



The Star



Issue #117

"We Speak Their Names"

Winter - 2025

THE ANN BENNETT MIX MEMORIAL CELEBRATION

By Conference Chair
Marilynn Rustand Lieurance

**AWON's 15th
National Conference,
The Ann Bennett Mix
Memorial Celebration,
was a big success!**

**We honored our founder, Ann,
and everyone in attendance
had a great time!**



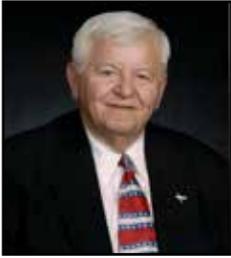
I wrote this article so that all those who could not attend the event could have a written view of the Ann Bennett Mix Memorial Celebration.

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While the official start date of the Ann Bennett Mix Memorial Celebration was Friday, October 10, the fun started on the Thursday beforehand. Several of our members arrived a day early and gathered to help put name tags and Welcome Packets together, in addition to other tasks.

In honor of Ann's life, AWON designed a commemorative Challenge Coin, like those given out by military units to their members. A coin was given to the members who attended the conference. Rik Peirson had a beautiful insert made promoting AWON membership. The insert slips into a plastic holder alongside each



President's Message

by Walt Linne

The end of 2025 approaches. Once again, where has the time gone? AWON has much to be thankful for.

First, we give thanks for our founder Ann Bennett Mix. Our Celebration of Life for Ann at the 2025 Des Moines National Conference was a fitting tribute to our beloved founder who brought us all together. The conference was a great opportunity to share many precious memories. The lady who brought our fathers "off the shelf" and back into our lives and enabled us to meet our fellow war orphans and share our stories and feelings was well-honored. Thank you very, very much, Ann!

Second, we give thanks for our delightful 15th National AWON Conference, the Ann Bennett Mix Memorial Celebration. A big THANK YOU to our wonderful conference committee led by Marilyn Lieurance, with Lorin McCleary, Bob Meek, Rik Peirson, Judi Kramer, Bob Holliday, Roberta Nolan, and Kristin Holmes (granddaughter of 1LT Lorin McCleary II), plus all the volunteers that helped at the conference. At the conference we were able to share our many memories that we experienced over the 30-plus years that AWON has existed as a WWII network of orphans. And be sure to check the Conference Video: <https://www.awon.org/2025-conference>, created by Webmaster Rik Peirson. It captures the spirit of the conference perfectly.

Also, a very special thank you to Bob Holliday, CEO and Board Chair of the Museum of Iowa's Gold Star Military Museum, for setting up the visit. Both Iowa State Quartermaster Colonel Mike Harris, and the Museum's curator, Mike Vogt, went above and beyond expectations in not only telling the story of Camp Dodge, The Iowa Guard, and the museum, but also welcoming all the AWON members as well. And the Top-Secret D-Day briefing by General Dwight D, Eisenhower (Mr. Tom Clegg, reenactor) was mesmerizing...we all felt like we were back in time.

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AWON FOUNDER

Ann Bennett Mix

AWON DIRECTORS

Rondy Elliott
Bonnie Hellums
Bob Holliday
Judi Kramer
Gloria Layne
Walter Linne
Marilynn Lieurance
Lorin McCleary
Robert Meek Jr.
Roberta Nolan
Rik Peirson

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Lorin McCleary

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...Conference, con't from front page

Challenge Coin. Rik and his wife, Dianna, together with other volunteers, helped fold and insert them with the Challenge Coins.

We sold additional coins while we were at the conference. Members who wish to purchase any of the remaining Challenge Coins can find photos of the beautiful coins on page 18, along with directions on how you can order your own coin.

On Friday, AWON Members and guests arrived throughout the day. Welcome tables were set up front and center in the lobby with a wonderful large poster of our founder, Ann, for all to see. The poster announced who we are, spreading the word about AWON. Credit for this piece of art goes to Walt Linne.

While in our Hospitality Room a military helmet belonging to Bob Holliday was used to draw names of two of our attendees. Lucky winners Ginger Gregory and Dianna Peirson won rides in WWII Willys Jeeps from the Holiday Inn to Iowa's Gold Star Military Museum on Saturday morning.

