

## *Biographies from American Wars*

### **Esther de Berdt Reed**

Revolutionary War

Esther de Berdt Reed was a recent immigrant to the American colonies when the Revolutionary War broke out. Though born in Britain, Esther passionately supported colonial independence and founded the Ladies of Pennsylvania to fundraise on behalf of the Continental Army. Esther was an important civic and political figure in Philadelphia, and inspired numerous women's organizations to take root in early American cities.

### **Joseph Plumb Martin**

Revolutionary War

Born in 1760, Joseph Plumb Martin joined the Connecticut Army to fight the British when he was only 15. As a private, he participated in some of the war's most grueling events, including the siege of Fort Mifflin, Yorktown, and the Battle of Monmouth. Later in life, Martin detailed his wartime experiences in a narrative, first published anonymously in 1830. It is known as one of the best first-person accounts of the American Revolution.

### **Deborah Samson**

Revolutionary War

At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, Deborah Samson was working as an indentured servant in a relative's household. She had been denied education, but had managed to learn how to read and had formed a strong sense of duty. When her servitude ended in 1782, Samson entered the Continental Army—dressing as a man to do so. She fought in several skirmishes, suffered several wounds, and was honorably discharged in October 1783.

### **George Washington**

Revolutionary War

George Washington was born in the Colony of Virginia in 1732. His early years were defined by plantation life, land surveying, and his early military service. He went on to become an instrumental voice of the American rebellion, the commander-in-chief of the Colonial Armies during the Revolution, and the first President of the United States.

### **Johnny Clem**

War of 1812

Johnny Clem, despite being underage, responded enthusiastically to President Lincoln's request for Union volunteer soldiers. He wasn't formally enlisted until age 12, but Clem traveled alongside Union regiments beginning when he was only nine. His devotion to the Union and dauntless spirit transformed him into a legend of the Civil War.

### **Hiram Cronk**

War of 1812

Hiram Cronk was the last surviving veteran of the War of 1812. He joined the war effort at age 14, and despite seeing very little combat, Cronk was a highly regarded figure at the time of his death in 1905.

### **George Gleig**

War of 1812

George Gleig was a young Scottish soldier who took part in the War of 1812. The United States declared war on the United Kingdom due to trade restrictions and the British tendency to impress (effectively, to steal) American sailors. Gleig put his divinity schooling on hold to serve during the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812, and participated in the burning of Washington—the only time the U.S. capitol has been occupied by a foreign force.

### **Paul Jennings**

War of 1812

Paul Jennings was born into slavery in 1799 Virginia. He worked for the Madison family from childhood, eventually following them to the White House. During the War of 1812, Jennings witnessed the burning of Washington and helped to preserve important artifacts of American history. He later gained his freedom and wrote the first White House memoir. Jennings died at age 75, in 1874.

### **Robert Anderson**

Civil War

Robert Anderson was born in Kentucky in 1805, and died in France in 1871. He was a loyal member of the U.S. Army, and fought in four American wars from 1832 until 1863. Anderson played a key role in the Union's defense of Fort Sumter against the Confederates, and though ultimately unsuccessful, he was nationally recognized and celebrated for his bravery.

### **William Luther Bigelow Lawrence**

Civil War

William Luther Bigelow Lawrence owned a farm in Tennessee at the outbreak of the Civil War. His diary contains the daily concerns of the farm, and later, a grocery business. But Lawrence's life was clearly disrupted by the conflict, as evidenced by his commentary on the "Northern fanatics." Details of Lawrence's personal life intertwine with matters of great political importance, illustrating the impact the Civil War had on all people in the United States.

### **William Henry Singleton**

Civil War

Born into slavery in North Carolina, William Henry Singleton entered the Civil War on behalf of the Union. When President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Singleton's regiment became one of the first United States Colored Troops. He served throughout the Civil War and later moved north, where he wrote a memoir of his experiences as a slave, and later, a soldier.

### **Jack Cornwell**

World War I

Jack Cornwell was a British Boy Seaman First Class who enlisted in the Royal Navy at age 15. Only a month after being deployed to war aboard the *HMS Chester*, Cornwell defended the British Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland. He was later awarded the highest British forces medal—the Victoria Cross—for gallantry.

### **Quiren Groessl**

World War I

Quiren Groessl came from a German-American family in Wisconsin, and joined the war effort in 1917. He was nicknamed “Big Boy” while in the Army for his short, muscular stature. While his troop was stationed in the trenches of France, Groessl engaged three German officers in hand-to-hand combat. He managed to escape and survive the event, though he was critically wounded. While recuperating, Groessl wrote notes on his experiences, which he later set down as a memoir.

### **Roland Neel**

World War I

Roland Neel was born in 1894, in Macon, Georgia. His family was beloved throughout town, and owned a successful business. When the U.S. entered World War I, Roland enlisted in the fight. He served as a gunner in the 99th Aero Squadron of the American Expeditionary Forces, which helped to support the American troops on the ground. Early aircraft technology made for risky flying—something Neel himself experienced.

