

VIRGINIA WORLD WAR II 75TH ANNIVERSARY COMMISSION
Advisory Council Meeting
December 10, 2015

Summary of Recommendations

The first meeting of the Advisory Council began with a welcome from Sandy Treadway, Librarian of Virginia and Advisory Council liaison to the World War II 75th Anniversary Commission. Delegate M. Kirkland Cox, Commission chairman, gave opening remarks that stressed the importance of World War II as a national turning point and highlighted Virginia's key role. Delegate Cox thanked Advisory Council members for their participation and stressed that their expertise and input is critical in the early stages of planning.

Cheryl Jackson, Executive Director, gave an overview of the World War II 75th Anniversary Commission and noted that there may be an opportunity to combine efforts with the robust state and national efforts that are underway to mark the 100th anniversary of World War I. The idea of combining forces was met with a positive response, as Advisory Council members saw the benefit in coordination of efforts, as opposed to competition. Ms. Jackson also gave an overview of lessons learned and successes of the Civil War sesquicentennial commemoration, with which many members of the Advisory Council had worked.

Colonel Rob Dalessandro and Edwin Fountain, both of the United States World War I Centennial Commission and members of the Advisory Council, offered remarks on the status of national efforts to commemorate the 100th anniversary of World War I. The national commission is serving as a clearinghouse for state events, working toward development of a World War I memorial on the National Mall, and planning a number of events to include naval opportunities that could occur in the Hampton Roads area. They also offered guidance from the national World War I commission, including:

- Involve universities in the Commission's work.
- Recognize the importance of partnering; specifically, partnering between the World War I and World War II commissions.
 - While each commemoration has different missions, themes, and visions, there is great benefit to combining the commemorations of World War I and World War II (e.g., coordination, the ability to merge resources, avoiding overlap, and greater efficiency in funding/fundraising).
 - World War I is a forgotten war, yet it was really the first of two chapters, World War II being the second.
 - Unlike World War I, World War II still has living veterans, naturally an important focal point of commemoration. World War I veterans were the parents of World War II veterans.

- Avoid having parallel but entirely separate events for commemorating the two wars. Put them together as one; merge the stories and show how they were one. For example, develop a single traveling exhibit for both.
- Avoid duplication by combining the two stories, when possible, to maximize the impact on both constituencies. For example, it makes sense to combine forces for Memorial Day and Veterans Day events, but don't feel that it is necessary to inject World War I into Pearl Harbor or D-Day commemorations.
- To some extent, there is competition for fundraising dollars. World War I commemoration is ahead in this, in part because of grant funds and connections with the national World War I commission. Try not to have separate, competing donors. Partnering will reduce the amount of competition.

Responses to Commission Members' Questions

Commission members requested Advisory Council input on seven specific topics. Recommendations by Advisory Council members are numbered for ease of reference, but are listed in no particular order of priority.

1. What should be the overall vision for the commemoration?

Summary: Pay tribute to veterans, but also treat the war as a global struggle that involved the entire population and had a tremendous impact not just on Virginia and the nation as a whole, but on individual people.

1. Emphasize these key points:
 - a) Importance of the home front and what was at stake. "Tooth to Tail": Behind every soldier in the field there were a hundred working in the factories or otherwise contributing to the war effort at home. In 1943 no one could be certain of the war's outcome and an all-out effort was needed to secure freedom worldwide.
 - b) The commemoration itself, especially paying tribute to living veterans of the war.
 - c) Education about the war.
 - d) Effects of the war on society (minorities, women, industrialization, etc.).
2. The 75th anniversary is a chance to pay tribute, to say thank you to those who served. The 100th anniversary is an opportunity to educate, so that the next generation does not forget.
3. Have a visual depiction of all the death in the war (comparable to poppies in commemorating the fallen of World War I)—perhaps flags or stars.
4. Virginia is unique in that all points of World War II can be told within its borders (e.g., military involvement, home front support, shipbuilding, industry, Holocaust, etc.).

