

The background image shows a veterans memorial park. In the foreground, there is a stone monument with a brick base. The monument is inscribed with "ST. HENRY VETERANS GARD" and "FREEDOM AMPHITHEATER". Above the text is a relief of a soldier. To the left, there are three flagpoles with flags, including the American flag and the St. Henry Legion flag. A paved path leads through the park, and there are various plants and trees. The sky is blue with some clouds.

THE KIA MEMORIAL PROJECT

for the St. Henry Legion

COMMUNITY WITH HEART

The St. Henry Village was incorporated in 1901 and has since grown to a small Ohio community of just under 3,000 residents. Like any small town in America, they pride themselves in their patriotism and honoring those who have served in the military.

In 2012, the community dedicated and opened the Freedom Amphitheater. As years passed and with the community support, they added the St. Henry Veterans Garden outside the amphitheater and street banners to honor all those in the community that served them. They continue to look for ways to honor and remember their military service.



HONOR THE FALLEN

For the St. Henry Legion, I wanted to create pieces that honored those that gave America their all. Since World War I, there have been eight men from the St. Henry community that have given their lives for their country. They had friends, family, and brothers in arms that want to remember them and honor them.

MAY WE HONOR THOSE WHO PAID THE ULTIMATE PRICE FOR FREEDOM

The goal of this project was to give them memorial pieces to do that. I wanted their service to not be forgotten and the faces and names to be remembered.





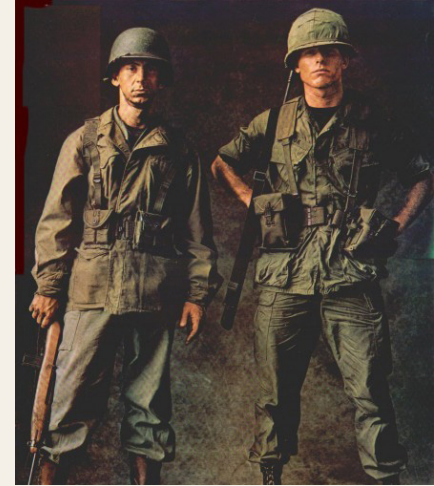
THE RESEARCH

RESEARCH

Over the years, the Legion has asked the community for help in honoring the veterans. They have pulled together lists and documentation to create memorials and pieces to honor them. I wanted to create an illustration where they all stood together. I had considered Photoshopping it all together, but with the oldest being over 100 years ago, it was immensely challenging to get the photos and references needed to make it happen.

For my research, I reached out to Mark Schulze. Mark is a Marine veteran that served during Desert Storm and most recently served as the St. Henry Legion commander for the past 6 years. He was able to connect me with the local veterans that provided the information I needed to create the realistic illustration.

When searching for additional information besides what was provided, I found it difficult to find more about those from World War I and World War II. This made the project feel even more important to not let them fade into history. They paid the ultimate price, and for their sacrifice, they should be remembered.



POSING

When looking for inspiration on how to pose eight men in an illustration together, I started looking at buddy pictures from the military. What I found didn't seem suitable for what I wanted. Most pictures had some squatting, kneeling, and standing. I wanted something that gave each man the same level of focus, so I switched to looking at groomsmen's pictures for inspiration.

From there, I picked standing poses and reference pictures that were fitting for the facial references I had for each guy. If I struggled to find a good reference, I asked people I knew to pose so I could have a picture reference.



