

History & Heritage

The 37th Division Veterans Association (37th DVA), a non-profit organization, was originally formed in 1918 by veterans of the 37th Infantry Division who fought in Europe during WWI with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). It was formed to honor veterans who gave their lives while serving our nation and to help the dependents of these heroic soldiers. In doing so, they preserved and strengthen the fraternal bonds they formed during the war. The mission of our founders continues with our membership today as noted below and as further evidenced by our 101st consecutive annual reunion held at Camp Perry August 24-25, 2019.

The 37th Infantry Division served with distinction in WWI, WWII and Korea. During WWII, seven members of the division earned the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest decoration awarded. Current units of the Ohio Army National Guard can tie their history to the 37th Division. In 2007, the 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team began wearing the 37th Infantry Division’s “bull’s eye” insignia and carry its colors and lineage, which will return some historic designation to the current force structure. They have been deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kuwait.

Some heritage units of the 37th Division, such as the 112th Engineers, can further trace their history back to the civil war era to events at Bull Run, Shiloh and Murfrees Borough. In 1865, as the Cleveland Grays, one unit was singled out to perform honor guard duties during the funeral procession and ceremonies for President Lincoln. They also acted as escort for President Hayes and General Garfield.

Heritage units of the 37th Division continue to execute the traditions set forth by the 37th Infantry Division in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). At the close of 2018, there were 11,900 serving in the Ohio Army National Guard. Most had served on active duty during the war on terror. Many of which have served multiple tours. Additionally, soldiers have provided support and relief during natural disasters in Ohio and throughout the nation such as the case with Hurricane Katrina. Members of the brigade have also supported food banks and provided prison medical support in Ohio during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the exception of a few units, all current units of the Ohio Army National Guard, can trace their heritage to the 37th Infantry Division.

One need not look far in the ranks of the 37th Infantry Division to see exceptional success, skill and sacrifice. Rodger Young, one of the fore mentioned Congressional Medal of Honor recipients and maybe the member with the most notoriety within the division, willingly gave his life in battle for his unit, which was under enemy fire and likely would have perished had he not prevailed.

37th Division Memorials

The 37th Infantry Division’s history and accomplishments have been memorialized in several ways over the years.

Ohio State Route 3, also known as the 3C Highway, as it connects Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland, was dedicated as the 37th Division Memorial Highway in 1947.

On 22 August 1954, a sandstone monument honoring the veterans of the 37th Division was unveiled in Centerburg, the geographic center of Ohio. This monument was rededicated with a solid granite monument and illuminated flag pole on 22 August 2004, 50 years to the day of its original dedication.

An Ohio Bicentennial Marker, honoring the 37th Division for its service to state and country during Ohio’s 200-year history, was unveiled on the Ohio State House grounds on 26 October 2003.

Annual Reunions

Each year the association holds an annual reunion at Camp Perry in Port Clinton, Ohio. This reunion along with providing camaraderie and information is an entertaining way to keep current with members of the association. During the reunion, a Memorial Service is held honoring those that have answered their last call since the last reunion. This moving tribute keeps their sacrifices and memories alive.

In 2004, the reunion was held in Washington DC in conjunction with the National WWII Memorial Dedication. This reunion held special significance for those having served in WWII as their tours of duty in the South Pacific ended nearly 60 years earlier.

We celebrated our centennial year of service to our veterans in August 2018 at our 100th reunion. A buckeye tree commemorating our 100th year was planted and dedicated on the Camp Perry clubhouse grounds. A commemorative 100th anniversary challenge coin was also created to mark the accomplishment.

Services Provided

In addition to answering many inquiries from descendants of the veterans that served in the 37th Infantry Division, other veteran organizations and the Ohio Adjutant General’s Department, we:

Assist members and non-members in obtaining DD-214 separation forms as well as in obtaining certificates of service on record. We also provide referrals to VA offices in other states.

Assist veterans and/or their descendants in obtaining individual administrative and medical records from the records center in St. Louis, Missouri.

Assist veterans in securing medals earned, but not awarded, such as Bronze Star conversion awards earned during WWII. In many of these cases the recipients had been unaware that they had earned the award, but were informed by the 37th DVA that they had.

Assist widows and/or families of deceased veterans in obtaining burial details, in obtaining the respective grave marker and when requested, displaying the 37th DVA colors at the wake of the deceased.

Publish a newsletter three times per year, the *37th Division Veterans News*, containing the latest changes and/or new actions that may be of interest to members including stories about important veteran benefit issues, on individual members, heritage units returning from active duty and letters from members and non-members searching for information on people with whom they served or with whom their families served. Newsletters also include a section called TAPS, which lists veterans that have passed away since the last edition.

Manage a portfolio of investments from which we award scholarship grants annually to descendants of our veterans. Since 2000, 201 grants have been awarded totaling $92,650. Members and direct descendants of members (to the third generation) including grandchildren and great grandchildren are eligible to apply for this program.

Membership

If you served in the 37th Infantry Division, have served or are serving in a heritage unit of the 37th Infantry Division with the Ohio Army National Guard, or are a spouse/widower, descendant or parent of someone who did or does, you are eligible to join the 37th DVA. If you do not meet one of the above, you can become an Associate Member of the organization.

We provided a place to call and a person to talk to about the items highlighted herein. Our camaraderie is as strong as our dedication is to the nation and to you. Please join our association and its members in continuing the legacy and heritage of the 37th Infantry Division. Annual memberships cost $20.00 for emailed newsletter or $30.00 for those that prefer to receive the newsletter by mail.

For More Information

Contact the 37th DVA at 614-228-3788, 35 E. Chestnut St., Suite 512, Columbus, OH 43215, www.37thdva.org, or mandy@37thdva.org.