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WVI Newsletter

OCTOBER 2021



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Reba Whittle - Prisoner of War

Reba Whittle (1919-1981), upon graduating from nursing school, joined the Army Nurse Corps in June 1941. In 1943 Whittle was approved for the Army Air Forces School of Air Evacuation as a flight nurse. In January of 1943, she boarded the Royal Mail Ship Queen Mary with 25 other flight nurses from the 813th Emergency Air Evacuation Transport Squadron to travel to England. Whittle flew 40 missions between January and September 1944, logging over 500 hours of flight time.

In September 1944, on a mission to collect casualties the C-47 aircraft was struck by German flak and crashed south of Aachen, Germany. Whittle sustained multiple injuries, including a concussion and lacerations. German soldiers captured the crew as they crawled from the burning plane. Whittle became the first American female military prisoner of war in the European Theater.

Whittle was separated from the rest of the crew and transferred to Hohemark Hospital where she was tasked with providing emergency medical assistance to injured prisoners. In October 1944 Whittle was relocated to a POW hospital in Meiningen, Germany, where she worked with burn victims and in an amputee rehabilitation facility.

Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross notified the U.S. Department of State that Whittle was being held as a POW and negotiations for her release began. In January 1945 she was released and transported to Switzerland by train. She was then repatriated along with 109 other American POW's before she flew back to the US.

In February 1945, Whittle was awarded the Purple Heart and Air Medal. Starting in June 1945, Whittle worked for one year as a ward nurse. She was discharged from active duty in January 1946 for medical reasons.

Information & picture: VA Center for Women Veterans 8/9/21



Something to think about ...

“Autumn is the time of the year when Mother Nature says, ‘Look how easy, how healthy, and how beautiful letting go can be’”

Quote by Toni Sorenson

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

How Many Sentinels Have Been Female?

There have been over 680 tomb guards awarded the badge since 1958 when we started counting. There are hundreds more from the year 1926 when the Army started guarding the Tomb. The 3rd US Infantry (The Old Guard) is the unit that has been given the duty of guarding the Tomb. It was given this sacred duty in 1948. The Old Guard was – and still is – considered a combat unit. As an Infantry unit, females were not permitted in the ranks for many years. It wasn't until 1994 that females were permitted to volunteer to become a Sentinel when the 289th Military Police Company was attached to the Old Guard. The MP branch is a combat support unit and includes females.

In 1996, SGT Heather Johnson became the first female to earn the Tomb Guard Identification Badge. She volunteered for duty in June 1995 and earned her badge in 1996. However, SGT Johnson was not the only female Sentinel. Since then, there have been a total of five female Sentinels awarded the Tomb Guard Identification Badge:

SGT Danyell Wilson earned her badge in 1997

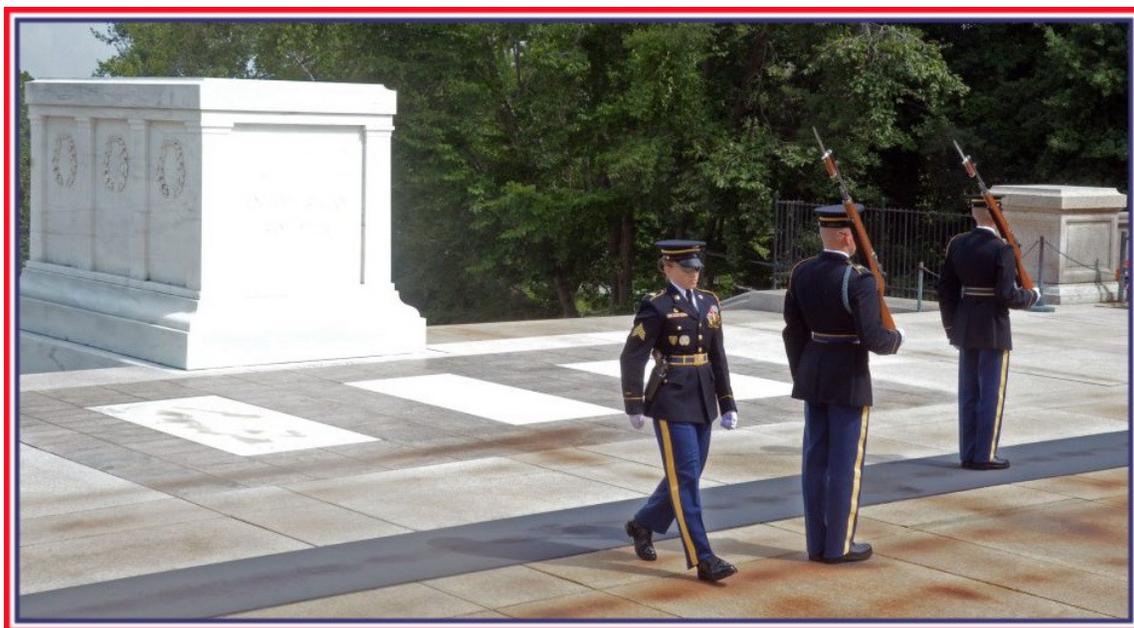
SSG Tonya Bell received hers in 1998

SGT Ruth Hanks earned her badge in June 2015

SFC Chelsea Porterfield earned her badge in 2021

Several other units have since been attached to the Old Guard – food service, transportation, medics, etc. ~ so now females have an ever greater opportunity to become a Sentinel. Females must meet the same requirements as the male soldiers to be eligible to volunteer at the Tomb. The only difference is that females have a minimum height of 5'8" ~ which is the same standard to be a member of the Old Guard.

