



# Miracle of America Museum

MEMBER:  
MUSEUM ASSOC.  
OF MONTANA  
AND  
AMERICAN ASSOC.  
OF MUSEUMS

Spring 2025

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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## 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 Edger,

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.

## Snow is Blessing, Now with Plow Help

As is customary, I start writing your next newsletter a  
well before deadline. This morning, the 18th of February  
we are contending with a week's worth of snow, an  
accumulation of over two feet. I'm thankful for the  
snowfall and moisture, especially in the mountains, even  
though it is a nuisance and expensive to deal with on  
museum property. I'm thankful that David has taken over  
most of the plowing responsibility.



## Winter Fest Better than Ever!

Our fourth annual  
Winter Fest went  
beautifully, with good snow,  
more volunteers and over  
200 guests. Many children  
enjoyed learning to run the  
smaller snowmobiles,  
thanks to the **Western  
Montana Vintage  
Snowmobile Enthusiasts**.  
With admissions, club  
donations and concessions,  
this winter fundraiser  
brought in over \$2,000. Lots of smiles and promises to be back  
next year!



See what two of our special friends had to say!

I use to go on field trips to the museum in Preschool and now  
it's my favorite place to go. I love history, especially wars, and  
God and the Miracle of America Museum has lots of both. My  
mom's old military uniform is in the museum with more of our  
family's military history, which is very special to me! My mom  
and I love to visit Gil, he always has something new to show  
and teach us. We really like going to all of the events Gil does  
at the museum for everyone.

Gil, thank you for all the fun events. I hope the museum  
goes on for a very long time and that someday my kids will  
get to go! Also thank you for how much time you take to talk  
and teach us and I hope all of the knowledge you've shared  
with me I can pass onto my kids and their kids for future  
generations!

- Carmen, age 8

*Above: Carmen standing beside her favorite guest  
snowmobile.*

I want to thank Gil for putting so much dedication and hard  
work into his amazing museum and our community. He goes  
out of his way to educate youth in our valley and not let  
important history be forgotten. We go to the museum  
multiple times per year and always see something new. You  
can tell how much attention and care goes into each display  
to honor its history. I definitely suggest following the Miracle  
of America Museum on social media and signing up for the  
newsletter to keep up on all of their fun family events! Local  
or just visiting, the Miracle of America Museum is a MUST  
see stop!

- Kristen, age 34

## Teddy Roosevelt Visits, Entertains at MOAM

We were fortunate to be chosen by Mission Valley Live to be one of the hosts for “President Teddy Roosevelt” and his knowledgeable and entertaining program. The performer, Joe Wiegand entertained and informed 46 people in our public meeting room. He was impressed to see our permanent display of the actual saddle Teddy rode on when he came to Montana; along with the history of Fred Herrig, ranger and caretaker of the president’s tack and animals. Fred actually served with Teddy in the Spanish American War. Teddy called him a hero for retrieving a runaway pack mule laden with machine guns that was feared would get into enemy hands.

Our guest speaker also viewed our Spanish American War exhibit and our “Great White Fleet” display. The Fleet was commissioned by Teddy as a goodwill around-the-world cruise, but mainly to show the world that our Navy was not to be messed with.

*This time, “Teddy” rode into town not on a saddle horse, but from Theodore Roosevelt National Park in Medora, ND in this colorful Ford Flex. We were thrilled to host him, thanks to Mission Valley Live.*



## Modified Army Vehicle Serves for Five Decades

Many museum friends enjoy the history of various aspects of the museum, so please indulge me while I tell you about our snowplow unit. The truck is a WWII GMC six wheel drive, nicknamed by the GIs as a “6 x6” or a “Deuce and a Half”. Did you know that “G.I.” was a nickname given the servicemen, and it stands for Government Issue?

I purchased the vehicle because it had a correct front winch that I needed to finish restoring my other open cab model Army truck. It was about 70 miles from my previous home and shop at Yellow Bay. I didn’t have a trailer to haul it, but it ran, so I decided to drive it home. It had no brakes and the doors were barely hanging on, but by a miracle I made it through Kalispell and home without any accidents by using my transmission to downshift and slow down, and a couple of times by using the emergency brake.

