



The Quarterly Publication of the Fort MacArthur Museum Association

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From the Director

By Stephen R. Nelson, Museum Director

The museum recently had a visit from a staff member of one of the country's newest and best funded WWII museums. As our staff and volunteers showed him our exhibits, collections and macro artifacts we asked about his funding and his projects. While our two organizations are funded at vastly different levels he had this observation. He said that he has been to every military museum in the country and the Fort MacArthur Museum appears to be doing more, with fewer resources than any museum he has visited. This observation makes us proud. While we would welcome increased funding at any level, the fact that we are doing well, despite being "financially challenged" is a testament to all our donors, members and volunteers.

In addition to the praise from other museum professionals our institution is continuing to build better relationships with the community at large. Our last Old Fort MacArthur Days special event was the best to date. Our special guests From the TV series Mail Call brought us even wider recognition. Our diversity of exhibits and re-enactors is unmatched in the region and our setting is obviously significant historically and beautiful. Where else can the visitor see Ancient Romans, 19th Century European Cavalry and 20th century military vehicles (to name only a few) in a 20 acre ocean view setting? Even during our non-event schedule people continually comment on the Museum's excellent collections, knowledgeable staff and stunning location.

We hope that all of you will soon get the chance to visit us again, projects are moving ahead, the collection is growing and our programs are reaching more and more people. We are very proud of our continued growth and will continue to earn your valued support. We hope to see you soon.

Picture of the Quarter



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Veteran Spotlight

By Stephen R. Nelson, Museum Director

In this issue we focus on Lt. Col. Sidney Riches'. Originally from Superior Wisconsin, Riches parents moved the family to San Diego where Sidney grew up and was graduated from San Diego High School in 1934. During his high school summers, he attended Citizen's Military Training Camp sessions at the Presidio in Monterrey and was enrolled in the Infantry courses held there. At the conclusion of his CMTC and high school courses Riches entered the nation's labor force at during the Depression, finding no work he enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps. While working with the CCC, Riches received a series of extension courses from the Infantry School at Ft. Benning Georgia. With strong prompting from his father young Riches worked hard to complete the courses. During this time Riches also found meaningful work with the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation building PBYS and early model B-24 Liberators that were being sold to Brittain during the build up prior to WWII. In 1938 he joined the enlisted Reserve Corps but also finished his extension courses and was commissioned as a second Lieutenant in the Reserves on June 30, 1940.

As the nation moved towards war, Roosevelt continued building the Arsenal of Democracy in the attempt to equip the allies so the US involvement could be minimized. Pearl Harbor changed the nation and Riches was caught up in the mobilization for war. He was called to active duty on December 26, 1941 and was assigned to Company M, 160th Infantry, 40th Infantry Division. The 40th Division and its units were a California National Guard unit with a distinguished history and many long timers... Riches recalls that as a Reserve Second Lieutenant he was about as low on the totem pole as one could get.

Despite his standing with the Guardsmen, Riches reported for duty at 40th Division Headquarters he was surprised to learn that HQ was located at the Olympic Swimming Pool at Exposition Park. Ironically, Riches parents had moved to Los Angeles from San Diego and lived about one block away, on Santa Barbara and Figueroa, from Division Headquarters so as he recalls "I reported to the Army and also to Mom and Dad".

Upon reporting he learned that Company M was stationed at Recreation Park in Long Beach. Company M along with D and H were heavy weapons companies equipped with .30 Cal. Water cooled machine guns. Although not certain, Riches recalls that each company had about 8 of these machine guns. Company M was dispersed throughout Long Beach protecting bridges, oil refineries and other vital areas from the threat of sabotage. In this respect men of the 40th Division worked very closely with HDLA and Fort MacArthur personnel with Company H, of the 160th and Battery B 164th Field Artillery actually being physically deployed on the Fort. According to the 40th Division history, the heavy weapons company (presumably Company H) manned 34 emplaced machine guns 24 hours a day for the first part of the war. Riches recalls that the men were at first equipped with 03 Springfields. Later on the M1 Garand made its appearance and the troops used these rifles for the duration.