On Saturday morning, Chief Warrant Officer Peter "Chief" Lentz was the lead WWII Willys Jeep driver. The second WWII Willys Jeep was driven by John Krone. We are so grateful for the time and expense these men gave us.

The museum's Living History Detachment was represented by Michael Vogt, dressed as a WWII U.S. Army Air Corps Officer; David Malake, as a WWII U.S. Marine Corps Infantryman; and Scott Andreas, as a WWII U.S. Airborne Paratrooper. After welcoming us graciously, they answered questions and displayed many WWII artifacts.

A warm welcome to Iowa's Gold Star Military Museum was given by Colonel (Ret.) Michael Harris, Installation Officer-in-Charge/State Quartermaster, Iowa National Guard/Iowa Department of Public Defense. Colonel Harris filled in for Brigadier General Mark G. Kappelmann, who had a family emergency and could not be with us. Colonel Harris gave a wonderful history of the Museum and Camp Dodge. It was both informative and interesting, and kept our attention.

At the end of the day, Colonel Harris was heard saying, "This is the best day I've ever had at the museum." I asked him what was behind this statement and this was his reply:

"As I began the day at the museum, I knew that day was going to be special. Your fathers were of the Greatest Generation, and as I looked around the room, I couldn't imagine what it must have been like to grow up eighty years ago with the knowledge of the sacrifice they made. It was the greatest struggle in modern times, and the incredible sense of loss and wonder at what could have been still echoes through the generations.

The museum has never hosted a gathering of guests who have made a collective sacrifice on the scale of those who are members of AWON. To stand among you—children of heroes, keepers of memory—was a profound honor. Your presence reminded us that history is not just preserved in artifacts and archives, but in the hearts of those who live its legacy."

A VIP Tour was led by our own Bob Holliday who has served as President/Chairman at Iowa's Gold Star Military Museum for 25 years. This museum is well put together with

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A special call for AWON Grandkids and Great-Grands!

2026 will be an election year for the AWON Board of Directors. We would love to see AWON Descendants - grandchildren and great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews, taking on more leadership roles in AWON. If you or someone you know might be interested in becoming more active in AWON, now is the time to open the lines of communication. In a few months we will be actively recruiting candidates, so talk to your children, grandchildren, and other relatives about the possibility of joining the AWON Board today!

Call for Tributes!

Add a Tribute to the AWON Website! This could be one of the most long-lasting and satisfying ways to remember your Father, Grandfather, Brother, or Uncle. Just be a current AWON Member!

Here's How: 1. Have a look at our website's TRIBUTE section at www.awon.org (click "Our Fathers") to see what others have done; 2. Check the web page on "How to prepare a Father Tribute" – (at www.awon.org/check5.html); then 3. Scan (or have a Kinko's scan) your best picture of your loved one in uniform; 4. Collect your thoughts, memories, and service record of your loved one; 5. Send your JPG-formatted image and between 500 and 1,100 words to our Tribute Stager, Nancy Sue Johnson. Her E-Mail address is . . . janceysue@gmail.com. If you need her snailmail address, just call Nancy Sue at 406/529-2315.

Don't let another day go by. AWON is honored to help you honor your Father or loved one! . . . a Tribute page is yours for the asking.



...Conference, con't from page 3

many interactive displays. Michael Vogt also assisted with the VIP tour, and both men had inside knowledge to share about everything. The presentation was so interesting that we had to keep encouraging our group to move forward to get back in time for the next event.

Our next speaker/performer, respected war reenactor Tom Clegg, is a very intelligent man with many talents. For his presentation - a top-secret D-Day briefing - AWON members came into the room and got seated. The doors closed behind us, and military guards stood in place guarding the doors. Tom entered the room as he was being introduced as General Eisenhower, and he looks a lot like him. We played the part of reporters, listening to & witnessing the plans for the invasion, complete with visual chart descriptions. Note taking and recordings were not permitted. It was made clear that repeating any part of this briefing would be an Act of Treason, until after the plans were carried out and the okay given. There were questions and answers, and I was impressed with the questions that came from our members/reporters.

Tom's performance was so believable that even after it was over, our members were so caught up in the presentation that they continued speaking with Tom Clegg as if he was indeed General Eisenhower. Anybody who witnessed and became part of this amazing event had to be impressed!

