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An overdue tribute

SIXTEEN years ago, work was completed on the impressive National Guard Memorial building, a stone's throw from the nation's Capitol, and several thousand National Guardsmen gathered in Washington with their organizational colors and battle streamers to take part in its formal dedicatory ceremony.

Not long thereafter, the building's character as a living monument to Guardsmen past and present was enhanced by the addition of a massive bronze statue of a colonial Minuteman, flanked by bas-reliefs depicting the Guard's role in America's wars. Still later, we commenced to add the busts of Presidents who had been militiamen or Guardsmen, to further dramatize for visitors the Guard's great heritage. That project is still alive and continuing.

The structure was intended as a permanent memorial to all the millions of dedicated, selfless men and women who have served (and will yet serve) their nation, states and communities as members of the militia/National Guard.

Now we are prepared to take still another step to perpetuate and pay honor to that most unique member of the world's military fraternity, the National Guardsman. The NGAUS has authorized the design and installation of a small, high-quality gallery on the ground floor of the Memorial building. It is to be this Association's major contribution to the national bicentennial observance, providing millions of Washington's bicentennial visitors an opportunity to see exhibits reflecting the full scope of the militia/Guard contribution to the United States and its people.


Across the nation are galleries and museums that preserve and glorify the history of such diverse American institutions as cowboys, firemen, sports, firearms, ships and mariners, policemen and our professional military forces. Yet none of these were more intimately involved in the birth, building and preservation of the nation than the militia and its modern-day descendant, the National Guard.

The Guard existed long before the colonies joined in a free and independent nation. It provided the bulk of the leadership, and most of the rank and file, of the Continental Army that gave us our freedom. It has provided a significant and critical share of our military forces in every war this nation has fought throughout its 200-year existence. It has been a factor of equal importance at state and community level, fighting forest fires, rescuing the marooned, hauling emergency supplies through blizzards, pursuing outlaws and hostile Indians, and coping with the aftermath of tornados, earthquakes and other catastrophes, to earn its right to immortality. Who is more deserving of a place where 340 years of accomplishment can be placed on view for all Americans to see and appreciate?

We propose to place that great heritage on public view, through such means as historically-significant artifacts, old prints, and professionally-designed exhibits.

We have engaged a team of talented, proven experts to design our gallery. They will attempt to convey not only the historic past but, likewise, the productive present of the National Guard, for history can be meaningless unless it is visibly related to today's world.

It will require an estimated \$500,000 to design and install the exhibits, and operate the gallery through the bicentennial years. A special committee has developed a funding plan, which has been approved by the Executive Council. It seeks the support of every member of this Association and of the National Guard.

The NGAUS is committed to the creation of this gallery. We believe it will help make millions of Americans more aware of what the Guard was and is. We hope every Guardsman will share our enthusiasm and will help us convert the National Guard Memorial building into an even finer monument to our citizen-soldiers. 

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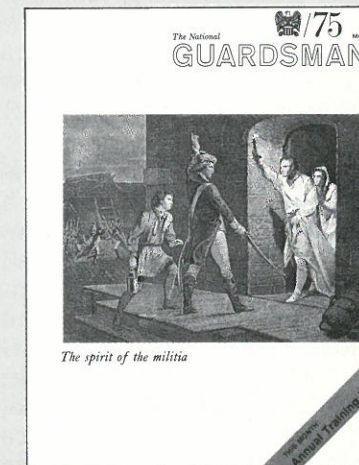
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The spirit of the militia — exemplified on this month's front cover by Ethan Allen's capture of Fort Ticonderoga during the early hours of the Revolutionary War (see page 23).

staff

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