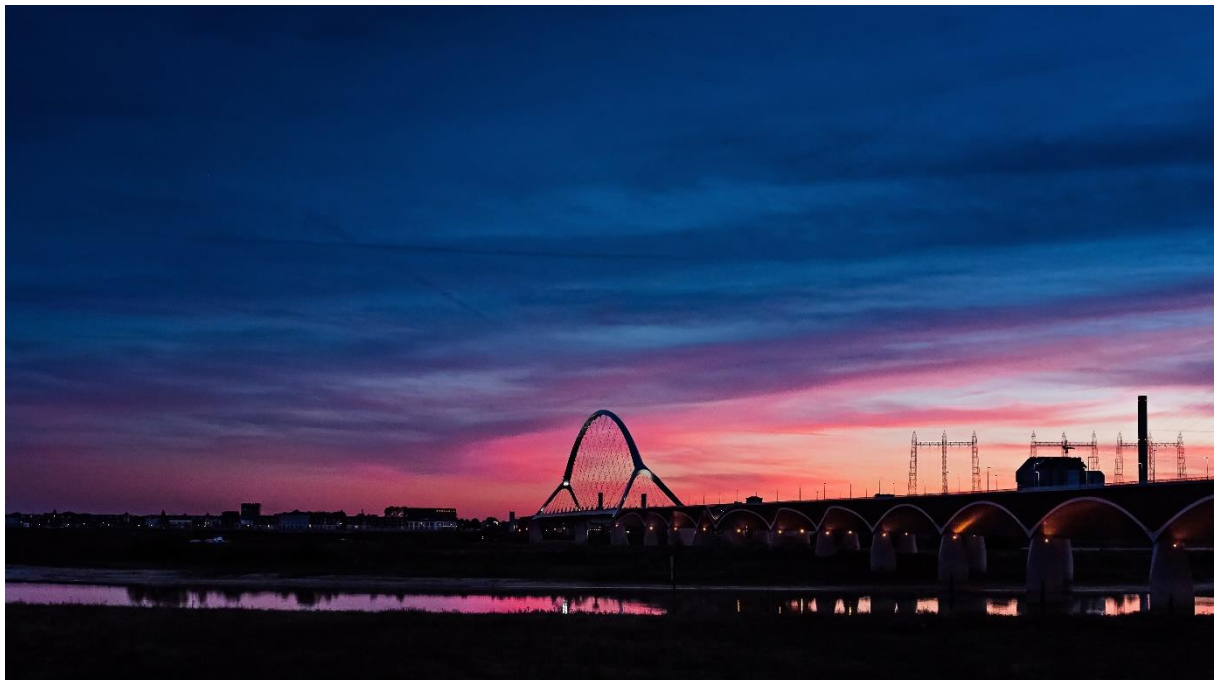


SUNSET MARCH

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Sunset March #2997 up and including #3361



Colophon

This annual report is a publication of the Sunset March Foundation.

Secretariat:
Sunset March Foundation,
c/o Dennenstraat 147,
6543 JR Nijmegen

Editorial:
Kees Bleijerveld
Design:
Dirk-Jan van Zuidam

Photo on front page: The Crossing at Evening Red
(Photo: Jaleesa Photography)

Contents

- 1. Introduction..... 3
- 2. What is Sunset March? 4
- 3. Veterans in 2023 as "Veteran of the Day"..... 5
- 4. Activities and details 2023 6
- 5. Information/Stand 14
- 6. Media..... 15
- 7. Finance 2023 15
- 8. Outlook 2024 16



Figure 1: Board Sunset March (photo: Jacco van Mierlo)

1. Introduction

Last year was the first without any restrictions due to covid19 after a long time; finally a normal pattern again. The 365 daily Sunset Marches could be walked without disturbing restrictions, as they should be, in peace and quiet by the veteran of the day with or without followers. Sometimes with a somewhat more elaborate ceremony at the monument at the end, but always in serene peace and reverent silence. That the year had no limitations was also demonstrated by the fact that more new Veterans of the Day had signed up again this year than in other years. Again this year, there were a remarkable number of groups who set a date, meaningful to them, and walked a joint Sunset March. Often those groups set the same date right away for the following year.