Tom actually paid to reschedule his and his wife's flights to Scotland so he could be with us during the dates of our conference. He told me he considered it a real privilege to honor our founder Ann, our dads, and us.

After lunch, we moved outside where

Colonel Harris had arranged for a WWII 105 Howitzer Cannon to be brought to the front lawn of the museum. We sat in a small open amphitheater area where four names were drawn. Roberta Holmes, Carol LaBounty, Maggie Fenstermacher, and Ginger Gregory won the privilege of firing the cannon. It was both loud and exciting to be there and had to be thrilling for those who were granted this honor. Our thanks go to Cannoneer Wes Bender, Iowa National Guardsman, for volunteering time and expertise in making ready the cannon for firing.

The Honorable Paula Dierenfeld, Johnston City, Iowa's Mayor, was introduced and welcomed us to her city. Among all she has done and still does in her life, she has also served as Johnston City Mayor for 18 years. I think this speaks volumes about her. She was inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame in 2023 and has many accomplishments to her credit. She was uplifting and gracious to make time in her busy schedule to be with us.

A flyover was done by Pilot Joe Dalbey in a 1946 Ercoupe with marking of a U.S. Army Air Corps XPQ-B, used during 1941 as a manned test plane for jet-assisted take offs. Joe flew over the museum where we were sitting in the outdoor amphitheater, and we stood up and waved. Once he saw us, the show began. He circled around five or six times; with each pass dropping altitude 500 feet to honor our fathers.

The flyover was done as a gift from the pilot at his own expense, in honor of our AWON founder, Ann, together with remembrance of our dads and for us. Thanks, Joe.

Continued on page 6...

...Conference, con't from page 5

Special Mention goes to Michael Vogt, Curator of the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum, Department of Public Defense at Camp Dodge, for spending many weeks finding us a flyover. Michael worked closely with us, giving support in every way possible assisting with and during the tour of the museum, and making sure all was well.

The reading of our fathers' names was done by their grandchildren in attendance: Jim Anthony, Susan Lee Anthony, Yvette Schorsch, Matthew C. Tomas, and Scott Rustand Turley.

As each name was read, the AWON member connected to that fallen soldier stood in respect and honor. *Taps* followed, performed by Michael Vogt with a recording within the trumpet itself. It's always beautiful to see and hear *Taps* and always stirs up the emotions of so many, too many lives lost.

The day's last speaker was Kevin Callahan, renowned author of *Brothers in Arms*. He told the story of walking among the graves at an American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC) cemetery in the Netherlands. (Please see page 19 for more about Kevin's book.)

Kevin saw his own two young boys playing with each other as they walked the cemetery a few feet behind him, and described how finding the graves of two brothers buried side-by-side personally touched him.

He went on to find the family of those two brothers, learn their stories, and he became closely connected to the family. He sought out other cemeteries and found additional WWII brother/soldiers buried side-by-side.

What followed is the moving story found in his book, *Brothers in Arms*. Kevin didn't serve in the military, nor did he have family who served, but he truly understands our loss.

Back at the hotel, the rest of the day and evening was spent having dinner and visiting with our AWON brothers and sisters. The Hospitality Room was also a nice place for visiting and catching up with each other.

On Sunday, we ate breakfast on our own. Afterwards, Sharing Circles took place in the Hospitality Room, and each table had a preassigned leader. An AWON Board Meeting followed; and the rest of the afternoon was free time to visit and relax.

Volunteers helped set up the centerpieces. The beautiful, meaningful AWON quilt made by our AWON sister, Judi Kramer, honoring our fathers, was on display in the Banquet Room during dinner. AWON posters of Ann - courtesy of Walt Linne - were also displayed on easels.

Chief Warrant Officer Peter "Chief" Lentz, mentioned earlier for providing one of the WWII jeep rides to the museum, also had a major part in our banquet centerpieces. Speaking with him over the phone, I had asked if he knew anybody who might have ammo boxes that we could borrow. "Chief" bought used ammo boxes, sandblasted and repainted them for our centerpieces. I asked him what I owed him for this and he replied...nothing.

I told him this was very generous of him--and I want you to hear this--he said, "How could I not do this? Your dads died for us."

