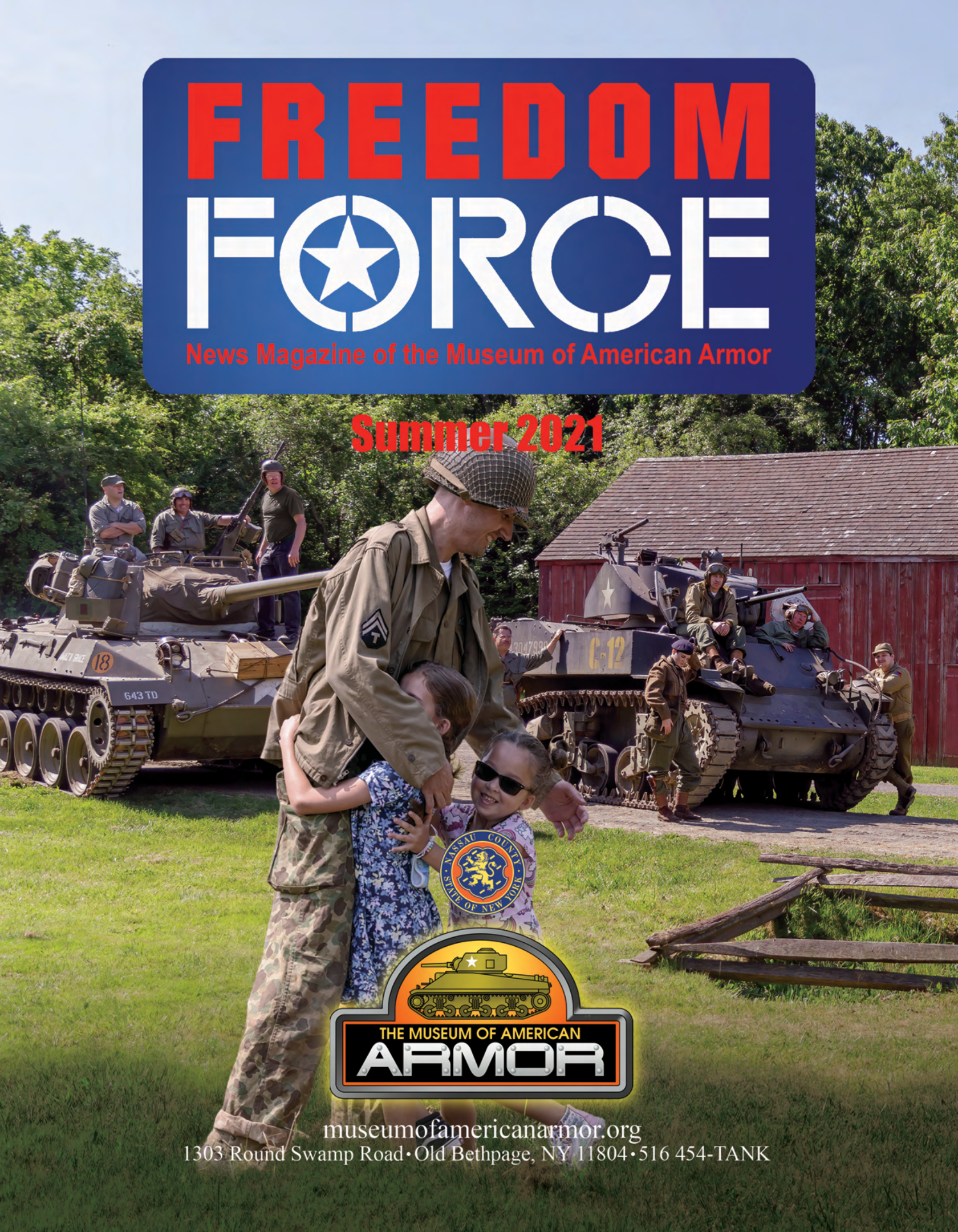
FREEDOM FORCE

News Magazine of the Museum of American Armor

Summer 2021



THE MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ARMOR

museumofamericanarmor.org

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Welcome to the latest edition of Freedom Force...



