The Railsplitter

Newsletter of the Department of Illinois
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

Fall 2026

In Fraternity,
Charity and Loyalty





Grand Army of the Republic turned 160 in 2026

The Railsplitter is a publication of the Department of Illinois, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW).

For more information about the Department, visit our Website: https://www.suvcwil.org/.

Our Facebook page is here.

More information about the SUVCW and becoming a member is here: www.suvcw.org.

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Cover graphic by Gerald Sonnenberg. Image of Benjamin F. Stephenson courtesy of Wikipedia.

For submissions, email *The Railsplitter* editor, Gerald Sonnenberg at gsonnenberg@hotmail.com or lestweforget1861@outlook.com.

Commander's Corner

By Michael Zafran
Department Commander



Brothers,

I am pleased to report that the Department of Illinois is going strong throughout the state, doing the work of our Order.

The summer has flown by with parades celebrating America 250, concerts, cemetery ceremonies and restorations, Eagle Scout programs, re-enactment battles, and living history displays.

We have sworn in 18 new brothers, bringing our department to 239 active members.

On Oct. 10, we held our 143rd Mid-Term Encampment, hosted by John A. Logan Camp 26 of Rockford at the Veterans Memorial Hall and Museum. A big thank you to Commander Andrew Hare and Bill Johnson for setting up the room and providing a delicious lunch for the 17 brothers and three sisters from Tent 20 of Rockford who made the encampment a success.

One worthy cause was brought to the department's attention: Jennifer Dyer Mickelson, daughter of PDC Terry Dyer, proposed establishing a scholarship fund in his memory. I will send out information on how to contribute as soon as I receive it.

For those who haven't visited the Rockford museum, I encourage you to do so. It has many Civil War displays to view.

Speaking of wonderful museums, I am pleased to announce that our 144th Annual Encampment will be held on Saturday, May 15, 2027, at the Chicagoland Veterans Memorial Campus, 39 Army Trail Blvd., Addison, Illinois. Lunch will be served from noon to 1 p.m., followed by the meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. Please allow time to tour the museum, which was originated by PDC Bobby Welch. As always, a flyer will be posted before the event. Be sure to save the date.

Veterans Day is rapidly approaching. I will be attending two ceremonies on Nov. 7, ahead of Veterans Day: one at 11 a.m. in the chapel at Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago, and another at 1 p.m. at Union Ridge Cemetery in Chicago. I encourage all our brothers to observe Veterans Day in their own way.

Respectfully submitted in F.C.L.,
Michael J. Zafran, D.C.

The 144th Annual Encampment will be 15 May 2027 at the Chicagoland Veterans Memorial Campus, 39 Army Trail Blvd., in Addison, Illinois.

Department of Illinois Ballot 2027 Officer Nominees

Dept. Comdr. Lee Lasseigne, Gen Sheridan Camp 2, Aurora, Illinois

SVC. Wayne Wehrheim, Bryner Camp 67, Peoria, Illinois

JVC. Andrew Hare, Logan Camp 26, Rockford, Illinois

Secretary. Jeff Kaup, Old Glory Camp 6165, Chicago, Illinois

Treasurer. Harlan Hawkins, Dutton Camp 49, Sycamore, Illinois

Council Nominees

Bob Kurek, Gen Sheridan Camp 2, Aurora
Dennis Maher, Dutton Camp 49, Sycamore
Gerald Sonnenberg, Camp 443, Belleville, Illinois

Patriotic Instruction

G.A.R. at 160:
Illinois native builds group for brothers in arms

By Gerald Sonnenberg, Hecker Camp 443
Dept. of Illinois Patriotic Instructor, editor



This year was unique in that we celebrated the Nation's 250th birthday. In addition, 2026 was also the 160th anniversary of the establishment of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR).

It was in Decatur, Illinois, on April 6, 1866 that Illinois native Dr. Benjamin Franklin Stephenson and Virginia native, Chaplain Reverend William J. Rutledge established the first post of the GAR; a fraternal organization composed of Veterans of the Union Army, Navy, Marines and Revenue Cutter Service who served in the American Civil War.

Born in Wayne County, Illinois, Stephenson himself served in the Union Army as chief surgeon of the 14th Illinois Infantry Regiment during the war. Rutledge served as the regiment's chaplain.

While not the first organization founded by Civil War Veterans, what started as an association for Union Civil War Veterans to preserve friendships, maintain connections from their shared wartime suffering and provide charity and support, grew to become the first massive, nationally structured fraternal organization for Union Civil War Veterans.

Posts were formed when a minimum number of Veterans (usually 15) applied formally to create a post. The new posts were assigned a sequential number within a department based on their chronological admission into that organization, and most posts adopted formal names which honored comrades, battles or commanders; but it was not allowed to have more than one post in a department honoring the same individual.

At its peak in 1890, the GAR had 410,000 members and thousands of "posts" around the nation. Illinois had close to 800 active posts in the state at that time. That year was also when the GAR was most active in its Civil War commemorative and monument dedication ceremonies.

Stephenson died on Aug. 30, 1871 at age 47, but Rutledge would live until April 15, 1900. He would go on to see the GAR become one of the first and, ultimately, the largest advocacy

See GAR, next page...

About the SUVCW Department of Illinois

The Department of Illinois, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) includes 11 camps. To learn more about our camps, click here.

