The Knox County Joint Veterans Council are looking for volunteers!!!

The Knox County Joint Veterans Council is located at the Knox County Veterans Service Office located at 105 E Chestnut St. Mount Vernon, Ohio. The post conducts regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month. The meeting time is 7:00 P.M. Contact Carol Riley @ 740-504-3264 to schedule services. Contact Eddie Stage@ 740-504-1597 if you are interested in volunteering. Thank you!



They stand guard silently, vigilantly through whatever Mother Nature dares throw at them. They do so with great pride to honor one of their own. And they do this without thought of payment. For them, honoring a fallen brother-in-arms is compensation enough.

For the families of the deceased soldier, they are the ever-watchful sentinels, and their selfless act is a much-appreciated tribute.

They are the Joint Veterans Council.



For most of the Civil War, North Carolina's Fort Fisher saw very little combat. But that changed on Christmas 1864, when the Union decided it wanted to capture the last port the Confederates held on the Atlantic Ocean. It was a debacle for the Union.

First, the Union tried to pack a warship with explosives and blow up the fort's walls — but that didn't work. It just blew up their ship and alerted the Confederates of an imminent attack. So on Christmas Eve, the Union tried again, bombarding the fort with heavy gunfire, most of which fell short or missed its target.

On Christmas morning, Union commanders decided to shell an area north of the fort so troops could land and come ashore. But when they did, more disappointment followed — the fort's heavy artillery was completely unscathed, so that was a no-go, too. It was only then that the Union ordered troops to retreat.

While the first Battle of Fort Fisher was a massive failure for the Union, the second wasn't. In mid-January 1865, Union troops were finally able to capture the fort, effectively cutting the Confederates off from global trade and supplies. The Civil War ended three months later.

It Happened on Christmas

While the "Christmas Truce" of 1914 has achieved legendary status in the history of World War I, there has been little coverage of similar events involving American troops. When America entered World War I, years of massive casualties discouraged any brotherly feeling between the opposing armies, and senior officers actively discouraged any repeat of the events of 1914. In World War II, there were few chances for such events, as American troops were in close contact with German forces only in relatively small numbers in North Africa and Italy prior to the 1944 D-Day landings. Any large scale truce for Christmas 1944 was impossible as just nine days prior to Christmas, the Germans launched their largest counteroffensive of the war in the west, resulting in the Battle of the Bulge and heavy fighting throughout the holiday.

Yet while there is no mention of any "Christmas truce" in the official records, we do have a personal account of a much smaller truce during the height of the fighting in the Battle of the Bulge. This is the story of Fritz Vincken, a young German boy at the time of the battle. Fritz, then 12-years-old, had moved with his mother to a small cottage in the Huertgen forest after their hometown of Aachen was partially destroyed in an earlier American offensive. The area had stayed quiet until nine days before Christmas, when the German Ardennes Offensive had crashed through the area. According to Fritz, "we heard the incessant booming of field guns; planes soared continuously overhead; at night searchlights stabbed through the darkness."

On Christmas Eve, 1944, Fritz and his mother answered a knock at the door -- three American soldiers, one badly wounded, were standing there. While the Vinckens did not speak English nor the Americans German, they were able to communicate to a limited extent in French. Fritz's mother invited the Americans inside and attempted to make them comfortable. Fritz remembered: "We learned that the stocky, dark-haired fellow was Jim; his friend, tall and slender, was Robin. Harry, the wounded one, was now sleeping on my bed, his face as white as the snow outside. They'd lost their battalion and had wandered in the forest for three days, looking for the Americans, and hiding from the Germans. They hadn't shaved, but still, without their heavy coats, they looked merely like big boys. And that was the way Mother began to treat them."

Fritz's mother made a meal of potatoes and a rooster, previously being saved for a reunion with Fritz's father. As they cooked, there was a second knock on the door: "Expecting to find more lost Americans, I opened the door without hesitation. There stood four soldiers, wearing uniforms quite familiar to me after five years of war. They were Wehrmacht – Germans! I was paralyzed with fear. Although still a child, I knew the harsh law: sheltering enemy soldiers constituted high treason. We could all be shot!"

The corporal leading the German patrol told Fritz's mother, "we have lost our regiment and would like to wait for daylight…can we rest here?" "Of course," she replied, "you can also have a fine, warm meal and eat 'til the pot is empty. But, we have three other guests, whom you may not consider friends. This is Christmas Eve, and there will be no shooting here." The corporal demanded, "Who is inside? Amerikaner?" Fritz's mother replied, "Listen. You could be my sons, and so could they in there. A boy with a gunshot wound, fighting for his life, and his two friends, lost like you and just as hungry and exhausted as you are. This one night, this Christmas night, let us forget about killing." The Germans stacked their arms by the door, and after a quick conversation in French the startled Americans also turned over their weapons to Fritz's mother. The entire mixed group, somewhat tensely, sat down and shared dinner.

