



OUR HISTORY:

What started out... as a little shop named Pat's Gourmet Coffee Shop, named in honor of his wife, became much more. It became not only a Coffee Shop but a "Living" Military Museum, named in honor of the man who spent the last 14 years of his life honoring and supporting America's Veterans.

It was owned and operated by Richard Warren, a U.S. Army, Vietnam combat pilot who flew a Huey attack helicopter, or "gunship", with the callsign "Mustang 53".

With his background Richard made a point of extending the traditional Veterans greeting of "Welcome Home" to every veteran who came in the shop. Over time, Pat's became a gathering place for veterans of all ages and a collection of artifacts, awards, magazine and newspaper articles slowly accumulated.

"**Our State**", the official North Carolina state magazine labeled it "*The Most Patriotic Coffee Shop in America*". Not far from the truth, since it is the only non-profit coffee shop and living military museum in the United States.

Sadly, in May of 2009, Richard died of complications from exposure to Agent Orange. He had spent many years of his life providing assistance and support to veterans. But, just months before he passed away he started forming a non-profit organization and he wanted it to be named "Welcome Home Veterans". This non-profit would oversee and keep Richard's dream, to see that what he started grew and continue to recognize, serve, support, and honor those who gave so much.

After his death there were some issues with the lease, being so old, and Pat's Coffee Shop closed. We're not sure at this point if it was the need for a good cup of coffee, missing other comrades or the honor and tradition of carrying on for a fallen comrade but a number of Richard's regular patrons were determined that his special legacy would not be lost.

Richard's Coffee Shop, named in Richard Warren's honor, and with oversight from Welcome Home Veterans, Inc., opened on July 4th, 2009 just down the street from the original site of Pat's Coffee Shop, underwritten by the members of the non-profit's Board and the generous contributions of so many others from around the world.

As a 501c3 tax-exempt non-profit organization we have the following mission statement:

***“To ensure the memory of, and support to, those who serve through
Welcome Home Veterans Living Military Museum at Richard’s Coffee Shop”.***

With this mission statement we are continuing the legacy of Richard Warren’s love and respect for all of those who have served our country. We strive to carry forward the values of Honor, Respect, Duty and Love of country that is reflected by not only by the veterans but by a large part of the American people.

Richard’s is an incredible place of support, healing and camaraderie for veterans, their families and many members of the community. We have veterans of all ages and time periods from WWII to the current conflicts coming to the coffee shop, several of our veterans have even called it therapeutic.

Each Thursday, a traditional free coffee day, we often have gatherings of more than one hundred veterans of all ages. Saturday is a music day when veterans and professional musicians alike gather to play country, bluegrass, traditional old hymns, and patriotic music.

We sponsor the ***“Book of Honor”***, which is signed by the veterans when they first visit the coffee shop and carries the names of around 9,000 veterans from all over the world. With this signing, they are formally presented a two-row, beaded keychain that represents the American Flag, which they served, and either the branch of service or conflict(s) they served in. This keychain is visible and recognized symbol in almost any part of the world in which the United States has a presence.

The ***“Living”*** segment in our name consists of all of the veterans who gather on a daily basis to share their memories and stories with each other and the community, through our outreach and school programs, and with anyone who values our heritage.

The ***“Military Museum”*** consists of artifacts donated to us by our patrons, by the very people who used, lived, worked with them. Many are donated by the families of veterans. Some are priceless.

The many awards that hang on our walls, such as ***“Beetle Bailey”*** presented and signed, the ***“Tuskegee Airmen”*** presented and signed, and the North Carolina State ***“Order of the Long Leaf Pine”*** (highest State Governors’ award), remind us of the value we represent and our duty to the American people.

Sadly, we have very little time left with most of the WWII and Korean veterans and a short time left with the Vietnam veterans. But gratefully, we see the current veterans and active duty members of the military picking up the torch of freedom in the stories they share when they come to the coffee shop and get signed into the ***“Book of Honor”***.

THE NEED:

It has become clear and we have identified the need to become a “clearinghouse”, a centralized point to further support the many veteran, school, and community initiatives that are coming to light.

During these past many years, Pat’s/Richard’s has been traditionally involved with Toys for Tots, Freedom Honor Flights, the Ride of Pride sponsored by Freightliner on Memorial Day, Blue Star families, Daughters of the American Revolution (Ft. Dobbs chapter), Marine Corp League, VFWs, Honor/Flag Guard for the Traveling Wall at Charlotte (Lowe’s) Motor Speedway, American Legion, the Fourth of July Parade in Troutman, NC, Patriot Guard, Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, nursing home visits, public school speaking engagements, children’s field trips, grave-site flag honors for veterans on holidays, Purple Heart Homes, troop supplies donation barrels, and various fund-raisers at the local, state and national levels.

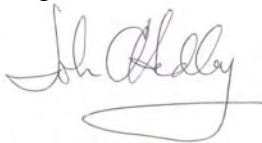
We are currently raising funds to purchase the commercial property at 165 N. Main Street, Mooresville, NC, which is four times our current facility size, because of our growth and because it is ideally located in the heart of downtown directly across from the original coffee shop.

We see the need to create a state-of-the-art media center to further exhibit the growing collection of artifacts and electronic media. Our goal is to provide both an exhibit and meeting resource for the many groups with which we are involved and a place for shared media events.

These goals will ensure better communication and exposure within the various veterans groups and the general media such as WBTV and WSOC television, DOD, WBT and WHIP radio, with local stores and shops, and regional magazines, newspapers and websites. Our press releases would then reflect a broader, better coordinated exposure for all the groups. At some further date, our history has shown, this will naturally expand to such names as CNN, Fisher House, Military.com and the Library of Congress because of our involvement with other veterans groups. We were recently covered in Time Magazine.

We further plan to extend our current presence through our website at WelcomeVets.com, on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIN, and through web link sharing with our sponsors and other community groups.

Regards,



John Hedley, LtCol, U.S. Army (retired)
President, Board of Directors
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