

NOTES

PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE CEREMONY

- Arrival of the guests (1:30PM to 2:00PM)
- Speech of Mr Lebrun-Damiens, Consul Général of San Francisco
- Presentation of Légion d'Honneur medals
- Mary Forbes
- Pictures & Refreshments



**PRESENTATION CEREMONY**  
**FOR THE**  
**FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL**  
**TO**  
**WORLD WAR II VETERANS**

*Quartermaster 1<sup>st</sup> Class Navy Gordon L. Smith*

*P-38 Mechanic Daniel F. McAllaster*

*B-17 Pilot Richard A. Nelms*

*Demolition Squad Leader Stanley Zemont*

**MUSEUM OF FLIGHT**  
**Seattle, WA**  
**May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

## **HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL ORDER OF THE LEGION OF HONOR**

*During the French Revolution all the orders of the kingdom were abolished. It was the wish of Napoleon, the First Consul, to create a reward to commend civilians and soldiers regardless of their stature in life. In 1802, a **Légion d'Honneur**, (Legion of Honor) was established as the first modern order of merit. The **Légion** was open to individuals of all ranks and professions. The order is France's highest award and is conferred upon men and women, either French citizens or foreign nationals, for outstanding achievements in military or civilian life.*

*The President of France is the Grand Master of the Order and appoints all other members of the Order — by convention, on the advice of the Government. Its principal officers are the Chancellor and Secretary-General. The order has five classes: Grand-Croix (Grand Cross); Grand Officier (Grand Officer); Commandeur (Commander); Officier (Officer); and Chevalier (Knight).*

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### **La Marseillaise**

Allons enfants de la Patrie  
Le jour de gloire est arrivé !  
Contre nous de la tyrannie  
L'étendard sanglant est levé (Bis)  
Entendez-vous dans nos campagnes  
Mugir ces féroces soldats?  
Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras.  
Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes!

*Aux armes citoyens  
Formez vos bataillons  
Marchons, marchons  
Qu'un sang impur  
Abreuve nos sillons*



\* \* \*

### **IN FLANDERS FIELDS**

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow.  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch, be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.*

\* \* \* \* \*

This famous WW1 poem was written by Canadian military doctor John McRae during the battle of Ypres, Belgium in 1915.

**Gordon L. Smith** was born on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1921 in Vancouver, Washington State. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts from University of Oregon in

He joined the army on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1942 after 16 weeks of training in the Quartermaster School of San Diego, and entered the active service on June 7<sup>th</sup> as a First-Class Quartermaster USNR and then crew member of the LCI(L)-43 in the Landing Craft Infantry Flotilla One. The LCI(L)-43 operated in the Europe-Africa-Middle East Theater from 1943 to 1944 : starting with a first landing in North-Africa from April 11<sup>th</sup> to May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1943, the ship then sailed to Sicily to conduct the invasion of Italy a month after, entering Salerno in September 1943, going up to Anzio, advanced landings set on multiple occasions throughout January and February 1944 and finally crossing the border to Southern France in August 1944.

After his military career, Mr Smith became a business manager for

**Stanley L. Zemont** was born on November 19, 1924 and joined the US Army in April 1943 and served until January 1946. He then served in the US Air Force from January 1948 until December 1953. After the war, he went to college in Chicago and worked for Hughes Aircraft for 32 years. He and his present wife have been married for 35 years. Here is a short testimony of his memories from the war :

*“When entering a town or village, you knew you were in friendly territory because out came the flags, French or Belgium, and people coming out and some of the men pumping their arms and pointing the direction to go. In one French village a French citizen came up to me with a bottle of wine that I shared with my comrades.*

*The most frightening event that I will never forget was when we first entered Germany we were harassed by a Pillbox that held us up. A plan was made for us to take it out. Around 2:00 AM (date unknown) a patrol of 30 or 40 men was to get to the target, surround it, and ask for their surrender. If they refused the patrol would button up the entrance with rifle fire, and my job was to get to the steel door with two Shape Charges fixed to a crossbar and blow it in. THAT WAS THE PLAN. When we got there the Germans were waiting for us, and all Hell Broke Loose. My*

*Lieutenant who was with me in a field in front of the pill box, and the flares kept us pinned down, and I can hear a German who was to my left say "hey joe" a number of times. My Lieutenant said between flares lets get the hell out of here. We did, and on the way to our lines I found a Sargent that I knew who was shot in the Shoulder and Heel, after resting a few times, I did manage to carry the Sargent back to our lines. Of all that happens in War this one will stick with me forever, plus January 7 1945, 23 days into the Battle of the Bulge I received the Purple Heart.”*

*“After my return to civilian life I hired in at Hughes Aircraft Company in Culver City, California. I mostly worked on different Missile Programs that involved Air to Air and Air to Ground and Ground to Ground systems. When the Company developed the A-6E Detecting and Ranging Set (DRS) a wonderful Classified System that I worked on as a Configuration Management Administrator. I did this for a few years, and since I was single I decided to go into the field as a Hughes Field Rep; even if I dropped a few grades so that I can get out and see some of the World. This was a wonderful choice. I got to deploy with the USS America to the Persian Gulf with visits to different Country's and later I was sent to Iwakuni, Japan a Marine Air Base, that sent me on deployments to South Korea, and Philippines. While on these deployments I had custody of \$28 million in assets because the Navy did not own the Systems. After being deployed to Japan for three (3) years my company sent me directly to Oak Harbor Naval Air Station in my first visit to the State of Washington. During my year in Washington we reached Material Support Date that gave the Navy full control of all the Hughes Systems. ( They bought the system). My company wanted me to return to the LA Area, but I fell in love with Washington and retired after 32 years. I choice that I never regretted because of the many friends that I have made.”*



