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World War II veteran to celebrate 90th birthday with 6,000-mile cross-country motorcycle ride

(RICHMOND, VA) Dr. E. Bruce Heilman, a veteran of the Battle of Okinawa, is celebrating his 90th birthday this year by embarking on a 6,000-mile motorcycle ride across America.

His goal is to help raise public awareness about the upcoming series of 75th anniversaries of the important events that took place during WWII between 1941 and 1945 that will begin this year with the attack on Pearl Harbor that will be commemorated this December.

"I want to honor the more than 2,000 Americans who died on December 7, 1941 as a way to remind people of the true meaning of Memorial Day which is to remember the sacrifices of those who gave their lives in service to our country and the importance of always being alert to the threat of attack," said Heilman.

Heilman has teamed up with fellow Marine veteran Hershel "Woody" Williams, one of the 6 surviving Congressional Medal of Honor recipients of WWII, to promote the creation of memorials to Gold Star families in every state in time for the commemoration of 75th anniversary of the end of WWII in 2020.

Heilman plans to travel through several states that had ships in Pearl Harbor that were sunk or heavily damaged during the attack the plunged the U.S. into war, including the USS Arizona, USS Oklahoma, USS California, USS Utah, USS Nevada and USS West Virginia.

He will begin his month long trip by traveling from his home town in Kentucky to San Diego where he received his basic training as a young Marine before shipping out to the Pacific to serve in the final battle of WWII, returning to Richmond by Memorial Day.

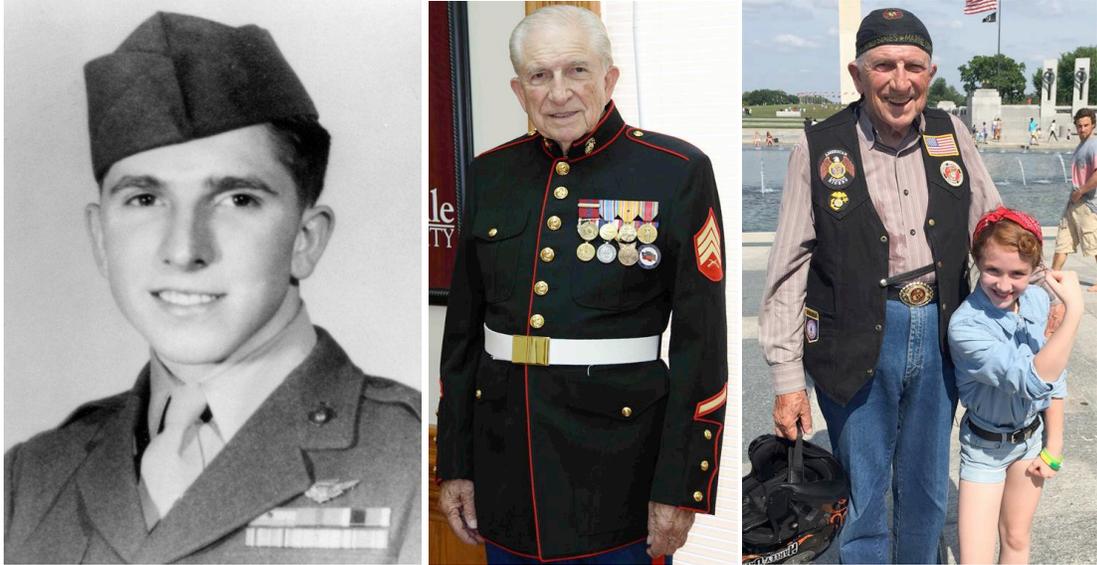
Heilman served as President for 16 years and 30 years as the chancellor of the University of Richmond which is hosting a national symposium that is being organized by the Virginia WWII 75th Anniversary Commemoration Commission that was established last summer.

The Commission is planning a homecoming event at the Virginia Veterans Memorial for Heilman when he returns home on Wednesday, May 25 to conclude his epic ride by joining the annual Rolling Thunder rally in Washington, DC and riding in the National Memorial Day Parade.

Heilman is undaunted by the prospect of riding thousands of miles with 1,000 pounds of bike and gear. Last year he traveled a similar route to kick off the 70th anniversary commemoration of the end of WWII, and in 2014 rode more than 5,000 miles to Alaska to honor his late wife, Betty, who gave him his first Harley on their 50th anniversary when he was 72.

A lifelong educator, Heilman hopes that the youth of America will actively participate in the upcoming 75th anniversary commemorations and carry forward the legacy of his generation. "I am confident that today's youth have the same qualities of character and potential for greatness as my generation," said Heilman. "There are plenty of big challenges facing them."

For updates on Chancellor Heilman's Memorial Day Ride, please call (804) 873-4700 or visit <http://www.Spiritof45.org>. Donations to support the Ride are welcome, and are tax deductible.



Dr. Heilman as a young Marine in 1945. In uniform: "once a Marine, always a Marine." With a "Rosie the Riveter" lookalike at the National WWII Memorial during the youth wreath laying ceremony in Washington, DC in 2015. Below, on his beloved Harley.