Lawrence Kadish
President and Founder of the Museum of American Armor

Sustaining the commitment to our veterans in the face of COVID.

For those of us entrusted with telling America's story of courage and valor in the defense of freedom, 2021 has become even more important, as we seek to recapture the year lost to social isolation, quarantine, and the inability of many museums to open their doors.

There is a shared appreciation that even the modest amount of time assigned to teach history in the classroom has been further reduced. While technology can fill part of the gap, museums such as this one, with powerful displays and operational exhibits, are what ensures that history lessons become an indelible part of a young student's learning experience.

The year 2021 will also see the nation and the world observe the 20th anniversary of the terror attacks on our country...attacks that shocked America and saw Long Island conduct countless funerals...but also witnessed a nation rally in a way not seen since World War II. We need to use the upcoming milestone anniversary during 2021 as a means to better appreciate the strategic threat that freedom-loving democracies continue to face from terrorist nations and freedom destroyers now with nuclear weapons.

We also need to remember that a strong military remains the best deterrent against such aggressor nations...that a shared awareness is the collective debt that we continue to owe to our veterans as we gather at the Museum of American Armor to participate in its various programs, memorials, and experiences.

A Crucial Vietnam War Observance

IN keeping with its mission to honor all American veterans, during the winter of 2021 the Museum of American Armor marked the anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War's deadly Tet offensive with the dedication of three 1960s-era vehicles in the presence of Vietnam veterans, former Congressman **Peter King**, Oyster Bay Town Supervisor **Joseph Saladino**, living historians, and clergy.

The 1968 Tet Offensive marked a strategic turning point in the Vietnam conflict, for while the Communists lost tens of thousands of soldiers in a failed attempt to take and hold key centers across South Vietnam, the attacks were a severe psychological blow to the American public. The end of the offensive saw the beginning of America's eventual disengagement from the war.

The museum's program reflected on the 3,470 lives lost in the defense of freedom during Tet, one-third of them Americans, and 12,062 wounded, almost half of them G.I.s. Additional prayers were offered for the 57,939 Americans killed or missing during the decade that the United States was engaged in combat in Vietnam.

George Swantek, a Vietnam veteran of the 101st Airborne, said he would do it all over again. "Our job was to hunt down the enemy and put a whopping on them every chance we got."

Among those attending was **Steve Bonom**, president of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Nassau Chapter, who reminded, "Our veterans are still suffering, fifty years later; the homelessness, the PTSD…these are critical issues we still need to address."

1. Former Congressman and Armor Museum trustee Peter King discusses the need for additional medical support to assist Vietnam veterans.

2. Armor Museum volunteer Bob Inslee holds memorial photos of his brother, lost in action during the Vietnam conflict.

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FROM SCRAP TO SALUTES

Armor Museum volunteer Chris Suhr knows something about sheet metal. As an Air Force airframe repairman, he was assigned to a field maintenance squadron, where his abilities were put to good use in the sheet metal shop, the machine shop, welding shop, paint shop, and more.

And so, when confronted with a sad, rusting halftrack in need of restoration, it was Chris and his Armor colleagues (including Bob LaMantia) who spent more than three years bringing the historic WWII vehicle back to life

Tackling the vehicle piece by piece, Chris believes that the most difficult challenge was the disassembly. "Without a doubt, the *most* difficult", he reflected. "Early on it became clear that this phase was going to be tough and time-consuming. Many skinned knuckles and burned fingertips. Virtually every nut and bolt on the machine was substantially rusted. On many occasions we spent an entire day removing a single part. As we progressed, it was apparent that many portions of the vehicle would have to be completely rebuilt or replaced. The years of outdoor exposure had taken their toll. The message became clear...this was going to be a much wider project than I initially thought."

Yet, Suhr says they never gave up. "Day by day we got closer to what I always felt was the top of the mountain. When the vehicle was stripped down to the chassis and drivetrain, we were almost there. Once the pressure wash was done and the sandblasting was complete, the priming and painting meant we were at the summit. The downhill phase began by reassembling everything. Finally, it all started to come together. Remove, repair, fabricate, sandblast, prime, paint, and assemble every small part to every large part."