According to Fritz: "Relaxation was now beginning to replace suspicion. Even to me, all the soldiers looked very young as we sat there together. Heinz and Willi, both from Cologne, were 16. Their German corporal, at 23, was the oldest of them all. From his food bag he drew out a bottle of red wine, and Heinz managed to find a loaf of rye bread. Mother cut that in small pieces to be served with the dinner; half the wine, however, she put away, 'for the wounded boy.' Then Mother said grace. I noticed that there were tears in her eyes as she said the old, familiar words, 'Komm, Herr Jesus. Be our guest.' And as I looked around the table, I saw tears, too, in the eyes of the battle-weary soldiers, boys again, some from America, some from Germany, all far from home. Just before midnight, Mother went to the doorstep and asked us to join her to look up at the Star of Bethlehem. We all stood beside her except Harry, who was sleeping. For all of us during the moment of silence, looking at the brightest star in the heavens, the war was a distant, almost-forgotten thing." The truce held through the morning, Christmas Day, when the two sets of soldiers shook hands and departed, each headed back to their own army.

It is likely that there were other such small scale truces, or at least tacit agreements between local American and German units to refrain from attacks and firing on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, perhaps in Italy in 1943 or in quieter parts of the line in 1944, but this is the only documented case currently known.



About Our Services

We are a local, county operated agency with no affiliation to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Our funding comes from county property taxes in the amount of .5 mil. With this funding we provide: temporary financial assistance, a gas card program to reimburse gas usage by veterans for their trips to and from VA appointments, community outreach, office operating expenses and payroll. What money we don't utilize is returned to the County General Fund. We employ 2 full time Veteran Service Officers to assist you with filing disability claims, pensions, or they are available if you just want to come in to talk or answer questions. We also have a full time Financial Coordinator to assist our veterans and dependents in the need for temporary financial assistance. In addition to the above listed services we also have in place a transportation program to get our veterans to and from their VA scheduled appointments. We have 3 vans operated and maintained in house which are driven by part time veteran drivers, employed by our office, and are in operation Monday through Friday. So, as you can see we offer a wide range of services to meet the needs of our Knox County veterans and their families. Please stop in for a visit or call us if you have any questions or concerns.

- Assist the veterans and dependents with filing a claim for Pension or Service Connected Disability, Survivors Pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC),
- Assist families with the filing for Death and Burial benefits
- Provide veterans and dependents with temporary financial assistance for basic necessities such as; food, utilities, rent or mortgage.
- All services can be accomplished in our office or, if you are unable to come in, we can provide services at your home.
- We provide gas card reimbursement to veterans for their VA appointments. Vouchers are provided after your appointment and with proof of your visit.
- If you are unable to drive to your VA appointment, we also provide transportation to and from VA clinics. The only exception are Newark, Mansfield, and Marion.
- We can help you obtain copies of your DD214 or Report of Separation, service medical records, service personnel file and replacement medals.
- We are involved with Community Outreach to help broaden our office's exposure and reach those veterans that are unaware of our office. One way we accomplish this is by appearing at the area festivals and events such as The Knox County Fair, Knox County Veterans Picnic, Memorial Day and Veterans Day, POW/MIA Vigil, and Fredericktown Tomato Show. We also conduct informational seminars at several of the local nursing homes and service organizations.
- Our office provides a fully functional Veteran's welcome center available during regular business hours, Monday-Friday 8 AM-4 PM. Computers with internet access, color printer, fax machine and scanner are available for use as well as a small library with abundant veteran related information.
- Our office also publishes a monthly newsletter which is accessible online at our website, in our office, and at several other locations around Knox County.
- Counseling services from the Columbus Vet Center are available, which provides free PTSD counseling for combat veterans and their families. Call or visit our office for details.
- The first Tuesday of each month, you can hear us on 1300 WMVO beginning at 10 AM. Call with your questions.
- Any Veteran who is an Ohio resident can obtain the "Ohio Veterans ID Card" within our office with proper discharge on file.

Pictures of the Month



An Army paratrooper engages targets with the M110 semi-automatic sniper system during sniper training as part of Silver Bullet 24 at Piandell'Alpe, Italy, Nov. 13, 2024



Air Force Maj. Melanie "Mach" Kluesner, assigned to the F-35A Lightning II Demonstration Team, performs aerial maneuvers during practice before an airshow at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla., Oct. 31, 2024