AWON's President Walt Linne gave a welcome

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...Conference, con't. from page 6

address and introduced our Guest of Honor, Ryan Casey Schneider. Ryan is the youngest son of our late AWON Founder, Ann Bennett Mix. Bob Meek, Jr. described the Missing Man Table and gave the invocation prior to the Buffet Dinner.

Keith Luchtel, an Air Force Academy Grad and Vietnam Combat Pilot, was our speaker for the evening. Keith had been shot down twice, and did some work for the CIA. He shared an emotional story about a family he became acquainted with in Vietnam. The enemy had needlessly shot and killed the couple's two very young children, for no reason. Keith tracked them down and killed them.

Keith's speech was a powerful reminder that even though it's good that many Americans are protected from what really happens in war, these same Americans never really understand what combat soldiers experience. It's so much more than a movie on the big screen with a comfortable end to the story.

Soldiers come home with memories they can't shake, and most of them are affected by this for the rest of their lives. The things they went through and what they did for America were done for each one of us, so we have the privilege to continue living in freedom. As AWON members are well aware, war also touches and affects other people - parents, spouses, children, aunts and uncles, cousins, neighbors, and friends - all connected to the loss of our soldiers. These are the silent parts of war that America never hears about.

Tributes of Ann Bennett Mix were given by Walt Linne and Lorin McCleary III - both First Founding Members of AWON. Each of them spoke from the heart, and I was personally

moved to hear what Ann and AWON meant to these two men.

Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Erin Whitney, Director of Operations with the Honor and Remember Organization, assisted by her mother, Carolyn Sandkamp, presented an *Honor and Remember* Flag to our Guest of Honor, Ryan Schneider, the son of AWON Founder, Ann Bennett Mix. The mission of the Honor and Remember Organization is to present every Gold Star family with a hand-embroidered flag in honor of their fallen soldiers. The flag is intended to fly continuously as a visible reminder to all Americans of the lives lost in defense of our national freedoms.

If you're interested in receiving one of these flags, please contact them at <https://honorandremember.org/request-a-flag> or contact Erin direct at ewhitney@honorandremember.org to be placed on the list. Flags are presented, one per soldiers' family, as they find sponsors to cover the cost. For more about how to get your flag, please see page 11.

The Forge Awards were presented by Walt Linne and went to Star Editor Kristin Holmes, in addition to Bob Holliday, Rondy Elliott, Rik Peirson, and Marilynn Lieurance, honoring ten years work to restore the ABMC Flower Program.

A very special and much deserved award went to Walt Linne for his leadership as our AWON President. It was a total and complete surprise to Walt. Lorin McCleary and Rik Peirson were the two driving forces behind this award. Walt was emotional when accepting his award, and later returned to

Continued on page 8...

Membership



- This is a
- New Membership
 - Renewal
 - Family Membership
 - Database Registration Only

Membership Types:

Orphan Member: Any son or daughter of a member of the US Armed Forces, Coast Guard, or Merchant Marine who was killed, remains missing in action, or who died in the line of duty, or who later died of wounds or injuries sustained during WWII.

About You:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 Home Phone _____
 Mobilephone _____
 E-Mail _____
If you're renewing, skip to the Dues Section
 Your Relationship to Serviceman _____
 Your Date of Birth _____
 How did you hear about AWON _____

- Family Member:** Other relations who are not a son or daughter.
- Supporting Member:** Other individuals with an interest in WWII, who wish to support us and participate in our outreach activities and programs.

Membership Dues:

Basic Orphan Member Dues are \$25 a year – starting when we receive your check. This includes your AWON Membership Card, a Web Tribute for your father, a physical or E-version of our quarterly newsletter, **The Star**, a personal account on the AWON online List-serv, and an account on the AWON Facebook Page.

Family Member Dues are \$10 a year – includes an E-version of **The Star**, and \$25 a year – includes a printed version.

Supporting Member Dues are \$50 a year – includes either version of **The Star**.