The frame had been lengthened and with the rusty body, it was beyond restoration, so I shortened the frame, took off the dual wheels and added the plow. With all six wheels chained up, there isn’t much to stop it. I did drive it the 20 miles to Polson, still without brakes, and it has served faithfully now for around 50 years. *Photo on page 1.*

## MISCELLANEOUS DONATIONS

Again this last quarter, we were overwhelmed with donations. Adding to the farrier section of our blacksmith shop (smithy) are four oxen shoes donated by **Bernard Hakes**. Oxen were cloven hooved which required two shoes per hoof. Oxen had a reputation for being slow, but they were steady, had stamina, and could thrive on feed that a horse wouldn’t eat. An ox is a large adult bull that has been neutered (castrated) to make them more docile.



**Lee Koch** brought in a nice original circa 1920s wall telephone in memory of Lou Marchello who along with wife Irene operated the Crow’s Nest Gallery on Main Street in Polson. It was only missing the coned mouthpiece. I only mention that to show how important some miscellaneous donations are, because I found a correct mouthpiece in a box of assorted phone parts I’ve had for many years.



*Community folks will recall this sign we preserved from Marchello’s longtime Main Street business. Lou served as Polson’s mayor, and Irene was a real estate agent and volunteered for local clubs and projects.*

# MISCELLANEOUS DONATIONS

Frequently, our international visitors leave us a piece of paper money from their native country for display. A recent visitor from Poland noticed we didn't have anything from his country so he left us a Polish bill and coin. He, like many visitors from countries that had been invaded by the Nazis and later the equally tyrannical communists, are so thankful for our freedom message. And they are so grateful for the part America played in their gaining freedom.

As long as we are talking about freedom, **Doug Altrogge** brought in a donation of three WWII cookbooks for families on the home front to cook wiser, healthier, and more frugally, so there would be more food for our soldiers on the battlefield.



We finished the WWII bomb truck and now must wait for warmer weather to paint it. We found an unbelievable sale on brand new military tread tires for it and hope to enter it in the Memorial Day parade. Funds for the tires came from a trust-based grant from the **Greater Polson Community Foundation**. We may use their gift as we see fit, as it is their expression of trust in us as an entity that enriches Polson. We will use part of the funds to extend a weather cover and second handrail on the barn ramp.

As I progress slowly on writing this newsletter, it is now the second week in March and we've had three weeks of 40



degree weather which makes for mud mixed with the slowly melting ice on our packed walkways.

Growing up in Montana, I don't try to outguess the weather, but I do expect another snow dump before spring. We really need more in the mountains.



## We Salute our Members, Donors, and Volunteers

Last quarter's memberships and miscellaneous donations include:

**Glacier Bank, Ace Hardware, John Hatfield, Don Lodmell, Wanda Kemp Maxson, Erik Meis, Dr. Irvine Millheim, John and Lisa Robine, Robert Sklans, Andrew Speer, Ardrene Sarracino,** and the much appreciated tips in our tip jar and ice cream can.

Significant donor this last quarter is **John Zarling**. While every donated penny is as significant as the



widow's mite in the Bible, we deeply appreciate those like Mr. Zarling who give beyond the category of our specified life membership of \$1,000.

Annual Support Levels:  
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.

## Importance of Miracle Endowment – Ways to Help

Maybe you already know that Helen and I work on a strictly volunteer basis. My granddaughter Desire' takes over when Helen and I step away, and 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 desires in writing and let the family know that you did so.



# Plan to join us the third weekend in July 2025 for our 38th Annual Live History Days – July 19th and 20th!



We promise another fun celebration of history with live artisan demonstrations, vintage equipment demonstrations, food concessions, rides, ice cream social, and musical entertainment.

Bring the family and all your summer visitors for a very special weekend at Miracle of America Museum!



We look forward to the spring of the year with anticipation of the new life we see and experience. Calving time, flowers blooming, baby chicks, etc. Easter card imagery uses some of these symbols to celebrate the glorious resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

I have lost several friends lately and Christ's resurrection reminds us that death is a part of the eternal plan and just a temporary parting.

We wish you a blessed Easter full of meaning and joy.

**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.

**Please subscribe to our channels:** However you get your information, here are the QR Codes for Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube.



**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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