

FREEDOM FORCE

News Magazine of the Museum of American Armor

Summer 2024



museumofamericanarmor.com

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A Decade and Counting...

This year marks the tenth anniversary of The Museum of American Armor. Since it opened on June 6, 2014, its operational inventory has grown exponentially to more than 50 vehicles, requiring it to break ground on a new 8,000 square foot storage building that will augment its existing 25,000 square foot exhibit building.

Situated inside Old Bethpage Village Restoration, administered by the Nassau County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Museums, it shares space with a recreated rural Long Island village of the 1800s, using its hundreds of acres as a backdrop for a variety of programs that have traditionally attracted some 12,000 visitors, many of them heritage tourists visiting New York and its environs.

Armor Museum founder and president, Lawrence Kadish, says the mission has never changed over the past decade. "The Museum of American Armor was

chartered for the purpose of connecting a new generation with the courage, valor, and sacrifice of those who have defended our nation. Our programs, educational initiatives, and special exhibits let visitors appreciate history through an immersion experience that can be life changing."

The Armor Museum's operational inventory includes vehicles on long-term loan such as the extraordinary Dragon Wagon tank transporter, while the museum owns icons including the Sherman and Stuart tanks, a trio of M8s and halftracks, a replica Tiger Tank, a rare LTV4, a Hellcat, Staghound, a Dingo, artillery, among others.

Professional care

Since day one Armor Museum Director Mark Renton has kept them running. He's



Lawrence Kadish
*President and Founder of the
Museum of American Armor*

still at it and is currently training a new generation of volunteers to help keep the inventory operational for public displays and reenactments. One senior museum volunteer, Dave Levy, told a reporter, "If there is such a thing as a tank whisperer, it would be Mark. He can hear a misfiring engine cylinder at fifty feet."

Over the same decade, the museum has enjoyed a strong working alliance with the Long Island Living History Association (LILHA), whose members are focused on presenting historically accurate examples of field tactics. During the annual World War II Weekend that attracts thousands, their members are accompanied by armor in "assaulting" enemy positions. Of particular note is the joint "Armor Experience" program that places visitors in half-tracks driving within the woods of the park only to be ambushed by enemy forces before living historians counterattack with available armor.

However, it is the educational programs that Armor Museum senior trustee Michael Sapricono says define the museum's ten-year tenure. He explained, "We have as a consultant Gloria Sesso, the president of the Long Island Council for the Social Studies, for the purpose of providing us with guidance to ensure students have a meaningful visit when they return to the classroom following a visit to the Armor Museum. She also is our liaison with the



many school districts in our region that serve hundreds of thousands of students.” Sesso explained, “This institution has also created educational opportunities for students so that they are lifted out of smart phone apps and digital simulations to better understand the human courage that was, and remains, a requirement to defend their freedoms.”

A public-private partnership

The Armor Museum continues to enjoy a public-private partnership with Nassau County, given that it operates within its Old Bethpage Village Restoration and enjoys the support of County Executive Bruce Blakeman. He notes that Nassau County continues to have one of the largest veterans populations in the United States and was the new home to many of the GIs who returned from World War II.

He has been supportive of the Armor Museum’s role as a vibrant, innovative education destination as well as a tourism magnet, bringing additional revenue to a county that has much to offer – from Gold Coast mansions now turned into museums to enviable resort beaches. Blakeman reminds that the Armor Museum acts in synergy with these attractions while remaining a permanent tribute to those who served.

“The challenge going forward is how best to keep the legacy of World War II relevant far into the future. Our first ten years proved the enormous value of living history but the next ten years will require additional innovation, creativity, and commitment by every military museum here in the States and abroad,” concluded Mr. Kadish.



French & British Diplomats Join WWII Veterans

at Armor's D-Day Observance

Before hundreds of visitors, World War II veterans led ceremonies that marked the 80th anniversary of D-Day at a program held at The Museum of American Armor under the auspices of the Long Island D-Day Anniversary Coalition.

The program included the laying of a wreath on a D-Day era landing craft, the tolling of a memorial bell to mark Normandy's five landing beaches, a tribute to WW II veterans in attendance, remarks from British and French diplomatic representatives, a memorial service to reflect on the deaths of the 4,400 Allied soldiers killed in action on D-Day, and a display of opposing armor during the battle for Normandy.