About your WWII Service Member:

Last Name _____
 First Name _____ M.I. _____
 Birthdate _____
 Hometown & State _____
 Military Unit _____
 Rank _____ Service Number _____
 Date of Death _____ Place _____
 Burial Location _____
 Wife's Maiden Name _____
 Additional information on your WWII Service Member's Military Service, Death, or Burial. _____

Membership Dues Levels: Please circle your Dues Level below:

	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years
Orphan	\$25	\$48	\$70
Family (E-Star Version)	\$10	\$20	\$30
Family (Printed Star Version)	\$25	\$48	\$70
Supporting	\$50	\$96	\$140
Gold Star (Increased Donation)	\$100	\$192	\$280

Please send your check:

Payable to AWON, include it with this form and send it to:

AWON Treasurer
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46216

Donation Considerations:

Memorial Day Wreath Fund \$ _____
 General Operations & Outreach \$ _____
 Total Dues & Donations Enclosed \$ _____



Submittable
 Online >>>



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...Conference, continued from page 7

the stage, still very emotional regarding being appreciated and honored with this award.

Walt's reaction reminds us to tell our loved ones they are loved. It also reminds us to share kind words with the people we meet every day. Life is short and we can all have differences and still come together as friends.

There was a long list of thank yous, given by yours truly, as the Chairperson for this event. I started by thanking all the military in the room, current and past service, asking them to stand and be recognized. Then I let everyone know this event was the work of the Planning Committee - Judi Kramer, Bob Meek, Lorin McCleary III; plus Kristin Holmes and Roberta Nolan who could not attend. Judi Kramer played a major role in several parts of this event, and I considered her a right arm. Kristin Holmes was a great support with *The Star*, and so much more, and was always first to raise her hand to help. (*Editor's Note - It was my pleasure, Marilyn!*)

A few others also need to be remembered:

Ned and Eva Swanson at Action Flag provided the American flags that were part of our centerpieces and even painted the sticks black for me. Take a minute and read what they said in an email prior to our event:

"Although we cannot be with you in person, please know our hearts are with you as you gather in Iowa. We are honored to send these flags as a small gesture of our deep gratitude. We recognize the sacrifices you and your families made during World War II and that they shaped our freedom today. Losing a parent at such a young age is a burden few

can understand, yet you all have carried that legacy with courage and grace for a lifetime. Your stories remind us that there is a cost to our freedom. We thank you and remember your parents who fought for us."

SGT Thomas Mannen, U.S. Army, a neighbor of mine in Oregon, provided the dog tags that were part of our centerpieces and represented both PVT Sydney W. Bennett and his proud daughter, AWON's founder, Ann Bennett Mix. Five of the dog tags were given to Ann's five children, and others were given to our AWON Board Members in attendance.

Tom said, "It was an honor to provide these Dog Tags in honor of the sacrifice your dads made for our freedom."

MSG (Ret.) Patricia Timmerman U.S. Air Force worked with us over a period of several weeks to be awarded an F-16 flyover. Though the flyover was ultimately denied, she went above and beyond in her efforts, and we certainly appreciated the time she gave us.

"Chief" Lentz, who was mentioned for providing one of the WWII Willys Jeep rides and who also provided the Ammo Boxes for our banquet centerpieces, is also owed a huge debt of gratitude.

Bob Holliday was our boots on the ground in Iowa. He knows everybody in Iowa. Many of them he is even somehow related to. Anything we thought of doing, Bob had a name and phone number for us to call. And Rik Peirson was responsible for all the signs, posters, name tags, and website listings.

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...Conference, con't from page 9

Rik also put together an amazing video of the conference which you can access here:

<https://www.awon.org/2025-conference>

At the end of the thank yous, all military past and present were asked to stand, and all who helped and participated were asked to stand. Less than half the folks in the room were left seated. It took many people, both AWON members and non-members, to make this event a success. Iowa was welcoming, patriotic, and rolled out the red carpet for us, and it made every day all it could be. The evening ran long, but we found the energy to sing AWON's traditional conference songs together.

Editor's Note: On behalf of AWON, I just wanted to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to you, Marilyn, for everything you have done putting together this conference, not to mention this phenomenal write-up for those of us who couldn't be in attendance. It is so very much appreciated!!

Please check out pages 12-15 for photos of the Ann Bennett Mix Memorial Conference.