The year started off right with the 3000th Sunset March on Jan. 4, where many Team31 members were represented and the U.S. Defence Attaché was the veteran of the day.

Worth mentioning is that during the busy commemoration period in September, a mini copy of the Daniel Liebeskind-designed Liberation Route Europe (LRE) Vector was affixed to the railing of the bridge at the starting point of the Sunset March, making the starting point a little more recognizable. The LRE has incorporated the Sunset March into their walking and biking routes.

Since June 1 this year, at Fort Liberty, USA (formerly Fort Bragg), there has also been a daily Sunset March: The Sunset Liberty March (sunsetlibertymarch.com). On 19 October 2023, exactly 9 years after the first Sunset March, Tim Ruijling, the creator of the Sunset March, walked the Sunset Liberty March at the invitation of and together with Lieutenant General Donahue, commander of Fort Liberty and the commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps. After the start of the Sunset March in Nijmegen, this important event marked another major step in our relatively short history. You can read more about this event below.



*Figure 2: Tim Ruijling and LTG Donahue at the start of the Liberty Sunset March
(Photo: Spc. Nolan Brewer, XVIII Airborne Corps Public Affairs)*

2. What is Sunset March?

Origin

On 27 September 2014, the plan was born to see if it was possible to use the light monument "Lights Crossing"¹ on the new city bridge "De Oversteek" in Nijmegen to realize a "living" and daily tribute to our allied liberators. This initiative is aimed at commemorating what sacrifice the American soldiers made here far from home for our freedom. It is also particularly aimed at building a visible bridge to all veterans, who have contributed and continue to contribute to peace and security in missions around the world. On Sunday, 19 October 2014, the first Sunset March was walked.

The Sunset March

When the first pair of light poles is lit, the veteran starts walking at the pace with which the lamps are lit one by one. When the other side of the Waal is reached, he will stop at the "De Oversteek" Waal Crossing Monument and pays tribute. Very special it often is. Regularly "authorities" and directors of national veteran organizations walk the Sunset March. On special occasions and on memorial days the march is regularly walked with large groups of interested people and participants. Then, at the monument, a horn blower plays the "Last Post" and flowers and wreaths are laid. Fixed special moments each year are: 22 February for a German delegation, on 4 and 5 May (Remembrance of the Dead and Liberation Day), the Four-Day Marches Week, 20 September, 19 October (anniversary Sunset March) and 11 November (International Veterans Day / Remembrance Day).

Veterans, who are registered as "Veteran of the Day", will receive a unique numbered certificate at the conclusion of their first Sunset March. Only one veteran can be "Veteran of the Day" per day and only one numbered certificate will be awarded per day, even if more than one veteran walks that day.

Since 11 November 2015, Sunset March has been a foundation with cultural ANBI (General Beneficial Institution) status.

Multimedia

The Sunset March website (<https://www.sunsetmarch.nl>) allows veterans to sign up to walk the Sunset March. The website also provides a wide range of information, including: objective and working method, register of veteran walkers, details of the foundation, walkers' experiences, photos and videos. Sunset March is also active on Facebook. The Facebook page is used for announcements, impressions and reactions about (special) Sunset Marches. On LinkedIn the group Sunsetmarch exists for which LinkedIn members can sign up.

Board and Team31

The board is composed of 9 members. The board consists of a Daily Board of 3 persons, which are in addition to the chairman, Peter Grotens, a secretary and a treasurer. The other 6 board members take care of the other tasks such as: technical support, arranging and providing meeting rooms, material management, web hosting, etc. The board is further supported by a coordinator from Team31, Henk Deelen, who among other things takes care of the designation and registration of the Veteran of the Day. Last year, our Founding Father and Vice President Tim Ruijling resigned his duties and retired permanently from the board with thanks for his services rendered.

