The Nimitz Education and Research Center (NERC) has been making headlines recently due to two new documentaries that feature resources from our collections.

This past June, the Smithsonian Channel began airing an eight-part mini-series entitled *The Pacific War in Color*. This groundbreaking series uses unvarnished firsthand accounts from the NERC’s World War II Veteran’s Oral History Collection to tell the story of the Pacific War in the words of the men and women who lived it. After coming across the oral history collection in the NERC’s digital archive (accessible via the Museum’s website, www.pacificwarmuseum.org), the filmmakers reached out to NERC staff about including parts of the collection in their film. Series Producer Dan Wolf later said, “We researched archives and museums all over the world for films, correspondence, and photos. When we discovered the online oral history collection at the National Museum of the Pacific War, we were like kids in a candy store. The stories were jaw-dropping, and the sheer volume of material allowed us to find a voice for just about any Pacific War storyline, combat or not. For example, I could keyword “New Guinea” into Search and pull up all the veterans who talked about their service there. With the Museum’s permission, we made them our primary source of first-person accounts for the entire series.”

Executive Producer John Cavanagh reiterated the importance of the oral histories to the overall series, “The narrator can describe the nuts and bolts of history, but only the men and women who lived it can describe the experience. It’s like a sports broadcast — our narrator often does the play-by-play, and the oral histories provide the color commentary. We focus on stories that really bring a moment to life — what the war felt like, sounded like, and meant to them. It’s their stories that viewers will remember. The Pacific War is huge — we wanted to make it personal.”

Continued on Page 2:
Continued from Page 1:

The Pacific War in Color is airing in repeats on the Smithsonian Channel, streaming online or for digital download.

The National Museum of the Pacific War is always looking to add to our oral history collection to preserve the legacy of the Greatest Generation. If you or someone you know lived through World War II and have a story to share, please contact Archivist and Librarian Chris McDougal at cmcdougal@nimitzfoundation.org or at 830-997-8600, ext. 264, to schedule an interview.

In his role as Archivist and Librarian, Chris McDougal was involved not only with the Smithsonian Channel series, but with the production of a Japanese documentary called Letters Home, which aired on TV station, NHK, in Japan this past August and will be available on DVD. Letters Home features a cache of letters found by a Navy SeaBee in a cave on Iwo Jima.

The filmmakers reached out to a number of American institutions, including the Marine Corps Museum, the National Archives and Records Administration and, of course the NERC, to request scans of correspondence from Japanese service men.

The filmmakers were drawn to one particular collection of letters in our archive because it was quite large, and all of the letters had been written by members of one family. The filmmakers were actually able to track down a couple of family members, including one who was mentioned by name in a couple of the letters. The family members were delighted to receive scans of their correspondence. It was reportedly very emotional for them as they only have one surviving postcard from the service member, who is believed to have been killed on Iwo Jima, although his remains have never been found.

In partial exchange for the use of the letters in their documentary, the filmmakers are providing a translation of the letters to the NERC. This is exciting, as translation of the letters is complicated and would have been costly for the Museum to have translated. The letters are written in an older form of Japanese and contain a lot of regional dialect and business jargon. An English translation of the letters will be very useful for future researchers at the NERC.

Following the move of Mike Lebens, longtime Curator of Collections for the museum, to a new role in the Texas Historical Commission, Reagan Grau has been promoted to the position of Director of Collections. Reagan graduated from Texas Tech University in 1997 with a B.A. and in 2006 with a M.A. in History. He worked in the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech before coming to the Admiral Nimitz Foundation in 2006. Reagan was the first archivist on staff at our Museum and is very qualified to take on the new challenges facing him. As Director of Collections, Reagan is responsible for managing the Museum collection, which includes both artifacts and archival material, as well as overseeing permanent and temporary exhibitions. In his 12 years with the Museum, Reagan has been involved with three gallery renovations, and will play a major role in the upcoming Nimitz Gallery renovation. Originally from Lubbock, Reagan and his family have lived in Fredericksburg since 2006.
Message from Our New Director Rorie Cartier:

Dear Members:

Our Motto is: “We inspire our Youth, by honoring our Heroes.” Here at the National Museum of the Pacific War, we are faithful to preserving and telling the material history of the Pacific Asiatic Theater during WWII. It is my absolute honor and privilege to serve as the new Museum Director of such a wonderful and meaningful institution.