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Robert Meek	rhmeekjr@gmail.com
Roberta Nolan	rdnolan@gmail.com
Rik Peirson	rik@dayone.com

In closing, a bit more about the Forgy-Award-winning ABMC Flower Program Team:

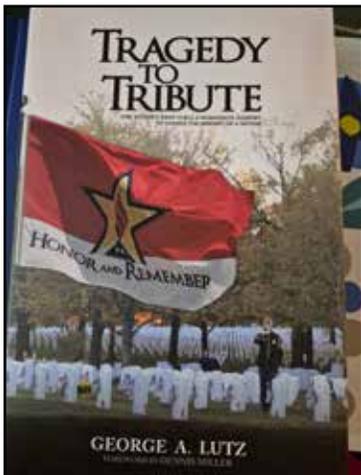
For those who are unaware, the Flower Program was an American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) program that helped Gold Star Families with language barriers and currency exchanges between countries when ordering flowers for the graves of our WWII soldiers buried or on the Walls of the Missing at overseas ABMC cemeteries. The ending of this program affects 183,000 WWII Orphans across our Great Country, and this team is responsible for taking the ABMC, an Executive Branch of our Federal Government, before Congress to answer for ending this program.

Led by Bob Holliday, with members Rondy Elliott, Rik Peirson, and Marilyn Lieurance, and the late Susan Hadler, this team brings many talents and interpersonal connections to the table. They've continuously worked as an independent team to restore the Flower Program, now known in Congress as the "Flowers for Fallen Heroes, 2924 Act 7361." In Congress, the ABMC promised the Flower Program would be up and running in 2025. Shortly after our AWON event in October, the government shut down. It has temporarily reopened and it is our understanding the ABMC has the Flower Program in their budget, and this looks good.

Some of those helping us with resurrecting the Flower Program are: Colonel Benjamin Cassidy, U.S. Marine (Ret.); U.S. Navy Seal Ryan Zinke, (Ret.) and U.S. Representative for Montana's First Congressional District; Kyle Egan, Military Legislative Assistant; General John F. Kelly U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.) and former White House Chief of Staff; Jake Tapper, Lead News Anchor at CNN for Washington, D.C. events; and many Generals, Military Officers, and National Military Organizations.

Honor and Remember - An Old Concept and a New Flag

by Rondy Elliott



At AWON's recent Ann Bennett Mix Memorial Conference honoring Annie, in Des Moines, Iowa, we were treated to a delightful program featuring a colorful new flag, specifically designed to honor the fallen in all wars, from the War for Independence (The

American Revolution), through the two World Wars, to the present day.

Although I have always loved the Gold Star Flag for its simplicity, this new flag takes the Gold Star Flag a step further. While (too) many people are unfamiliar with the Gold Star flag, leaving some wondering what the Gold Star is meant to represent, this flag states "HONOR AND REMEMBER" right on the body of the flag in large letters. That, I think, is what makes the Honor and Remember Flag unique, because its purpose is instantly recognizable.

The origins of the Honor and Remember Flag will be all too familiar to AWON members. A man named George Lutz lost his Tony in Iraq in 2005. Tony left behind a wife and two small children. George Lutz ultimately turned his grief for his son into a purpose which consumed him - to be sure that NO life lost while serving our country would ever be forgotten. To that end, he designed the Honor and Remember Flag, and set out to have it be recognized as our country's symbol of honor and remembrance. As of 2025, twenty-eight states have officially recognized it as such.

Every year, they have a huge banquet to present flags to new people. Honor and Remember, Inc's headquarters is in Chesapeake, VA, and because I

live close enough to that location and could get there easily, I was invited to a ceremony wherein I would receive my flag. It was presented in a beautiful and meaningful ceremony, along with several others. One went to a Gold Star wife who lost her husband in 2009 in Iraq. One flag went to a family whose loved one was MIA in Vietnam for years, whose remains were recently found and repatriated.

A retired Lieutenant Colonel from the Army, Erin Whitney, also a West Point grad, came to AWON's Des Moines conference. She presented an Honor and Remember flag to Guest of Honor, Ryan Schneider, son of AWON founder Ann Bennett Mix. She is one of many people who are enthusiastic supporters of the Honor and Remember Flag, dedicated to helping Mr. Lutz spread the message of the flag's meaning far and wide. Each flag has the fallen service member's rank, name, and date of death professionally embroidered on the bottom. One goal of the Honor and Remember program is to present a personalized flag to every Gold Star family in our nation.