5. Stress, among other things, the impact of both world wars in Virginia and the contribution of Virginia, both as a people and an entity.
6. Use Virginia as a point of departure. Make use of sites and multiple resources in the state to tell the war's story, especially Then/Now narratives. Use people here today who participated in the war or who have special knowledge or appreciation of the event. Virginia, for example, has the largest Filipino community in the eastern United States; the Philippines was at the front line as the war began in 1941.
7. Combine the events of commemoration with education.
8. Stress the human element. Don't just focus on the military effort, but also on the nation and the civilian effort. What is significant to the individual may not be the big event but, say, a skirmish in which someone was wounded—something that maybe no one knows about. That means seeking to get the veterans' personal stories.
9. The national effort was "for the duration." It was the nation, not just the military, that went to war. Salute not just the veterans but **everybody**—the factory workers, families, and others who stood behind the armed services. Celebrate the family and the nation.
10. Focus on reconciliation and education. Bring veterans of our side and the enemy side together. For educational purposes, this would give a more complete picture.
11. Partner with military organizations.

2. What events, programs, or projects would you hope to see for Virginia's observance of the 75th anniversary of World War II?

Summary: Sponsor a wide variety of inclusive programs to honor veterans and educate the present generation. Coordinate efforts with local committees and make the fullest use of the many resources Virginia has to offer, such as libraries and museums. Be guided by the message that by remembering veterans of the past, we are also communicating to current soldiers that they will not be forgotten either.

1. Sponsor a naval visit to Hampton Roads, highlighting the vital importance of Norfolk, Newport News, and Hampton in the might of American - building ships and sending them out. As an example, the recent [Hermione](#) visit to Jamestown was an event that conveyed a deep sense of history to the public, while also being an exciting event that draws audiences.
2. Events should be all-inclusive and not in all instances focused on Virginia. Balance the heroic work of winning the war with the bad things to come out of it, such as the Holocaust. Tell about the entire war: the internment of Japanese Americans in the United States, the internment of Americans in Japanese camps, women and the push for civil rights that came out of the war (e.g., "[Double Victory](#)" campaign and promise of equality for African-American soldiers). Have a wide variety of programs to focus on the military, social, and political aspects,

- including Wilson's 14 points, women in the job market, and the evolving voice of soldiers in securing civil rights upon their return home).
3. Have an event bringing historians and teachers together, perhaps a commission program comparable to the Civil War sesquicentennial's Signature Conferences.
 4. Offer educational events for schools, especially focusing on lesson plans and other teacher resource compendiums.
 5. Have events that commemorate veterans of the world wars, and thereby send a message to more recent veterans that they will not be forgotten, either. In some measure, this is already being addressed with the Signature Event planned for December 2016.
 6. Plan statewide programs that travel, in order to take commemoration down to the local level. This could be especially beneficial for those who cannot travel to distant exhibits and programs.
 7. Prepare a guide and other materials to get libraries and local communities involved. Every locality had a sesquicentennial committee and hence a contact list or liaison with the state commission. A system is therefore already in place to be used for developing commemoration at the local level. Every community in Virginia has a World War II story to tell.
 8. Perhaps develop sister-city relationships with certain cities in France.
 9. Undertake an oral history project with veterans or family members of veterans. This draws people out who might not otherwise speak out. Upload Library of Congress material on how to do oral history. Admittedly, some prefer not to share experiences. But for some who do, a weight is lifted; they want the fellowship and find it easier to open up with other veterans. Acquire stories, but at the same time be sensitive.

3. The Commission's first Signature Event will be a National Veterans Tribute on December 8, 2016, at the University of Richmond. What is important to include at that event?

Summary: Pay a tasteful tribute to the veterans and involve them in an inclusive program along with scholars and others, but don't wear them out.

1. To illustrate the magnitude of the cost of the conflict, distribute flags, stars, or some other symbol in the way that poppies have been used to commemorate the dead of World War I. The item could be sold and proceeds put into something like a soldier's relief fund, much as American Legion posts raised money on Poppy Day for needy veterans and their families during the interwar years.
2. Provide a platform both for the testimony of veterans and presentations or panels featuring charismatic scholars—a hybrid event.
3. Encourage recent veterans to participate, perhaps assigning them to a WWII veteran. Also involve young people/students in the program.
4. The panel discussion should be as inclusive as possible, with as many groups represented as possible.