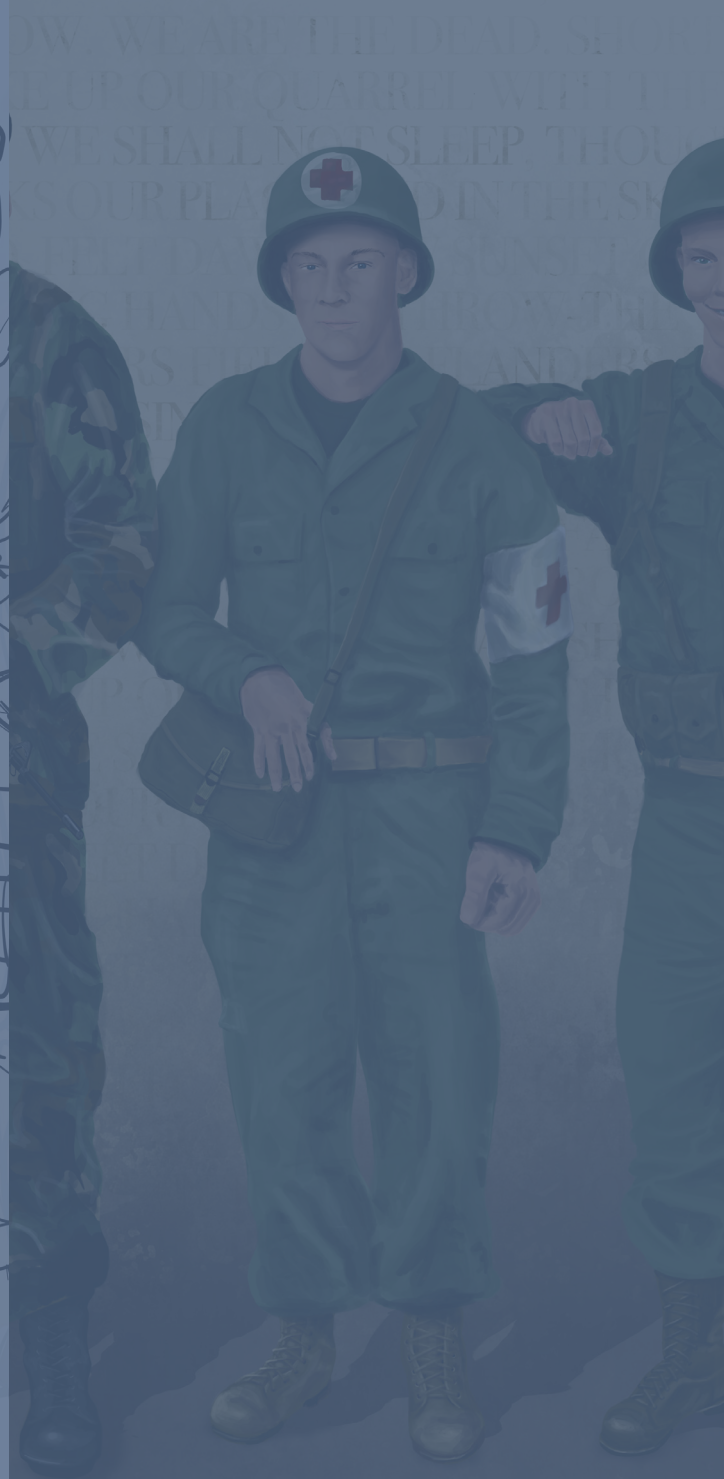
WEAPONS

In the time span of the eight KIAs, there were four military-issued rifles that were used: the M1903 Springfield Rifle, M1 Garand, M16A1, and M16A2. These weapons are well documented and known for their place in history.

For the illustration, I made sure each had the proper rifle and followed the proper handling. In some of the original sketches that I had reviewed, it was pointed out that the way I had them posed was not accurate to the way military is trained to hold their weapons. After that, I researched how they would have been handled and altered the posing to be more accurate.



THE PROCESS



mel

Dottkott

Heitka

FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY



STEP 1
Rough sketch of
body form and
composition



STEP 2
More detailed
rough sketch with
clothes



STEP 3
Add the solid
colors and sketch
major lines



STEP 4
Add shadowing
and highlights for
dimension



STEP 5
Add hands, face
and finishing
touches

WHO THEY ARE

NICHOLAS FRANZER

Nicholas Franzer served in the Vietnam War. He was wounded on April 27, 1969, in the Quang Tri Province in South Vietnam. He returned home wounded and passed away from his injuries on January 16, 1978. He was 30 years old. He is honored on the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Panel 26w, Line 76.



When researching the Vietnam uniforms, I talked to a Vietnam veteran to look over for accuracy. Once we started talking, the veteran told me that he had gotten beers with Nick a week before he was injured.



JAMES BERNARD

James Bernard served in World War II.



Little is known about Bernard. Mark Schulze believes he died in or shortly after boot camp. For his uniform, I found a modern picture that was perfect for his position in the group, making it easier for me to not have to pull together so many references.



WHO THEY ARE

HENRY RAMMEL

Henry Rammel served in the US Army during World War I. He is buried in Saint Mihiel American Cemetery and Memorial in France. He was 25 years old.

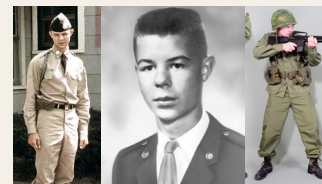


Henry Rammel served in World War I, so finding good-quality reference photos was difficult. Mark was a big help in tracking down a good picture. He went to the local library and attempted to find Henry's high school photo, but found nothing. The librarian then checked on a historical records website and found three pictures that were all easy to work with.