The Museum already tells thousands of stories of individuals and events during the War in the Pacific, but we are certainly not finished yet. In cooperation with the Admiral Nimitz Foundation and the Texas Historical Commission, we will begin design and construction to renovate the Admiral Nimitz Galleries in the historic Nimitz Hotel building here on the Museum campus. In addition to the gallery renovation, thanks to a gift from the Damon Wells Foundation, we are building an orientation theater in the Bush Gallery. As we continue to grow and update our state-of-the-art campus, our curatorial and collections teams are working hard every day to add new oral histories, images, and documents to our website, providing resources to academic and amateur historians across the globe.

My responsibilities at the Museum are twofold: the first is to ensure the stories, memories, and artifacts are preserved and cared for in the way they deserve. The second responsibility is to make sure these stories, memories and artifacts are as readily available to the public as possible. It is an audacious task that everyone here at the Museum has accepted, and although I may be a little biased, I believe they have all done an amazing job.

I look forward to the future and hope you will engage with the Museum in any way possible, whether it is touring our galleries, watching our Living History program, using our online resources, or participating in one of many onsite and outreach programs. In closing, allow me to echo Admiral Chester Nimitz regarding my new position here at the museum, “I have just taken on a great responsibility. I will do my utmost to meet it.”

Sincerely, Rorie Cartier

New Assistant Development-Membership Director

Along with all of the recent staff changes at the Foundation, we have a new Assistant Development Director - Membership. Amelia White joined the Foundation staff back in February 2018 as a member of the marketing department where she was responsible for managing the Museum’s social media accounts. She made the jump to membership in July after Dr. Rorie Cartier moved to the Museum Director position. A native Houstonian, Amelia has a B.A. in Political Science from Austin College in Sherman, Texas and an M.A. in History from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Following internships at the Institute of Texan Cultures and the National Archives and Records Administration, she joined the staff at the Alamo working in visitor services, education and marketing during her five years there.

Amelia was thrilled at the opportunity to join the staff at the Admiral Nimitz Foundation. This self-described “history nerd” is enjoying immersing herself in books on the Pacific War. She recently told us, “I am related to Audie Murphy through my paternal grandmother, so growing up, I had more of an interest in learning about the European Theater. I’m excited to now have the opportunity to study the Pacific Theater in more depth and better understand the experiences of the men and women who served in this theater of operations.” She continued, “One of my favorite parts of my new role as Assistant Development Director is talking with our members and hearing about the connections they have to the war and their family stories. I look forward to meeting more of our members in the upcoming months!”
The corps of nurses was undoubtedly one of the most courageous forces to play its key role in gaining the Allied victory in WWII. This is a bold statement, yet it is easy to defend. They performed their multi-faceted duties on hospital ships, in field hospitals, and later in the war on airplanes and on the front lines. It must be remembered that the women who stepped up to serve came out of a generation where the majority of women rarely worked outside the home. Few had traveled much beyond their home towns, much less abroad. One has to wonder what their expectations were, but it is clear that what they found was vastly different than what they might have anticipated.

Their story started at Pearl Harbor where there were both Army and Navy Corps nurses stationed when the bombs and carnage began. Fortunately, none of the nurses were killed so they could spring into action to help the injured and dying from the USS Arizona, West Virginia and other ships. It quickly became evident to the government back in Washington, D.C., that there would be a huge need for more nurses as the country began to face war on several fronts. By the end of the war, the Army Nurse Corps had a total of almost 59,000 nurses, and the Navy Nurse Corps had 1,799 active component nurses and 9,222 reserves, the majority of whom were also active duty nurses scattered across the world.