The SUVCW is a fraternal organization dedicated to preserving the history and legacy of heroes who fought to save the Union.

In 1881, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) formed the SUVCW as the Sons of Veterans of the United States of America (SV) to carry on its traditions and memory long after the GAR ceased to exist. Membership was open to any man who could prove ancestry to a member of the GAR or to a Veteran eligible for membership in the GAR. In later years, men who did not have the ancestry to qualify for hereditary membership, but who demonstrated a genuine interest in the Civil War and could subscribe to the purpose and objectives of the SUVCW, were admitted as Associates. This practice continues today.

Many GAR Posts sponsored Camps of the SV. In 1925, the SV name was changed to SUVCW, under which its federal charter was issued in 1954. The SUVCW is legally recognized as the heir to, and representative of, the GAR. It became the SUVCW in name in 1925 and is the legal successor to the GAR, first founded in 1866. Today, the National Organization of the SUVCW, headed by an annually elected Commander-in-Chief, oversees the operation of 32 Departments, each consisting of one or more states, a Department-at-Large, a National Membership-at-Large, and over 200 community based camps.

The SUVCW is one of five Allied Orders of the GAR. The other four Orders are: Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic, Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

If you are not a member and have an interest and/or a direct connection to the civil war or interest in an associate membership, or know of someone else who may, please consider applying for membership and passing the word along to others. Click here to learn more.



Around the Department:
Camp activities throughout Illinois

145th National Encampment

The 145th National Encampment of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) and the Allied Orders was held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 30-Aug. 2. The 146th National Encampment will be hosted by the Department of Tennessee and held in Franklin, Tennessee, according to the CinC Order #1, and dated 4 Aug. 2026.

Pictured right was our Illinois delegation in Gettysburg.



(Far left) PDC Nick Kaup and PDC Harry Reineke IV; (Front row) Camp 1863 Commander Nick Sauer; PDC Jim Lyons, his grandson who was sworn in at the National Encampment; PDC Steven Westlake; (Back row, third from left) Past Department Secretary Chris Heyward; PDC Gary Gunderson; Department Treasurer Lee Lasseigne; Camp 6165 commander Jeff Kaup; Camp 26 Commander Andrew Hare. **The newly elected officers at the national level were:** Daniel W. Murray - Commander-in-Chief; Robert Payne - Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief; David Hann - Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief; Benjamin Frail - Council of Administration.

GAR continued...

group at the time in American politics, supporting voting rights for black Veterans, promoting patriotic education, helping to make Memorial Day a national holiday, lobbying Congress to establish regular Veterans' pensions, and supporting Republican political candidates. The GAR was also the father of Veteran Service Organizations like the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion today.

Why it was established

Through their own experiences, Stephenson and Rutledge wanted soldiers—who had grown closely allied through the trials and dangers of the war—to stay connected after being mustered out of service.

Just as President Lincoln stated in his second inaugural address, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan," the GAR was designed around its foundational motto of, "Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty" to look out for former soldiers, care for disabled or needy Veterans, and aid widows and orphans.

The GAR was dissolved in 1956 after the death of its last member, Albert Woolson. However, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW), established in 1881 to carry on after the GAR Veterans passed, is the legal successor to the Grand Army of the Republic and proudly carries on.

It is an American congressionally chartered fraternal organization that carries out activities to preserve the history and legacy of the boys in blue who fought during the Civil War.

More information about the establishment of the GAR is available here.



Mid-Term Encampment

The 143rd Department of Illinois Mid-Term Encampment was held Oct. 10 in Rockford, Illinois at the Veterans Memorial Hall and Museum, 311 Main Street. Pictured above are the brothers who attended the event. *(Courtesy photo)*

Dr. Mary Edwards Walker Award



Barbara Hauff (center) received the Dr. Mary Edwards Walker Award for her services to the SUVCW at the Camp 1 meeting Aug. 18. Also pictured is Department Commander Michael Zafran (left) and Tent 20 sister JoEllen Kowalski. The Dr. Mary Edwards Walker Award is presented to a female member of one of the Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic in recognition of and appreciation for her outstanding service to the SUVCW.

Dr. Walker worked as a U.S. Army contract surgeon and field physician for Union forces. She received the Medal of Honor in 1865 and remains the only woman to ever receive the nation's highest military honor. *(Courtesy photo)*

Annual picnic



The annual picnic/reunion for Hecker Camp 443's 30th anniversary occurred on Saturday, Aug. 29. Both past and present members of the camp were invited to attend. We are grateful for the brothers, present and past, our family and friends that attended and also provided side dishes and desserts.

We are also grateful to Mr. Jack LeChien of the Gustave Koerner House in Belleville, Illinois, for his presentation on the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and four Belleville men: Koerner, General James Shields, William Bissell and Lyman Trumbull. Pictured above, left to right are Brothers Gerald Sonnenberg, Greg Zelinske, Justin Ottolini, Richard Piper, John Stanton, Jon Stacy, Garry Ladd, Russell Schleicher and past member David Buechler. *(Courtesy photo)*

Upcoming events

*70th Annual Remembrance Day Parade - The 70th Annual Remembrance Day Parade is Saturday, Nov. 14 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

***Department of Illinois Annual Encampment** - SUVCW Department of Illinois The 144th Annual Encampment will be May 15, 2027 at the Chicagoland Veterans Memorial Campus, 39 Army Trail Blvd., in Addison, Illinois. Lunch will be served from noon to 1 p.m., followed by the meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. Please allow time to tour the museum, which was originated by PDC Bobby Welch. As always, a flyer will be posted before the event. Be sure to save the date.