Riches and other officers carried the .45 automatic as their side arms. The division was also equipped with 37mm anti tank guns, French 75mm guns and brand new 105mm Howitzers. Many of the Division's guns were hastily positioned along the Coast to augment the fire power of the Coast Defense batteries. Jeeps were modified by adding 30 Cal. Water cooled machine guns to the passenger side dashboard to make for a primitive rapid deployment force since the

troops were spread so thin over a very large area (in one case, one company covered over 150 miles of coastline). Riches recalls that one of the most serious challenges was to keep the men occupied.

Guard duty in the middle of a thriving community was difficult in terms of staying focused and committed. Riches recalls that in his unit, unlike many of the other units in the area, there was little concern about a Japanese invasion as they were told that the Japanese did not have the resources to bring the war to the west coast of the United States. Still keeping the men fit for duty was a constant challenge. In one particular instance he recalls that some men were sent to dig gun positions directly on the sand of Redondo Beach. One soldier exercising his initiative dug a very deep hole, so deep that he was nearly under the surface. Riches fearing an unnecessary casualty ordered the man to stop and get out before the hole caved in.

Riches responsibility was to teach lessons on range finding and compass reading during the soldiers idle times. Chow was served by mess hall staff in a mess tent on Park grounds. Also there was a motor pool of sorts at Recreation Park. One of the most interesting duties of the Company was to mount a patrol of the coastline from Long Beach to San Clemente each day and night. To accomplish the mission, the Company had the use of a White Scout car (an early wheeled version of the more famous Half tracks of WWII). In this vehicle was a 30 caliber water cooled machine gun. Each day a crew patrolled the shore waving to the school kids and patriotic civilians who waited to greet them. Other groups of men were detailed to patrol the shoreline on foot.

In February 1942, elements of the 40th Division and other units began to evacuate alien Japanese from the Terminal Island fishing colony. President Roosevelt later ordered the evacuation of all Japanese, regardless of citizenship from the West Coast and again, 40th Division troops.

While the controversial action is hotly debated today, 40th Division troops handled the very difficult operation with the professionalism expected of the Army and the National Guard. According to the official Division history the entire operation was concluded without incident. On the night of February 24/25, 1942, Riches was on Duty in Long Beach. Early in the morning he noticed the beams of searchlights and what seemed to be some kind of event in the direction of Los Angeles. Only later did he learn of the "Air Raid". He does not recall seeing any unusual activity over Long Beach that night and that most of the activity was to the northwest of his position although he could see nothing but the searchlights.

In late April 1942, the Division was ordered to Fort Lewis for additional training, although some units remained and continued to serve for a few more months in their coastal defense role. By July the Division was on its way overseas. Their first stop was Hawaii for additional training and to relieve other troops from defending the island so that they could ship out for overseas duty.

After almost a year and a half in Hawaii, the Division shipped out for Guadalcanal. Here they trained in more realistic conditions and learned the art of amphibious landings. After training On Guadalcanal and action for a few units on New Britain the Division as a whole was ready for combat. The return to the Philippines was their destination. Riches remained with the 160th throughout the training and now faced his first combat at the landings in the Lingayan Gulf on the island of Luzon, on January 9, 1945. The Division made rapid progress and by the 24th Riches was in the town of Bamban just north of Clark Field. While searching for a Company Command post he and a Philippine guide were surprised by a Japanese soldier. After several minutes of maneuvering Riches and the enemy soldier surprised each other again. Riches sprayed him with his Tommy gun just as the Japanese threw a grenade. The enemy soldier dropped dead but his grenade landed close

enough to Riches to wound him. A couple of days later, Riches was back at the front lines. Once Clark field was captured, the Division fought further actions on Panay and Negros. Some units went on to fight in Mindanao. Once the Philippines were secured the Division prepared for one of the most intense operations yet planned. Operation Olympic was the scheduled invasion of Japan. The atomic bomb intervened on the Division's behalf and Olympic was cancelled. Riches was rotated stateside in October 1945 and separated from the service in January 1946.