After enlisting into the Army Air Corps in October 1942, **Daniel F. McAllaster** was inducted on November 2, 1942 at Leavenworth, Kansas. After basic training he was sent for general mechanics training school and further training for maintaining hydraulics, propellers and electrical systems on airplanes. In late October 1943, he was sent to Will Rogers Field in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to join the 30th Photo

Reconnaissance Squadron in the Ninth Air Force. The airplanes were the P-38's and were equipped with cameras for photo reconnaissance instead of guns. His job was to keep all of the airplanes properly serviced and maintained daily after their photo reconnaissance missions.

On June 13, 1944, the 30th Photo squadron became part of the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group which was attached to the First Army under the command of General Bradley. Dan was one of three mechanics with the squadron and was in the advance group to go over to the continent from England on June 29, 1944 (D-day plus 23). They set up their operations 2 miles behind the front lines in northern France and continually moved as the army marched through Belgium forward to Germany. Dan was one of the 25,000 who crossed the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen before it collapsed on March 17, 1945.

On March 20th, 1945 the unit moved on to Vogelsong, Germany. By April 8, 1945 the unit was in Eschwege (a German airbase) 150 miles southwest of Berlin. At the end of the war, the unit was assigned occupational duty in Nuremburg for about 1 week until they received orders to accompany the First Army to China.

Dan received an Honorable discharge at Leavenworth, Kansas on October 28, 1945. He achieved the rank of Sergeant. He (along with other members of his squadron) received the Presidential Unit Citation with an added Oak Leaf Cluster for exceptional and outstanding service for "the most extensive low altitude photographic assignment ever undertaken over enemy territory." This unit was flying before D-day and provided "an essential part of preparations for the Continental assault" mapping not only Normandy but the entire north coast of France, Belgium, the entire Siegfried Line and the Rhine Valley. These photo missions resulted in the saving of many Allied lives during the landing operations on June 6.

After leaving the army, Dan pursued a career in flour milling. He became the superintendent of several flour mills in Oklahoma, Colorado, Nebraska, Washington and Oregon before retiring in 1987.

Dan currently lives in Seattle with his daughter. He has 3 grandchildren (Shannon Millican, Todd Butler and Stacy Butler) and 5 great-grandchildren.

Capt. **Richard A. Nelms**, better known as Dick among those that know him, was born February 1923 in Cleveland, Ohio and ultimately raised in

Niagara Falls, NY. Dick became an avid golfer at 14, competed in track and field, and was Senior class president before graduating in 1941. War time changed any plans he had after that.

He enlisted in the Army Air Forces in 1942, and was accepted to Aviation Cadet and pilot training for active duty in March 1943. After earning his wings in December 1943 he was assigned to the B-17 and the 447<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, based in Rattlesdon, Suffolk County, England. Over the course of his service, he flew 35 missions into Germany, France and other Nazi occupied territories. He also helped plan and wrote the specifications for food and supply drops to the Maquis Freedom Fighters and others. Overall, Dick never lost sight of the fact that he was one of thousands of men dedicated to stopping Hitler's war machine.

Dick received a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for participation at the Battle of Normandy and the liberation of the region of France and of Europe; Distinguished Flying Cross medal for extraordinary achievement and superior airmanship while serving as Pilot on high altitude heavy bombardment missions over Germany and Nazi occupied Continental Europe; Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters; US Presidential Unit citation for accuracy in bombing; European Theater ribbon with four battle campaign stars; and, WWII Victory Medal.

After completing his tour, Dick volunteered to remain with the 447<sup>th</sup> as squadron duty officer. In December 1944 he returned to the US and was stationed at Hendricks Field in Sebring, FL; then moved onto Tyndall Field, FL for flexible gunnery school training before transferring to Dodge City, Kansas for B-26 transition School; and, finally to Liberal, Kansas where he he was assigned as Squadron C-3 Commander through the duration of WWII. Captain Nelms was honorably discharged in December 1945.

After WWII's end, he returned to civilian life to become an established advertising and corporate graphic designer in Seattle, WA. Dick married Laurel, an ex-Marine, and together they made their home on Mercer Island, with son Garet. Laurel passed away in 2014. Over the years Dick has been an avid volunteer in his community. He is now an active and popular WWII history story teller and B-17 guide at Museum of Flight, Seattle, WA.



COL (Retired) **Mary Forbes** graduated from the US Military Academy in 1983, the US Army War College in 2006, and served on active duty with the US Army and the Washington Army National Guard for over 26 years. As the Assistant Director for Veterans Services at the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, Mary Forbes champions federal and state initiatives to end veteran homelessness.

Her efforts have resulted in communities greatly expanding their capacity to serve homeless veterans and significantly reduced the number of homeless veterans in the state over the last four years. As a result of multiple years of community engagement, she was recognized by the White House as a “Women Veteran Leader Champion of Change” in February 2014 and received the Governor’s Award for Leadership in Management in June 2014. Mary’s guiding principles of building partnerships, fostering productive relationships and providing world class customer service at the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs have proven to be successful for veterans and their families in Washington State.