Given his leadership role on this project, Chris was granted naming rights for the halftrack. He chose, rather appropriately, the "Phenix." He explained, "This is the less common spelling, as opposed to the usual 'Phoenix.' I felt it would draw more attention and inquiries from the public as to why we spelled it `wrong.' Both spellings are correct, depending on the source. Both refer to the mythological Phenix of ancient Greek legend that was said to have lived 500 years, then self-immolated and rose from its own ashes to begin the lifecycle again."

One cannot imagine a more appropriate name for a valuable piece of American military history that came so close to remaining a forgotten derelict of democracy's struggle for survival, suitable only for the scrap-yard.

Congratulations to all those who saved it.









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The Museum of American Armor

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Thank you for your dedication to preserving our nation's military heritage and for paying tribute to those who defend our freedoms!

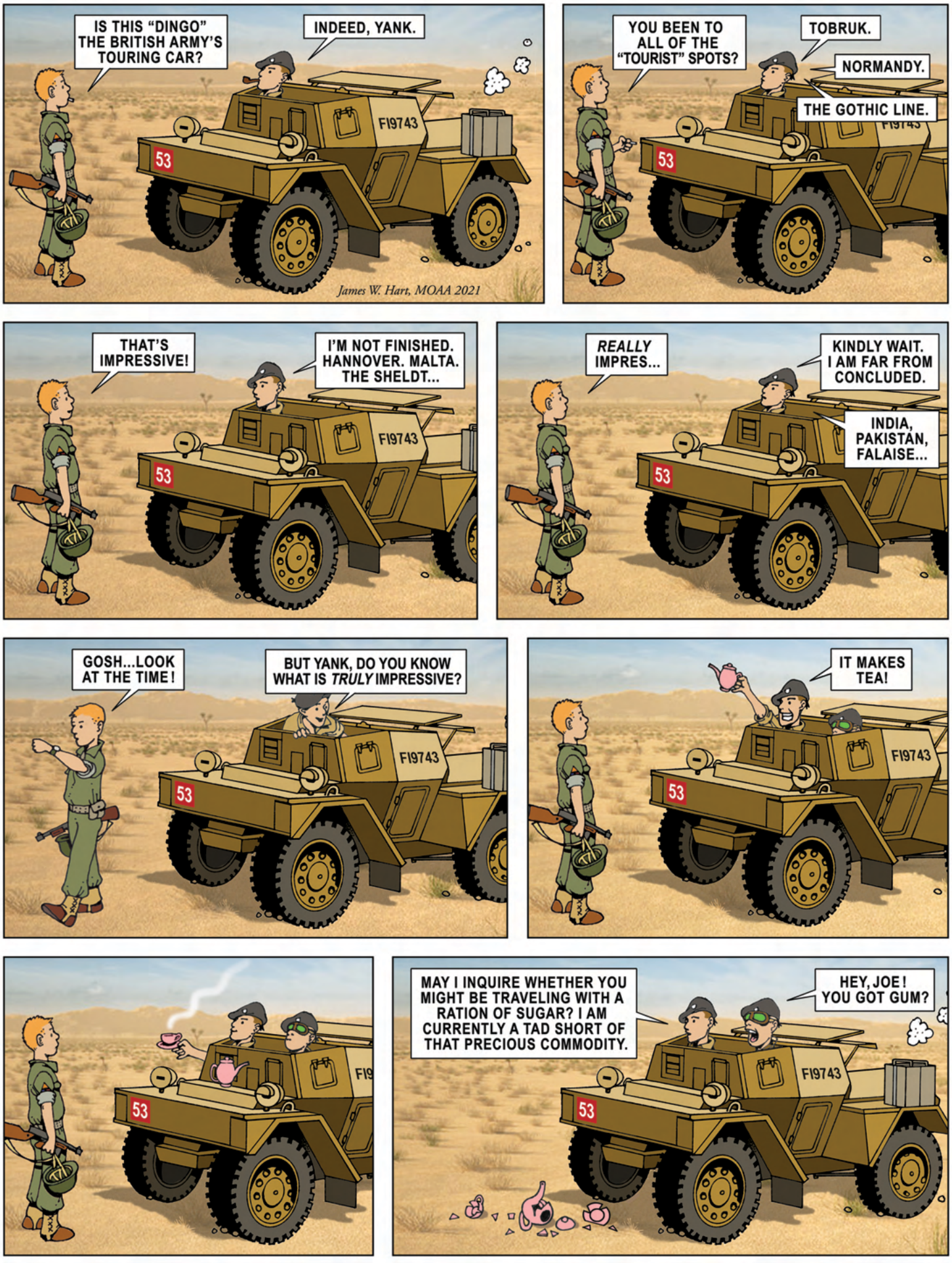


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53
James W. Hart, MOAA 2021
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TOBRUK.
NORMANDY.
THE GOTHIC LINE.
THAT'S IMPRESSIVE!
I'M NOT FINISHED. HANNOVER. MALTA. THE SHELDT...
REALLY IMPRES...
KINDLY WAIT. I AM FAR FROM CONCLUDED.
INDIA, PAKISTAN, FALAISE...
GOSH...LOOK AT THE TIME!
BUT YANK, DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS TRULY IMPRESSIVE?
IT MAKES TEA!
MAY I INQUIRE WHETHER YOU MIGHT BE TRAVELING WITH A RATION OF SUGAR? I AM CURRENTLY A TAD SHORT OF THAT PRECIOUS COMMODITY.
HEY, JOE! YOU GOT GUM?

For the second year in a row, Nassau County Executive **Laura Curran** led the Fourth of July Parade at the head of an armor column on the roads inside Old Bethpage Village Restoration.

Sponsored by PSEG Long Island, hundreds arrived with their families to watch some twenty historic armor vehicles rumble by as the parade was narrated by Kevin Carroll, the museum's community affairs director.

"In a county that is proud to be home to the largest veterans population in the nation, I can't think of a better way of saluting the Fourth than by honoring those who have defended our freedoms over the generations," stated County Executive Curran.