He returned to the Army as an enlisted NCO and served for 5 years before being promoted to Captain in the Reserves. On March 15, 1953 he was assigned to 9th Corps Headquarters G-3 section and returned home in March 1954. He was relieved from active service in 1957. As an officer in the Reserves, Riches had some connection with the Fort and its various reserve functions. He was assigned as a Major to the 6513 Logistical Command which had some functions at the Fort. He served in this capacity for some years when out of the blue he received new orders. He was appointed Commanding Officer of the 5th Battalion 40th Armored Division. Upon notice of his appointment he called Headquarters to inquire about the mistake. Why would an Infantry Officer be assigned the Commanding Officer of an armored battalion? To his surprise Headquarters said there's no mistake, that's your command. In 1967 the 40th Armored Division was deactivated and Riches again returned to the 6513th Logistical Command and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel and retired in June 1968.

In September 2005, Lt. Col. Riches visited the Museum with his family providing us with a great many details surrounding the 160ths role in and around the HDLA positions immediately after Pearl Harbor. He is the first 160th veteran that we have been able to interview and really provided some important information. In addition to his wonderful recollections, Lt. Col. Riches donated his personal copy of the 40th Division history which provides more details regarding their deployment

to the southland and includes several excellent photographs of the Fort and the surrounding areas during the early days of WWII. He also donated a Japanese "meatball" flag that he "liberated" from Japanese emplacements in the hills above Clark Field in the Philippines. Our sincere thanks go to Lt. Col. Riches for helping us to document and preserve this previously undocumented Fort related history.



Write to a Soldier

Many of you may be wondering where Cisco Lacy, one of our museum employees, has been. Cisco is a soldier with the Army National Guard and he has been deployed to go over seas to Iraq for a tour of duty. Cisco left us just shortly after this years Old Fort MacArthur Days event and we expect that he will be gone for about 18 months.

Right now he is still state side preparing to go over seas. As you may know the highlight of any soldiers day is to receive mail. This is such a morale boost. I am sure that PFC Lacy would love to hear from everyone at Ft. Mac or look at some pictures taken at the fort. Cisco played a large role in the museums restoration shop, organized Civil Air Patrol Cadets for many functions, and many other things. Take the time to write to a soldier today!

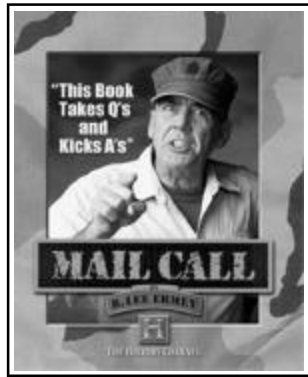
WRITE TO:

PFC FRANCISCO LACY
756 TRANSPORTATION CO.
647 ASG BLDG.
2444 CASSIDY RD.
FT. BLISS, TX 79916

From the Museum Store

By John Kanaster, Education Coordinator

Christmas is just around the corner folks. The Museum Store has many nice things in stock for all of you Christmas gift needs for both little and big kids. We have a large selection of museum apparel to include the widely anticipated "NIKE" t-shirt. The store has many books in stock such as "The Guardian of Angels Gate" (the book about Fort MacArthur), also have a look at "G.I. ISSUE" a collectors guide, and the new "Mail Call" book by History Channels R.Lee Ermev.



There are some wonderful DVD Videos like Huell Howser's "Californias Gold" episode about the "Great Los Angeles Air Raid" filmed at the Fort MacArthur Museum. Another good choice is the new blooper video called "Operation S.N.A.F.U." by our friends R.Lee Ermev and The History Channel.

There are also a great selection of toys in stock like the CORGY military vehicle dicast and boxed gift sets, as well as models, games, and much more! The museum store is also the place to sign up for a museum membership which gets you a one a year's subscription to the museums newsletter, a 10% discount to the Museums Store, and invitations to museum "members only" events. Remember, when you shop at the Museum Store you are supporting the museum, so the next time you are in the neighborhood, be sure to stop by.

A new face around the fort

By John Kanaster, Education Coordinator

You may have noticed a new face around the Fort MacArthur Museum. The museum has a new part time employee named Nick Pilato. Nick became interested with the museum because he The Fort MacArthur Alert

grew up near the fort and has always had an interest in the military and history. Currently a junior at San Pedro High School, Nick is also very active with the Navy Sea Cadets at the Coast Guard Station on Terminal Island in San Pedro.