***Veterans Day events -** The department commander is participating in two ceremonies on Nov. 7, ahead of Veterans Day: one at 11 a.m. in the chapel at Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago, and another at 1 p.m. at Union Ridge Cemetery, also in Chicago.

The Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp 443 is participating in the O'Fallon, Illinois Veterans Day Parade on Nov. 11 at 2 p.m.

MISSOURI CIVIL WAR MUSEUM

***Saturday Speakers Series** - Saturday, Nov. 14.at 1 p.m. Peter Downs speaks on the topis, "St. Louis Civil War Sites, and the Fight for Freedom."

***Battlefields and Bourbon -** An event benefiting the U.S. Grant Camp 1863 happens Friday, Nov. 20 at the American Legion Hall in Wauconda, Illinois, at 6 p.m. Full dinner, drinks and a show are included. **For more information, see the flyer on page 6.**

*Annual Lincoln Tomb Ceremony
All are invited to participate in the 71st Annual Lincoln Tomb Ceremony, sponsored by the SUVCW and MOLLUS, commemorating the 162nd Anniversary of President Lincoln's death. It will be held at the Lincoln Tomb in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois, at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 10, 2027. More information is to



Day of Remembrance





Department Commander Michael Zafran (top) arranged and acted as MC at St. Stephen Cemetery, in Carol Stream, Illinois, Aug. 28 for an America 250 Day of Remembrance. The last burial at this cemetery was in 1911. (Above right) Monsignor David Hoefler, Vicar General of the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois, has two ancestors buried at the cemetery. (Left) Camp 2 Brother Rich Stanczak plays taps. *(Courtesy photos)*