Speaking on behalf of their governments were French Acting Consul General, Mr. Damien Laban, and Ben Brierley, Head of Policy & State Government Relations for the British Consulate in New York.

A veteran reminds us

World War II veterans included William R. DeGroat, who was stationed in Iceland for a time as it was a strategic outpost for Allied patrol planes looking to protect the convoys. By June 6th, 1944, Private DeGroat found himself coming ashore on Omaha Beach. He would subsequently serve under General Patton prior to the Battle of the Bulge. Decades later he would be honored for his role in helping liberate France...and Europe...and all of those on the Home Front.

DeGroat would remind the solemn audience, "We live in the greatest nation in the world."

William Meunier was a Corporal in the Army of Occupation in Germany. He witnessed the devastation of a country that nearly destroyed the free world. In the words of Robert Jackson, America's prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, "The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated."

Calvin Blank was a Private who served as an Army medic. He treated the men devastated by what they saw and experienced in combat – at the time, they called it shell shock. Today we know it to be deadly and chronic – post traumatic stress disorder.

Cliff Boring served with the Marines in the Okinawa campaign from May to July 1945. He was with the 5th battalion, 3rd amphibious group. When he returned home he served in the Presidents Guard. His quiet demeanor cloaks his courage and valor.

Charles Lauer enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the age of 17. He saw combat action in the Pacific and would be among those in Tokyo Bay as a Japanese delegation climbed onto the neighboring USS Missouri to sign the instruments of surrender.





Keeping a promise

Members of the Long Island D-Day Coalition included Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, Suffolk County Executive Ed Romaine, Assemblyman Charles Lavine, Assemblyman Jake Blumencranz, Oyster Bay Town Supervisor Joseph Saladino, members of the Nassau County Legislature, Hon. Dan Serota, the Long Island Living History Association, the Long Island Chapter of the Air Force Association, the Cradle of Aviation Museum, PSEG Long Island, Bethpage Federal Credit Union, B2K Development, Bristol Assisted Living communities, Local 138 of the International Union of Operating Engineers, and Levittown VFW Post 9592.

Nassau County Executive Blakeman said, "We have a solemn and profound responsibility to those men who landed on the invasion beaches of Omaha, Utah, Sword, Gold, and Juno. We cannot allow this anniversary date to go unnoticed or to be indifferent to what occurred there. This effort will ensure that Long Islanders observe this anniversary with a deep appreciation of those D-Day GIs, sailors, and airmen as we renew the promise to honor their memory and their gift of freedom."

New York State Assemblyman Charles Lavine (D-AD 13) stated, "We have a moral obligation to remember those men who stormed the Normandy beaches 80 years ago. While we are rightly observing this milestone anniversary, we should be acknowledging the D-Day anniversary every year because without the sacrifice of thousands of GIs and our allies, the world would be a profoundly different place, a dark and forbidding world where the murderous Nazi regime would continue its unspeakable horrors. We owe the soldiers of D-Day much. Humanity demands we reflect on their sacrifice."

How to pay tribute? By remembering

David Burman, a partner in B2K Development, and a trustee of the Armor Museum, said, "Our corporate commitment to this effort reflects our deep appreciation of the courage, valor, and sacrifice of those who came ashore on D-Day and those Americans and Allies who followed them in the days and weeks that followed. We are honored to participate."

John Duffy, Treasurer and Business Manager for Local 138 of the International Union of Operating Engineers, stated, "Our Local is proud to support this effort because our members recognize the debt we owe every American who has ever worn the uniform. This anniversary is a reminder of just how enormous that debt is."



Former West Point Deputy Commandant joins the Armor Museum's Board

Colonel Jason Halloren, (Ret.) former Deputy Commandant of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and a Commack resident, has been nominated to the board of The Museum of American Armor, whose extensive collection of historic military vehicles pays tribute to those Americans who have served to protect our freedoms.

"Colonel Halloren's extraordinary military credentials, coupled with his passion for

preserving our nation's heritage, make him an important part of the Armor Museum's future," stated Lawrence Kadish, president and founder of the museum.

"The Museum of American Armor is a national treasure," Mr. Halloren said. "Its collection of operational armor breathes life into every history lesson that instructs visitors on the courage, sacrifice, and valor of those who have worn our nation's military uniform. I am truly honored to be welcomed to its board and to provide whatever assistance I can to ensure its future remains as vibrant and innovative as the past ten years since it first opened its doors."

