

Veterans Studies Interest Group Listserv

Issue #10 June 7, 2017

Topics for this month's Listserv are the Veterans Bonus March, Rolling Thunder, submitting photos for the Vietnam War Memorial, an article about remembering Memorial Day, a ceremony commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Midway and Gen. Eisenhower's speech on D-Day.

The Veterans Bonus March

May-July of this year marks the 85th anniversary of one of the country's unfortunate events – the Veterans Bonus March of 1932. It all started in 1924 when, in a time of relative prosperity Congress awarded monetary certificates to veterans redeemable 21 years later in 1945 (over President Calvin Coolidge's veto). With the coming of the depression, many veterans were now out of work and wanted immediate payment. In 1931, over President Hoover's veto. Congress approved part the amount as loans but this did not satisfy the hurting [veterans](#).

In May, 1932, led by Walter Waters, a 34-year-old ex-Sgt and unemployed cannery [worker](#) from Portland OR. marchers began to arrive in Washington by train, jalopy or hitchhiking. They squatted in and along condemned buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue and then overflowed into a shantytown on the Anacostia flats. Initial number was about 15,000 and it later swelled to 20,000 men and some [families](#).

Many in the DC area aided the veterans. Washington police superintendent and former Army Brigadier General, Pelham D. Glassford, who suggested the name of "Bonus Expeditionary Force", secured clothing, food and medical supplies and helped keep [discipline](#)

Rumors were spread about the marchers – that only 50% were actually veterans (a later VA study found that 94% had Army or Navy service [records](#)) and that Communists organized it, especially after John Pace, a communist party member, arrived with instructions to incite the [crowd](#).

The House passed a Bill to give the veterans their money but on June 17 the Senate voted it down by 62 to [18](#). After this, some went [home](#) but for others tempers and scuffles between the police and marchers flared in mid-July.

On July 28, the order went down to Superintendent Glassford to clear the government buildings and a melee ensued where men on both the police and veteran sides were injured. At 4:30 PM, 600 troops, 5 tanks and Cavalry were called out of Fort Myers led by officers who were to become principals in World War II: then Army Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Douglas MacArthur who personally commanded the force assisted by then Maj. Dwight D Eisenhower, who served as liaison to the [police](#) and cavalry commander then Maj. George S. Patton. The well trained troops cleared the marchers and their wives and children from downtown Washington by

forming cordons, using tear gas and with swords [drawn](#) by the cavalry but without firing a shot. The marchers wielded clubs, iron bars and profanities. Although MacArthur's definitive Presidential orders were to restrict his activities to clearing the downtown Washington [area](#), he continued over the 11th Street bridge into the Anacostia shantytown and burned it to the ground.

With this, the Bonus March was over. Three had died - two veterans who were later buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors, and one infant; 54 were injured and 135 [arrested](#).

The episode was met with dismay around the country. MacArthur was widely criticized but he stated that the government was threatened with insurrection (he had earlier said that only 10% of the marchers were veterans). Eisenhower later said that he tried to dissuade MacArthur from personally leading the charge. Patton called the event a "most distasteful form of service." The routed marchers had included Joseph Angelo, who 14 years earlier had saved Patton's life in World War I by pulling him from a [foxhole](#).

Newsreel footage of troops clearing the marchers was met with boos across the country. There were demonstrations and students loudly interrupted Gen. MacArthur's commencement address at the University of Pittsburgh that summer (sound familiar?). Sen. Hiram Johnson summed it up "The president sent against these men, emaciated from hunger, scantily clad, unarmed, the troops of the United States army. Tanks, tear-bombs, all of the weapons of modern warfare were directed against those who had borne the arms of the [republic](#)."

Many thought the Bonus March and its aftermath contributed to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's victory that November – he was against giving the bonus but said that it was handled badly. The Veterans of Foreign Wars continued to advocate for early redemption of military service certificates and a second Bonus March in 1933 was defused with an offer of Civilian Conservation Corp jobs, which most of the group accepted. In 1936, Congress overrode another Presidential veto (this by President Roosevelt) and paid the veterans their bonus nine years [early](#).

Pictures of the events are [here](#). Books include John Henry Bartlett's *The Bonus March and the New Deal* (1937) and Roger Daniels' *The Bonus March, an Episode of the Great Depression* (1971).

Rolling Thunder

Rolling Thunder, now celebrating its 30th year is a motorcycle rally in Washington held over Memorial Day weekend. Its original purpose was to bring back MIAs and POWs unaccounted for since World War II. Another purpose is to remember the Vietnam Veterans who were so badly treated on their return home. It was started by four veterans riding to the Vietnam War Memorial: Ray Manzo, a former United States Marine Corps corporal, U.S. Army Sgt. Major John Holland (Ret.), Marine First Sgt. Walt Sides (Ret.) and Sgt. Ted [Sampley](#) (Ret.). The rally

now numbers in the hundreds of thousands. Here [are some articles](#) about the event this year, [photos](#) and a [video](#).

Vietnam War Memorial Photos

Families and friends of Vietnam War veterans have been encouraged to submit photos for use on the Wall of Faces and the Education Center at The Wall and a large number are doing just that. Pictures add a great deal to the memory of loved ones. You can submit pictures online [here](#) or mail them to this [address](#). The general website for submission is [here](#).

What We Remember on Memorial Day

Article on how we remember wars and [veterans](#)

MIDWAY

On June 3, a 75th anniversary ceremony at the World War II Memorial (among others) honored those who fought in the Battle of Midway. Six survivors of the battle were present and a video of the event showing speaker Bob Dole is [here](#). Norman “Dusty” Kleiss, whose quick thinking resulted in the destruction of 2 of the 4 Japanese aircraft carriers sunk in the battle (and a changed tide of war after Pearl Harbor) had died in April, 2016 at shortly after his 100th [birthday](#).

D-Day Speech

Text and audio of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower’s famous D-Day speech 73 years ago yesterday is [here](#).

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Stats Section

Unaccounted for Veterans	
World War II	73,057
Korea	7,747
Vietnam	1,610
Cold War	126
Gulf Wars	5
El Dorado Canyon	1
Total	82,545

Names on the Vietnam War [Memorial](#)

58,318