¹ Artwork by Atelier Fieldwork



Figure 3: Board Sunset March (photo: Jacco van Mierlo)

Team31 consists of 31 veterans, mostly but not exclusively from the Nijmegen area. They make sure that any gaps in the calendar are filled at all times and thus there is always a Veteran of Day. The existence of this fixed group of selected veteran runners thus guarantees the continuity of the daily ceremony. It is important to mention that the turnover among the members of the board and Team31 is very small. Most are members from the (almost) beginning and remain loyal thereafter. In 2022, 2 Team31 members left us and were replaced last year. At the end of 2023 another team member announced his retirement and will also be replaced soon by a candidate from the reserve list.

On the third Saturday of January (this year on 21 January) the Team31 day traditionally took place at Fletcher Hotel Erica in Berg en Dal. This meeting is the day for all those directly involved in the Sunset March to meet (again) in an informal setting. A planned presentation by a representative of BAM could not take place, so there was ample time for a presentation by the chairman, in which he officially introduced himself to everyone, followed by a look back at 2022 and the agenda for 2023. Finally, questions could be asked and another successful Team31 meeting was concluded.

3. Veterans in 2023 as “Veteran of the Day”.

The veteran who applies through the website to walk on one of the 365 (or 366) days is called “Veteran of the Day”. From 1 January up to and including 31 December 2023, 126 veterans who have not previously received a certificate have applied to be “Veteran of the Day”. Each veteran who walks the Sunset March for the first time as “Veteran of the Day” will be awarded a unique certificate. With a unique number, name, the date of his or her Sunset March and the time. This will be sent through the mail. On the website, a separate register lists the names of all veterans of the day and their nationalities.

On 4 January 2023, the first “new” veteran (Jennifer Mills, US) walked with certificate number 748. On 31 December, the last one of the year 2023 walked. The latter, Vincent van Keulen, received certificate 873. In doing so, the percentage of veterans who received

certificates came to over 34% last year. This is a marked increase over past years. In past years, the percentages were the following: 18% (2020), 20% (2021) and 25% (2022). Over the entire period of existence of the Sunset March (3361 days as of 31 December 2023), there were 873 certificates issued. This means that over the entire existence of the Sunset March, 26% of the veterans of the day are someone running as Veteran of the Day for the first time. By all appearances, there is a clear upward trend in terms of the number of "first-time runners". The current year will reveal whether that trend continues.

4. Activities and details 2023

Board meetings

The board met 4 times in the past year. These meetings took place on Saturdays 11 February, 6 May, 12 August and 11 November. All meetings once again took place with full satisfaction at our sponsor's location Dirksen Opleidingen at Elst.

The Daily Board met on 28 January, 29 April, 5 August and 30 October.

Collaboration

Once again this year, the activities of the Sunset March have been supported by a wide range of agencies and organizations. Existing partnerships have been continued and perpetuated, others revived. Thanks to gifts, sponsorships and donations, all planned activities could take place again this year. We are of course extremely grateful to our sponsors and partners for this and naturally hope for a continuation of the relationship.

Our sponsors and partners are:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ➤ Atelier Fieldwork | ➤ Armed Forces Military Music |
| ➤ BAM Infra | ➤ The 4Day Marches Foundation |
| ➤ Bureau Stroom | ➤ Friendship Albany Nijmegen Foundation (FAN). |
| ➤ CCC Corporate Clothing | ➤ Veterans Institute (VI) |
| ➤ Dirksen Opleidingen Elst | ➤ VFonds |
| ➤ Fletcher Hotels Berg en Dal | ➤ VOC Collaborating Veterans Meeting Centres |
| ➤ Various departments Municipality of Nijmegen | ➤ VSI |
| ➤ Honorary Consul in Kleve, Germany | ➤ 11th Air Mobile Brigade |
| ➤ Kersten Retail Elst | ➤ 82nd Airborne Division |
| ➤ Liberation Route Europe (LRE). | |