After his graduation from High School, Nick aspires to join the military.... but we're trying to keep him around the museum as long as we can! Don't let Nick's young looks fool you; he is a very highly motivated young man who is eager to learn and is not afraid to get his hands dirty. Nick has been busy in the museums restoration shop, organizing Navy Sea Cadet volunteers for special museum events, and many other things. Please take the time to welcome Nick to our museum the next time you stop by.

South Pacific Evening Dance

By John Kanaster, Education Coordinator

The Fort MacArthur Museum hosted a "South Pacific Evening" on August 27th. This was the last fundraiser dance of the year and the second time that we put on this event. The theme of the evening was a 1940's luau and this years dance was even more special as it marked the 60th Anniversary of the end of World War Two. Guests were met at the front gate by girls from the Orient with leis and a warm "Aloha" welcome.

The entertainment line up included the Jonathan Stout Dance Orchestra and featured singer Hilary Alexander. Master of Ceremonies Maxwell DeMille was on hand once again and we had a nice selection of vintage automobiles. Everyone dressed up in WWII uniforms, vintage clothes, or Hawaiian attire.

It was a very pleasurable dance held outdoors with white lights and Chinese lanterns over the dance floor, grass skirting over the railings, and tiki torches lining the walk way. We had over 300 paid guest that evening. Everyone had a great time and most important the museum raised funds for it's education and preservation needs.

These vintage dance events are quickly becoming popular with the dance, re-enactor, and

vintage scenes. Vintage dances at historic sites with historic themes are too far and in between. Everyone has been asking, "When is the next Ft. Mac dance event!" The answer is look for our annual "Great Los Angeles Air Raid of 1942" event this February. Thanks goes out to all who helped to make this event a success!

Catalina Island in WWII

By John Kanaster, Education Coordinator

The Fort MacArthur and Catalina Island Museums teamed up on September 24th to explore the ruins of the US Army's Camp Cactus on Catalina Island. The Camp was built on the west side of the island, opposite of Avalon, facing the open Pacific Ocean. This remote Army installation was built right after the start of World War II and served as a forward observation post for the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles. At its peak in 1943 there were 600 soldiers stationed at the camp. 200 of the men were from the 654th Signal Corps Aircraft Warning Company which operated the top secret radar equipment. The camp was defended with up to 400 infantry and artillery men with a variety of anti-aircraft as well as 155mm guns along and searchlights.

The investigation team left Avalon and obtained special permission from the Catalina Island Conservancy to explore the interior of the island which is normally off limits to the general public. Our tour guide and driver for this trip was the great grandson of William Wrigley, owner of Wrigley Chewing Gum, the Chicago Cubs, and a former owner of Catalina Island.

Upon reaching Camp Cactus we found it in total ruin with the undergrowth taking over the dozen buildings. The team further explored the mysterious bunkers at Ben Westin point. This was a very strategic location with a commanding view of the entire islands coastline while overlooking the islands largest beach. Finally we went to a very remote site at Salte Verde Point where more military structures could be found including a base for another radar antenna.

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The team photo documented everything we could find and The Catalina Island Museum staff took video images which will be broadcast from on the islands TV station during the museum's annual fundraising telethon.

This was such a fun event that we hope to do it again in the future to explore this little known World War II local site. To learn more about Catalina Island's role in World War II, pick up a copy of "Catalina Island Goes to WAR" from the Fort Mac Arthur Museum Store.

The Passing of Ted Behr

By Stephen Nelson, Director / Curator

The Museum is sad to announce the passing of one of our most significant benefactors Mr. Ted Behr. Ted became familiar with the Museum back in 1997 when he visited and had a tour. During the tour he mentioned to staff that he had been "imprisoned" at Ft. MacArthur immediately after the end of World War Two while he was awaiting separation from the Army. Ted could not leave until his orders came through. "That week seemed like a lifetime", he said.

