearing the uniforms of the Army Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy. Several artifacts relative to World War II servicewomen are exhibited in the display case, as well as the framed exhibits on the wall.

#### Museum Hours and Admission Fee

Tuesday – Friday: 10:00 – 4:00; Saturday: 10:00 – 2:00  
Closed Sunday and Monday and major Federal holidays

Adults – \$5.00

Members and Children under 18 – Free

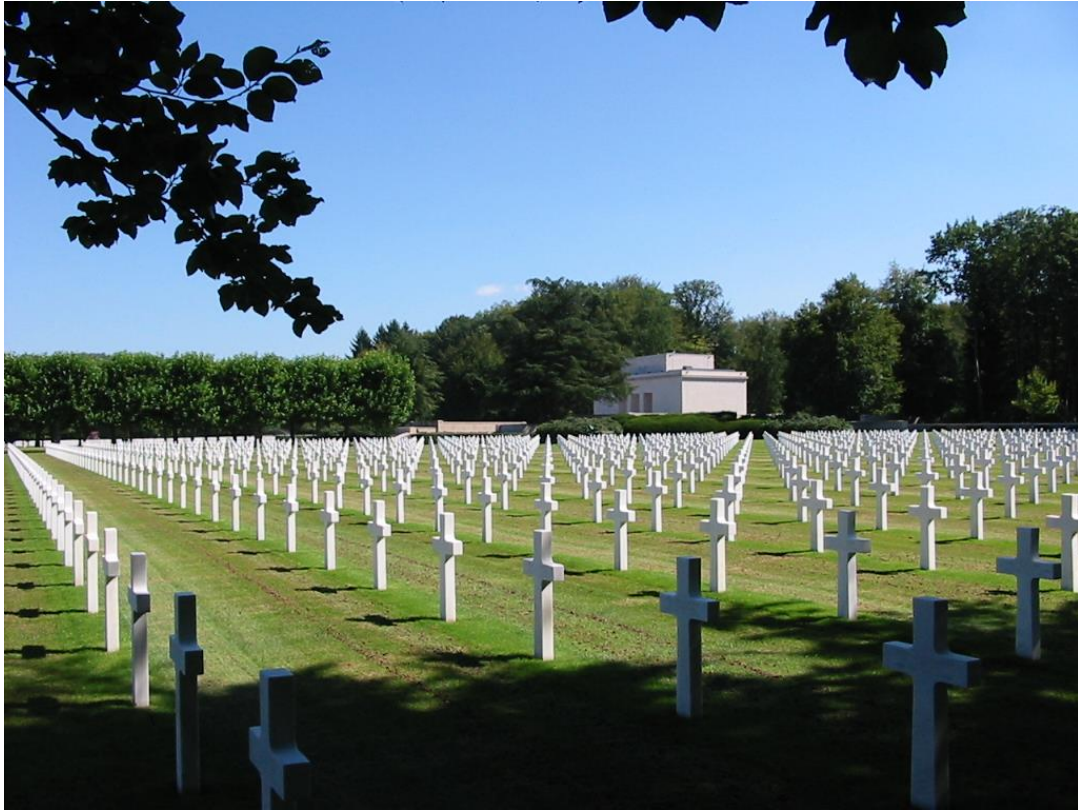
**For more information, call (918) 794-2712**

[www.okmhc.org](http://www.okmhc.org)

#### Service Women in World War II

More than 400,000 women served in all branches of the U.S. armed services during World War II. Overwhelmingly, they served as nurses in combat zones, behind the lines in military hospitals, on hospital ships and in hospitals at home. They also served in administrative positions such as typists, clerks, mechanics, cooks, photographers and in numerous other jobs, both at home and abroad. Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) served in the United States as aircraft ferriers, test pilots and anti-aircraft artillery trainers.

# *“Lest We Forget”*



**Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial – Dinozé, France**

Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial is located on a plateau, 100 feet above the Moselle River in the foothills of the Vosges Mountains near Dinozé, France. The 49.6-acre cemetery contains the graves of 5,255 United States military dead, most of whom are from Seventh Army and lost their lives in the campaigns across northeastern France to the Rhine and beyond into Germany during World War II. The cemetery was established in October 1944 by the 49<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company (Graves Registration Service) of Seventh Army. On the walls of the Court of Honor, which surrounds the memorial, are inscribed the names of 424 missing. Rosettes mark the names of those recovered and identified since construction of the cemetery.

*Freedom is not free.*