During his tour as Deputy Commandant at West Point, Mr. Halloren's responsibilities were centered on the character and leadership development training of over 4400 cadets, future officers of the U.S. Army. He was also involved in meeting the

academy's various infrastructure needs, staffing, and fiscal responsibilities.

Armor Museum Trustee and Brookville Village Mayor Dan Serota stated, "We are honored and fortunate to have Jason join the Armor Museum's board. He brings a wealth of experience in many of the key operational aspects of our institution as well as his recognition that, at the end of the day, we are an important educational destination for thousands of students across the region."

Prior to his role at West Point, Mr. Halloren was Chief Executive Officer (Brigade Commander), 5th ROTC Brigade, United States Army Cadet Command (USACC) at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.





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Armor Museum's role as an educational leader cited by Nassau BOCES

THE Museum of American Armor was among the three organizations cited by Nassau BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) this year for having profound and positive effects on public education in Nassau County.

"The Museum of American Armor's programs are so accurate and immersive that they are a part of the social studies curriculum for a number of Long Island school districts," said Nassau BOCES Board Member Robert "B.A." Schoen at the awards gala. "Visitors are transported into one of the most pivotal periods in American history. The museum provides an experience that is at once so powerful and informative that it has been referred to as one of the most compelling educational tools our region has at its disposal."

The Nassau BOCES Education Partner Awards program pays tribute to outstanding educational leaders,

organizations, school administrators and staff, students, teachers, Nassau BOCES employees, and other champions of education.

This year's honorees were recognized during the annual Nassau BOCES Education Partner Awards Gala, hosted by the Nassau BOCES Educational Foundation. The Foundation is an independent, community-based organization devoted to enhancing educational opportunities for students who take part in Nassau BOCES schools, services, or programs.

A vital regional resource, Nassau BOCES offers state-of-the-art programs for learners of all ages and abilities as well as cost-effective services for school districts and municipalities. The institution empowers students to achieve their maximum potential in alternative, artistic, outdoor, special education, career



and technical, and virtual educational environments. They also offer adult education programs and a variety of programs that are vital to improving the Long Island regional economy.





Reflections by an Armor Museum Trustee

By Hon. Daniel Serota, Mayor and Police Commissioner of Brookville Village

My father was part of a 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun crew during World War II. He rarely spoke of his experience, but when I visited the Armor Museum and saw a Bofors on display it immediately connected me to my father who passed at the age of 90 some 14 years ago. And that is what makes the Museum of American Armor so important. It connects us to the heroes in our own families.

Many of my fellow trustees work with a variety of worthy not-for-profits for the purpose of strengthening our region's

quality of life. But we recognize that this museum serves a unique and powerful purpose. It reminds us of the legacy given to us by every veteran, regardless of era, branch of service, or their role in the military. When you tour the museum, and see these armor vehicles power up and roll out the door, you are presented with a far better understanding of what it must have been like when they defended our freedoms.

I firmly believe the Armor Museum's role is crucial because it comes at a time when that legacy is in danger of being forgotten,

too often ignored in classrooms across the state. We simply cannot allow that to happen.

** Mayor Serota is also president of Serota Properties which owns a large portfolio of commercial, industrial, retail, and residential buildings. But it is for public service that Dan is perhaps best known. He originally served on the Brookville Village Architectural Review Board before successfully running for trustee, Deputy Mayor, and Mayor. Years earlier, he was a government intern for U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato.*

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With the rumble of tanks, the footfalls of living historians, and to the amazement of visitors, World War II Encampment Weekend 2024 inside Old Bethpage Village Restoration once again provided the means to honor our nation's military heritage.

The Museum of American Armor in cooperation with the Nassau County Department of Parks, Recreation and Museums, and the Long Island Living History Association (LILHA), provided several thousand attendees the means to enter a time machine during the two-day event.

Co-sponsored by PSEG Long Island, Bethpage Federal Credit Union, B2K, and Newsday, the encampment included military reenactments, a parade of operational armor vehicles from the museum's extensive collection, and

World War II Weekend 2024

continues to honor the past

interactive exhibits that highlighted tactics, strategies, and equipment from the period.

Living historians create memories

In addition to armor on the move and living historians creating battlefield scenarios, two masterful interpreters of Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt greeted many who came to the event.

