

Major General William E. Ingram (Ret.), President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

HARRY S TRUMAN CENTENNIAL

This month is a very special one for the National Guard and for the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS). On the evening of May 4, the leaders of the National Guard, the NGAUS' leaders and major national figures will gather at the National Guard Memorial to celebrate two very significant birthdays: the 100th anniversary of Harry S Truman's birth and the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the National Guard Memorial.

We celebrate the centenary of Harry S Truman's birth because he is the most recent president of the United States to have been a National Guardsman; a Guardsman proud of his service during two periods in the first 20 years of this century, and to complete the relationship, it was Truman who gave the dedication speech for the National Guard Memorial on May 3, 1959, the second birthday we celebrate, this month.

Both Truman's Guard membership and the dedication of the National Guard Memorial are significant in the evolution of the National Guard to the way we know the Guard. This issue of NATIONAL GUARD contains major articles on both events. A reading of the first article, Colonel Kish's recollection of Harry Truman's Guard career, reveals several facts pointing up the major differences between the National Guard as Truman knew it and the way we know it today. Let's consider a few of them:

Truman enlisted in 1905 and served two three-year enlistments. But of more significance, Kish notes, is that Truman didn't drill regularly and had to pay 25 cents a week to attend drill. The year 1905 was a few years before the federal government instituted drill pay. In those days, the militia was a totally volunteer organization, much like a volunteer fire department.

Truman reenlisted in 1917 at the beginning of World War I after a six-year break

in service and he was elected a first lieutenant. Obviously, we don't elect officers in the Guard anymore, although this was a fairly common practice in many states in earlier years. Perhaps most significant so far as Truman's military career was concerned, however, is that he truly is the epitome of the National Guardsman as we would like to think of him, and as we would hope the American people see the Guard.

"Truman . . . is the epitome of the National Guardsman as we would like to think of him, and as we would hope the American people see the Guard."

He served his country in peacetime, and he mobilized with his unit (Missouri's field artillery) in time of war and capped his career by leading his unit in combat.

Another war, World War II, was to come and be successfully concluded before the second part of this two-part story was to take place. The conception, planning and construction of the National Guard Memorial in Washington, D.C., probably first occurred to Major General Ellard A. Walsh, the NGAUS president during World War II and immediately thereafter, in the early 1940s. Walsh was one of those top National Guard leaders who, although mobilized with his unit in 1940, did not serve in the war because of physical problems. That left him, along with a handful of other top Guard leaders, at home to

make plans for how the Guard should be organized after the war.

Walsh saw, as is recounted in another article in this issue by Colonel Allan G. Crist, founding editor of this magazine, that a full-time national headquarters in the capital would be important to defending and supporting the National Guard in the postwar era.

That headquarters was established in 1947, but it occupied rented quarters in various locations in Washington for the first 12 years of its existence. However, that did not deter Walsh from dreaming about construction of a building that not only would house the NGAUS' full-time staff, but also would honor the memory and the service of all Guardsmen who have served or will serve. When the effort began, it was executed and completed with startling rapidity.

Truman was the principal attraction at the Sunday, May 3, 1959 dedication, an event that paraded a variety of color guards, bands and other groups for the occasion. He and his "buddies" from the 129th Field Artillery stole the show. Other states had young, lean color guards; the 129th Field Artillery came with four old men who had served with Truman in another time and place. Today, 66 years after Truman led Battery D into combat, a few good men from the regiment still like to talk about Captain Harry, Citizen Soldier and Guardsman (page 17).

The Guard today is much different than the Guard of 1905 or 1917, and most of the changes are for the better. But it's good occasionally to recall the history surrounding a man destined to become president and his association with the National Guard...a man who enlisted in the Missouri Guard and went with his unit to war. That kind of sacrifice hasn't changed much and we trust it never will. That kind of dedication serves us well today, as the citizen soldiers of the 1980s.

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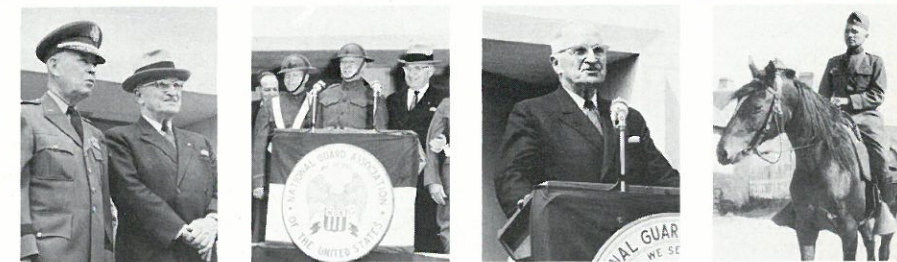
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Features

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If you can believe it, it has been 25 years since the dedication of the National Guard Memorial. The founding editor of NATIONAL GUARD recalls the planning for the Memorial in the late 1940s and through the 1950s, the fund drive, the construction and the dedication on May 3, 1959.

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Two members of Captain Harry S Truman's Missouri artillery battery tell about their introduction to the feisty future president.

19 TRUMAN'S DEDICATION SPEECH

By then a former president, Truman exhibited the same feistiness in his speech for the dedication of the National Guard Memorial in 1959.

22 HARRY S TRUMAN'S WORLD WAR I SERVICE

Harry S Truman was 33 years old when he reenlisted in the Missouri Guard at the beginning of World War I. His war experiences as commander of Battery D, 129th Field Artillery, 35th Infantry Division, were to be an important life influence for him.

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COVER: This issue of NATIONAL GUARD is devoted to a reminiscence of Harry S Truman's Guard career, noting the centennial of Truman's birth and Truman's dedication of the National Guard Memorial 25 years ago this month. Design, Johnson Design Group.

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