

## A Little Something for Everyone

### Hometown Heros Exhibit Revisited



*Barbara Merkel Johnson and sons, Steve and Ray, pose with their donation at the February 22, 2009, Grand Opening of the Hometown Heroes Exhibit. The exhibit featuring Barbara's father, **WWI hero Edmo Merkel**, tells the stories of a number of Hattiesburg natives who have made notable contributions to their communities. There is something for everyone in this exhibit, so be sure to visit your museum soon.*

Edmo was born in Hattiesburg on April 26, 1897. He joined the US Marines on June 9, 1917. His division was one of the first to arrive in France. While serving as a Pharmacist Mate and ambulance driver he saw action at Verdun, Chateau Theirry, Bois De Belleau, the Meuse Argonne Offensive.



He was severely wounded at the Battle of Blanc Mont, but continued to help treat his comrades until he collapsed. For this heroic service he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart.



After the war, he attended the American College of Physical Education, Chicago, and began teaching after graduation. Merk and his wife, Mary Elizabeth Jackson, both taught in Illinois until their retirement. They moved to Ocean Springs, Mississippi in 1957.

Merk made numerous contributions to the community in which he taught. These included officiating and coaching ball games for disadvantaged children, directing school bands, and coaching Olympian Walley Ris, 1948 100 meter free style swimming champion.

### Additional Hometown Heros

Not all of the Hattiesburg natives depicted in the Hometown Heroes Exhibit have actively served in the military, but all have served this community with their talents and dedication. Hattiesburg has always been blessed with citizens who felt that service to

their communities be not only a duty, but also a privilege. The HAHS Museum is fortunate that they or their families have donated the memorabilia that makes this exhibit possible.



(left) Evelyn Gandy donated a dress (left) that she wore for one of her inaugural balls when she was elected Lt. Governor in 1976.

Citizen heroes walk among us daily. Since space constraints and our limited collection will not allow us to recognize them all, the HAHS hopes that by displaying the contributions of a few we can honor the many who make Hattiesburg a great place to live. Our citizens have contributed in all areas of life: from government to sports, from education to healthcare, from religion to volunteerism, and from writing music to writing books. You'll find something here to enjoy.

(right) Greg Weisman, the boy who wrote music for Hattiesburg, now entertains the nation.



Craig Wiseman's First Record  
 "The Ballad of Hattiesburg"  
 &  
 "I Make My Home in Dixie"  
 \$1.00 Donation



(left) Chester C. Ward of A. Nash Clothes, a sports uniform supplier, was the sponsor for a the 1930's Hattiesburg baseball team that wore this uniform.



*(above) Little boys, who wore their mother's hand-made robes to sing in Ethel Poe's Main Street Methodist Boy's Choir, carved slingshots from tree limbs and grew up to rebuilt damaged faces and establish medical museums.*

*(above) Little girls, who played nurse, served as Red Cross volunteers at Camp Shelby in WWII and later traveled the world providing disaster relief.*

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