Besides Pearl Harbor, American nurses were on Guam, the Philippines and aboard the hospital ship, USS Solace. They were later sent to the islands north of New Caledonia and to Efate where they treated the many wounded during the long siege on Guadalcanal. Others were sent to the Solomons, New Zealand, Australia, the Coral Sea, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian, Leyte, New Guinea, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Large numbers of nurses served in Europe, and a smaller number were sent to Africa.

Many faced danger from bombings and enemy fire, and the conditions in which they worked were often daunting. They had to make emergency life and death decisions, sometimes on their own. They faced inadequate medical supplies, medicines and sometimes a lack of beds to put the wounded in. Conditions were often unsanitary. The risk of disease, especially in the Pacific was always present. They saw very disturbing things and grisly wounds. They had to treat young men with shell shock (now known as PTSD) and then deal with it themselves as they dealt with feelings of isolation and were haunted by what they had seen. As the war progressed, the danger increased, and the nurses got closer to battles than ever before. Again, they brought humanity and a bit of grace to horrific scenes. Their bravery served as a beacon for many and strengthened resolve. Their impact on morale can never be overstated.

No matter what they faced, the nurses — both Army and Navy — served with skill and dedication. They were responsible for saving arms and limbs and countless lives. Over 200 nurses were killed — 16 due to enemy action, and some were imprisoned by the Japanese in the Philippines. The relentless service of the nurses in WWII, under extremely challenging circumstances, transformed the world of nursing forever. As individuals, their worlds were broadened, and they became inspirations for the girls and women left behind. They and the other women who served in the war or on the homefront were the trailblazers for future generations. It is important we make sure their heroism and legacy are never forgotten.
For the second time, the Fredericksburg Police Department brought participants in their summer youth program to the Museum.

The Museum’s Education Department offered a STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) related activity: code name “Operation Humpty Dumpty.” Students were tasked with constructing a delivery system that would safely land an egg on the Nimitz ballroom floor after being dropped from the second floor mezzanine.

The 80 participants were divided into 12 teams. During the 30 minute time period, each group, with limited supplies, demonstrated teamwork in coming up with a plan. Only one team managed to successfully complete the mission and deliver the egg without it breaking.

The Museum, in partnership with the Tom Lea Institute in El Paso, Texas, brought history to life for 160 middle school students this past July. These students had been participating in a summer camp where they studied WWII history. The art work of Tom Lea, the first embedded artist correspondent in WWII, was used to bring a more personal firsthand experience to the students.

In addition to Lea’s work, such as the “Two Thousand Yard Stare,” the students got to see and touch WWII gear and hear lessons and stories related to the war from Museum Director of Education Bryan Degner. He conducted several presentations which covered topics such as the home front, advances in technology, women in the military and leadership. Holly Cobb, Director of Education at the Tom Lea Institute, called the event a success as the students were engaged, asked great questions and left with a better understanding of the challenges and perils faced by young men and women not much older than themselves.

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**Plan Ahead to See The 2019 Living History Shows!**

- **March 9-10**
- **April 6-7**
- **May 25-26**
- **July 6-7**
- **August 31 - September 1**
- **October 12-13**
- **November 9-10**

All shows 10:30am and 2:00pm both Saturday and Sunday

*only morning show on Sunday*
Dear Members,

Thank you for your support, we continue to bring the lessons of World War II in the Asiatic-Pacific and the ideas of service, patriotism and dedication to on-site visitors and increasingly off-site to schools and other venues in and outside Texas.

Led by our new Museum Director, Rorie Cartier, we are deep into schematic design for the renovation of the Nimitz Gallery. We believe we will begin the renovation in January 2019 with a projected completion in October 2019. Unfortunately, the Nimitz Gallery and Ballroom will be closed to visitors during this time. We plan to keep the staff offices open during construction.