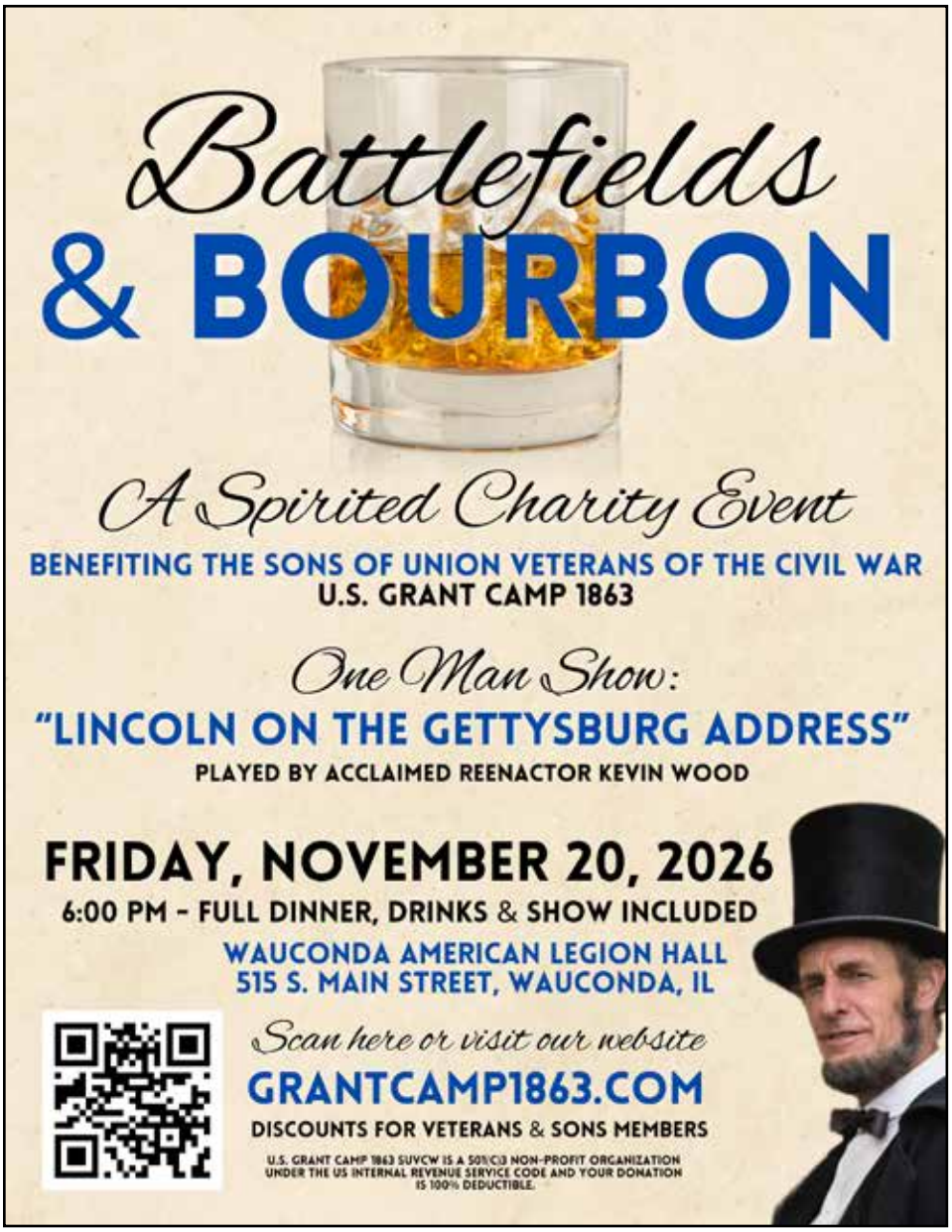
Time capsule

On Aug. 22, Department Commander Michael Zafran and GAR hall museum director Brother Eric Pry attended the opening of a 104-year-old copper time capsule that survived a devastating fire at the Aurora, Illinois Masonic Hall in 2019. The cornerstone of the building was laid in 1921. Inside the time capsule were newspapers from 1921 and 1922; original blueprints and drawings of the building; 10 historical photographs; masonic artifacts and documents and more. *(Courtesy photo)*

Honoring the fallen

Eagle Scout candidate A.J. Early (left) led a team of fellow Boy Scouts and volunteers raising and cleaning 10 Civil War Veteran stones Sept. 12. The group was assisted by members of the General Philip H. Sheridan Camp 2 in Aurora, Illinois: Brothers Matt Clark, Lee Lasseigne and Matt Dulceak. *(Courtesy photo)*





September a busy month for Camp 24

By Kim McGee, Commander
Capt. Benjamin Franklin Reed Camp 24

September was a busy month for the Captain Benjamin Franklin Reed Camp 24, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW). Our first activity was held at the Douglas County Museum on Sept. 5.

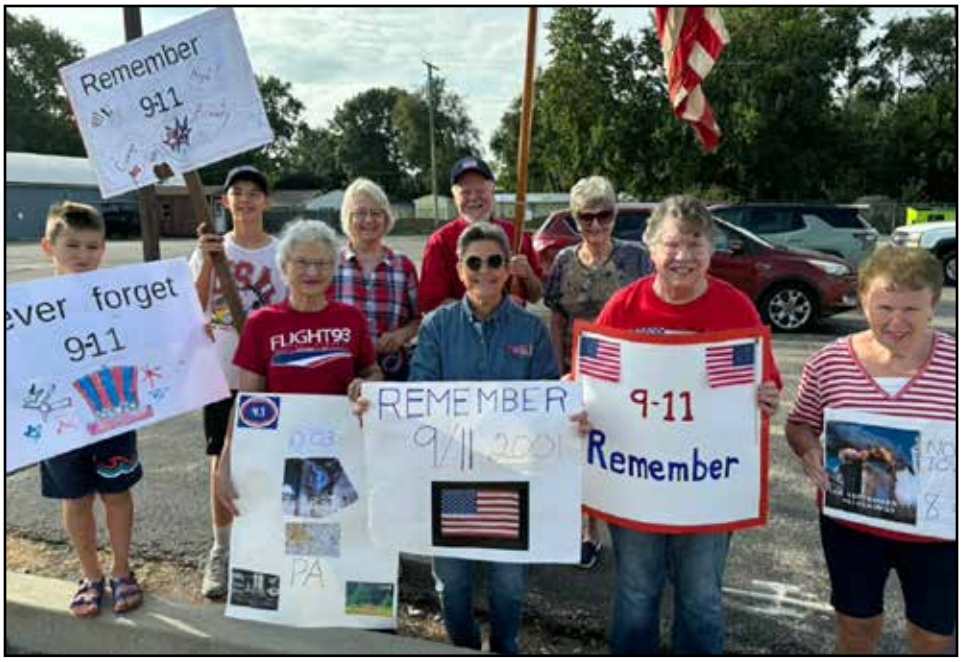
The SUVCW sponsored event featured Stan Buckle of Mt. Pulaski, Illinois. Stan is the author of the book, *Not Afraid to Go Any Whare*, a history of the 114th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Stan's excellent program was an overview of the regiment's participation in the war with special emphasis on their involvement in the Battle of Brice's Cross Roads. The Camp offers sincere thanks to Stan for his effort with both his fine book and program.



On Sept. 11 Camp members and their families joined with members of Tent 48 Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War for their remembrance program commemorating the horrible events of Sept. 11, 2001. Camp 24 was honored to be invited to participate in this important event.

Finally, on Sept. 26, Camp 24 took part in a celebration in remembrance of the namesake of the camp, as well as the GAR post that it grew out of. The two-day event included tours of locations important to Captain Reed.

The first stop was the Douglas County Museum with its collection of Civil War artifacts, which featured exhibits of over 100 original Civil War firearms, with a concentration on weapon types issued to Illinois volunteers.



Camp #24 members and members of Tent 48 Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War participated in a 9/11 ceremony. (Courtesy photo)





(Inset photo) Capt. B.F. Reed. (Above) Grandsons of B.F. Reed at the new tombstone. (Courtesy photos)

The next stop was the GAR room in the Douglas County Courthouse that was dedicated to Captain Reed's sacrifice and memory when the courthouse was opened in 1913.

The final piece of the weekend event took place in Camargo, Illinois, at Oak Ridge Cemetery and Captain Reed's final resting place. Reed was mortally wounded on Sunday, Sept. 20, 1863 at the Battle of Chickamauga in Georgia. He died three days later. His body was brought back home to the cemetery in October 1863.