Information: Judy Pearson (Ambassador-The Women's Memorial)



Picture: Sgt. Ruth Hanks

Provided by: Army University Press February 2017

Sexual Assault & Harassment Prevention Work Group

“WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs names members to the Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention Work group who will begin serving their one-year appointment this September.

The appointees are experienced subject matter experts and will advise the secretary on department policies and procedures to eliminate sexual assault and harassment in VA facilities.

“Veterans, service members, VA patients, their families and caregivers, as well as sexual assault survivors, staff, visitors and advocates should feel safe in all VA facilities,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough.

“The Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Work group is a critical step in making sure that happens.”

Information: Department of Veteran Affairs 9/921

National Park Fees Waived

“Entrance fees for the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and standard amenity recreation fees for the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sites **are waived for current Military Service-members and their dependents, Veterans, and Gold Star Families.** They now have free access to approximately 2,000 public locations spread out across more than 400 million acres of public lands, which host activities to fit any lifestyle, from serene to high octane, including hiking, fishing, paddling, biking, hunting, stargazing, camping, and much more.

For purposes of this program, a Veteran is identified as an individual who has served in the United States Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, and is able to present one of the following forms of valid (unexpired) identification:

- ◆ Department of Defense Identification Card
- ◆ Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC)
- ◆ Veteran ID Card
- ◆ Veterans designation on a state-issued U.S. driver’s license or identification card

Inter-agency Passes can be obtained in person while visiting a participating site. Visit Places to Get Inter-agency Passes for a searchable list and be sure to contact the site before you go, to make sure they are open and have passes in stock. In addition, Military passes, as well as those for seniors and persons with permanent disabilities, are available online through the USGS Online Store.”

US Department Veteran Affairs (September 2021)

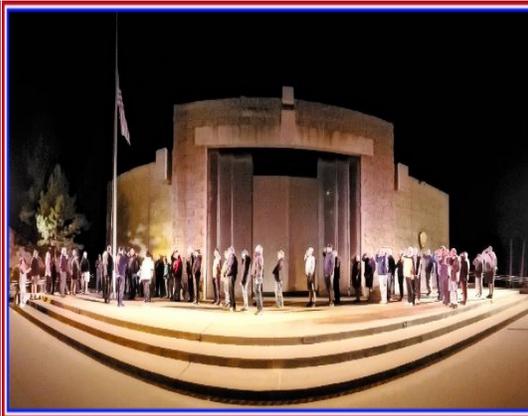
Mount Rushmore

Carolyn Nagy reports that on a recent trip to Mt. Rushmore she had the opportunity to attend the evening ceremony honoring veterans. As guests walked through the gates each state flag was lit. The “Presidents” were not visible but the American flag on the amphitheater stage was flying in all its glory. A park ranger was selected to deliver a patriotic speech - what freedom means to them. Our park ranger was dynamic and well spoken.

This was followed by a brief movie regarding Mt. Rushmore and its meaning. At this time, the “Presidents” came to life against the dark sky. Spectacular. After the National Anthem, Veterans were invited to the stage for recognition by those in the audience. Veterans volunteered to lower and fold of the flag. What a special evening and honor to be on the stage with so many veterans. The park ranger commented that she was glad to see a few women veterans on the stage. The next day we were back to see the “Presidents” which are amazing but the best was the evening ceremony.



Washington-Jefferson-Roosevelt-Lincoln



Mt. Rushmore - Veterans

Photos provided by C. Nagy

The Liberation of Kuwait

A free copy of “The Liberation of Kuwait - Honoring the Veterans of Desert Storm” is available to all veterans that served during that era. There are a limited number of copies so if you would like a copy for yourself, family member, or friend that served contact cenagy@bex.net.

Holiday Needs

WVI and United States Vets, Inc. are beginning to work with potential donors for Thanksgiving and Christmas. It would be helpful to have an idea of what is needed when coordinating with the donors. Contact cenagy@bex.net with your projected needs.

PS: The Holiday party will be planned for early December.



Day of Honor

Saturday,
November 6
Hope Baptist
Church will host
a free steak
dinner for all
veterans at
6:00pm. **RSVP
by October 29,
2021** by calling
419-540-1141.
Address: 6250
South Avenue
Toledo.