Memorial Day 2017: Veteran’s Remarks Exemplify the Trauma of Iwo Jima

On a very warm day, a standing room only crowd filled the Memorial Courtyard to commemorate once again Memorial Day. Formerly known as "Decoration Day," it commemorates U.S. Service men and women who died on active duty. It was first enacted to honor Union and Confederate soldiers following the American Civil War. It was extended after WWI to honor Americans who have died in all wars.

T. Fred Harvey, a paratrooper in the Pacific War, was the keynote speaker at this year's commemoration. Harvey spoke about his ordeal on Iwo Jima. His remarks exemplified the danger, fear, suffering and lifelong impact of being part of the hard fought island battles. On Page 2 is a condensation of Harvey’s remarks.

T. Fred Harvey, Keynote Speaker, holds up a replica of his boot which was cut in half by a Japanese grenade on Iwo Jima.

Please plan to attend the Veterans Day (11 November) and Pearl Harbor Day (7 December) ceremonies in the Memorial Courtyard. These, along with Memorial Day, are the Museum's three most important commemorative events of the year. They are wonderful opportunities to give thanks to those who have fought to preserve our liberty.
Memorial Day, Continued:

Harvey stated “I was a real good Marine because my mother, a Comanche Indian, demanded it. When I was inducted, she told me: ‘You listen real good -- when the war is over, you come back to us, not as a coward, drunkard or covered with tattoos.’ When I came home, I didn't have tattoos, but I had many injuries resulting from being in a foxhole on Iwo Jima. One night, I heard a ‘thump.’ Knowing that Japanese grenades have a five-second delay, I scooped up the first one and tossed it out. I bobbled the second one and kicked, but that baby kicked back. I lay injured against the wall of the foxhole when a third grenade landed. All I could do was raise a hip and push it down into the volcanic ash, which took most of the force of the explosion.

“A surgeon treated me the next morning, and I told him not to remove my boots. The surgeon said one of them was no good from the blast because about half was gone. I ended up aboard a ship in ‘God's waiting room’ where I was nearly given up for dead. I asked the ship's doctor if I was in ‘God's Hands,’ and he told me 'I guess you were for a while.'

“I don't wait for Memorial Day to come around to remember those guys who lost their lives. Every time I hear the words 'died for their country,' I say a prayer for them."

General Michael Hagee, the President and CEO of the Museum, emceed the event and talked about the courage of the men and women who volunteer to serve. He quoted Yale historian Timothy Snyder who recently wrote: "If no one is willing to die for freedom, we will all die under tyranny."

General Hagee also gave his view about why people always step up to fight to protect their country. He said: "After some 40 years of thinking about that, I concluded they do it for two different reasons: One, they believe in something larger than themselves, and two, they do it for the buddy on their left. You can't buy that, and we can never lose that."

During the event, Colors were posted and retired by the Fredericksburg High School NJROTC, and the invocation was given by Captain Roger Spencer, USN (Ret). The Pledge of Allegiance was led by NJROTC Cadet Michael Cooper, and music was provided by the Fredericksburg Community Chorus. NJROTC Cadet Anne LaFleur presented the Gillespie County Veterans wreath; the Nimitz Living History Detachment gave the Rifle Salute; and Bill Smallwood played Taps.

[Note: For those interested in reading more about Harvey’s experiences, his book, Hell, Yes, I’d Do It All Again, can be ordered from Amazon.com.]

Memorial Wall Endowment Wreath Presentations

Ships: USS Arizona, USS Balch/Porterfield, USS Baltimore, USS Bataan, USS Biloxi, USS Bush, USS Caliente, USS Cebu, USS Colorado, USS De Haven, USS Drexler, USS Essex, USS Eureyal, USS Farenholt, USS Fulton, USS Gen Mark L. Hersey, USS General A.E. Anderson, USS General R.E. Callan, USS Goshen, USS Hughes, USS Hull, USS Idaho, USS Juneau, USS Kankakee, USS LST 463, USS Maryland, USS Mississippi, USS Missouri, USS Monaghan, USS Renshaw, USS Salamonie, USS Salt Lake City, USS Shelik, USS Smith, USS Spence, USS Tabberer, USS Wisconsin, USS Wm. P. Biddle, USS Zellars, USS New Mexico, USS Oklahoma City CL-91 & CLG/CG-5, and USS Princeton

