

It's Not An Age. It's An Attitude.

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Fifty Plus

Virginia's War Memorial

The Stories Still Echo



"I Think So Much of This Place"

Veterans, Visitors Appreciate Virginia's War Memorial

By LIBBY CARTY McNAMEE

There is a place in downtown Richmond where a former World War II prisoner of war may greet you at the door and candidly share his experiences. That unique place is the Virginia War Memorial, an impressive state monument dedicated to those Virginian servicemen killed in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf wars. And that veteran is Russell Scott.

Not your average volunteer, Russell Scott spent close to a year in captivity in Poland and Germany. During his second mission in Europe as an armorer gunner, Scott's Mitchell B-25 bomber was shot down over Italy, breaking his back in the process. "I haven't had any treatment for it, even now," he says.

The Russians liberated his war camp on May 1, 1945, calling out in broken English, "Go! Go!"

The ship taking him back to the States did not set off until June 6, and was so overcrowded that he had to sleep in the box containing the life preservers.

"I didn't mind a bit," Scott chuckles. "I was going home!"

The first thing he did when he arrived back home was borrow a 1940 Ford and drive on the open road to his heart's content.

Before he entered the service, he had restored a 1940 Ford. Now, 63 years later, his favorite hobby is restoring and driving one just like it.

Birthday Gifts for the Memorial

Currently 86 years old and retired after 26 years of body and fender work for the City of Richmond, Scott treasures his weekly volunteer time at the Memorial.

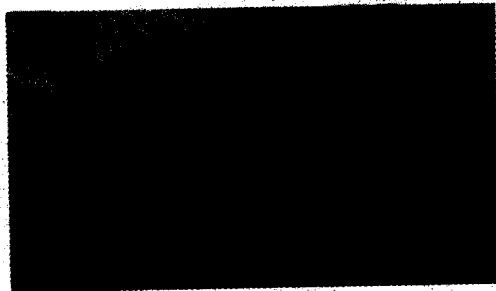
"It keeps me young," he says with a smile. "I think so much of this place that I've asked my friends to make donations here instead of giving me birthday gifts. Last year we raised over \$2,000."

It is no wonder that the Memorial holds such a special place in Scott's heart. Constructed in 1955, it is a glorious sight to behold. General Matthew B. Ridgeway of the U.S. Army called it "the most beautiful and inspiring War Memorial I have ever

A Majestic Tribute

With engravings on its stone and glass walls, the awe-inspiring Shrine of Memory lists over 11,600 names of fallen Virginians.

At the southern end of the Shrine, the majestic statue Memory, carved from 100,000 pounds of white marble, soars 23 feet in the air. The Torch of Liberty lies at the base of Memory, an eternal flame



(Photo: Frost)

Visit the Memorial

- ★ The Virginia War Memorial is at 621 S. Belvidere St., just north of the Robert E. Lee Bridge as it crosses the James River.
- ★ The visitors' center is open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday, 12 to 4 p.m. The Shrine of Memory is open every day of the year.
- ★ Admission is free with plenty of free parking.

For information on group tours, please call (804) 786-2060 or refer to the website: www.vawarmemorial.org.

lit in 1956 at the original dedication ceremony.

In addition, the Memorial offers two rose gardens, a court of eight flags including the POW/MIA flag, and a commanding view of the James River and the Richmond skyline.

The inviting Visitors' Center at the Memorial provides displays, artifacts and memorabilia pertaining to World War II, Europe, World War II Pacific, the Korean War, Vietnam, Desert Storm and Prisoners of War. In addition, touch-screen computers are available to trace the actions of Virginia's veterans by accessing their names, records, deeds and pictures.

From Remembering to Educating

"The wonderful thing is that the Memorial belongs to every Virginian," comments Candice Shelton, the Memorial's education specialist.

In addition, the Memorial offers noteworthy speakers, a quarterly newsletter and an education program that teaches student groups as well as adults about history, patriotism and the immense sacrifices made by our nation's military forces.

