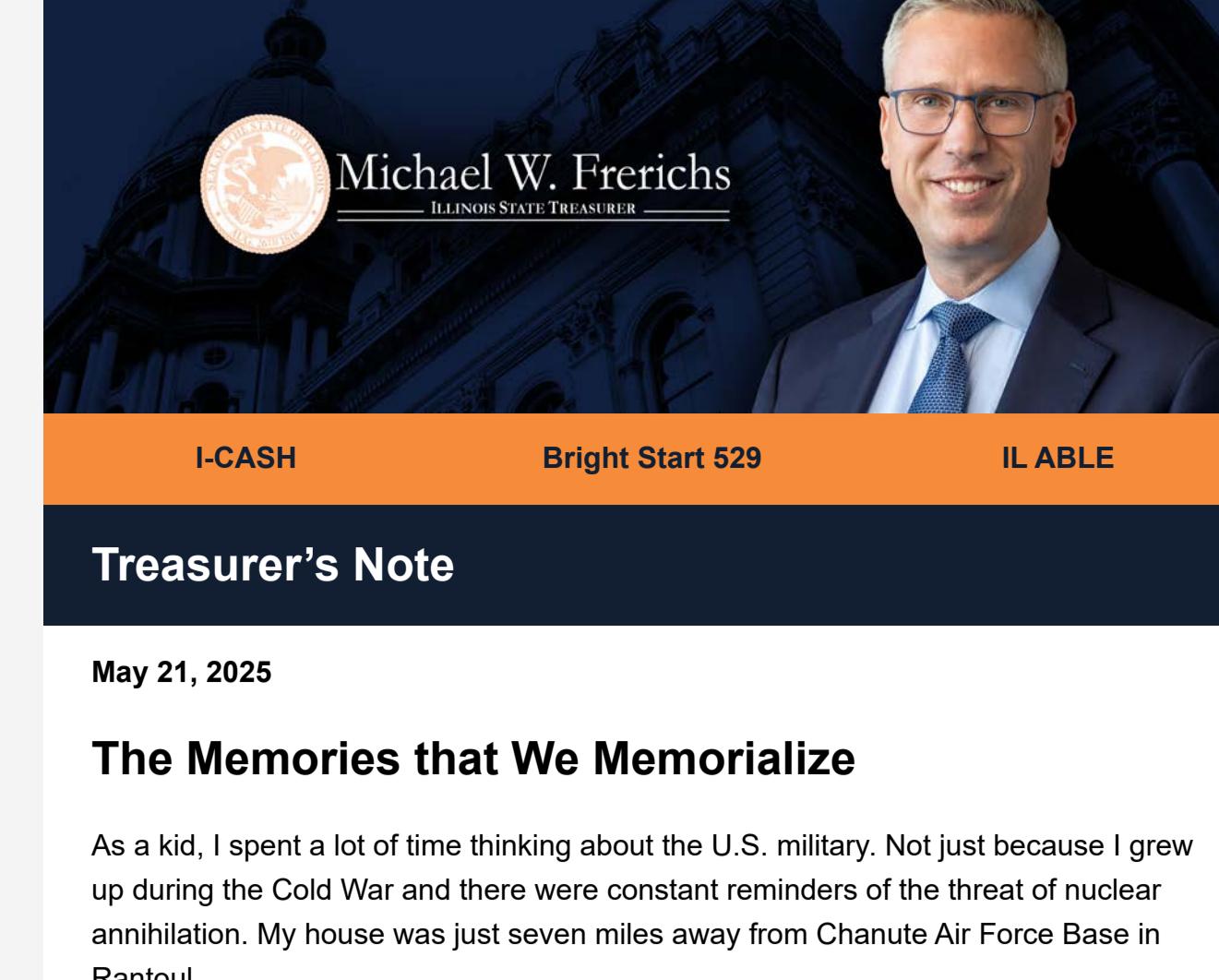


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May 21, 2025

The Memories that We Memorialize

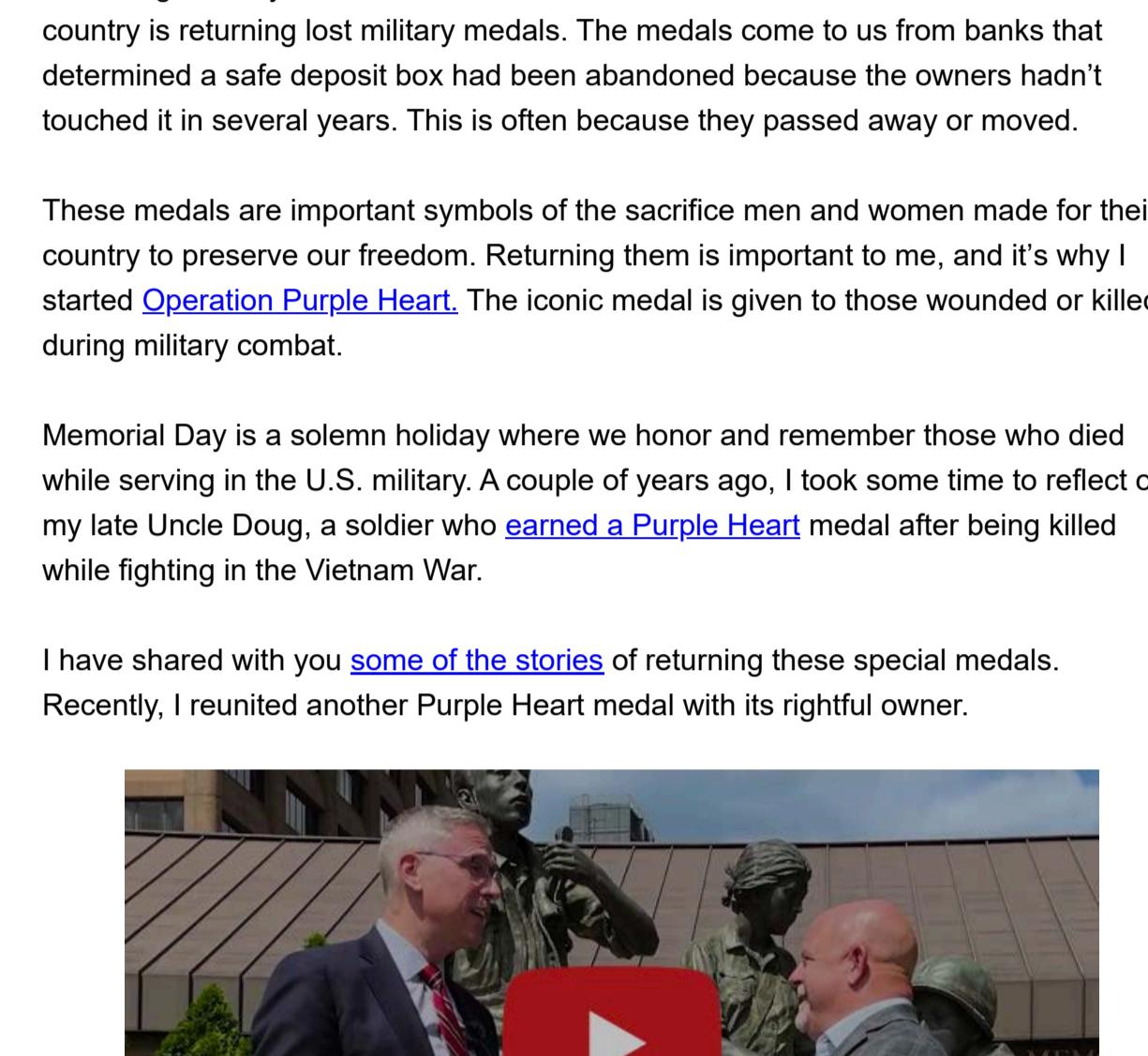
As a kid, I spent a lot of time thinking about the U.S. military. Not just because I grew up during the Cold War and there were constant reminders of the threat of nuclear annihilation. My house was just seven miles away from Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul.

You could set your watch by when you saw the giant plume of dark smoke rising to the west. We weren't under attack, though. The billowing smoke came from the jet fuel fires ignited during training exercises at the U.S. Air Force Fire Fighting School.

I frequently saw young cadets and officers in uniform when I went into town. And less frequently — but much more exciting — were the air shows that on special occasions featured the [Air Force Thunderbirds](#).