Units: 158th Regimental Combat Team (Bushmasters), 16th Combat Cargo Squadron, 302nd Fighter Control Squadron, 41st Bombardment Group (M), 4th Regiment, Sixth Marines, Engineers, American Battleship Association, Arisan Maru POWs, Civilian Internees of the Japanese, and First Air Commando, USN Base Hospital #15

Individuals: CAPT Henry L. Plage, USN, Dale and George Anderson, Donald D. Hessler, Fletcher Brothers, Jim Bob Pifer, Joe Leslie Ware and John Henry Winn, LCDR Frank J. Longtin, USN, Lester Rotter, William Dietel, Jr., Robert L. Hagee, LT. Charles McCoy, USN, LTJG Henry Gregorio, USN, Marvin H. Raven, Reverend Robert Wilch, Richard L. Bell, Sijifredo Salinas, Wayne B. Goodenow, and PFC Ballard Pead & Fred Dietel
We would like to give parents a head's up regarding plans for next year's Nimitz Jr. Corps programs which introduce youth to the values, innovations, and experiences of our Greatest Generation. Through fun games, exhibit exploration, art, and science, the Nimitz Jr. Corps aims to create the next generation of history enthusiasts, museum stewards, and good citizens. The events are open to children who are 8-13 and are free of charge. All of next year's programs will begin at 1pm and will last until 5pm. Participation is limited so please register by contacting Barbara Ford at 830-997-8600, x225.

Saturday, 21 January 2018

*Anchors Aweigh: Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen and Marines of WWII*

Join the Nimitz Jr. Corps on Saturday, 21 January, at the National Museum of the Pacific War to learn about the men and women who served in the six branches of our Armed Forces during WWII and led America to victory! Children will translate military lingo, learn to tell military time, make their own Victory pins to wear proudly, and figure out what to do when the Captain is Coming!

Saturday, 21 April 2018

*Weapons of War: Secrets and Science*

Have you ever wondered what makes a bomb drop and how they can hit a target from so far away? Find out by joining the Nimitz Jr. Corps on Saturday, 21 April. Children are invited to come break secret codes, get an up close look at authentic WWII weapons, and learn how to maneuver a minefield. We will also take time to understand the human toll of war.

Saturday, 21 July 2018

*Use it Up, Wear it Out, or Do Without: The American Homefront During World War II*

On Saturday, 21 July, children are invited to join the Nimitz Jr. Corps to discover how kids just like them helped the war effort on the home front! We’ll chow down on ration cakes,* explore the exhibits to find the ways that Americans pitched in, and learn how to spot enemy planes from below. There might even be an appearance by the iconic Rosie the Riveter. (*Ration cakes are free of butter, milk, egg, and white sugar. We will also be doing an activity using butter and bread. If your child has any food allergies please let us know ahead of time.)

Saturday, 20 October 2018

*Leadership: Choose Your Own Way*

On Saturday, 20 October, join the Nimitz Jr. Corps to test your leadership and decision making skills. Children will spend the day in the Museum studying the leaders of the War in the Pacific and the tough decisions they made which ultimately led to victory. Corps members will be tested on how closely they paid attention to those lessons through a rousing game of “Choose Your Own Adventure!”

Meet Barbara Ford:

Barbara Ford is our new Education Assistant/Public Programs Coordinator and will be in charge of these Nimitz Jr. Corps programs. She is from a military family, and this background sparked her interest in World War II and a desire to honor the veterans who put their lives on the line to save our country.

Barbara's education and work experience are perfect for her new position. She has a BS degree from Texas A&M in Recreation Park and Tourism Sciences and a Master’s degree in Resource Interpretation from Stephen F. Austin State University. She spent a year in New Hampshire serving with AmeriCorps and working for the State Parks there. She also worked for the National Park Service as a Student Conservation Association Intern at the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park and went on to a two year career as a National Park Service Ranger there. Her work experience also includes three years as a Park Ranger at Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Cheyenne, Oklahoma. In her free time, she likes to travel to other National Parks and is learning to speak German.
Introducing Our New Living History Coordinator: Jeff Copsetta

As a Pacific War enthusiast and novice historian, I am excited and honored to continue the missions of the National Museum of the Pacific War as the new Living History Coordinator.

