

# Honoring Veterans Nationwide

**In observance of Memorial Day, VFW magazine showcases a selection of eight memorials — established, recent and forthcoming — dedicated to honoring the men and women who served our country**

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Preserving the legacy of U.S. troops who made the ultimate sacrifice is central to the VFW's mission and existence. Many across the country have united in this endeavor to commemorate the valor of those honored and recognize the contributions of all who have served in the armed forces.

Here are eight memorials dedicated, authorized, refurbished or proposed over the last year.

## **NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MEMORIAL**

On Dec. 27, 2021, President Joe Biden signed into law the National Medal of Honor Memorial Act (P.L. 117-80). The legislation authorized the establishment of a National Medal of Honor Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

In 2023, supporters of the monument asked Congress to consider approving the National Medal of Honor Memorial to be located near the Lincoln Memorial. The location was selected to honor President Abraham Lincoln, who created the Medal of Honor, according to the National Medal of Honor Museum.

House members in November passed the Hershel Woody Williams National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act (H.R. 2717), meaning that if the Senate and Biden approved the legislation, the monument would be located near the Lincoln Memorial.

The bill was named in honor of Medal of Honor recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams, who died on June 29, 2022. Williams, who was the last living World War II Medal of Honor recipient, earned the highest award for valor while fighting in the Battle of Iwo Jima. The Marine Corps veteran also is the namesake of the Woody Williams Foundation. (See Gold

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Star Families Memorial Monument.)

As of VFW magazine's print deadline, a design had not been selected for the monument. Learn more about the National Medal of Honor Memorial at <https://www.mohmuseum.org/the-monument>.

## **GOLD STAR FAMILIES MEMORIAL MONUMENT**

The Woody Williams Foundation was instrumental in installing more than 130 monuments to honor Gold Star families around the country. Gold Star families are those who have had a member die while serving in the military.

According to the Woody Williams Foundation, the creation of the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument is intended to:

- Establish and provide a space that Gold Star families can call their own in honor of their families.
- Demonstrate to Gold Star families that their community cares for them and appreciates their sacrifice while also honoring the ultimate sacrifice of their loved ones.
- Establish and strengthen local Gold Star family communities through Gold Star family outreach events in each monument's location.
- Educate the public about Gold Star families who endure the sacrifices made by their loved ones.

As of March 8, 133 monuments have been established and 53 more are in progress. The Gold Star monuments are located in all 50 states and on Guam. Gold Star Families Memorial Monument locations are available at <https://www.woodywilliams.org>.

## **2ND INFANTRY DIVISION MEMORIAL**

On Oct. 26, the 106th birthday of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, the 2ID Memorials Foundation announced that the 2nd Infantry Division Memorial, located in Washington D.C., is undergoing modifications.

Originally, the 2nd Infantry Division Memorial was established in 1939. It was built and dedicated "to our dead," referring to 2nd Infantry Division troops who were killed in World War I.

The 2nd Infantry Division Memorial was last modified in 1962. The alteration was made to include division troops who were killed in World War II and the Korean War. The latest update will honor those who lost their lives to conflicts in Korea's demilitarized zone.

The 2ID Memorials Foundation noted that the modifications will cost \$2.7 million and will be finished in fall 2025. The project is privately funded. Learn more about the 2ID Memorials Foundation at

<https://www.2idmemorialsfoundation.org>.

### **USS HALYBURTON MUSEUM**

The Oliver Hazard Perry Shipyard, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is working with the Navy to bring a decommissioned Oliver Hazard class guided-missile frigate, the USS Halyburton (FFG-40), to its proposed home in Erie, Pa.

The Oliver Hazard Perry Shipyard plans to display the Halyburton as a museum ship that will be open to the public.

The organization aims to honor veterans and share the story of Oliver Hazard Perry, a Naval officer who is best known for his and his sailors' victory over the British Royal Navy during the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813.

"Ships are more than objects to those who serve on them," said organizers of the Oliver Hazard Perry Shipyard. "They have a heart and soul. Visitors — students, families and veterans alike — will feel what life was like on board as they tour the vessel, participate in overnight visits sleeping like sailors, and hearing personal stories from those who served on the Halyburton."

To learn more about the Oliver Hazard Perry Shipyard, visit <https://perryshipyard.org>.

### **CASTNER RANGE NATIONAL MONUMENT**

In March 2023, President Joe Biden signed a proclamation that established the Castner Range National Monument, located on Fort Bliss near El Paso, Texas.

The more than 6,600-acre plot of land is a former training and testing site for the Army from World War II to the Vietnam War. Training at the site ended and the Castner Range was closed in 1966. Castner Range was home to myriad indigenous people, including Apache and Pueblo peoples, as well as the Comanche Nation, the Hopi Tribe and the Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma.

"The Castner Range area contains more than 40 known archaeological sites, including living structures, hearths, remnants of pottery and other tools, as well as a myriad of petroglyphs and images on the rock faces that make up the canyons and mountains of Castner Range," according to a White House press release.

As of VFW magazine's print deadline, Castner Range is closed to the public. To learn more about Castner Range National Monument, visit <https://www.castnerrange.org>.

### **MILITARY WORKING DOGS TEAM NATIONAL MONUMENT**

A ceremony to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Military Working Dogs Team National Monument took place on Oct. 27 at Joint Base San Antonio-

Lackland in Texas.

The event highlighted the contributions of past and current military working dog teams. Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland is the world's largest training center for military dogs and handlers, according to a press release from the Air Force Air Education and Training Command.

The monument features a 9-foot-tall bronze dog handler, four bronze statues depicting military working dogs and a "Not Forgotten Fountain."

*This article is featured in the 2024 May issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Dave Spiva](#), associate editor for VFW magazine.*