In high school, I had several friends who lived on-base, so I got an up-close look that went beyond what I'd previously seen from beyond fences crowned with barbed wire. It was then that I really came to understand and appreciate the work and the pride of our enlisted U.S. armed forces members.

Chanute Air Force base was officially closed more than 30 years ago as the government began downsizing our armed forces. I don't see as many servicemen and servicewomen as often as I used to in my youth, but I still have great respect for their service and their sacrifice. That's especially true of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. We honor and commemorate them on Memorial Day.



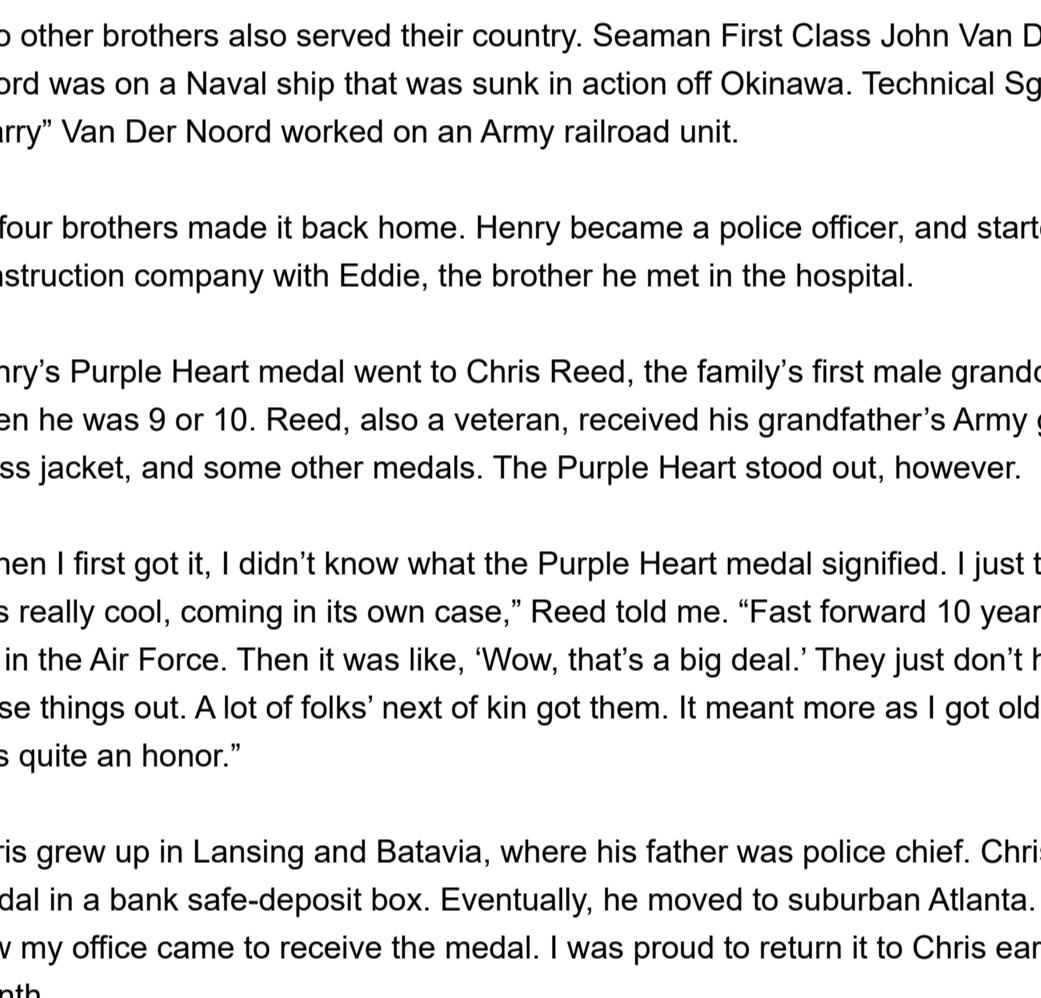
I like this aerial view of the base. I never flew over the base and only saw its large hangars from the ground.

One thing we do year-round to honor the men and women who have served our country is returning lost military medals. The medals come to us from banks that determined a safe deposit box had been abandoned because the owners hadn't touched it in several years. This is often because they passed away or moved.