Sunset Liberty March

In the spring of 2022, Lieutenant General Donahue (Commander XVIII Airborne Corps and before that Commander 82nd Airborne Division) visited the Netherlands on a battlefield tour, where he learned about our foundation and the Sunset March. He was very impressed. Later he promised that a copy of the Sunset March will be held at Fort Liberty, the former Fort Bragg, and one of the largest military complexes in the world. On 1 June 2023 the time had come and the first Sunset Liberty March took place. On 19 October, Sunset March founder and past president, Tim Ruijling, along with Lieutenant General Donahue and others walked the copy of our daily march in the United States of America on our 9th anniversary. The march runs along a newly constructed 1-kilometer path (exactly the same length as the Nijmegen original) and features 39 plaques of memorable historical military facts and will end at a newly erected monument to all fallen from units, which have or had a relationship with Fort Liberty (Fort Bragg). Any veteran, active or reserve military or family member of a fallen military can register as a "Liberty Marcher", similar to our Veteran of the Day.

New clothing supplier and sponsor.

At the end of 2023 an agreement was made with director Coen Gazendam of CCC company clothing in Arnhem to act as our new supplier. He can supply the clothing for board and Team31 at a good price, as he has offered us a hefty discount. The existing clothing package of polo and jacket have been extended with a polo long sleeve and a polo of polyester material.

Extraordinary Sunset Marches

Every day, in all weathers, 365 Sunset Marches were walked in 2023. While every Sunset March is special and impressive, some are just a little different than usual. Below are some of the noteworthy Sunset Marches in 2023:

- ✓ 4 January: The 3000th Sunset March was led by Captain (N) Jennifer Mills of the U.S. Embassy. A delegation from Team31 and board were in attendance.
- ✓ 9 February: Joel Pedersen, the senior "First Nation" non-commissioned officer in the Canadian Armed Forces.
- ✓ 22 February: As usual, a large delegation from the GE/NL Kleve business club walked in the company of a delegation of German and international military personnel from Uedem (D) and Kalkar (D) who had laid a wreath earlier in the day in memory of the bombing of 22-2-1944.



Figure 4: German delegation GE/NL Businessclub Kleve (D) and military personnel from Kalkar (D) led by LtGen T. Poschwatta. (Photo: Patrick Bransmoeller)

- ✓ 28 February: Veteran and Minister of the Interior, Mrs. Hanke Bruins Slot, walked the Sunset March along with former Commander of the Army, Mart de Kruif, and other interested parties.



Figure 5: Veterans Hanke Bruins Slot and Mart de Kruif (Source: News from Nijmegen, Photo: Geert Timmer)

- ✓ On 4 March, a selection of international journalists walked at the invitation of Liberation Route Europe (LRE).
- ✓ 11 April was walked, as usual, by a delegation from Radboud University. 11 April commemorates the day in 1943 when Rector Hermesdorf closed the university after refusing to distribute the Declaration of Loyalty to the German occupiers to staff and students for signature.

- ✓ 14 April: The 3100th Sunset March was walked by the new U.S. Ambassador, Mrs. Shefali Razdan Duggal. She made special time during her introductory tour of Gelderland to walk with the 3100th Sunset March and was very impressed.



Figure 6: The U.S. Ambassador, Mrs. Shefali Razdan Duggal next to the Veteran of the Day, Mireille Riesenbeck

- ✓ 21 April: A delegation from the HAN, Master Management & Innovation (MMI) program including alumni, walked.
- ✓ 25 April: A delegation from the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), European Region;
- ✓ 1 May: The nominations for the 2023 White Carnation Prize are announced: our former president Tim Ruijling is among them. Unfortunately, the White Carnation Prize goes to another nominee;
- ✓ 3 May: Friends of the Red Beret Foundation with a large delegation;
- ✓ 4 May: A large group of interested people joined the memorial march on the evening of the National Remembrance Day;

- ✓ 11 June: Commander 11 Air Mobile Brigade, Brigadier General Cas Scheurs and Commander 12 US Combat Aviation Brigade, Colonel Patrick Schuck (veteran of the day) walk the Sunset March;