Fundraising continues for the renovation. If you would like to contribute to this important effort, please ensure that your gift is designated for the Nimitz Renovation. Thank you for any support you can provide.

As you know, this year marks the 100th Anniversary of the end of World War I and the establishment of Veterans Day on 11 November. We will have our normal ceremony in the Memorial Courtyard on Sunday, 11 November. Later, that afternoon, we will participate in a parade, here in Fredericksburg, commemorating the end of WW I and honoring all veterans, past and present.

We have recently been updating our website (www.pacificwarmuseum.org). We always look forward to any feedback.

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

Best Wishes, Mike Hagee

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**Successful Battle Buddies Classic**

**Raises Funds for Admiral Nimitz Foundation and Veterans’ Assistance Dogs of Texas**

Saturday, 20 October 2018

“Leadership: Choose Your Own Way”

Saturday, 20 October 2018 join the Nimitz Jr. Corps to test your leadership and decision making skills. Children, ages 8-12, will spend the day in the National Museum of the Pacific War studying the leaders of the War in the Pacific and the tough decisions they made that ultimately led to victory. Corps members will be tested on how closely they paid attention to those lessons learned through a rousing game of “Choose Your Own Adventure!” Nimitz Jr. Corps is from 1:00pm-5:00pm and is free of charge. Participation is limited so please register by contacting Barbara Ford at 830-997-8700 ext. 225.

We are very grateful to Whataburger® for their sponsorship of these programs.

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**Reminder: Nimitz Jr. Corps**

Saturday, 20 October 2018
Red, White and Bourbon Fundraiser To Benefit the Admiral Nimitz Foundation

Mark your calendars now for a special fundraising event on Saturday, November 10 at the Garrison Brothers Distillery in Hye, Texas. This event promises to be a lot of fun with music, tours, drinks and food. Thanks to our generous partners, all event proceeds benefit the Admiral Nimitz Foundation. In the words of Garrison Brothers:

“We are teaming up with Family Business Brewing Company and the Admiral Nimitz Foundation to bring you Red White and Bourbon. There ain’t much sweeter than neighboring craft distillers and breweries coming together to raise money for a worthy cause. We’ll have “Tank Tours” of the distillery with Rev, our distillery director, ‘Dip-Your-Own’ red, white, blue wax bottles (a portion of the purchase goes to support the Admiral Nimitz Foundation).

Please Plan to Come!

Veterans Day and End of WW I Commemorations Planned for 11 November 2018

Please plan to join the Museum in a two-fold event on Veterans Day, 11 November. The first is our annual Veterans Day commemoration at 11am, the time the Armistice ending WW I was signed. The ceremony is free and open to the public and will be held in the Memorial Courtyard.

At 11am, as part of a national World War I Remembrance “Bells of Peace”, all community bells will ring for one full minute. The program will begin immediately afterward. Major General Robert Parker, USAF (Ret.) will be our keynote speaker. Parker served in key defense positions at the Defense Department, including in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Senior Military Advisor to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and Director of the US On-Site Inspection Agency. He retired as Commander 20th Air Force, where he was responsible for our nation’s 1000 Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and commanded over 11,000 military and civilian personnel.

In the second event of the day, the city of Fredericksburg will remember the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I with a parade in the afternoon. Members of the Museum’s Living History program will participate with their military vehicles. This will be a colorful and enjoyable occasion in honor of the veterans who have served to protect our country.
The use of airpower in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea (March 2-4, 1943) successfully restricted Japanese abilities to counter Allied offensive actions in the New Guinea campaign. General George C. Kenney, Commander of the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA), utilized medium bombers at low-level altitudes as the key element in his modified attack strategy.

Twenty-six-year-old Raymond H. Wilkins would regret missing action in the skies above the Bismarck Sea—he was on a rare leave period in Australia. Major Wilkins had been in the SWPA for over a year. However, while on leave, he had met and begun dating Phyllis Byrne of Rockhampton, Queensland…and had fallen in love.