Armor Museum president and founder, **Lawrence Kadish**, reminded, "These vehicles are symbols of American courage, valor, and sacrifice. As we pause to celebrate our nation's birth we have a responsibility to remember why we are still able to observe this important date on America's national calendar."

Daniel Eichhorn, PSEG Long Island president and chief operating officer, stated, "Supporting our communities is a huge part of PSEG Long Island's employee culture, donating volunteer time or funds to some 500 organizations. Today we welcome the opportunity to expand our veterans' recognition efforts by supporting a celebration of our nation's birth that pays direct tribute to those who have defended democracy."

A parade of history

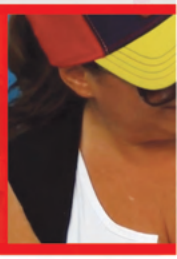
The Armor Museum is home to an operational collection of over forty armored vehicles, many of which participated in the July 4th parade. Vehicles in motion included the mighty Hellcat, halftracks, armored cars similar to those that liberated the Nazi death camps, Vietnam-era combat vehicles, and the massive M48 Patton tank that would have confronted Soviet armor in the disastrous event that the Cold War became an open conflict.

In addition to PSEG Long Island, proud sponsors of The Armor Museum's July 4th program included Bethpage Federal Credit Union, Squad Security, Polimeni International, SUEZ Environmental, and Newsday.













The Armor Museum's July 4th







4

LONG ISLAND

Lindsey and Nick Butcher and their son Brandon, 6, watch the parade Sunday. • Video: newsday.com/li

ARMORED VEHICLES MARK JULY FOURTH

Hundreds watch parade at Old Bethpage Village

BY KELLY ORTIZ
kelly.ortiz@newsday.com

Richard Orsino and his family came to the Old Bethpage Village Restoration to witness the parade march in celebration of Independence Day.

What they found, he said later, was "not your typical parade."

The Orsino family from Commack and other spectators saw a line of vintage military vehicles from the Museum of American Armor in Plainview, including an M10 Wolverine tank destroyer used during World War II.

Some 20 vehicles drove through a village dirt roads on Sunday at the museum's second annual July Fourth armor parade, following last year's in which spectators were kept socially distant during the pandemic.