Ted often commented that his wartime duties consisted of flipping mattresses. When queried further he told us that he was in the Quartermaster Corps and was responsible for rotating over 10,000 mattresses in a huge warehouse. If they were not rotated there was a danger of spontaneous combustion! He was fond of saying, "That was my contribution to the war effort".

Since that first meeting Ted was a great friend of the Museum. He assisted with the purchase of our first searchlight and most recently was the driving force behind the purchase of the 1918 Dodge Light Repair Truck. He was a great philanthropist and generously supported dozens of charities throughout Los Angeles and even co-founded them as well. Ted's support and enthusiasm for our projects and operations was instrumental in our progress. His friendship and encouragement will be sorely missed but will live on with the Museum and our continued growth.

The Passing of Lt Col Byron Brim

By Dennis Piotrowski

Lieutenant Colonel Byron A. Brim, Fort MacArthur veteran and recipient of the Silver Star Medal during World War II, passed away June 15, 2005 at his home in Virginia. Byron served with Battery B of the 3rd Coast Artillery for twenty months beginning in January 1941. After Fort Mac, Byron enrolled in Officer Candidate School and served for a total of twenty years in the Army, and then for fifteen years as a civilian employee of the Army Engineer School at Fort Belvoir where he retired as chief of combat development, equipment and doctrine.



For further details of Byron's distinguished career, please see the Fall 2002 edition of the Veteran Spotlight (also available online at www.ftmac.org).

On a personal note, over the past several years I have had the distinct honor and privilege of corresponding and forming a warm friendship with LTC Brim. Although I knew him for only a short period of time, I will always remember his honesty, wit, and great recollection of historical detail. The information and insights contained in his detailed written accounts added to our knowledge of the Coast Artillery, engineer amphibious operations and the sacrifices resulting from the Great Depression. Byron was not shy about offering his opinions on current events as well.

Funeral services were held on August 29 at the Fort Belvoir Chapel with internment at Arlington National Cemetery. The Museum offers its sincere condolences to Byron's wife Vivian, and the rest of his family, friends, and fellow soldiers. He will not be forgotten.

The Fort MacArthur Alert

Old Fort MacArthur Days

By Joseph Janesic, Board of Directors

This year wraps up the 20th year of operations for the Fort MacArthur Museum and the 19th annual Old Fort MacArthur Days event was the biggest event ever held at the museum. We wish to extend our thanks to everyone who participated in this year's show, especially the dozen or so people who volunteered to help us by manning the event.

Special thanks go's out to Gunnery Sergeant R. Lee Ermy and the staff from Digital Ranch and The History Channel for coming out and providing materials from the "Mail Call" show and for the endless numbers of autographs and pictures "The Gunny" signed and posed for. We also thank Associated Foundations for their help underwriting the show.

More than 4,000 people came to view this year's show which featured some 500 re-enactors representing all periods of history from the times of Roman Legions to the 1970's. This was definitely the most successful fundraiser we have ever had.

"Gunny Ermy" had such a good time this year and was so well received that he announced at the conclusion of this years show that he will be back next year. If you missed this year's show, be sure to make your calendar next year for the 20th annual OFMD event, Saturday and Sunday July 8 – 9, 2006.



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About the Fort MacArthur Museum:
The Fort MacArthur Museum is a Special Facility of the city of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department and is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the history of Fort MacArthur, a U. S. Army post that guarded the Los Angeles Harbor from 1914 to 1974. The museum opened to the public in 1986 and is located at the Battery Osgood Farley National Historic Site located in Angels Gate Park (formally the Upper Reservation of Fort MacArthur) in the city of San Pedro.

About the Fort MacArthur Museum Association:

The Fort MacArthur Museum Association is a non-profit corporation established in 1990 to support the restoration, interpretive, and education efforts of the Fort MacArthur Museum. Membership is open to all who want to help the museum in its efforts to preserve the history of Fort MacArthur and the history of American Coastal and Harbor Defense. For more information about the association, visit our website: www.ftmac.org



City of Los Angeles Mailstop 644b

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The Fort MacArthur Museum is a special facility of the city of Los Angeles Department of Recreation & Parks