Hailing from Virginia’s Tidewater region, Wilkins was born in Portsmouth, VA, on 28 September 1917. He enlisted in the Army at nearby Langley Field in July 1936. After serving at Langley, he was assigned as a radio instructor at Chanute Field, IL. He graduated from the Air Corps Technical School in February 1940. By March 1941, he began flight training at Parks Air College, IL, followed by duty at Randolph and Kelly Fields, TX. He received the gold bars of a Second Lieutenant along with his “wings” on 31 October 1941 and soon left for the Philippines.

Wilkins’ transport was diverted after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and he arrived in Australia to help organize the 89th Bombardment Squadron, 3rd Bombardment Group. Following the move of the 3rd Group’s squadrons to New Guinea, he participated in over 50 bombing and low-level strafing missions—primarily in his B-25—that had included four successful raids on Japanese air facilities on the island. He would eventually earn the Silver Star, four Distinguished Flying Crosses, and two Air Medals for his 254 flight hours against the enemy.

Wilkins opted to stay with the 3rd Bombardment Group and take command of the 8th Bombardment Squadron. He enjoyed an outstanding reputation among his peers and those he led. He also commanded some of the most difficult air missions against the Japanese fortress at Rabaul as part of Operation CARTWHEEL.

Rabaul was the capital of New Britain and had been captured by Japan from the Australians in February 1942. The Japanese developed it into their South Pacific citadel and launched their offensive initiatives into the SWPA from there. It had five airfields and numerous anti-aircraft guns manned by both its army and navy for defense. Simpson Harbor served as a superb deep-water anchorage for the Japanese fleet. By October 1943, Kenney had authorized a series of sustained bombing campaigns against the base to isolate and neutralize the site. However, these raids had mixed results. A big push was planned for the following month as the Japanese transferred a large cruiser force from their Truk naval base to Simpson Harbor.

On Tuesday, 2 November 1943, Wilkins and his squadron left Dobodura’s airstrip along with eight other squadrons of B-25s and their P-38 escorts heading towards their anti-shipping mission on Rabaul. The squadrons were not at full strength due to the attrition of the previous month and did not know that the Japanese had delivered another 100 fighters to Rabaul. As the planes approached, they put into action the plans from their previous briefings: the anti-aircraft (AA) positions would be attacked, a smokescreen laid down and the B-25s would go to work. Wilkins’ squadron would be placed in increased danger since it was the last to enter the harbor target area. Wilkins’ plane, Fifi (Phyllis’ nickname), was in the position of maximum risk on the left flank. The smoke screen caused a last-minute navigational change which still allowed the Japanese vessels to be attacked, but it brought the squadron through more concentrated AA fire. Now alerted, the Japanese were waiting for the low-flying aircraft with a rain of steel.

Wilkins’ airplane was hit almost immediately with damage to his controls and the right wing. He stayed the course and led his squadron into the attack, strafing a group of small harbor vessels. He then attacked a Japanese destroyer at low-level, causing the vessel to explode when his 1,000-pound bomb struck the craft amidships. Even after AA fire had seriously damaged his left vertical stabilizer, he attacked a 9,000-ton transport from below mast-head height—again the ship was engulfed in flames. With his bomb load expended, he began to lead his squadron from the harbor. The heavy cruiser Haguro blocked his path. Wilkins unhesitatingly zeroed in for a strafing run, and Fifi’s damaged left stabilizer was completely shot off. Wilkins turned his aircraft to evade crashing into his wing planes. By doing so, he exposed the belly and full wing surfaces of his plane to the AA fire of the cruiser which tore off his left wing and sent the plane plunging into the harbor. His valor would allow the the remaining planes of his squadron to escape safely home. His family would receive his posthumous Medal of Honor in 1944.