When I was a senior at Burnet High School in Burnet, Texas, I signed a contract to join the United States Army as a 19D Cavalry Scout. I attended Basic Training and Armored Reconnaissance School at Fort Knox, Kentucky, from 21 June to 26 October 2001. Upon completion of training, I was ordered to Fort Hood, Texas, as a member of a Scout platoon with the 1st Battalion 9th Cavalry Regiment 1st Cavalry Division. After a year long stint in the latter, I received new orders to help stand up a new unit, F Troop 9th Cavalry Regiment 3rd Brigade Recon Troop. My 28 months with F/9 were very dynamic. In March, 2004, we deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, where I was selected to be in a Private Security Detachment for our Brigade Commander. This detail was a handpicked and extremely cohesive unit of just seven soldiers where we conducted nearly 400 combat missions into Baghdad’s “red zone." I earned my Sergeant’s stripes while overseas, as well as spent my 21st birthday there!

With the Army behind me, I went into Texas Parks & Wildlife as a Park Ranger III at the second most visited park in the state, Inks Lake. I served as a Ranger there for nine years and one week. I learned many skills and had great opportunities while serving in Parks & Wildlife, but I knew there was something else out there that I was meant to do. Two years ago, I decided to use my GI Bill and attended Central Texas College where I earned an AA in General Studies. I figured this would help open new doors for me to pursue my lifelong goal, i.e., make the history of World War II my career!

Shortly after I agreed to volunteer in the Education Department at the Pacific Combat Zone, my life-long goal came into view as I was offered the position I currently hold as Living History Coordinator, thus, honoring our heroes, while inspiring our youth!

My dream had come true! I realize now all my dedication and motivation have finally paid off, but it would not have been possible without the staff and volunteers at the National Museum of the Pacific War, as well as the support of my amazing family.

I live on a small piece of Texas Hill Country heaven in Burnet with the “Girl I Left Behind,” my high school sweetheart and super supportive wife of 12 years, Tammy, and our amazing children, Logan 11 and Alyssa 6. I’ve learned firsthand to be careful what you wish for--you just might get it!

A Calendar showing the dates for future Living History Reenactments can be found on Page 11.
Choreographing the Sounds of Battle for the Pacific Combat Zone

Not only have there been major improvements to the newly renovated Pacific Combat Zone, there are new sounds reverberating during the reenactment of a battle to win control of a Pacific island. The following article describes how people who normally stick to working with local bands and guitars fulfilled the task of making sure the sounds of battle were realistic enough to make visitors think they are right in its midst.

Greg Stone, owner of Hill Country Ears Sound Company, is used to dealing with guitars and bands, but when people from the Museum's Living History Program approached him regarding setting up the sound system for the renovated Pacific Combat Zone, he was unsure about taking on the job. Eventually, he decided to do it and is delighted to have been a part of something he regards as "big and meaningful."

For readers who have not had the opportunity to attend, the purpose of the reenactments put on by the Living History Department is to watch "Allied forces" attempt to win a battle on one of the Pacific Islands. The show includes explosions, gunfire, a tank, landing craft, and a flamethrower. Augmenting the action on the field is a soundtrack designed to immerse the audience into the fighting. There was no desire to create a frightening environment, but they did want to make the sounds as realistic as possible.

Designing the hardware and software was complicated. Stone's crew had to run over a mile of cables to 18 speakers. A 40 channel soundboard, powered by 8600 watts, was used to control 16 wireless microphones and 23 other inputs. Stone had to constantly send photos to vendors so they would understand what was needed.

Andrew Alexander, who works as an audio engineer and "mixologist," designed the software from scratch, making every show's soundtrack unique. Thus, aircraft have random trajectories that start in a different spot and go a different route every time. They accomplished this by programming random sound over the heads of the audience. The crew is also able to manually trigger sound effects of planes, cannons, and explosions. Gunfire is live. Although the reenactors use blanks, the reports are loud enough that the audience is provided with ear plugs. Explosions are real, with charges and sound effects used to train Navy Seals. While the battle is not real, the danger is, and each reenactor must be on top of things. They are trained exactly where to be at exactly what time, including which men are to be casualties and where they should fall. If anyone is in the wrong place at the wrong time, they can get hurt.

