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.

"Easter Eggs" for Hitler

Technical Sergeant William E. Thomas and Private First Class Joseph Jackson prepared a gift of special "Easter Eggs" for Adolph Hitler and the German Army. Scrawling such messages on artillery shells in World War II was one way in which artillery soldiers could humorously express their dislike of the enemy.

By March, 1945 many more U.S. combat units of African-Americans were on the front. Lieutenant Colonel Chet Hansen, aide to 12th Army Group commander Omar Bradley, noted in his diary on April 8, 1945, that "Blacks are now being used in volunteer (combat) platoons with our divisions and according to Bradley they are doing well." On April 7, 1945, Private First Class Willy F. James, Jr., volunteered to be lead scout. Private James was a member of the all black platoon assigned to Company G, 413th Regiment,104th Infantry Division. When he got pinned down by enemy fire for over an hour, instead of panicking, Private James made a detailed observation of the German positions. After safely returning to the platoon, he assisted in working out a plan of attack, and then personally led a squad in the subsequent fighting. He was killed by enemy machine gun fire while going to the aid of his fatally wounded platoon leader.

The US Army was segregated during World War II, but the attitudes towards African-Americans in uniform were undergoing change in the minds of some generals, including Eisenhower and Bradley. Five years later the military ended segregation in the army by order of President Truman. However, because of racial bias prevalent in the Army in 1945, it was not until 1997 that Private James' extraordinary heroism was finally recognized with a posthumous Medal of Honor presented to his surviving relatives by President Bill Clinton at a White House Ceremony. Six other African-American World War II heroes were similarly honored at the time.



The First Shots of the Civil War

Few sites are more synonymous with the American Civil War than Fort Sumter. Named for the Revolutionary War hero Thomas Sumter, the United States government began construction on Fort Sumter in 1829. It was part of the third system fortifications built to defend the American coastline from foreign attack. The site selected was a sandbar near the entrance to Charleston Harbor that played an important role in the 1776 Battle of Sullivan's Island. British ships ran aground on the sandbar during that battle, taking them out of action, which helped lead to a Patriot victory. The man-made island was created on the sandbar. Seventy thousand tons of granite was used to create the island, and the fort was built on top of that. By April of 1861, the fort was still under construction and was an imposing fortress in the harbor. It was designed to house 650 men and 135 cannons. It had five-foot-thick brick walls that towered fifty feet high with three levels of artillery emplacements. Inside were wooden officers' quarters, enlisted men's barracks, and a brick powder magazine. The range of artillery at that time being approximately one mile, the cannons from Sumter and Moultrie commanded the entrance to the harbor.

On December 20, 1860, South Carolina seceded from the United States following Abraham Lincoln's election as President of the United States. At that time, the only federal troops in Charleston harbor were about 85 men under the command of Major Robert Anderson, and they were stationed at Fort Moultrie. Feeling like he was in an indefensible location, Anderson made the decision on December 26, 1860, to spike the cannon at Moultrie, burn the carriages, and move his command across the harbor and into the unfinished Fort Sumter. South Carolina militia quickly took over all the other forts in the harbor and began training artillery on Fort Sumter.

President James Buchanan attempted to resupply the isolated garrison by sending a ship, the Star of the West, to their aid. However, Citadel military college students stationed on Morris Island fired on the ship. The ship fell back without returning fire, and the standoff in the harbor continued. After six more Deep South states seceded from the Union, these Southern states formed the Confederate States of America and created their government and took charge of the situation in Charleston Harbor. On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated president of the United States. He refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of states' secession or the sovereignty of the Confederate States. With Anderson's garrison running low on supplies, Lincoln decided to send an armed fleet to resupply Fort Sumter.

As the nation watched the tense standoff in Charleston Harbor, Southern diarist Mary Chesnut summed it up: "There stands Fort Sumter, and thereby hangs peace or war." In the early morning of April 12, 1861, the Confederates gave Anderson an ultimatum to evacuate or be fired upon. Anderson replied that he would stay until he ran on supplies three days later. The Confederates informed him they would open fire. At 4:30 a.m. the first shot of the American Civil War was fried from a 10-inch mortar at Fort Johnson. The mortar shell arced over Fort Sumter and exploded, a signal for all the Confederate artillery to open fire on the fort. Both sides fired at each other over the course of 34 hours. Finally, with the buildings in the fort burning and with no prospect of victory, Anderson decided to surrender to the Confederates. Anderson and his men were able to take their flags and return to the North. In the Deep South the Confederate victory was hailed as an important declaration of their independence from the Union. In the North, the firing on Fort Sumter was viewed as an assault on the American Union and rallied thousands to the defense of the American flag. Lincoln's call for volunteers to invade the South forced the Upper South states to secede and join the Confederacy as well.

Now in Confederate hands, Fort Sumter remained a powerful symbol. It became a target for the Union armies. On April 7, 1863, the Union returned to the harbor and attempted to retake Sumter, but they were driven back. Beginning in July of 1863, the Union began to lay siege to Charleston and Fort Sumter. By September of 1863, the Union captured all of Morris Island. The rifled artillery opened up on Fort Sumter less than a mile away. The Union fired more than seven million pounds of metal at the fort. The bombardment lasted on and off for 587 days. The brick walls of the fort were reduced to rubble. But as they continued to bombard the fort it only made it stronger as the rubble became essentially a massive earthwork. The Union attempted to land troops on the island fort but were repulsed. Finally, Charleston became untenable with General William T. Sherman's army marching through central South Carolina. On February 17, 1865, the Confederates evacuated Charleston and Fort Sumter, and the Union retook both. On April 14, 1865, four years to the day that Major Robert Anderson had lowered the American flag and left Fort Sumter, now General Robert Anderson returned for a ceremonial re-raising of the American flag on the battered remnants of Fort Sumter.