Two weeks before his final mission to Rabaul, Wilkins had been able to go back to Australia briefly to visit Phyllis and had asked her father for permission to marry. They had set a date for after Christmas to walk down the aisle. Historian Bruce Gamble, in his Rabaul trilogy, noted that “the hard part, everybody knew, would be keeping it.”
Ken and Libby Biedermann Named Volunteers of the Year

In July, Museum volunteers gathered for our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. Volunteers and staff enjoyed an evening barbecue, dancing and games. We also recognized our amazing volunteers for their hours of service to the Museum and named the Volunteers of the Year Ken and Libby Biedermann (shown right). The Biedermann’s began volunteering at the museum in 2011 and are always available to help out on any occasion. From cleaning old candle holders to serving as greeters in the Bush Gallery and Pacific Combat Zone to helping with special events, the Biedermann’s have done it all. Volunteer Coordinator Connie Eckardt praised the couple saying, “I can always count on them as a team! They both always seem to have a smile on their face and are always ready to jump in and help.”

Others were also recognized for their significant contributions to specific Departments. They were: Development - Carol Ann Shepherd; Gallery - Lloyd Jolly; Marketing - Diane Evans; Administration - Greg Hagelstein; Living History - P.B. Snyder; Education - Myles Theis; Curatorial - Ed Metzler; Memorials - David Lawford.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact CONNIE ECKHARDT at ceckhardt@nimitzfoundation.org or 830-997-8600, x223

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Foundation Members Receive a 15% Discount (Excluding November 25th)
A new temporary exhibit, *Art of the Aloha Shirt: Keoni of Hawaii, 1938 – 1951* opened on 14 September. This special exhibit explores the history, artistry, and production of Hawaii’s enduring fashion statement, the Aloha Shirt. Sixty objects, including original textile artwork, production sketches and swatches, advertisements, and vintage shirts tell the story of an early innovator, John “Keoni” Magis, in an industry that has left an indelible mark on fashion in the United States and the world. The exhibit will be on display in the Temporary Gallery through 7 January 2019.

This exhibit is a program of Exhibits USA, a national division of Mid-America Arts Alliance, with the Texas Commission on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. The exhibit is free to the public and does not require a museum ticket. It is located in the Temporary Gallery of the George H. W. Bush Gallery on Austin Street.

**Donation of the Flag of Torpedo Squadron Ten known as the Buzzard Brigade**

In June 2018, the Museum received the unit flag of the legendary Torpedo Squadron Ten, known as the Buzzard Brigade, along with documents, letters and photos pertaining to the famed group. The donor was Bill Shinneman, who co-wrote the book, *The Buzzard Brigade: Torpedo Squadron Ten at War.*

The idea of the canvas flag was hatched early in the combat tour of Torpedo Squadron Ten (VT-10). Each squadron in the air group had its own emblem, and the men of VT-10 worked on several designs before one was agreed upon. Robert W. Gruebel, AMM3c, is generally credited with coming up with the emblem showing the diving buzzard, bloody mop clutched in its claws, and it was he who drew the design on the canvas. The flag was then given to the skipper of the squadron, LCDR Albert "Scoofer" Coffin, and it became known as “Scoofer’s Flag.” Sometime later, the score of the first month’s combat action at Santa Cruz and Guadalcanal was painted on the canvas, showing ships sunk and/or damaged, enemy planes shot down by squadron gunners, and bombs and torpedo results. The flag stayed with the CO throughout his naval career and many years after. Upon his death, the family of retired RADM Coffin donated the flag to the squadron exes.

VT-10 participated in numerous combat operations against enemy forces and installations. Included among these were Santa Cruz, the Solomons, Guadalcanal, Hollandia, New Guinea, Marianas and Okinawa. There were also three major Fleet engagements, which among other exploits, resulted in the sinking of the *IJNS Yamato.* The squadron also participated in strikes against Japanese home and outlying islands. The Squadron was recognized for its exemplary performance by being awarded two Presidential Citations and a Navy Unit Commendation Medal.
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
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Displaying the Power of the Flamethrower Weapon During Living History Programs