*Figure 7: Brigadier General Cas Scheurs and Colonel Patrick Schuck;
(photo 11LMB)*

- ✓ 11 July: Once again a large delegation on this Dutchbat memorial day.
- ✓ 17 July: A large international group of 4Days Marches participants walked, on the evening preceding 105th 4Days Marches, concluded by an impressive ceremony at the monument. Participants from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada and Belgium, among others, were present.
- ✓ 19 September: The newly placed US Defence Attache, Col. Mark Sturgeon, meets and walks the Sunset March
- ✓ 20 September: At the Crossing Memorial Day, there was again much interest. C-1Brig/82nd Airborne Division, Colonel Jason Schuerger, was veteran of the day. A special certificate was presented to Deputy Commander XVIII Corps, General Bradley Hinson.



Figure 8: Wreath laying at the commemoration on 20 September.
(Photo: Voilá photography)

- ✓ 29 September: Team31 member Michael Pollmann had invited all fellow team members and the board to walk with him as this was the last day of his active career in the Bundeswehr. Many complied with his request.
- ✓ 5 October: Veterans Search Team.



Figure 9: Veterans Search Team (photo: Cor Groot)

- ✓ 19 October: On the 9th anniversary of the Sunset March, a delegation of the board and Team31 walked. They recorded a video that was sent to Tim Ruijling to wish him luck and success in walking the special Liberty Sunset March in Fort Liberty (USA) later that day.

- ✓ 11 November: By now a good habit: a large delegation of Team31 and board walked on this International Veterans Day. The Sunset March concluded with drinks, snacks and soup under the bridge. A large delegation from the Regiment of Technical Troops also walks as standard on this date.
- ✓ 17 November: Tracy Lane, granddaughter of Jack Howard walks the Sunset March in memory of her grandfather killed at the crossing.
- ✓ 18 November: A delegation Peace Mission Veterans Royal Air Force (VmVKLu) has been running on its founding date for several years now.
- ✓ 23 November: A delegation of designers of the Oversteek Bridge, contractors and Nijmegen City Council walk the Sunset March to commemorate the opening 10 years earlier.

Other events.

In addition to the above overview, the board participated in several meetings and commemorations; a non-exhaustive list follows:

- ✓ On 31 January, a Sunset March delegation attended the unveiling of the LRE Vector at the museum Niemandland in Gendt.
- ✓ On 8 February, a delegation from the Sunset March attended the annual commemoration of the start of Operation Veritable organized by the Groesbeek Airborne Friends at the Canadian Cemetery in Groesbeek.
- ✓ 8 April: A delegation receives a lecture on the technical part of the "Lights Crossing" light monument by Floris Lobé (BAM) in the meeting room at VASIM and then visits the catacombs under the Crossing to witness the technology.



Figure 10: Visit by board and Team31 to the computer room and interior of the Crossing (photo: Sunset march)

- ✓ On 2 May, a Sunset March delegation attended the celebration of our king's birthday at the Dutch consulate in Kleve (D).
- ✓ On 4 May, a delegation of the board laid a flower arrangement at the commemoration of the Dutch National Remembrance Day in Kleve (D), organized by the consul of the Netherlands there.

- ✓ On 4 May, at the Waalcrossing Monument on the Oosterhoutsedijk in Nijmegen, "our own" national Remembrance Day was held. A Ukrainian refugee, Olena Soroka, told her moving personal story and two appropriate poems were read by former Nijmegen city poet Marijke Hanegraaf
- ✓ 4/5 May: The annual "bivouac" on the Oosterhoutsedijk took place again to guard the Liberation Fire arriving overnight from Wageningen. On May 5 in the afternoon, with the help of members of the Sunset March, it is transported to the Hunnerpark in Nijmegen, to be received by mayor Bruls so that he can open the liberation celebrations.
- ✓ On 12 May, a delegation from the board attended the unveiling of the LRE Vector at Fletcher Hotel Erica
- ✓ On 23 June, by invitation, the president participated in the 75 Hectometer march for organizers and partners of the Nijmegen 4Daagse
- ✓ On 5 July, a delegation of the board was invited and attended the official opening of the Groesbeek Freedom Museum.
- ✓ 18-21 July: 5 members of the board walk 4Daagse for the 1st time in the Sunset March polo shirt to increase visibility.
- ✓ 17 September: During the annual commemoration period, the LRE Vector is unveiled at the starting point of the Sunset March. Further participation will take place at: commemorations in Grave, Groesbeek and Hommersum (D), a ceremony by Friendship Albany Nijmegen (FAN) at the ROC and the James Cook building.
- ✓ On 20 September, the commemoration of the Oversteek organized by the municipality of Nijmegen, Sunset March and OBS De Oversteek will take place on the Oosterhoutsedijk, followed by a special Sunset March.