An elaborate tombstone was placed on the grave. The stone deteriorated over the years and broke into two pieces last winter. Donations were taken up by interested friends, and an exact replacement stone was unveiled at the end of the event. Of note was the fact that the 21st Illinois reenactment unit performed the 21-gun salute and included three direct descendants of Captain Reed.

The U.S. Navy Medical Department during the Civil War

By Dr. Garry "Doc" Ladd
Hecker Camp 443
Past Camp Commander

During the American Civil War (1861–1865), medical challenges affected both the Army and Navy. In a previous article, I pointed out the transformation of medical evacuation of the U.S. Army Medical Department, specifically, Dr. Jonathan Letterman's innovations to improve the movement of casualties from battlefields to advanced medical care.

The U.S. Navy Medical Department had its own challenges as the Union Navy rapidly expanded from fewer than 100 ships to more than 600 vessels. This resulted in the demand for qualified medical personnel, improved sanitation and effective treatment of disease.

Navy surgeons and assistant surgeons served aboard warships, hospital ships and naval hospitals, where they treated combat injuries, while also battling the far more common threats of infectious disease. Their efforts significantly improved survival rates among sailors and helped establish many practices that influenced modern U.S. Navy medicine.

At the beginning of the Civil War, the U.S. Navy Medical Department was relatively small and lacked the resources necessary to support a rapidly growing fleet. Medical officers often worked under difficult conditions with limited supplies, overcrowded ships and inadequate facilities. Despite these challenges, Navy physicians adapted quickly by improving sanitation practices, organizing medical supply systems and expanding the use of naval hospitals. Their work reflected an increased understanding that preventing disease was just as important as treating injuries.



The steamboat State of Maine at Alexandria, Virginia, during the Civil War. Built in New York in 1848, State of Maine was a hospital boat with the U.S. Sanitary Commission during the Peninsula Campaign in 1862. (Source, Wikipedia)



Disease posed a greater threat to sailors than combat itself, as was also the case for the Army. Conditions aboard ships often included poor ventilation, contaminated drinking water, inadequate nutrition and crowded living quarters, all of which contributed to outbreaks of illnesses such as typhoid fever, dysentery, smallpox and malaria.

Medical officers emphasized cleanliness, quarantine procedures and improved hygiene whenever possible. Although the germ theory of disease had not yet gained widespread acceptance, many Navy surgeons recognized that better sanitation reduced illness and improved the health of crews.

Combat injuries presented another major challenge. Naval battles exposed sailors to cannon fire, exploding shells, burns, fractures and traumatic amputations. Surgeons worked in cramped shipboard operating rooms, and frequently performed emergency procedures while battles continued overhead. Anesthesia, particularly chloroform and ether, had become widely accepted by the Civil War and allowed surgeons to perform amputations and other operations with significantly less pain than in previous conflicts.

Although antiseptic techniques were still in their infancy, the use of anesthesia represented a major advancement in military medicine.

The Union Navy also relied on an expanding network of naval hospitals to care for wounded and sick sailors.

Facilities in cities such as Philadelphia, New York and Boston treated thousands of patients throughout the war. Hospital ships transported injured personnel from combat zones to permanent medical facilities where they could receive more comprehensive care. These hospitals became important centers for surgical practice, patient recovery and medical recordkeeping. The Navy Medical Department carefully documented illnesses, injuries and treatments, creating valuable data that improved military medical knowledge.

The Civil War demonstrated the importance of preventive medicine, organized medical logistics and professional medical education.

Many lessons learned by Navy physicians, such as improvements in sanitation, hospital administration and medical documentation, continued to influence military medicine long after the war ended. The experience also reinforced the need for permanent medical infrastructure capable of supporting large naval operations during wartime.

Although Navy medical officers faced limited resources, widespread disease and the challenges of treating combat injuries at sea, they adapted through innovation and dedication. Their contributions not only improved the survival and health of thousands of sailors, but also helped shape the future of military medicine in the United States.

The advancements made during the Civil War laid the foundation for many practices that remain essential within the U.S. Navy Medical Corps today.

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Lest we forget

By Gerald Sonnenberg, Hecker Camp 443
Dept. of Illinois Patriotic Instructor, editor



The remains of the unit flag belonging to this author's grandfather, the 102nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment.

I am sometimes asked why I put so much effort into the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW). I answer by talking about sacrifice. Not mine, but of my great-great-grandfather's, his three brothers and the hundreds of thousands who fought to save this country and end slavery. The commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 also reminded me of a way to better explain why I'm a member.

Our Hecker Camp newsletter is called *Lest We Forget* because the phrase basically refers to something that should not be forgotten. It comes from a poem by British writer Rudyard Kipling. It also sounds like a warning of sorts, and it is. "Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it" is a phrase too many choose to forget.

While most Americans remember where they were on 9/11, I have heard much regarding one-third of Americans, (100,000,000 people) not being born when the attacks took the lives of nearly 3,000 innocent victims.

They stressed that because of these deaths and the resulting deaths from the wars that followed, that this is all the more reason to continue to commemorate their sacrifice. What's more is, because of carcinogens in the rubble from the twin towers in New York City, about 9,000 more people have since died from related illnesses.

