

# Remembering Ernie

The Board of Directors, Officers and staff of the Navy Memorial are thrilled to lead off a nationwide Spirit of '45 Day Tribute to Ernest Borgnine that is taking place across America on Sunday, August 12, 2012.

Ernie was our National Spokesman. Having completed his active duty in the U.S. Navy many years before Ernie came aboard the United States Navy Memorial in 1997 upon receiving our prestigious Lone Sailor Award on his 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday. He made up for lost time with his regular visits to Washington, D.C. over the last fifteen years of his life. He attended Navy Memorial screenings of his films, was the Master of Ceremonies at our Lone Sailor Dinners and attended various veterans' events at the Navy Memorial to include a book signing of his own book, "Ernie"!

The following quote is from Ernie's Navy Memorial visit in 2008:

"I feel like I've had three tours of duty, two with the Navy and the other with McHale's Navy. And now, I'm involved with a very special organization, the United States Navy Memorial, and gee whilikers it is great! When I visited the Memorial, it felt like coming home - going back into the Navy and remembering all my old buddies again. Serving my country at sea was a life-changing and very special experience. Visiting the Navy Memorial brought it all back."

Ernie was among the first people to get behind the national grassroots initiative to create a national day to honor the legacy of the men and women of his generation who came together to win World War II.

Proud of his service of 10 years in the Navy, from 1935 to 1945 -- longer than any Hollywood star of his generation -- Ernie liked to say that his best starring role was playing himself during WWII.

In 2009, Ernie came to Washington, D.C. to help build public support for this idea by appearing as the Honorary Grand Marshall in

the National Memorial Day Parade and speaking at the wreath laying ceremony at the U.S. Navy Memorial.

Thanks to his efforts, in 2010 both houses of Congress voted unanimously in favor a national “Spirit of ’45 Day,” to be observed on the second Sunday in every August.

Spirit of ’45 Day is now being commemorated in hundreds of communities throughout America each year, including observances during Major League Baseball games. At the close of the Day, buglers perform “Taps” in honor of the more than 400,000 Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice during World War II, and the millions of the members of America’s “greatest generation” who have passed away since the end of the war.

This summer, on July 8<sup>th</sup>, Ernie joined them.

Today we pay tribute to his memory with this wreath laying ceremony at statue of the Lone Sailor in front of the Memorial that he loved so dearly. Similar ceremonies in his honor will be taking place at other statues in cities across America, ending in Pearl Harbor, and will be repeated each year on the national day that Ernie helped to create.

We hope that today ceremony lays the foundation for the future, and that Ernie and his fellow members of ‘greatest generation’ will forever be an inspiration to future generations of Americans.

