

Learn History Through Their Stories

Veterans' stories come alive at the Wyoming Veterans' Memorial Museum

Sally O'Brien, Social Studies teacher at KWHS, has taken her students to the Wyoming Veterans' Memorial Museum 1-2 times per semester for the past 8 years. "When I first learned of the significance of the air base, I thought it was important that the students knew about it too," Sally explained when discussing the value of visiting The Wyoming Veterans' Memorial Museum.

The Wyoming Veterans' Memorial Museum (WVMM) is located in the World War II Servicemen's Club at the former Casper Army Air Base, where crews trained on B-24 and B-17 bombers. Students experience the feeling of the old bomber base and an association with the men and women who worked and trained here over 60 years ago.

Ms. O'Brien explains that, while the WVMM is not an 'interactive museum' like some of the others, the students still get a hands-on experience. "They put gloves on and are able to handle weapons and other military artifacts." Students are fascinated with the Nazi war flags, the propaganda pamphlets dropped during WWII, swords, pictures, and other artifacts on display at the museum. And, most importantly, they get a personalized guided tour by John and Eric. "When those guys tell the stories, they bring you to tears. They really make a connection with the students."

KWHS Junior Teresa Fuller adds, "When Ms. O'Brien took my class to the Veterans' Museum many of my classmates and I had no idea the importance of the air base. We learned about equipment, people, and events first hand which we would have never been able to do sitting in a classroom."



O'Brien has seen a positive response from the families of her students after visiting the museum. "The students will talk with their parents and find out that the old air base is the reason their family is in Casper."

The WVMM has often arranged for Veterans to address the students while visiting. A recent field trip involved comparing Desert Storm to Viet Nam. "I teach my students that *technology drives history*, so that comparison was a useful part of that discussion, comparing the desert to the jungle and all the newest technology the soldiers have now."

John Goss, Director of the WVMM, explains, "Duty, service to our country, sacrifice, and history at all levels are powerful themes that have been imparted by a wide range of Wyoming Veterans. These stories leave students and teachers with a strong attachment to their Wyoming community."

Max Popp, a Senior at KWHS had an interesting take on field trips and his visits to the WVMM: "When you feel something, like a cold metal WW2 pistol in your hand, or a trench helmet, strapped to your head, it gives you a greater appreciation of the history itself and the people that lived through it. Sure, you can sit in a classroom and read about civil rights, and the people that got sprayed with high-pressure fire hoses or bitten by police dogs. But until you feel the cold water pound your side, or the dogs teeth bite your arm, you will not really appreciate the history as the people lived it. So in my opinion, the best way to learn history is to go out, into society, and experience it as closely as possible to the way it actually happened. This is the way hands-on learning and field trips benefit me intellectually."

Local, state, and national historical themes are all tied together through human experiences captured in artifacts, photos, and oral interviews. A military library, archives, and photograph collection are available for learning and research. Hands-on possibilities with a wide range of actual military artifacts can be coordinated for educational curricula.

John also explains, "If it's difficult for the class to come out here, we will go to them!" The WVMM provides to teachers, at the museum or in your classrooms, a wide range of specialized lectures or presentations including examples such as military service, historical aspects of war, or the Casper Air Base.

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Hours:

Tues-Sat 9-4

Admission:

Free