There were many challenges for Stone and his crew as none of them had Living History battle experience. For example, they did not know where to place a speaker on a simulated island. This is where the expertise of retired Living History Director Marvin Schroeder came in. Stone commented that "Marvin was an inspiration to us all. We'd never had to hide anything like that, Marvin taught us how to make speakers look like a wall or an entrance to a tunnel. It was a full team effort."

Schroeder's experience helped to boost the realism of the show. His goal was to have "the audience be the third unit and to feel the "thunderous-ness" of being in battle; no one but veterans have had that experience." Schroeder designed the battlefield somewhat as a movie set. "That is why the audience is positioned behind the troops. It's as if you are on a ship sitting offshore watching the battle unfold. What you are seeing is the troops taking a bunker; you feel the heat backlash of the flamethrower; and also see the flag going up, knowing that is not the end of the war. You are meant to feel that at any time, you might be going into battle."

Stone said that "it's been great to be a part of something this big in Fredericksburg and in the country overall. We did a lot of this for the veterans. It is always a pleasure to see them. There are not that many left, and we are lucky to have so many here. It's been a thrill."

[Credit for article and photo: Phil Houseal, Columnist, Full House Productions and the Fredericksburg Standard-Radio Post]
From the Desk of the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Admiral Nimitz Foundation:

Dear Members,

Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those in Texas, Louisiana and Florida who have had their lives impacted by the hurricanes, Harvey and Irma, and the horrific devastation that they caused. Although we received heavy rain at the Museum, we had no flooding. Obviously, visitation dropped significantly during that time. We were happy to offer free admission to all evacuees during the last week of August. Additionally, anyone who donated a case of water received a free ticket to the Living History shows at the Pacific Combat Zone over Labor Day weekend. We delivered all donations to the American Red Cross and their relief efforts.

Celebrating the Museum’s 50th Anniversary this year provided us several opportunities to recognize and thank the men and women who have served this country in our Armed Forces from WW-II to the present. A couple of examples are:

- When we reopened the Pacific Combat Zone and restarted the Living History performances in March, we had over 40 WW-II veterans in attendance. In addition, many veterans from Korea and more current wars attended one of the shows.

- We are also proud to recognize those active duty service men and women who volunteer to participate in our Living History shows. They come from all services and many military locations throughout Texas.

T. Fred Harvey, a WW-II Marine who was severely wounded on Iwo-Jima, gave the perfect Memorial Day talk at our annual commemorative program in the Courtyard.

We recently reorganized our Education Department. Under the leadership of Bryan Degner, a retired high-school history teacher and former volunteer at the PCZ, the department has quickly come together and become an integral part of the team. We are all dedicated to improving our educational impact and outreach.

Our website at www.pacificwarmuseum.org is the best way to get information on the Museum, Foundation and our associated activities.

In recognition of our 50th Anniversary this year, the Foundation and Museum served as the Grand Marshal for the Gillespie County Fair Parade in August. It was a perfect day for a parade and we had many veterans and supporters ride with us on WW-II vehicles.

As always, I thank you for your strong and dedicated support. You are a critical part of our legacy and our continued success.

Best Wishes, Mike Hagee

Teachers Invade Museum!

In mid-August, 72 teachers and staff from Boerne Middle School North visited the Museum for their Boerne Journey Adventure. This outing is held each year and at a different location. It serves as a team building and get reacquainted event before the start of school.

The teachers toured the Bush Gallery and experienced the Pacific Combat Zone Up Close Tour. While at the PCZ, the group saw the battlefield artifacts, went onboard the Higgins PT Boat for a lesson, rode in the Half Track and witnessed the flame thrower in action. A great time was had by all and several teachers commented that they would be back with their families or students.
A Marine’s Story: “It Became Too Undignified”

According to Richard Frank, a Pacific War Scholar whose contributions to our Museum cannot be overstated, he did research at East Carolina University, he found an unpublished memoir of Edward P. Leahy, Company D, 20th Marines, 4th Marine Division who fought from the Marshalls to Iwo Jima.