After the Civil War, Fort Sumter continued to be used by the military and as a navigational beacon. In the 1890s, a large Endicott battery was constructed inside the old fort. The military continued to use the fort until it was decommissioned after World War II in 1947 and transferred to the National Park Service, which preserves and interprets the site today. Visitors to Fort Sumter can take a boat ride out to the fort, visit a museum in the fort and learn about the important Civil War history of the site.

This Philippine Scout fired his rifle with one hand to save his squad

Among the outcomes of the Spanish-American War of 1898 was the transfer of the Philippine Archipelago from Spain to the United States. It was followed by another war when Filipinos led by Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy, who had rebelled against the Spanish in 1896 in hopes of establishing an indigenous republic, found their country seized by the U.S. instead.

After yet another brutal conflict, fought between 1899 and 1902, Aguinaldo and his forces were defeated and the Philippines became the strategic protectorate of a new conqueror. Within a few years, the predominantly Catholic, Tagalog-speaking Filipinos in the northern islands resigned themselves to the current situation and some became part of the U.S. military forces enforcing order there.

As early as 1901 the U.S. Army had organized the first Philippine Scouts, whose familiarity with their home terrain made them an invaluable asset. In the years leading up to World War I, the principal enemy these units still had to fight were various Islamic sultanates in southern islands such as Mindanao, Jolo and Sulu, collectively dubbed Moros. Under their previous overlords, the Moro sultans had enjoyed a degree of autonomy from the Spaniards, who found that policy preferable to provoking unnecessary trouble. The Americans, however, were more serious about assimilating the entire archipelago under their rule, resulting in a series of the sort of savage campaigns that the Spanish had tried to avoid. It was amid those violent years that Pvt. José Nisperos had his moment in military history.

José Nisperos Balítón was born on Dec. 30, 1887, in San Fernando, La Union province, on the island of Luzon. He enlisted in the 34th Company of Philippine Scouts in December 1907, altering his name to be less confusing to the Americans (in its Spanish-based form, Balítón was his mother's family name, while Nisperos was his father's). He finished his tour of duty in 1911, but a few months after his discharge, he reenlisted, citing his occupation as "soldier."

On Sept. 24, 1911, Nisperos was attached as an interpreter to a small naval detachment involved in a multi-pronged operation against Moros on Basilan, the largest and northernmost island in the Sulu Archipelago. Disembarking at Semut from the gunboat Pampanga, the squad, led by Ensign Charles Hovey, with a local guide, Hospital Apprentice Fred McGuire and Nisperos, advanced toward the town of Lapurap ahead of four other enlisted seamen: Jacob Volz, John Catherwood, Bolden Harrison and George Henrechon.

As the four-man vanguard approached their objective, they came upon a village of nipa huts, from which shots suddenly rang out, instantly killing the guide, grievously wounding Hovey and wounding Nisperos and McGuire. About 20 Moros then burst from hiding behind the huts, armed with obsolete muskets, spears and kris knives, and charged the party.

In spite of his wounds, McGuire countercharged, emptying his rifle into his assailants and then using it as a club while placing himself between their assailants and Hovey. Nisperos, who was shot in the left elbow and speared through the body, fought on, propping himself on his disabled arm as described in his citation: "Having been badly wounded (his left arm was broken and lacerated and he had received several spear wounds in the body so he could not stand) continued to fire his rifle with one hand until the enemy was repulsed, thereby aiding materially in preventing the annihilation of his party and the mutilation of their bodies."

The seamen bringing up the rear charged to assist the advance party. Catherwood was wounded early on but fought on from the prone position, Volz assaulted his adversaries, Harrison killed three Moros with a double barrel shotgun and Henrechon, after suffering a gun jam and breaking his rifle butt over a Moro's head, drew a service pistol and continued fighting. With other landing parties moving up to aid Hovey's, the surviving Moros retreated. As McGuire reverted to his proper role, tending to the wounded, Nisperos insisted that Hovey be taken care of before himself. Hovey died of his wounds shortly thereafter, however.

All five of the Navy enlisted men were subsequently awarded the Medal of Honor. Later, as more details of the fight near Lapurap came to light, on March 19, 1912, Nisperos' immediate superior, 2nd Lt. Arthur Cody recommended him for the medal as well. Consequently, on Feb. 3, 1913, the wife of Maj. Gen. J. Franklin Bell (himself a Medal holder) made him the first Filipino and Asian Medal of Honor recipient.

Although promoted to corporal, Nisperos did not remain long in the Army. He was discharged in June 1912, and appointed a deputy sheriff of Basilon by the commander of the 28th Infantry Regiment and given a lifetime disability pension of $55 per month. On Sept. 1, 1922, however, he died in his hometown of San Fernando at age 34. He is buried at Lingsat Public Cemetery.

Pictures of the Month



The USS Hampton enters Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, March 8, 2025.



Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Kepono Gowan launches an RQ-20 Puma unmanned aircraft system during Operation Baltic Sentry in southern Finland, Feb. 24, 2025 .