We remember these people because these victims of Muslim extremist hate were men, women and children; mothers, fathers, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, etc., mostly American, but from other nations as well. We also learn lessons when things like this happen.

Can generations right now imagine a time when we will not commemorate and remember their sacrifice? Probably not, and I hope not. However, I'm sure that our ancestors in the 1880s and 1890s were thinking the same thing about the Civil War.

There were hundreds of thousands of members of the Grand Army of the Republic or GAR. This fraternal organization, established in 1866, of Veterans of the Union Army, Navy, Marines and Revenue Cutter Service who served during the American Civil War became one of the most influential Veterans' groups in U.S. history. It gave us today's Memorial Day, for one thing, and its political and advocacy work shaped the federal policies, funding and infrastructure that enabled Veterans' medical care and influenced military pensions. It was the father of Veteran Service Organizations like the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion today.

The GAR established the SUVCW in 1881 so their children and ours could carry on preserving the history and legacy of heroes who fought and sacrificed to save the Union. More than 360,000 Union men died and nearly 300,000 were wounded. In all, about 750,000 Americans died during the conflict, North and South. It resulted in the end of slavery, efforts toward equal rights and citizenship of Black Americans and former slaves. It ushered in a multitude of changes in this nation.

Fictional books have been written about what would have happened throughout the world if the Union had lost. All of them, that I've read, resulted in a disaster for the world as we know it.

My college history professor and advisor always said "what iffing" is a waste of time because facts are facts. They don't change. That's true. However, I think "what iffing" is important in teaching us lessons and giving us an opportunity to realize the significance of what actually happened.

Have you ever had a near accident? What if you had not stopped at the stop sign and driven through that intersection? We could go on and on about "what ifs" like this in our personal lives, but the Civil War is much more. It's about preserving the world's "last best hope on earth," as said by President Abraham Lincoln in his Annual Message to Congress on Dec. 1, 1862. I don't think his statement is an exaggeration.

Forgetting the sacrifice of Union soldiers and sailors is like not celebrating Independence Day or forgetting about the allies that saved the world from Nazi oppression. In fact, each June, citizens of France, Belgium and other countries freed by the Allies still recognize those sacrifices from World War II and tend to the graves of the Allied dead, including Americans, eighty years later.

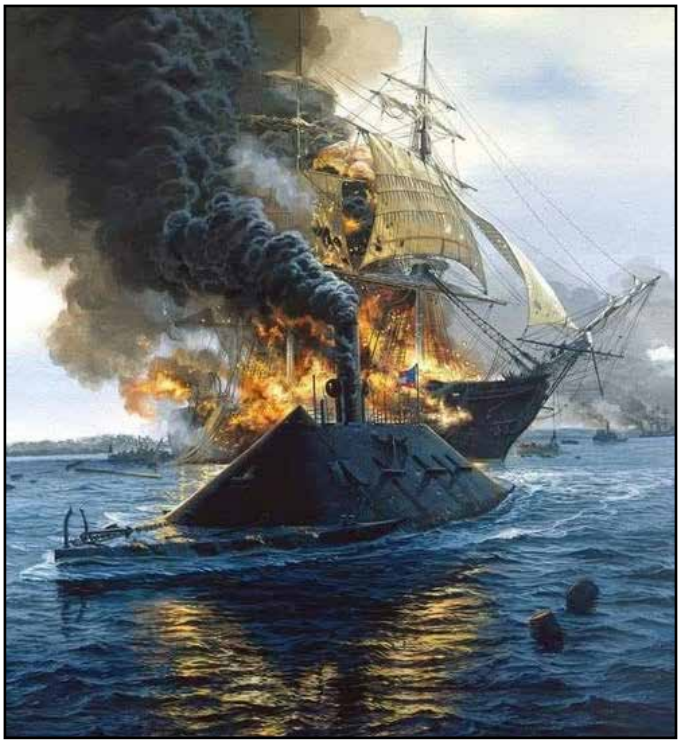
The big cause of the Civil War doesn't exist because no Americans alive today owned slaves or were slaves or remember it firsthand. Just like no one alive today fought in the American Civil War or remembers it firsthand. An event that significant must be remembered. While we had a revolution for independence, winning the Civil War solidified us as a nation and, subsequently, changed the world.

For me, being a descendant of a Union soldier (actually several) is a responsibility to help protect and teach about their sacrifice and the results thereafter. That's the biggest reason why I'm a part of the SUVCW. If I can educate through my writing, marching in parades, displays, decorating graves and proudly wearing my uniforms, that's the least I can do after their sacrifice.

If you are a fan of the movie *National Treasure*, the main character refers to himself and his sidekick as "treasure protectors" trying to protect the Constitution from being stolen. We in the Sons and similar organizations are really history protectors with a big responsibility to safeguard our nation's history for our children and theirs to come.

The Union Navy

By Richard Piper
Hecker Camp 443
Treasurer, Patriotic Instructor



The C.S.S. Virginia (U.S.S. Merrimack) ironclad battles a Union wooden frigate on the first day of the Battle of Hampton Roads on March 8, 1862.
(Courtesy image)

When our Civil War began, the U.S. Navy had 90 ships, but only 41 could be used as many were scattered around the world. Of the 1,457 naval officers, 237 resigned to join the Confederacy. Enlisted men numbered 7,500.