### **Gabby Gabreski**

World War II

The U.S. Air Force honors particularly skilled pilots with the nickname “flying ace,” meaning the flier successfully downed five enemy planes. Gabby Gabreski was the first American to become an ace in two wars—World War II and the Korean War. When he applied for Army Air Corps flight training in 1940, Gabreski didn’t expect to be accepted. He went on to become one of the most decorated pilots in U.S. history.

### **Yoshitaka Kawamoto**

World War II

Yoshitaka Kawamoto was born in 1932. He was an eyewitness to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima—on the day of the attack, he was attending school only a half mile away from the explosion site. Kawamoto was only 13 years old. At the time of his interview, the summer of 1990, Kawamoto worked as the Director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.

### **Rose W. Monroe**

World War II

Rose Monroe was one of nineteen million women who joined the U.S. labor force during World War II. She worked on an assembly line building aircraft and hoped to train as a transport pilot. As a single mom, Monroe wasn’t selected, but went on to lead several other small businesses, and eventually earn her pilot’s license.

### **Joseph Stalin**

World War II

Joseph Stalin ruled the Soviet Union for decades. Born into poverty, as a boy he trained to become a priest before embarking on a dual career of crime and politics. His cunning, cruelty, and ambition took him to the heights of power. Presiding over the rapid transformation of Russia from an agrarian to an industrial society, Stalin’s armies played a major role in the defeat of Nazi Germany.

**Nancy Wake**

## World War II

Nancy Wake immigrated to Britain in the early 1930s, and after working with the French Resistance, she joined the British Special Operations Executive during the later stages of WWII. She became a leading figure in the French Resistance, and one of the most decorated Allied servicewomen of the war. Wake survived WWII and is thought to have helped more than a thousand Allied soldiers escape Nazi-occupied France.

**Johnny Cash**

## Korean War

Johnny Cash is remembered as a crossover music icon and one of the most significant musicians of the 20th century. He was known for his deep singing voice and genre-spanning songwriting. Before embarking on his music career, Cash served in the Korean War as a Morse code operator.

**Tae-seung Park**

## Korean War

Tae-seung Park was 17 when he joined the ROK Army. He fought alongside U.S. troops in the First Battle of Nakdong Bulge and the recapture of Seoul. Park recalls that the majority of his fellow ROK soldiers were under 17. Since his return, Park has dedicated himself to honoring those lost child soldiers and preventing the use of children in future wars.

**Hubert E. Reeves**

## Korean War

Ed Reeves joined the Army at 16 and rose quickly through the ranks. But his peacetime training ended with news of the Korean War. Reeves went into combat at age 18. He survived through several major battles and managed to escape capture by the Chinese forces in North Korea. The experience left him gravely wounded—he would eventually have his lower legs and all fingers amputated.

**Helen Hause**

## Vietnam War

Helen Hause joined the Air Force in 1956 and served for a total of 20 years. She worked as a flight nurse in the years leading up to the Vietnam War, and was stationed at the Tn Sun Nhut Air Base when it was attacked during the Tet Offensive. Hause describes her service as simultaneously fulfilling and terrifying—she loved what she did, but she lamented the loss of life inherent to war.

**Alan C. Nelson**

## Vietnam War

Alan Nelson was aboard the *USS Maddox* during the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. The events there in August 1964 were critical in the American decision to get involved in Vietnam—and with the U.S. involved in the conflict, it grew into an all-out war that resulted in millions of deaths. After the war, the U.S. government's account of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident was called into question and weakened U.S. justifications for the war. Nelson provided a firsthand account of the episode.

**Phan Thị Kim Phúc**

Vietnam War

Phan Thị Kim Phúc grew up in war-torn Vietnam. At the age of nine, she became the subject of one of the most compelling images of the Vietnam War—*The Terror of War* by Nick Ut. In it, Kim Phúc runs in terror away from napalm bombs. Her clothes have been burned off by the fire, and her face is filled with fear. Contrary to her doctors' predictions, Kim Phúc survived the burns, and went on to establish the Kim Phúc Foundation, which provides medical and psychological aid to children impacted by war.

**Meg Minor**

First Persian Gulf War

Meg Miner joined the United States Air Force in late 1979, in the wake of the Vietnam War. Throughout her 16 year military career, Miner worked with various aircraft and sectors of the Air Force, including the airmen of Operation Desert Storm. While in the military, Miner realized she was a lesbian—a fact that greatly shaped her experiences both during and after her service.

**Colin Powell**

First Persian Gulf War

Colin Powell served a 35-year-long military career, and became a major figure in both Presidents George H. W. and George W. Bush's administrations. He fought in Vietnam, oversaw numerous international crises, and built the international support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Operation Desert Storm, which was significantly influenced by "Powell's Doctrine," laid the groundwork for the War on Terror. Powell is perhaps best remembered for his role in presenting evidence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction—weapons that turned out not to exist.

**Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr.**

First Persian Gulf War

Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr. was a U.S. Army General. He served as an advisor to South Vietnamese paratroopers during the Vietnam War, led the 1983 invasion of Grenada, and commanded Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

**Scott Speicher**

First Persian Gulf War

Scott Speicher was the first American combat casualty of the First Persian Gulf War. He served as a U.S. Navy pilot until being downed on the first night of Operation Desert Storm. His disappearance went unexplained for 18 years.