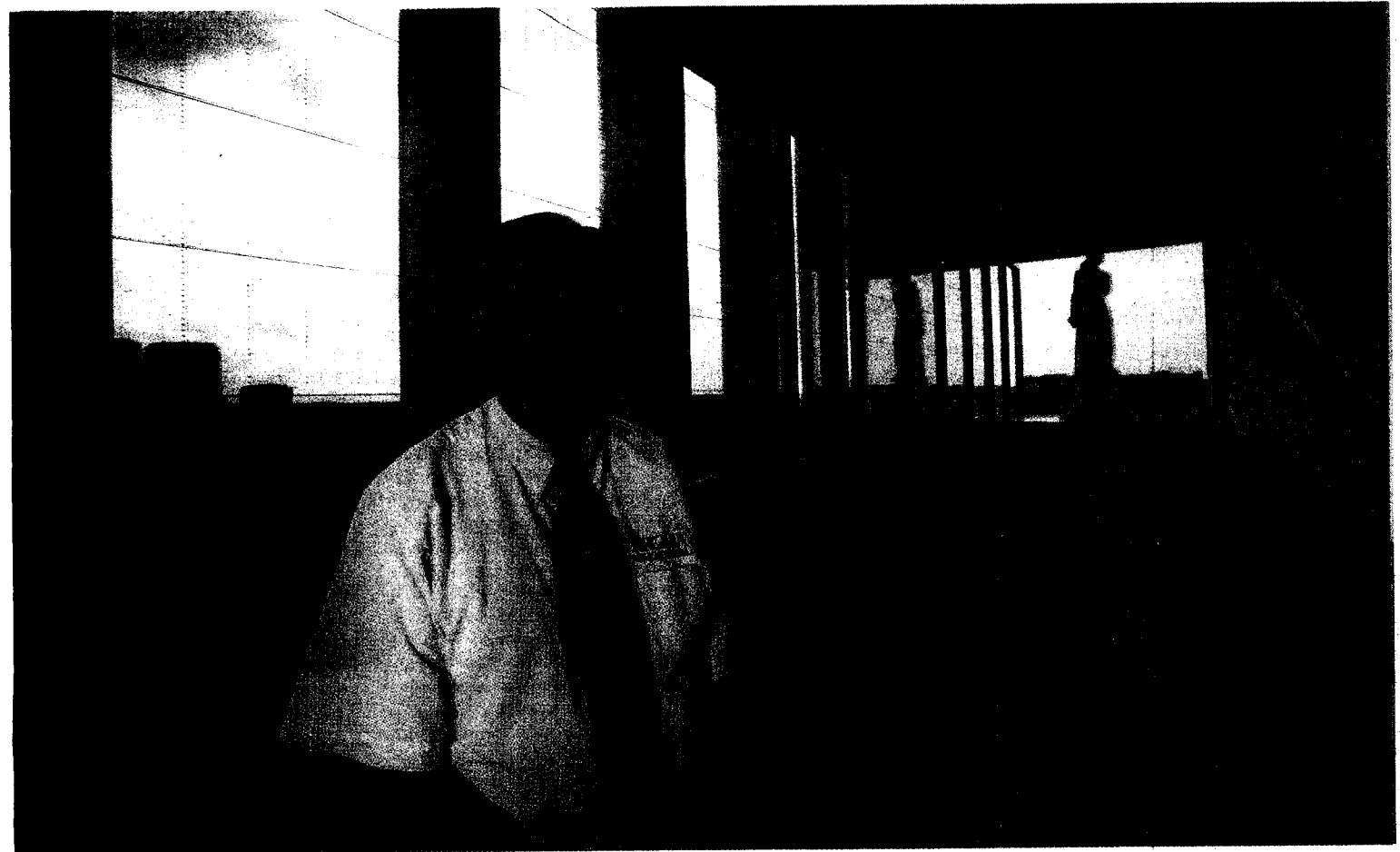
Among many other accomplishments, the Memorial has produced a series of 14 short documentary films, featuring interviews with Virginia veterans who were actually "there" giving their eyewitness accounts of historic events.

The Memorial has distributed these 15- to 20-minute films to middle and high schools across the Commonwealth at no charge. They are an excellent resource for history teachers, and the student who view them find them remarkably gripping and memorable, says Shelton.

A Board of Trustees governs the Memorial, comprised of five members of the Virginia House of Delegates, three members of the Virginia Senate, the Secretary of Administration and 10 member appointed by the Governor.

The generosity of donors solely funds the Memorial's education program. In addition, the Memorial is currently raising funds to build a new education center. All contributions are tax deductible since the Memorial is a 501(c)(3) corporation.

Libby Carty McNamee is a local freelance writer and veteran herself, a former Army JAG officer, thankful for Mr. Scott's service and willingness to share his memori



Russell Scott survived captivity in Poland and Germany during WWII. Now, he volunteers at the Virginia War Memorial, where the names of fallen servicemen are etched into marble and glass. (Photo: Frost)

Wreaths for Richmond

Members will lay 2500 balsam wreaths at veterans' graves in the Richmond National Cemetery.

The wreaths are supplied by the Worcester Wreath Company in Maine, which started donating wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery in 1992. Since then, the commemorative event has grown. The company is also donating seven wreaths, representing each branch of the military, to the Virginia Veterans Cemetery at Amelia and to the Seven Pines National Cemetery in Sandston.

Rocky Angone is coordinating the Richmond wreath-laying. Already, his warm enthusiasm for the event has attracted volunteers from the Girl Scouts, veterans' groups, and Harley-Davidson groups.

Angone, who is a Vietnam veteran and a Harley-Davidson rider himself, is looking for additional volunteers and financial contributions to offset the expense for Worcester Wreath Company. He emphasizes that the event is open to all people, no matter what their age, religion, political belief or military background.

To help out or to learn more about the event, visit Angone's website at www.pointman.homestead.com or call the South Richmond Harley-Davidson at 804-745-3445.



(Photo: U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Jim Varhegyi)