The Union's Anaconda Plan was designed to blockade ports in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia. To do this, the U.S. Navy needed more ships. By the end of 1861, there were about 200 ships in Union service, with 22,000 navy personnel. This would increase to 670 ships and 51,500 men by the war's end.

In May 1861, the Navy set up a blockading squadron for the Atlantic coast and another one for the Gulf of Mexico. These two squadrons were further divided into the North and South Atlantic Blockading Squadrons, and the East and West Gulf Blockading Squadrons. Each squadron was commanded by a commodore who controlled the blockading duties. In July 1862, the commodore position was replaced by the newly created rank of rear admiral. By the end of the war, 600 ships had served in the blockade to cover 187 ports and inlets from the Rio Grande river to Chesapeake Bay.

To support the blockade, the Union Navy captured bases along the southern coast which were used for coal depots and repairs. New Orleans, the South's largest port, was the first to be captured on April 25, 1862 by Admiral David G. Farragut. By the end of December 1864, Wilmington, North Carolina was the only port still open. By Jan. 15, 1865, it too had been closed.

During the war, the South used blockade runners to import goods and military supplies. Many of them that were built in Britain had shallow drafts to move up inlets, had low profiles, were painted gray to be seen less clearly and used anthracite coal to produce less smoke.

Loaded with cotton, they sailed to the neutral ports of Nassau, Bahamas; St. George, Bermuda; Havana, Cuba; and St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands where their cargo was transferred to regular merchant ships bound for Europe. Operating for profit, the blockade runners carried luxury goods back to the South until the end of the war.

The Confederate government was slow to make the ships provide more cargo space for southern military supplies. In 1861, nine out of ten blockade runners made successful trips, which fell to five in ten in 1865. Overall, the Union blockaded Confederate supplies by sea by more than two-thirds.

In 1861, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles commissioned John Ericsson to build the first Union ironclad, the U.S.S. Monitor, which was 172 feet long, with two, eleven-inch Dahlgren guns in a revolving iron turret. It had armor plating eight inches thick, made of one-inch plates bolted together. The U.S.S. Monitor was barely seaworthy with a deck only one foot above the waterline. In fact, it was towed from New York to Virginia where it battled the C.S.S. Virginia. The Union Navy contracted for 52 coastal ironclads, with 48 of them of the Monitor design.

To achieve the opening of the Mississippi River, the Union Army created the Mississippi Squadron in May 1861. An ironclad building program produced gunboats for this squadron with the first ones launched in October 1861. The Navy took over the squadron in September 1862.

The Pook Turtles or city-class gunboats were also known as "Eads gunboats." They were seven boats built from their keels up in a Carondelet, Missouri shipyard owned by James B. Eads, who was a wealthy St. Louis industrialist. These first ironclad warships were designed by Samuel M. Pook, who was employed at the time for the Navy Department in Cairo, Illinois.

Pook's vessels drew only six feet of water, carried 13 guns and could travel eight knots. Each had three keels. The two outboard keels were longer than the middle one that contained a paddlewheel at its rear. The casement armor on the outer keels protected the paddle wheel from the front and sides, but not from astern. The casements had sloping sides which was why Union farm boys christened them Pook's Turtles.

James Eads submitted the winning bid from the contract to build the seven boats, which were named for cities on the Mississippi and its tributaries, namely the U.S.S. Cairo, Carondelet, Cincinnati, Louisville, Mound City, Pittsburgh and St. Louis, which was later renamed the U.S.S. Baron DeKalb.

Each of these vessels had three gunports facing forward; two aft; and four on each side. Their casement armor was 2.5-inches thick, rolled in plates 13 inches wide and 8- to 13-feet long. Each vessel was 175-feet long and all were identical except for a different colored band on their chimney stack.

As part of the Mississippi River Squadron, they were first commanded by the Army. Then, in October 1862, their com-

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NAVY, continued ...

mand was transferred to the Navy.

The Union converted steamers with one-inch-thick armor, which could protect the vessel from riverbank rifle fire. These so-called tinclads could navigate shallower waterways that heavier armored ironclads could not.

Several of the gunboats were badly damaged, and two were lost. The U.S.S. Cairo sank in the Yazoo River in December 1862 when it hit a mine (torpedo). The U.S.S. Baron DeKalb also was sunk by a mine in July 1863 in the Yazoo River in Mississippi. In the Battle of St. Charles, Arkansas, in June 1862, the U.S.S. Mound City's steam drum exploded and 125 of her crew were killed or mortally wounded.

Some gunboats had armor made from cotton bales to be light enough to navigate shallow rivers and inlets. Union gunboats did great service in the Western Theater helping to capture Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862. They were also crucial in capturing New Orleans and Vicksburg in Mississippi, as well as Island Number 10 in the Mississippi River.

Atlantic coast squadrons also maintained ironclads on rivers that opened into the sea. They were also used in joint army/navy operations. Washington and the Potomac River were protected by the Potomac Flotilla. Union Navy ships also patrolled the coasts of South America, Europe and Africa for Confederate commerce raiders that preyed on Union merchant ships.

Union naval officers were of two types: Executive officers in charge of ships beginning in August 1863 wore a star over their gold sleeve rank stripes. The second group who wore no star were specialists that included surgeons on ships and in naval hospitals in ports, constructors who designed and built ships, paymasters, engineers, chaplains and math and chemistry professors who taught midshipmen and cadets.