Gary Stamm, who portrays "FDR" at Armor Museum events, is in much demand across the country. While a professional actor, his presentation as the president who led the nation through World War II has won plaudits and commendations. Luke Boyd, who is also a professional interpreter, brings Winston Churchill to life in a manner that suggests a far more friendlier Winston than the one who inhabited 10 Downing Street. Both help create one more essential memory for visitors.

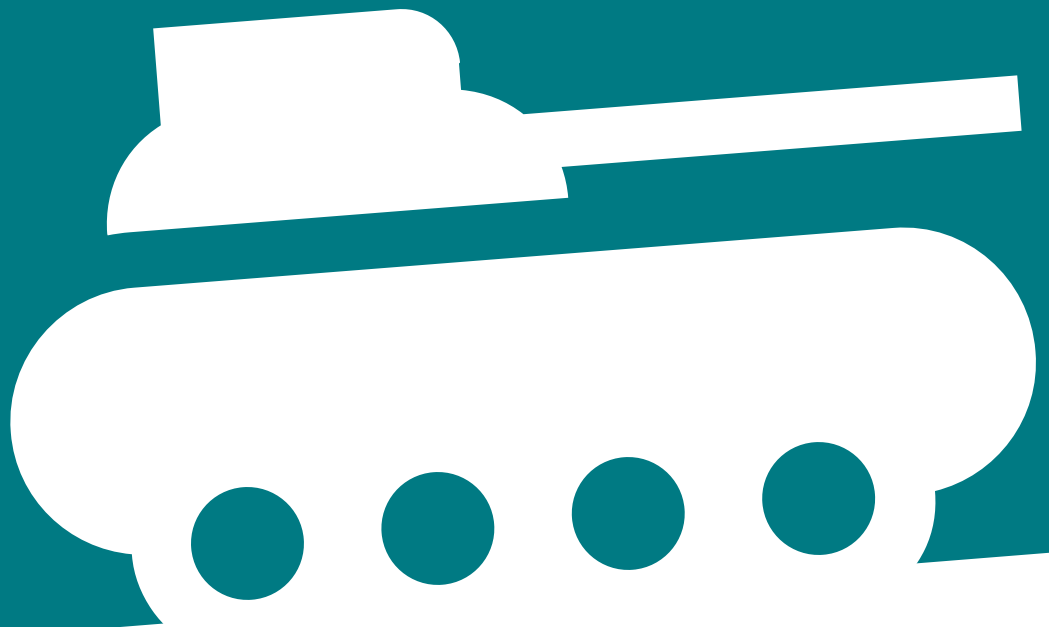
David Burman, an Armor Museum Trustee and a partner in B2K, agrees, "This is a profoundly personal experience for the thousands of visitors who attend this event, for it immerses you in the sights and sounds of a time when freedom for millions hung in the balance. We are proud to be co-sponsors."



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The Armor Museum awards Hofstra student an all-expense paid trip to Normandy for the 80th Anniversary of D-Day.

*F*ollowing a region-wide challenge inviting college and high school students to submit an essay regarding the lasting legacy of D-Day some eight decades after the historic World War II invasion, Dominick Pursino, a 22-year-old Hofstra University student from Commack, was selected as the winner of an all-expense paid trip to the invasion beach this June. His visit was coordinated by the internationally respected Beaches of Normandy Tours.

The founder and president of the Museum of American Armor, Lawrence Kadish, was the underwriter of this challenge in the belief that many of today's generation are not aware of the legacy of D-Day, an event that continues to touch their lives.

Mr. Kadish noted, "A survey by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) found that a quarter of Americans didn't know that D-Day occurred during World War II and less than half knew that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was president during that time. With such basic historic facts unknown to many college students, there is little surprise that few appreciate how our geo-political world is defined by the courage, valor, and sacrifice of Americans who answered the call of freedom over seventy-five years ago."

A grandmother's chilling remembrance

In reflecting on the unrestrained joy of those under Nazi rule as they were liberated by the Allies following D-Day, Pursino wrote, "When I was a boy, my grandmother would tell me hundreds of stories about her childhood, living in the small Italian seaside town of Giovinazzo.

"Out of all the stories she would tell, the one that stuck out to me the most was the story about the Nazi occupation in her hometown. The loud, menacing, and synchronous marching of German troops in formation were heard from miles away instilling fear into my grandmother's daily life and the rest of the people in the town. There was a constant state of terror in whatever street, alleyway, or town the Nazi's stepped foot in. In these occupied

nations like my grandmother's town the people suffered. Genocide, persecution, forced labor, and severe punishments were given out to the people who spoke out against their occupation.

