



Miracle of America Museum

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OF MUSEUMS

Autumn 2025

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

36094 Memory Lane Polson, MT 59860 406-883-6804 www.miracleofamericamuseum.org • info@miracleofamericamuseum.org

Executive Board of Directors

Gil Mangels, Chief Executive Officer
and Board Chair; Helen Mangels, Secretary;

Ryan Gage, Treasurer;

Board members: Brandy Wallace, Cathleen Wilde,
Art Mangels, Sam Allred, Carol Beck-Edgar,
Paul and Vanessa Hammond, and Rick Wallace.

Note: We would like to add members to our board of directors. We'd love to hear from you if you have interest.

Live History Days 2025 Another Success

Hello again – time seems to fly by so fast these days. Looking over last year's Autumn newsletter I could just about copy the report on our successful Live History Days for this 2025 event. I don't know whether to do a blanket thank you for all our helpers, exhibitors, and visitors, or try and remember each by name. What would you do?

I must thank my son **Ron**, who came all the way from Louisiana for three and a half weeks to help. He drove Chitty Chitty in the Fourth of July parade as well as two days of giving rides on our large military full tracked ammo carrier. My aging body makes it next to impossible for me to get up into the driver seat to operate it anymore.

Elijah Camel took over my job orienting the many passengers about our small arms military guns about which he is very knowledgeable. This was a great relief.

Thank you to everyone who stopped in and enjoyed our many displays. See you next year for Live History Days 2026!

This Just In!

Hi! I'm Dez! I'm excited to introduce myself as the new Assistant CEO of the Miracle of America Museum—a place that has always felt like home. I was born in Whitefish and spent my childhood summers here, helping my grandpa Gil by picking up nails for two cents apiece and working the front desk. *(Riding in Gil's sidecar at lower left)* I loved counting the stars as I slept on the deck of the Paul Bunyan logging boat. I've watched the museum grow for more than 40 years. I'm thrilled to return home after raising my family in Springdale, Arkansas, where my husband taught at the University. I'm bringing my experiences in welding, non-profit administration, and running my own small computer programming business. As Gil's granddaughter, I am honored to follow in his footsteps, carrying forward his vision with a passion for preservation and a commitment to helping the Miracle of America Museum thrive for generations to come.



Soap Box Derby Car Fulfills a Dream

Back in the 1930s and into at least the 60s, many a boy's dream was to build a soap box derby racer. A few years ago, I built one for museum display. Well, this summer, my great granddaughter from Arkansas thought it should be painted and coaxed me out of some money for her college fund to do the job.

I was prompted even further to finish my own when Kristi Eichner donated her father's original racer along with a beautiful trophy he had won in 1946.

I had seen Kristi at the waste transfer station as she was disposing of a homemade wagon with a broken axle. I mentioned I could fix it and display it at the museum. A couple of weeks later she stopped by the museum and asked if I would be willing to display her dad's racer. It was another one of those, "you could have knocked me over with a feather" moments.



Our Guests Write . . .

We are avid supporters of Miracle of America Museum and always tell our guests to go to the Museum. They are never disappointed. Often we go with them and see something we haven't seen in previous visits.

It's been said "you can't go home again" but depending on your perspective, a visit to MOAM is an enjoyable walk down memory lane. The patriotic theme is refreshing as a reminder that America is a Miracle.

The motorcycle collection is amazing; military artifacts and history are well done; car, boat, other unique vehicle collections are truly unique.

Western and Local history and building exhibits add a wow factor. The Space and Alien section adds a nice humorous touch. Recommended.

- Don and Denise Loveless, Polson.

Plan on WinterFest January 10

Be sure to put us on your new calendar for our fifth annual WinterFest, January 10, 2026.

The event continues to grow in popularity. We've already had promises of additional participants. You'll see more about it in our winter newsletter.



MISCELLANEOUS DONATIONS

As Paradise is claiming so many of our WWII and Korean War veterans, it leaves those family members still remaining with the question of what to do with their loved one's personal effects. Almost weekly, we get a call wondering if we would accept and display the veteran's uniform. We have a rule that we will not take any uniform that has been stripped of patches, rank insignia, ribbons or medals. Then it would be just cloth with no character or story. With those that qualify, it is also more meaningful to have documentation, such as a photograph of the service member in uniform, service records or citations for any awards.

With the preceding being said, I have been overwhelmed this last month with the following: **Monica Mills** brought in the Air Force uniform of her late husband, Maury Mills; **Nina Milton** gifted us the cap, patches, and ribbons of Warrant Officer Mortimer Milton; **Bob**

and Sue King donated their uncle Ted Sokalowski's uniform, and memorabilia.

Purple hearts are very meaningful as they signify KIA (killed in action) or being wounded in battle. The one pictured was donated by **Terry Clark** from an ephemera grouping of Robert Scales, pilot of a B-17. They are on display in our re-created 8th Army Air Corp bomber barracks.

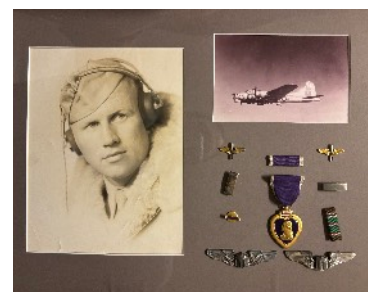
Thirty-eight years ago **Jim and Gerrie Boyle** moved into Polson from out of state (Jim had roots here) and one of the first places they visited was our museum. With Jim's recent passing, and Gerrie having moved into assisted living, Gerrie donated a large collection of collector clocks, some to display and the others to be used as fund raisers. We display a brass ship's clock in the boat building, and a couple of Gerrie's mother's heirlooms.