The Honor & Remember project has been underway for fifteen years, but some AWON members may not be aware of this wonderful remembrance. I

have submitted this article to the STAR so that no AWONer will be left behind! Flags can be ordered on the [Honor and Remember website](#).

Visit the site, learn more about this fine group, and order your flag.

Please note - there is a bit of a backlog, so if you want a flag for your family, get your order in as soon as possible.





Photos from AWON's Ann Bennett Mix Memorial Conference

Above: A lovely picture of Ann Bennett Mix greeted conference attendees.
Below: The decorations for the AWON banquet held on Sunday, Oct. 12
Photos continue on page 13





Photos continue on
page 14...



What a cast of characters!
If you want to see more group
conference photos plus a wonderful
video put together by Rik Peirson,
please visit AWON's website:

[https://www.awon.org/2025-
conference](https://www.awon.org/2025-conference)



Ann Bennett Mix Memorial Conference photos, continued from previous page



Top Left: Walt Linne and Marilyn Liurance with speaker (and Ike lookalike) Tom Clegg. Below Left: Sam Tannenbaum and Gloria Layne cutting up for the camera.

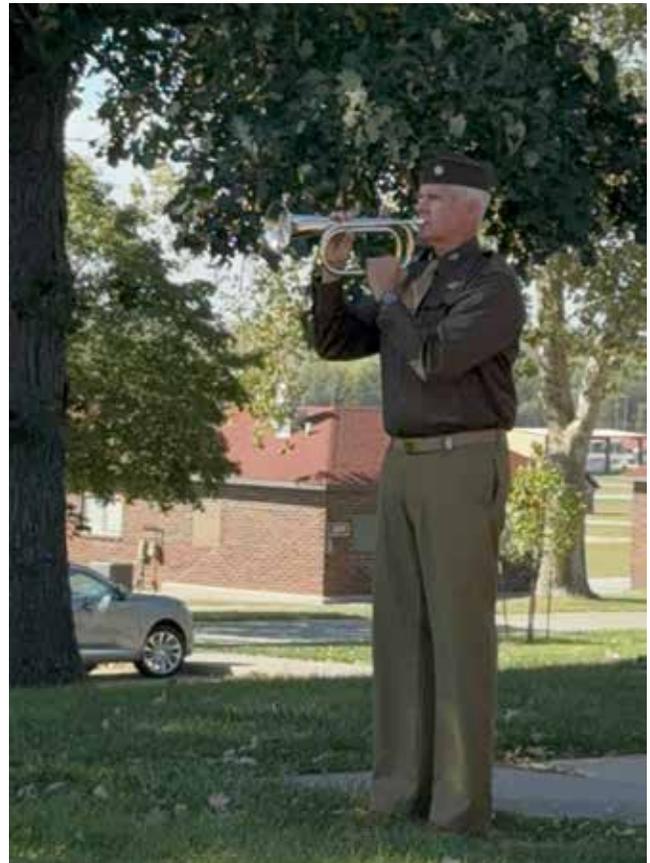
Top Right: Lucky AWONers like Dianna Peirson got to ride to the Iowa Gold Star Museum in style, in a Willys Jeep. Bottom Right: President Walt Linne addresses AWON Members. Walt was the recipient of the *Our Star is Still Shining* Award in recognition of his ongoing service to AWON.



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Above: The flyover for Ann, performed by Pilot Joe Dalbey



Top Right:

Taps, played by Michael Vogt

Below: The cannon firing was loud, but a lot of fun!

Bottom Right: AWON's Missing Man Table. The Missing Man Ceremony was performed by Robert Meek.



Photos continue on the following page...

Ann Bennett Mix Memorial Conference photos, continued from previous page

Photos continue on page 17



Above - AWON's webmaster Rik Peirson accepting his Forgy Award for his work on the ABMC Flower Program Team. Other Flower Program Team Members and Forgy Winners include Rondy Elliott, Marilyn Lieurance, Bob Holliday, and the late Susan Hadler.

Top Left - Ann Mix's son Ryan Schneider is presented with an Honor and Remember flag. Read more about the Honor and Remember organization on page 11.