Figure 11: LRE vector placed at starting point Sunset March
(photo: Sunset March)

- ✓ 27 September: A delegation was invited and attended the Dachau Lecture at Radboud University.
- ✓ 30 September: A delegation visits the National Tattoo in Rotterdam by invitation.
- ✓ 19 October: Tim Ruijling, the initiator of the Sunset March, walks the Sunset Liberty March in Fort Liberty (USA)
- ✓ 10 November: President participated in the semi-annual meeting of the umbrella Veterans Meeting Centres.
- ✓ On 30 November, members of the board will participate in the Commemoration and Celebration symposium at the Stevenskerk in Nijmegen, organized by the local May 4 and 5 Committee.

5. Information/Stands

The Sunset March also worked on its promotion this year. Among others, information was given to: Veterans Café Dronten and to Women's Network Arnhem Nijmegen.

Stands were set up and staffed on the following occasions, among others:

- ✓ May 5 celebration Wageningen
- ✓ Dutch Veterans Day
- ✓ Veterans Day Royal Air Force
- ✓ KMAR Veterans Day



Figure 12: Booth on National Veterans Day (photo: Sunset March)

6. Media

The Sunset March also received attention in the various local and national media this year. A brief and incomplete overview from the written press. Articles in which Sunset March was mentioned appeared, among others, in De Gelderlander of 29 April, 19 May, 24 May and 20 November and in De Brug of 16 September.

Furthermore, the Sunset March played an important role in a promotional film shot by BAM and played a prominent role in one of the broadcasts of "The Feeling of the 4Daagse" during the 4Daagse week. Also in June, the WNL program Goedemorgen Nederland covered Tim Ruijling's nomination for the Witte Anjer Prijs.

The exhibition "Blik op Nijmegen" in "Het Huis van de Nijmeegse Geschiedenis" also focused on the significance of the Sunset March for Nijmegen