Kathy Gilroy donated children's chemistry sets and two woman's girdles,

still in the original boxes.

Lynn Kelly donated a Gilbert microscope which is now on display in the toybox/Christmas building.

I never know what is coming in, or what historical object has just been uncovered, sometimes linking with artifacts already on display. For example, **Bryan Mahugh** found a 45 star U.S. flag in a cloth bag in the attic of a historic Polson house that his parents used to own. Written by the flag eyelet, was "N.A. CAP Palmer". Fortunately, I still



MISCELLANEOUS DONATIONS, cont'd

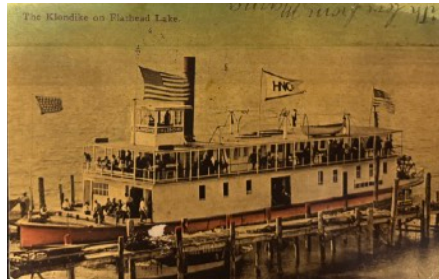
have some memory left and I showed Bryan photos and a medal of CAP Palmer relating to his naval service in the Spanish American War, WWI, and WWII donated to us years ago by his niece **Lucretia Beavers Simpson**. She, a young-sounding 92 year-old, was excited to get my call and do some reminiscing. While she didn't know

anything about the flag, she mentioned that between wars, Mr. Palmer had captained the Klondike paddle wheeler steam boat for several years. That mention sent me out to our water related building and I searched diligently until I found this 1910 postcard showing our new flag flying proudly. One of those WOW! incidents for sure.

It pays to have museum friends whose parents went through the Great Depression, because they save everything!

A great loss to Polson is **Dennis and Carol Jones** who are moving to Missoula to be close to grandkids. We only have room for two pics; the saddle they brought us, and a few of their baby related things. We are so grateful they thought of us.

As the days get chillier, you might be thinking of getting out your warmer clothing, like this beautiful fur coat, originally sold at Pete's Fur Shop in Missoula. It was donated by **Paul and Barbara Grinde**. We did some tidying up in the 30s house to make room for it.



We Salute our Members, Donors, and Volunteers

Eric and Carolyn Hall, John Tavaglione Family, Rob Rye Family, Emily Hall and Wade Shipley Family, Jens Gran, The American Legion, Allred Appliance Repair, Rocky Mountain Twist, Safeway, Super 1 Foods, Walmart, Donna Jean Rolfson Trust, Sandra Close in memory of her brother-in-law, **Brigadier General James Kemp, Westland Seed, Lynn Kelly, Ann Ross, and Julie Garrett.**

The accumulated tips in our tip jar and/or cream can help in many ways as well.

Significant donors:

**Denise and Don Loveless,
George Brimhall**

NOTE: While every penny donated is significant just like the widow's mite in the Bible, we have coined the phrase to credit those who have gone above and beyond the category of our specified life membership of \$1,000.



Museum Giving Levels:

Annual Support:

Single \$50; Family \$100;

Corporate \$200; Life \$1,000.

Membership includes free admission, newsletter and discount in our Gift Shop, plus the satisfaction that you are supporting our mission to preserve history.

Our Future is Ensured with Endowment

Thanks to our many donors, great and small, we accumulated enough to deposit \$30,000 more into the Endowment Fund.

Our fund now totals over \$350,000. We are at ten per cent of where we hope to be.

Can you help us reach our sustainability goal? The dividends from this fund will go toward hiring staff to keep the museum functioning well into the future.

Importance of Miracle Endowment – Ways to Help

Maybe you already know that Helen and I work on a strictly volunteer basis. My granddaughter Desire' "Dez" takes over when Helen and I step away. *See story, page 1.* Funds will be needed for assistants, receptionists, and grounds help.

That's where dividends from our Museum Endowment Fund will go. The corpus remains invested and the earnings are directed for that purpose alone. We need to grow the Endowment and we ask that you consider helping in any way you can.

Donors can enjoy tax advantages by helping the museum. Here are ideas to discuss with your CPA:

- **Planned or pending stock donation**
- **Required Minimum Distributions from your IRA**
- **Life insurance policies**
- **Real properties, i.e. land**
- **Personal assets, vehicles, collections of value, partial retirement fund, etc.**

If you so decide, be sure to put your wishes in writing and let the family know that you did so.

Plan to join us January 10 for our Fifth Annual WinterFest!

We promise another fun wintertime celebration with vintage snowmobiles, machinery, food, hot chocolate and cider.

Bring the family for a very special day at Miracle of America Museum!



*As we approach this special Holiday season,
please accept our Thanksgiving greetings and
our wishes that you have a safe and blessed
Christmas season.*



Please enjoy our quarterly newsletter and share it with your friends and family. View it online for best color images. If you are no longer interested in receiving a printed copy, a note or phone call is appreciated so we can save mailing costs.

**Open 9am to 5 pm
Year-Round!**



Enjoy the Museum's YouTube Channel! We've added QR codes, and WiFi is available throughout the grounds to enhance your enjoyment of our displays. Learn "the rest of the story!"

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