JAMES POTTKOTTER

James Pottkotter served in the Vietnam War. He was Killed in Action in the Pleiku province in South Vietnam. He was 20 years old. He is honored on the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Panel 03e, Line 13.



After nearly completing the illustration for Pottkotter's weapon, a veteran pointed out that I had drawn the incorrect M16. I had originally used an A2 for my reference when I should have used an A1. The weapons are highly similar, but the barrel is different enough that anyone from Vietnam would know immediately that it was incorrect.



WHO THEY ARE

DONALD HEITKAMP

Donald Heitkamp served in the Air Force for less than three and a half years as a Senior Airman in the Security Police Force. He was assigned to the 45th Missile Security Squadron when he was Killed in Action on security detail on May 29, 1986. He was 23 years old.



Donald Heitkamp was a name I heard a lot growing up even though he passed away almost a decade before I was born. Donald's brother was my neighbor for 21 years. Many community members knew him and still remember him. Illustrating the camo on his uniform proved to be quite difficult because the shadowing and highlights barely showed up with the camo pattern.



CLETUS BRUNSWICK

Cletus Brunswick served as a medic in the Korean War. He was Killed in Action in the Chorwon area on October 4, 1951. He was 23 years old.



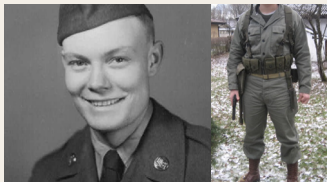
With Brunswick being a medic, a picture of his uniform was not easy to find. I could find bits and pieces, but I also found inconsistencies. Once I talked to some veterans, I found that a lot of the labels—like the medic symbol on the helmet—would have been painted by Cletus himself. The veteran I talked to about the uniform went to school with and knew Brunswick and Siefing.



WHO THEY ARE

RALPH SIEFRING

Ralph Siefring served in the Korean War. He was Killed in Action on September 5, 1951, in Yao-Dong. He was 23 years old.



Ralph Siefring and Cletus Brunswick were born within a week of one another and were killed in action within a month of one another. They would have gone to school together as well. Knowing this information, I posed them a little more buddy-like with Siefring leaning on Brunswick. This type of posing wasn't easy to find references for, so this one was where I asked people I knew to stand in.

CLARENCE HEMMELGARN

Clarence Hemmelgarn served in the US Army in World War II. He was Killed in Action on December 1, 1944, in Germany. He was 30 years old.



Not much is known about Hemmelgarn, but in World War II their uniform heavily depended on what they were doing and where they were. I didn't have that information to be able to ensure the correct uniform, but this uniform is one that could have been his.

A field of red poppies is shown at sunset. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The background is a warm, golden glow from the setting sun, creating a soft, hazy atmosphere. The text "THE DELIVERABLES" is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

THE DELIVERABLES

THE BANNERS

Today, St. Henry has a banner for every veteran. The KIA's banners are only different in color, so the current banners don't highlight that the KIAs are more than just veterans. Those banners also do not fully represent what they did or how they served. By showing their full uniform, the banner can start to put that in perspective how they served.

This is an effective and great way to use the illustration because it highlights each soldier individually and serves as a reminder for all those who drive down the main street.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Like any organization, social media can play a key role in connecting them to the community. Through social media, the Legion can honor the KIAs especially as we approach holidays like Memorial Day.

This illustration in social media highlights the detail of the work and focuses on the individual KIA.



THE POSTERS

The poster displays all Killed In Actions together in one group with the poem "In Flanders Fields" behind them. By creating this as a whole composition, it allows them all to be honored together for their service.

The illustration with the added background creates a great memorial piece for the Legion and community members.



THE MURAL

The mural creates a large year-round display for the community that honors the Killed In Actions. The location of the mural next to the St. Henry Legion carries forward a piece of the American Legion mission to remind others of the sacrifices given and acts as a memorial.

This use of the illustration shows how it can be used in multiple ways.



THE LEARNINGS

While I have done many illustrations in the past, this was my first realistic, digital large—scale illustration. I learned about the program Procreate- its features and limitations. The biggest challenge of this project was the research and finding the references I needed to best reflect and represent the soldiers. This project helped me build my skills in Procreate while providing me the opportunity to prove my illustration skills.

Legionnaires constantly remind communities that freedom and prosperity come with a price, a price often paid in blood. They know the difference between Memorial Day and Veterans Day. They raise the money, put in the hours and bring into existence monuments and memorials to “preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars.”

- From the American Legion
Mission Statement