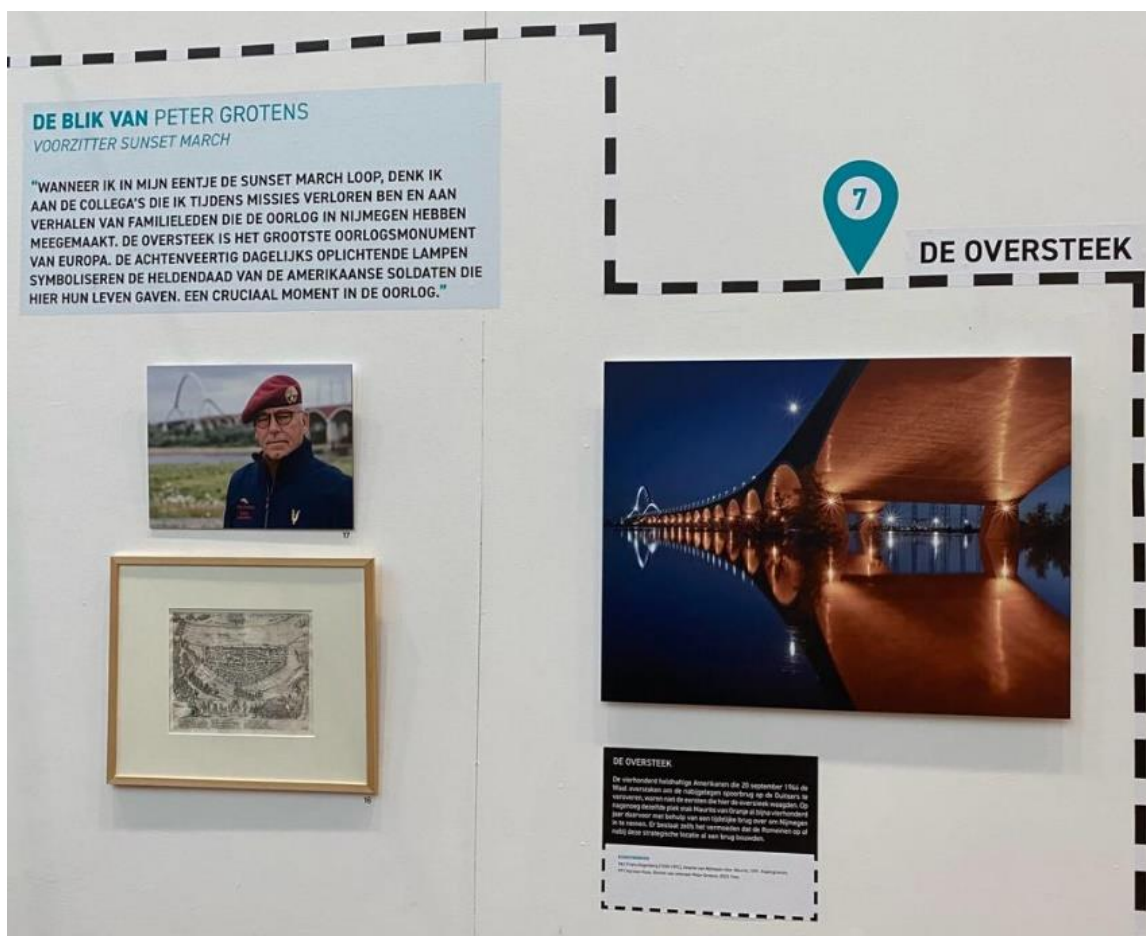


Figure 13: Sunset March at "Blik op Nijmegen" (photo: Sunset March)

7. Finance 2023

Sunset March Foundation has a number of fixed annual costs. These are primarily the costs for domain names and the website, maintaining a dedicated bank account for ANBI status, flowers and wreaths for commemorations, team and promotional activities. Other costs are variable and are adjusted and determined annually by the board. In addition to the material support from the municipality of Nijmegen, another substantial support was received from an anonymous benefactor. In addition, a number of smaller donations and contributions, mostly from individuals, have been received. Participation in the Clubkas Campagne of the RABO-bank again provided a contribution to our coffers. Thanks to the many contributions from those who have a good heart for us, we were also in the past year a financially healthy foundation and we could carry out all planned activities.

8. Outlook 2024

In September 2024, special attention will be paid in the Nijmegen region to 80 years of liberation and for us in particular: 10 years of the Sunset March. For example, there are plans for a major exhibition on the Sunset March in the House of Nijmegen History. Some of the activities already foreseen and/or planned:

- ✓ 366 Sunset Marches.
- ✓ 22 February: annual participation of a German/Dutch delegation.
- ✓ 11 April: Radboud University to commemorate closure of University in 1943.
- ✓ 4 and 5 May: Receiving Liberation Fire and informal commemoration of the dead.
- ✓ 11 July: Dutchbat I, II, III and IV
- ✓ 15 July: Participation detachment of international veterans from Heumensoord for the 4Daagse.
- ✓ Month of September/November: Exhibition at the House of Nijmegen History.
- ✓ 20 September: Commemoration of 80 years of Waalcrossing and a special Sunset March.
- ✓ 19 October: 10th anniversary of the Sunset March.
- ✓ 11 November: International Veterans Day
- ✓ 18 November: Air Force Peacekeeping Mission Veterans



Figure 14: 4Day Detachment Heumensoord (Photo: Jaleesa Photography)