5. The hope is that some from the December 7 event in Washington, D.C., will stick around and attend the Commission event on December 8. But don't overdo the event. It should be a quality experience but not overwhelming. Show the veterans that we appreciate what they have done, but don't exhaust them.

4. How can the work of the Commission, or the opportunities afforded by the 75th anniversary commemoration, best serve your organization or institution?

Summary: Provide grant funding opportunities, and work together and plan events that will result in increased visitors to sites in Virginia and more revenue.

1. Money! As the sesquicentennial proved, events that draw large numbers of tourists to the state are a boon to local economies and institutions. Grants to museums and organizations planning events can help them to maximize this opportunity.
2. Education is paramount. Schools and students should benefit the most, then museums.
3. Combining efforts is always a good thing.
4. Employ cross-promotional advocacy - "link arms." Have a web-based calendar of events.
5. Present the big themes and the World War II experience as expressed by the sites in Virginia.

5. How can your organization or institution support the work of the Commission?

Summary: Partnership and collaboration are the keywords. Organizations have resources to help the Commission achieve its goals.

1. Travel with exhibits to bring the war's stories to other locations.
2. Share information among institutions; cross-promote.
3. Put staff in touch with all the organizations the World War I group is working with, and in touch with the Library of Congress, and they will work with the Commission (Bob Patrick).
4. The Library of Virginia has an extensive collection of World War II records, including records of all Virginia's war dead and various federal government records.
5. The Virginia War Memorial has all the names of the dead of World War II (and some of the Korean Conflict). The records of Virginia's fallen are sorted by name and county.
6. Use the Commission collaboratively to "link arms." Through our sites, interpret the whole war.

6. How do we ensure that the commemoration appeals to a broad spectrum, including those who are not history buffs or have a personal connection to the war? What perspectives are important to include?

Summary: Using multiple media approaches, link the past to the present and encourage individuals to think about how the war affected their family.

1. Utilize local committees and organizations. Local committees have the chance to shine here. Work toward a goal. Build a consensus on how to commemorate.
2. Combine events and localities. Note how other events are now taking place at the same location. For example, a World War II torpedo factory in Alexandria is today an art center.
3. Almost everyone can be reached by asking, “What did your family do in World War II?” Many will have a connection at the family level; this is one way to engage people who are not history buffs.
4. Make a wide-ranging use of media. In particular, include music in commemoration events.
5. Don’t necessarily hold distinct events for young people and old people. Connect all ages. Bring the World War II veteran and the student together.
6. Utilize other organizations and museums besides the historical ones: art, science, etc.

7. What are the most important lessons of World War II?

Summary: The world of 2015 is the child of 1945. We cannot understand our world or ourselves without an understanding of World War II and its tremendous impact on nations, groups, and individuals.

1. To understand the world of today, it is necessary to understand 1945. The Yalta Conference and other developments of that day go far toward explaining the present world, not just the West but Asia and the Middle East.
2. Why did people put themselves in harm's way? People were scared, whether in theatre or at home closing blinds during blackout times. The stakes of the war were high, and its outcome was far from certain at the time. The reporting of 1,000 casualties in a day was thought to be light, whereas today that would be a catastrophic loss.
3. The war is a shared heritage. We are all Americans and the war showed what we can do as a united people. Teamwork, valor, perseverance, and a spirit of giving back were learned by those who served, and this is a heritage to be passed on. We were all one nation working together.
4. One of the biggest themes to come out of World War II is human rights. That has shaped our history ever since.
5. The human element is involved, and the experiences of all sides. Bring the war’s combatants together in a spirit of reconciliation—Americans, Germans, Japanese, etc.; otherwise we get only half the picture. World War II had a big impact

- through the variety of experiences of individuals; for example, the experience of an African American who saw German POWs being treated better than himself.
6. World War II had lasting and continuing effects on people—in PTSD, the grieving of families, etc. It isn't "just history." The lessons of war, and its scars, linger.
 7. The war was global in scope. America rises to the top by the end of it. Yet this goes back to World War I as well, and argues for a World War I/World War II connection.
 8. The war fostered a patriotic spirit. Patriotism today may be dying off, particularly among young people. Think about this and what the war may have to teach us about love of country.