"I will always remember when an American D-day veteran hosted an assembly when I was in middle school. He referred to the Omaha Beach where he landed as a vast killing field with death flying down like raindrops during a thunderstorm. I could never fathom the murderous atmosphere that these soldiers endured when storming the beaches, hopping off the boats to their likely death," Pursino reflected in his essay.

The Longest Day

Armor Museum Trustee Gene Spiegelman, stated, "Dominick's essay reflects his unique understanding of the valor and courage of those who engaged in history's largest amphibious assault and how their sacrifice liberated an enslaved continent. We continue to be in the debt of those who came ashore and those who dropped behind enemy lines in what history has called "The longest day."

The Hofstra student is a senior intent on pursuing a Masters Degree with hopes of becoming a history teacher with a discipline in special education.





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Under construction behind the Armor Museum's Main Hall is a 25,000 square foot storage building that will be able to house and protect a number of armor vehicles that are part of the museum's extensive collection.

This will enable various museum assets to be rotated into the Main Hall for public viewing, while opening up additional space for interactive displays, exhibits, and public programs.

"Funded in part by the administration of Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, a state DASNY grant secured through the efforts of Assemblyman Charles Lavine, and

Storage Building to Protect Our Armor Heritage

private donations, the building will become a much-welcomed addition at a time when recent armor acquisitions have created a challenge in how we present them to the visitor," remarked Armor Museum Trustee David Burman.

To allow the most efficient use of space and financial resources, the structure is a prefabricated building that will sit atop a concrete slab designed to withstand the weight of heavy armor.

The project's partners include BDG Construction, Racanelli Construction, and Darr Construction Equipment.



A British Solution to Battlefield Firepower

WORLD WAR II revealed the need for military forces to deploy armor capable of speed and mobility, including an army's artillery pieces.

Great Britain quickly recognized that need and initially answered it by mounting artillery on obsolete tanks. It was clear however that this expedient would not stand up to the rigors of combat.

The answer was found in Canada. To supplement early American tank production, The Montreal Locomotive Works had begun to produce tanks based on American tank designs. Combining a reliable design with the highly accurate 25 Pounder gun yielded the self-propelled gun known as Sexton.

Armor Museum Trustee Gene Spiegelman noted, "Given its importance to Allied forces, The Museum of American Armor made the acquisition of this rare example a priority. Made operational by our volunteers, it now participates in public events that honor the role of all those who confronted tyranny during World War II."

Just over 2,100 Sextons were built between 1943 and 1945. The vehicles weighed 25 tons and were powered by a 400 horsepower radial engine built by Continental. The main gun could fire a high explosive 25 pound shell out to a range of approximately seven miles.

The Sexton first saw combat with British forces in Italy and then later with Allied Forces, fighting from the Normandy beaches into Germany's heartland.

Many Sextons were supplied to Allied nations after World War II including India, Poland, South Africa, and Portugal. The Museum of American Armor's Sexton is a Mark II and last saw service in Portugal during the 1970s.



A Sexton takes a pause during WW II operations in Europe.



The Armor Museum's Sexton is joined by its WW II era colleague, the British Dingo.

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- Google Review



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A rare M3 Lee now an Armor Museum exhibit