These medals are important symbols of the sacrifice men and women made for their country to preserve our freedom. Returning them is important to me, and it's why I started [Operation Purple Heart](#). The iconic medal is given to those wounded or killed during military combat.

Memorial Day is a solemn holiday where we honor and remember those who died while serving in the U.S. military. A couple of years ago, I took some time to reflect on my late Uncle Doug, a soldier who [earned a Purple Heart](#) medal after being killed while fighting in the Vietnam War.

I have shared with you [some of the stories](#) of returning these special medals. Recently, I reunited another Purple Heart medal with its rightful owner.



It was a privilege to return the Purple Heart of Henry Van Der Noord to his grandson, Chris Reed. You can watch the ceremony in this video.

Henry Van Der Noord, one of eight children, was nicknamed "Babe" because he was an infant when his family came over on a boat from The Netherlands. He was one of four brothers who fought for the U.S. during World War II.

Henry admired General Douglas MacArthur and was in combat during MacArthur's mission to liberate the Philippines. It took many months, and many soldiers were killed or injured.

On May 3, 1945, Henry was with the 39th Field artillery division on Luzon, the largest island in the Philippines. Shrapnel hit him in the back, leaving what his grandson remembers as "a hellacious scar."

While in the hospital, Henry found out one of his brothers, Private First Class Edward Van Der Noord, was also there, Edward, who was in the Army's 11th Airborne Division, injured his ankle in a parachute jump.

"The happy brothers spent four days together the first week in June," according to a newspaper clipping from the time.

Two other brothers also served their country. Seaman First Class John Van Der Noord was on a Naval ship that was sunk in action off Okinawa. Technical Sgt. Gerriet "Harry" Van Der Noord worked on an Army railroad unit.

All four brothers made it back home. Henry became a police officer, and started a construction company with Eddie, the brother he met in the hospital.

Henry's Purple Heart medal went to Chris Reed, the family's first male grandchild, when he was 9 or 10. Reed, also a veteran, received his grandfather's Army green dress jacket, and some other medals. The Purple Heart stood out, however.

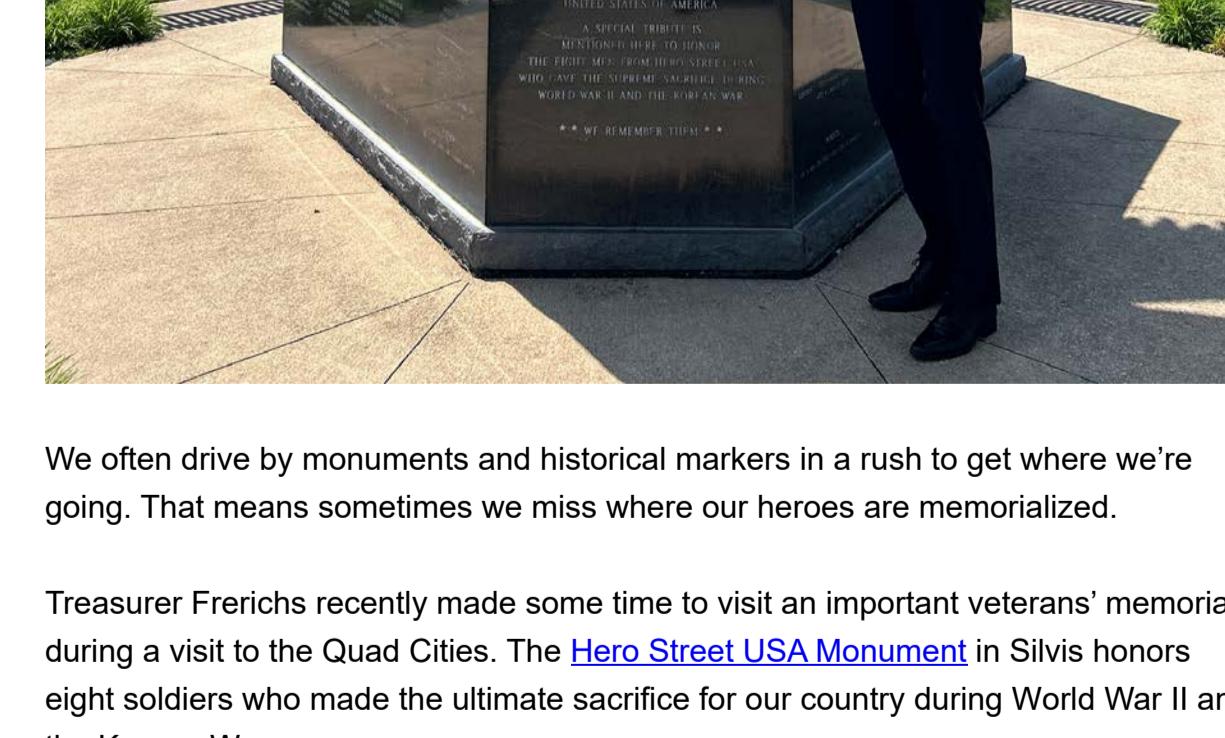
"When I first got it, I didn't know what the Purple Heart medal signified. I just thought it was really cool, coming in its own case," Reed told me. "Fast forward 10 years, and I'm in the Air Force. Then it was like, 'Wow, that's a big deal.' They just don't hand these things out. A lot of folks' next of kin got them. It meant more as I got older. It was quite an honor."