To help address the shortage of officers, the secretary of the navy had 7,500 volunteer officers and 84,500 enlisted men in the Navy during the war.



Navy Medal of Honor, our country's oldest continuously awarded medal for military gallantry, was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on Dec. 21, 1861.

(Right) The U.S.S. Cairo, one of seven U.S. Navy gunboats built by James Eads of St. Louis during and after its recovery from the Yazoo River in Mississippi. It was sunk by a Confederate mine (torpedo) in December 1862.

(Below right) The U.S.S. Cairo at anchor.





Black sailors had served on navy ships for years and were part of the unsegregated Union Navy from the start of the Civil War, comprising between 8 and 25% of all Union Navy personnel.

New volunteers were first posted to receiving ships that were, after conversion, floating barracks and training facilities where they learned seamanship and gunnery. They were issued their uniforms, which they had to pay for. As soon as they were needed, sailors were sent from their receiving ships to their duty stations despite how much or little training they had. Most new sailors received their job knowledge after they reached their duty station.

The Navy Medal of Honor, our country's oldest continuously awarded medal for military gallantry, was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on Dec. 21, 1861. The award was only eligible for enlisted personnel. After 1915, officers became eligible.

On our rivers, coasts and the open seas, the U.S. Navy and its men bravely served to defend and restore our country.

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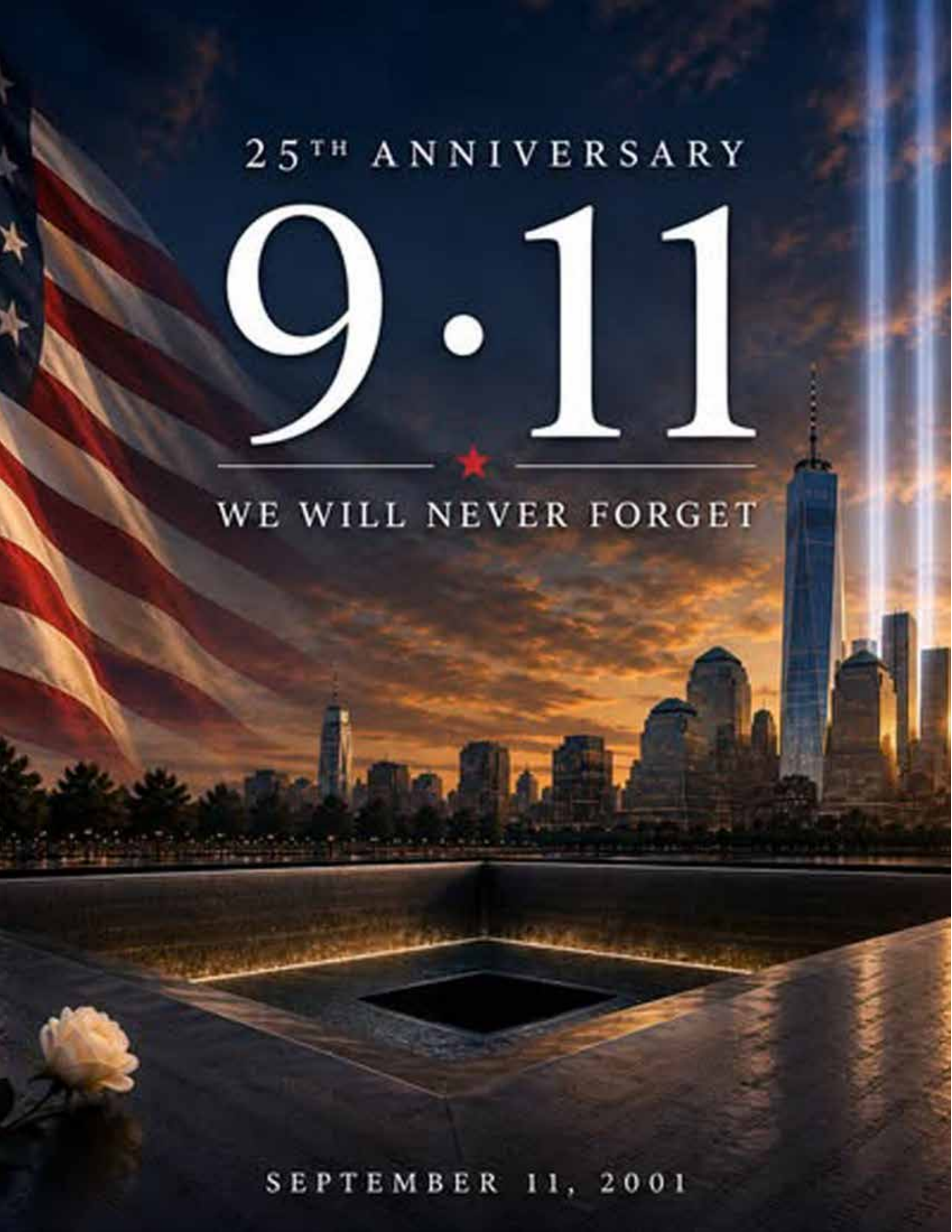
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25TH ANNIVERSARY
9·11
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SEPTEMBER 11, 2001