By Kevin Carroll

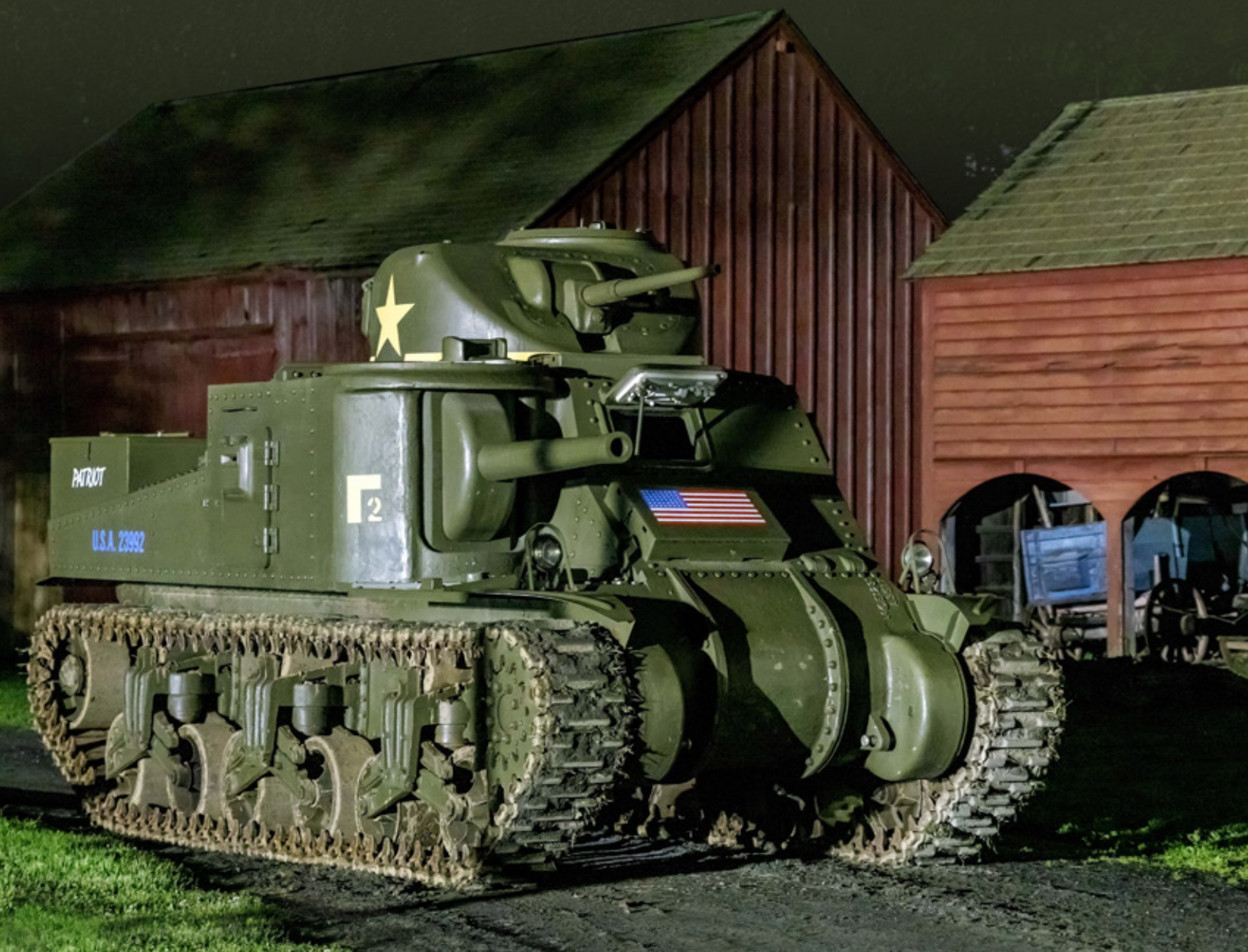
The Nazi Blitzkrieg of 1939 demonstrated the startling technical advances Germany had made in its armor forces. Realizing that American light tanks were now at a disadvantage, in 1940 the U.S. Ordnance Department ordered a new tank to be quickly readied. The design would employ a powerful 75mm main gun and incorporate armor up to two inches thick to protect the seven-man crew. The 30-ton tank was called the M3 Medium, and the first of over 6,000 to be built rolled off assembly lines in late 1941.

Manufacturing limitations at the time prevented the main gun from being mounted on a rotating turret. As a result, the 75mm gun was mounted in a sponson, resulting in limited traverse and elevation. A smaller 37mm gun was mounted on a turret above the tall, riveted hull. Placed atop that turret was a commander's cupola with a .30 caliber machine gun. The exceptional

height of just over 10 feet was a disadvantage on the battlefield.

Despite these shortcomings, the M3 was welcomed by beleaguered British forces in North Africa in early 1942 where its 75mm gun was an unpleasant surprise to German tankers. (Britain also used a modified turret version they christened the Grant, calling the original M3 the Lee.) American forces employed the M3 Lee when they invaded North Africa late in 1942. As the legendary Sherman became available, the M3 was quickly replaced.

The M3 was also provided to the Soviet Union and British Commonwealth armies during WWII. The Museum's example was built for the Australian army, eliminating the commander's cupola per their specifications. The M3 on display bears the markings of America's 1st Armored Division in North Africa during 1942.





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