In the section on Iwo Jima, Leahy vividly describes the landing and being pinned down under severe fire. Since this was his fourth campaign, he was no rookie and clearly understood the situation. Included in his account was the following, which should be a lesson for us all:

"Our new lieutenant, the replacement, came around and, his voice shaking, told us to get ready for evacuation. The beach was too hot, and we were being pulled out."

"Company “D” was on the verge of going to pieces."

"Carver (not further identified) came to the rescue. I could see him about twenty yards away in a foxhole with his back to a wrecked amtrac. He was gazing out at the scene: at the pinned down troops, all scared and sweating and pushing down into their foxholes, and at the burning amtracs, blown up bulldozers, dead bodies, and wreckage laying here and there. Carver studied the scene, and then he got kind of a contemplative look in his eye; he cleared his throat and spat, and then he got up and walked into the open, climbed up into the seat of a bulldozer that was still working and started the engine. He went to work. He ignored the fact that he was under fire and made a beautiful target. He just started moving material around, doing the work we were all supposed to be doing. He did not ask anyone to help him. He just went at it himself. It was the bravest act I have ever seen."

"In the meantime, I was crouched in my foxhole watching Carver. I knew I should help him but I didn’t want to. I would stay in my foxhole. It was safer there."

"Gradually others came out and went to work helping Carver. No order was given."

"I stuck it out for a while, but it got to me, of course. It became too undignified. It became too undignified to stay alive under these conditions. I came to the point, finally, of accepting the idea of my own death. I said to myself, ‘Well, if I’m going to be killed, I’m going to be killed.’ And I got up and left my foxhole, and walked out and joined Carver and the others. And we bent to the task."

In July, Gen. Michael Hagee, USMC, Ret., 33rd Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, was on hand at a Special Ceremony at the Museum in which Sean Maddux, (center), was commissioned as a second lieutenant. Maddux chose to have his older brother, Mathew, as his first salute. Mathew is part of the Wounded Warrior Battalion at San Antonio Military Medical Center. A few months ago, he had been wounded in a tank explosion.
It was November 24, 1942. On the afternoon agenda of Franklin D. Roosevelt was a White House meeting with Mrs. Michael E. Fleming, Fleming family members, and Marine Corps officials. At that time, the President would present Mrs. Fleming with her son’s posthumous Medal of Honor awarded for his actions during the Battle of Midway. It would be the only Medal of Honor presented for this pivotal engagement in the Pacific.

Six months earlier, Marine Air Group-22 (MAG-22) had been shore-based on Midway Atoll to assist in its defense. It consisted of two squadrons: Marine Fighter Squadron (VMF)-221, composed of fighter planes commanded by Major Floyd B. Parks, and Marine Scout-Bombing Squadron (VMSB)-241, composed of dive bombers commanded by Major Lofton R. Henderson. Captain Richard Eugene Fleming, USMCR, was a pilot assigned to VMSB-241.

A native of St. Paul, Minnesota, Fleming was born on November 2, 1917. He graduated in 1935 from Saint Thomas Military Academy and was chosen as its top student officer. He attended the University of Minnesota, served as President of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity and graduated with a BA degree in 1939. He joined the Marine Corps Reserve and applied for flight training, arriving at Naval Air Station Pensacola in 1940 to become an aviation cadet. A “spirited” cadet, Fleming countered his training demerits and infractions through his initiative and character. He received his “Wings of Gold” in November 1940, accepted his Marine Corps commission and eventually joined VMSB-241.

Admiral Chester Nimitz visited Midway to determine the atoll’s defensive readiness and requirements on May 2, 1942. Through successful decoding of Japanese messages by his staff—an intelligence coup—Nimitz alerted Midway leaders on May 20th of an impending Japanese attack. MAG-22 had its battle plan ready: The fighter-defense of the atoll itself would be led by VMF-221 with the attack on the Japanese Strike Force led by VMSB-241.