Bottom Left - LTCOL Erin Whitney, Director of Operations with the Honor and Remember Organization, and her mother, Carolyn Sandkamp, presented the flag in remembrance of Ann Mix and her father, PVT Sydney Worthington Bennett.

Below - A full view of the Honor and Remember Flag.





Above: AWON First Founder Lorin McCleary accepting the Forge Award on behalf of his daughter, STAR Editor Kristin Holmes.



Top Right: The Forge Award winners' names hangs proudly at AWON HQ in Indianapolis.

Middle Right: AWON President Walt Linne was awarded the *Our Star is Still Shining* award for his longtime work on behalf of AWON.



Bottom Right: The AWON Headquarters Office in Indianapolis displays three plaques - the AWON First Founders, AWON Chairmen and Presidents, and the Forge Awards Winners.

Below: Kristin Holmes, Star Editor since 2019, posing with her Forge Award.



AWON Challenge Coins

Available NOW!



AWON has a limited number of Commemorative Challenge Coins available for our members to purchase. The cost will be \$25, with shipping included in that price. To order, send \$25 with your name and address to:

AWON Challenge Coin
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216



A brief history of Challenge Coins -

Challenge coins originated as military tokens of camaraderie between men in a given unit, battalion, or campaign. While military coins were given out as early as the Roman Empire, the modern tradition is traced back to World War I. Over the following decades, Challenge Coins became a way to honor achievement and mark membership in any unit or organization. They are exchanged not only within the military but government agencies, corporations, and organizations like AWON, serving as treasured commemorative keepsakes.

Author Kevin Callahan, who wrote the book *Brothers In Arms*, about brothers killed in WWII and buried side by side, gave an informational and inspirational presentation about those who died for our freedom. Information on how to order his book is in the following column.

Third, we celebrate our outstanding banquet with Guest of Honor Ryan Schneider, Ann's son, presiding. Presentations were made by Paula Dierenfeld, Johnson City Mayor; LTC (Ret) Erin Whitney, Honor and Remembrance Flag Representative; and Joe Dalbey, Flyover Pilot. All the guest speakers were presented with our new AWON Challenge Coin. Information on ordering a challenge coin is on page 18.

The Forgy Award recipients were ABMC Flower Project Team - Bob Holliday, Marilyn Rustand Lieurance, Rondy Elliott, Rik Peirson, and Susan Hadley, posthumously. And Kristin D. Holmes, STAR Editor. The *Our Star is Still Shining* award was presented to yours truly. *(Editor's Note - a much deserved award for a wonderful man, Walt!!)*

Fourth, we continue looking to the future of AWON. We will be convening a committee to look into the future of AWON. Its goals include reaching to the membership, Past Presidents and Board members for suggestions and recommendations for the Future of AWON. Also, Board of Directors elections are coming in 2026 - if you know of any grandchildren or great-grandchildren, or nieces and nephews, that may want to serve on the Board, it might be time to open lines of communication about that possibility. Finally, Happy 2026 New Year! In Their Memory!



Above - Author Kevin M. Callahan, with AWON Member Ginger Gregory. Kevin is the author of:

BROTHERS IN ARMS
Remembering Brothers
Buried Side by Side in American
World War II Cemeteries

Brothers in Arms: Remembering Brothers Buried Side by Side in American World War II Cemeteries by author, Kevin M. Callahan, tells the stories of brothers who died in World War II and who rest today, side by side, in an American cemetery overseas. Featuring over 700 original photos and artifacts collected from the families who lost these brave brothers, the book chronicles the stories of seventy-two sets of brothers, eight of whom left children behind. The book can be purchased on Amazon or on our website:

<https://brothersinarmsbook.com/book/>

A note from AWON's President:

Kevin Callahan was a guest speaker at AWON's 15th National Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. Though Kevin's book BROTHERS IN ARMS is about brothers buried overseas, many AWON fathers are buried alongside them. Kevin's book, which describes the cemeteries and local war events, is informative and inspirational. It is a wonderful book that I recommend.

Walt Linne
AWON President



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The Star

“Breaking Down the Wall of Silence”

AWON Headquarters
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216
www.awon.org



AWON Mission

To locate and bring together sons and daughters of those who died or are missing as a result of American involvement in World War II, honor the service and sacrifice of our fathers and provide information and support to these people who were orphaned by the war.

AWON Directory

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