Vehicles included an M48 Patton tank, which was named after Gen. George S. Patton, commander of the U.S. Third Army in World War II, along with a V-100 Commando made in the 1950s and used to protect truck supply convoys.

Orsino's son, Braden Orsino, 8, learned during the parade that soldiers who drove the tank during combat had another way to free themselves in case of an emergency besides going through the top.

"I never knew there was an escape hatch at the bottom of the tank," Braden said. "I like all the tanks."

Damon Lin, 4, of Brookville, has his picture taken with a tank.

Maggie Kaufman, 1, of Old Bethpage, enjoys Independence Day with her dad, Khain.

Kevin Carroll, community affairs director at the museum, who told stories every loud-speakers about the history of the vehicles driven, said he wanted to illustrate "what American veterans have done for us, particularly today."

That includes, Carroll of Huntington Station said, "the people that fought for us to get our rights and maintain our rights through numerous wars, from obviously the Revolution, to today."

Spectators lined up along the parade route as the tanks came around, driven by volunteers who dressed as soldiers during the battles in which the tanks were used. About 600 people attended the parade, said museum spokesman Gary Lee).

Anthony Vale, originally from Holtsville, said he was proud seeing a soldier in the Second Armored Division, the Infantry Regiment, that served during World War II in the European Theater of Operations, because he loves talking about history — "especially people who paid the ultimate sacrifice in World War II ... a lot of freedoms that we have today are because of that."

Gladys Lumapat of Valley Stream arrived at the parade and said she felt as if she was "back in the World War."

"It was a great opportunity knowing the history and in celebrating the Fourth of July," she said.

Mike Vassallo of Yaphank, who said he retired from the military in 1997 after serving in the Air Force, enjoyed the parade because sometimes "what we tend to forget and take advantage of, we need to keep alive and this is part of that, restoring all these old tanks, restoring the old aircraft at the museums."

1. *Good times had by young and old alike.*
2. *The M48 "Patton" makes its way past admiring crowds at the start of the parade.*
3. *Nassau County Executive Laura Curran is joined in the parade's lead jeep by event sponsor PSE&G's Rick Walden, VP Customer Operations...seated; Fred Daum, Executive Director, Customer Operations; and Peter Hornick, Community Partner Program...far left, standing, with badge.*
4. *Media coverage included Newsday, News 12, WCBS, WNBC, and WABC.*











3



Parade Becomes a Tradition





WWII Weekend 2021

Included a Visit From Our Allied Leaders...

This year's World War II Weekend saw the Museum of American Armor reinventing the historic Yalta Conference convened in the closing days of World War II, when Allied leaders would dictate the shape of Europe for the following half-century.

Beside an array of operational Allied and enemy armor, interpreters portraying President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Britain's Winston Churchill, and Soviet Russia's Joseph Stalin greeted Armor Museum visitors at Old Bethpage Village Restoration to remind families of the extraordinary wartime alliance that confronted and defeated the forces of Nazi Germany.

Confronting "Screen Time."

Armor Museum president and founder, **Lawrence Kadish**, observed, "Our continuing mission at the Armor Museum is to bring history to life, so that a new generation of Americans will fully appreciate that their precious gift of freedom was bought and paid for by the sacrifices of those who came before us."

Armor Museum trustee, former U.S. Congressman **Peter King**, explained, "Living history has become an essential part of keeping our nation's heritage alive and relevant at a time when online platforms have created a virtual alternative universe for too many of our young people. To see these vehicles operate in the field opens a new journey of study and education for our visitors."

The Role of Living Historians

Members of the Long Island Living History Association were present in force, displaying uniforms, tactics, and weapons of an era that saw civilization hanging in the balance.

Jim Lennon, co-leader of the organization explained, "We are military historians whose purpose is to educate the public about military history through displays of period uniforms and equipment. Our goal is to keep history alive through the stories of our veterans and to remind people to always honor them."

The museum's senior trustee, **Michael Sapraicone**, noted, "The traditional role of living historians over the years has been to present Civil War and World War I scenarios to audiences.









"An absolute must see for history lovers!"

★★★★★

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