

TED STAMOS: MNHS VOLUNTEER

Making a Lasting Impact

Volunteers are essential to the work of the Minnesota Historical Society. One such volunteer is Ted Stamos, a US military veteran and retired mental health professional. Stamos dedicated nearly 20 years and more than 4,500 hours of his time to MNHS, providing meaningful experiences for History Center visitors, young and old.

Stamos's connection to MNHS began in early 2000, when he joined a group of volunteers at the Minnesota Air National Guard Museum who were building a replica of the iconic Curtiss Model JN-4 airplane, also known as a "Jenny." The plane was abruptly moved to a private hangar after 9/11, with the understanding that the aircraft would eventually return to the museum once a planned expansion was completed.

While work on the plane continued, the group learned that the MNHS collections housed an original Jenny engine. Stamos contacted MNHS staff about a potential loan, in hopes of eventually displaying the engine alongside the replica. The loan request was approved, but expansion plans for the Air National Guard Museum had been put on hold.

By then familiar with the newly opened Minnesota History Center, Stamos wondered if MNHS would consider displaying the life-size Jenny somewhere in the building. His inquiry piqued the interest of exhibit staff, who soon found themselves examining the aircraft and talking to the dedicated volunteers. In June 2006, the plane, by then on loan to MNHS from the Minnesota Air National Guard Museum, was suspended from the History Center's rotunda ceiling, where it remains today.

In 2008, MNHS exhibits staff sought outside help to refurbish the fuselage of a World War II-era C-47 plane for the upcoming *Minnesota's Greatest Generation* exhibit. Stamos, who had become an official MNHS volunteer, along with a group of volunteers with special knowledge, accepted the challenge. The result is a simulated multimedia experience that immerses visitors in the tragic story of a combat parachute jump that took place on June 6, 1944, D-Day.

Stamos described himself as the "gofer" of the group, because he lacked the professional trade skills of his fellow volunteers. He credits Jay Erickson, MNHS exhibit technician supervisor at the time, for unifying the men into a highly productive group who came to regard each other as family. The experience led them to continue working together to build other exhibits at the History Center, including *The 1968 Project* and *Then Now Wow*.

But Stamos is best known for introducing visitors to the C-47 multimedia experience where he described the sac-



Ted Stamos standing next to a Curtiss Model JN-4 airplane replica, also known as a "Jenny"

rifices experienced by men and women on D-Day and the post-traumatic stress they suffered as a result. Over the years, MNHS received more than 700 comment cards praising his presentation. Stamos credits his success to MNHS staff who mentored him on the development of his talk: "Being around such creative people makes MNHS a volunteer heaven."

Stamos resigned from his volunteer position earlier this year, noting that his experiences at MNHS have had a lasting impact on him. "I volunteered at MNHS because it met my desire to feel useful and valued in an organization whose mission will leave the world better than I found it."

Interested in learning how you can support the work of MNHS? Contact Jennifer Pogatchnik, Vice President of Advancement, at jennifer.pogatchnik@mnhs.org or (651) 259-3116.



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