On June 4, 1942, the Battle of Midway began. The Marines were soon engaged with enemy forces. VMF-221 took on the incoming Japanese attack planes with its F4F Wildcat and obsolete F2A Buffalo aircraft. Its unit was decimated while attempting to make a dent in the overwhelming Japanese air attack force before it reached the atoll. The Marines’ heroic labors were not able to turn back the wave of aircraft approaching Midway.

VMSB-241 launched its SBD Dauntless and SB2U Vindicator aircraft in two divisions for a rendezvous east of Midway. It then headed northwest to be among the first to attack the Japanese fleet. Leading the approach to the Strike Force, Henderson’s plane went down [Guadalcanal’s airfield would be named for him]. Fleming stepped up and “led the remainder of the division with such fearless determination that he dived his own plane to the perilously low altitude of 400 feet before releasing his bomb.” Fleming received two minor injuries in his attacks against the carrier *Hiryu*. His Dauntless returned safely to Midway, despite being riddled with 179 hits from Japanese fighter guns and anti-aircraft batteries.

The next day at 7:00 a.m., VMSB-241 participated in the pursuit phase of the battle. Fleming—with only four hours sleep—flew a SB2U Vindicator and led “the second division of his squadron in a coordinated glide-bombing [shallow angle] and dive-bombing [steep angle] assault on a Japanese battleship.” The vessel was actually the heavy cruiser *Mikuma*. At 8:40 a.m., Fleming and his gunner, Private First Class George A. Toms (who would receive the Distinguished Flying Cross) were in a glide-bombing approach run from 4,000 feet heading towards the cruiser when his aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire. Fleming pressed his attack to an altitude of 500 feet. Engine smoking, he released his bomb to score a near-miss on the stern of his target. As he started to pull out of the dive, his engine erupted in flames, and the plane crashed into the sea. (This is the citation account that FDR read in 1942. However, after the war, Japanese accounts stated that Fleming’s aircraft actually crashed into the cruiser’s aft turret and started fires in the engine room.) Fleming had participated in all three of his squadron’s attacks during the battle.

Despite their courageous efforts, the Marines’ damage to the Strike Force was minimal. However, the boldness of their attack contributed to the fatal decision by the Japanese to pursue another attack on the atoll. It was this change in plans that allowed attack aircraft from the *Yorktown*, *Hornet*, and *Enterprise* to attack, costing the Japanese Navy four aircraft carriers and the naval initiative in the Pacific. MAG-22 would be awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

Admiral Nimitz wrote of his Marine aviators at Midway that “They were the spearhead of our great victory. They have written a new and shining page in the annals of the Marine Corps.”
The Fleet Admiral Nimitz Legacy Society
Salutes Its Membership

The Fleet Admiral Nimitz Legacy Society welcomes three new members:
LtCol and Mrs. Richard Beil, Jr.
Stanley Murphy
Elizabeth and Alfred Montalvo

We would also like to extend our gratitude to our long time members:
Malcolm and Marge McDougall
Mr. and Mrs. Truman Gill
Joseph Scuro, Jr.
Carl I. Duncan
Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Phelps
Melinda Godfrey
Ray Harrison
Lawrence Notthdurft
Clascola Trust
Thomas A. Sullivan
Conway Taylor
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Woellhof

George J. Grimm
Monahans American Legion
Post #473
Scholarship Trust
Don Yockey
Donald Ashton Sumner
Robert E. Allender
John Ray Pepper
Jackie Hollis Henderson
Robert Grinslade, Jr.
Dorothy L. and Fred Lucas
Carol Ann Shepherd

Become a member by making a provision in your estate for the Admiral Nimitz Foundation and National Museum of the Pacific War and then notifying the Foundation of your intent.

To answer any questions or receive a Letter of Intent for Estate Gift, please contact Marty Kaderli at 830-997-8600, x204 or kaderli@NimitzFoundation.org or visit our website, PacificWarMuseum.org under “Get Involved.”