Chris grew up in Lansing and Batavia, where his father was police chief. Chris put the medal in a bank safe-deposit box. Eventually, he moved to suburban Atlanta. That's how my office came to receive the medal. I was proud to return it to Chris earlier this month.

It is the 13th Purple Heart we have returned. There is still more work to do. We have posted a list of the medals we have returned, and those we still need to return, at the [Operation Purple Heart web page](#).

These medals personify honor, sacrifice, and duty. If you recognize a name on the list, please reach out to the recipient or their family, or [contact us](#). This is an honor that deserves to be in the warm and loving hands of family members, not the cold, dark vault of my office.

Michael

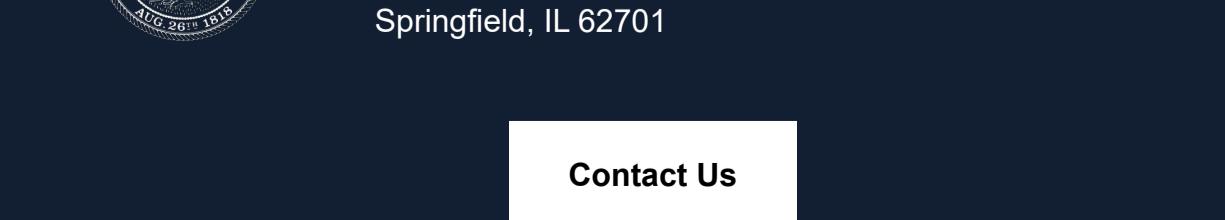
Get Yourself Some Money!

Each year, businesses across the country report forgotten bank accounts, lost checks, and other missing money to our office. So far this fiscal year, we have received over \$100 million more than we did at the same time last year — a staggering \$522 million!

In April, we returned more than \$22.5 million, and we have more to return. We are on track to break last year's record of 322,000 claims.

Help us get there! Today is a great day to check out [I-CASH](#). And if there's nothing for you, check for your friends and family members. We also have money for businesses, nonprofits, and other organizations. Spread some love and help them claim their money!

[Find Your Missing Money!](#)

Stopping at Hero Street USA

We often drive by monuments and miss where our heroes are memorialized.

Treasurer Frerichs recently made some time to visit an important veterans' memorial during a visit to the Quad Cities. The [Hero Street USA Monument](#) in Bettendorf honors eight soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country during World War II and the Korean War.

They're the sons of immigrants who fled Mexico during the turmoil of the 1910s.

Families from Second Street sent dozens of soldiers to war, and Second Street was renamed Hero Street USA.

"This is a moving monument, and I encourage you to visit it if you're in the area," Treasurer Frerichs said. "Freedom isn't free."

It's important to remember the names of those who sacrificed for their country. Here are the names of those from Second Street: Peter Mataja, Tony Poma, Frank Sandoval, Claro Solis, Joseph Sandoval, William Sandoval, John Munos, and Joseph Gomez.

You also can learn more [here](#).

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