50th Anniversary Admiral Nimitz Museum Journal
Reg. $9.95 - Sale: $5

50th Anniversary Admiral Nimitz Museum Mug
Reg. $12.95 - Sale: $6

National Museum of the Pacific War Shot Glass
Reg. $9.95 - Sale: $5

National Museum of the Pacific War Stein
Reg. $24.95 - Sale: $6

National Museum of the Pacific War Tote Bag
Reg. $18.95 - Sale: $9

TO ORDER: Call 830-997-8600, x252
ON-LINE: nimitz-bookstore.com
Shipping and TX Taxes Extra
Foundation Members Receive a 15% Discount
Curatorial News:

A new photographic exhibit entitled: “Before They’re Gone: Portraits & Stories of World War II Veterans” is on display in the Temporary Gallery until 14 January 2018. In addition, a unique piece of "Trench Art" was donated in September by one of the veterans honored in the photographic exhibit. The following describes the content of the exhibit and the nature of the donated artifact -- and the connection between the two.

"Before They're Gone:
Portraits and Stories of WWII Veterans"

When D. Clarke Evans (above), a graduate of Brooks Institute of Photography, went to a breakfast honoring World War II veterans, he did not expect to have a life changing experience. At the time, Evans, who had served in the Marine Corps Reserves, was the team photographer for the San Antonio Spurs. He sat next to Dick Cole, who had served as Jimmy Doolittle's co-pilot on the famed Doolittle Raid on Tokyo in April 1942, and after listening to Cole's story, he was awed. It was like an "awakening" because he realized he had to record veterans' stories Now. He retired from the Spurs and began his new photographic project.

The exhibit features a comparative photographic study of WWII veterans then and now. Each is photographed and interviewed in their homes, often surrounded by war memorabilia. Smaller photos from the veterans' active duty days are included. The display offers a “snapshot” of their lives before, during and after service. This has become a "calling" for Evans. In the Museum's exhibit, veterans from various military services are included, as well as nurses, and a Navajo code talker. Evans continues to seek out veterans, and one of his current targets is to expand his coverage of women who served in the WASPs. This project is completely self-funded by Evans and will eventually be published in book form. This exhibit is free and located in the Temporary Gallery of the George H.W. Bush Gallery.

"Trench Art" Depicting Corsair Fighter Plane

When stationed on Guadalcanal, MSGT Gray Majirus, 3rd Marine Division, Motor Transport NCO, built a model of a F4U Corsair fighter plane, similar to those being used on Guadalcanal. Majirus used bullet casings and other ordinance in the plane's construction.

He did the work in his machine shop after hours. When air raid sirens would sound, he would hastily shut down the shop and run for cover.

This piece of trench art is composed of 50 caliber shells at the base and has wings made of 90mm casings and wheels of 50 mm shells. Its cockpit is composed of scrap metal off of a downed Japanese aircraft, and the stars are made of silver dimes. It is truly one of a kind, and Majirus commented that he wanted to show that "not everything coming out of war was ugly."

Majirus donated the piece to the Museum in a ceremony on 7 September 2017. The plane is located in the Guadalcanal section of the exhibits and rests besides the goggles and helmet of Saburo Sakai, the Japanese Flying Ace, who was wounded badly in a dogfight above the island.

After the ceremony, Majirus and the rest of the onlookers went to the Temporary Gallery to see his photograph and "snapshot of his life" as depicted in Evans' exhibit of "Before They're Gone."
Our Partnership with the Texas Historical Commission: Working together by agreement as a state agency and a non-profit organization, the THC and Admiral Nimitz Foundation formed a new public/private partnership created to preserve the historic resources of the National Museum of the Pacific War and guide the expansion of the Museum. It is the only institution in the continental United States dedicated exclusively to telling the story of the Pacific Theater battles of World War II.
The Admiral Nimitz Foundation is a 501(c) 3 non-profit foundation eligible for corporate matching grants. Foundation members may forward any forms for matching gift programs with their membership contributions.

The Admiral Nimitz Foundation
328 E. Main St. • Fredericksburg, TX 78624

The Admiral Nimitz Foundation was recently rated Four Star by Charity Navigator -- the leading independent evaluator of non-profit charities in the U.S. A Four Star rating shows exceptional managerial efficiency exceeding industry standard.

Flag Day Commemoration with Thousands of Flags Adorning the Memorial Courtyard and Presidential Plaza