



The Quarterly Publication of the Fort MacArthur Museum Association

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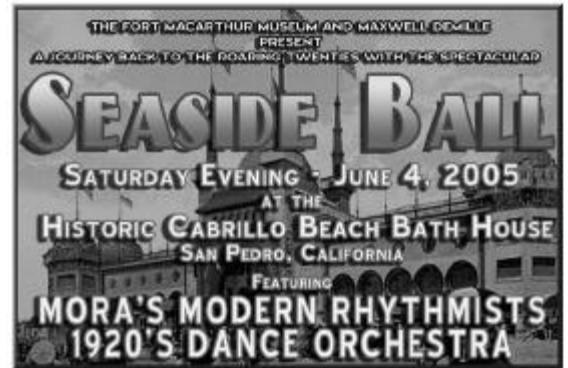
Spring 2005

From the Director

By Stephen R. Nelson, Museum Director

It is hard to believe but the Museum is almost halfway through its 20th year of operation! You'll notice a new look to the newsletter and we'll try to keep them coming. Since I started as the director some 8 ½ years ago we have gone from a museum with no operational vehicles to a collection of four, including the only operable 1918 Dodge Light Repair truck on the West Coast. We have one operational searchlight with another almost restored. We have four M2 Height Finders on their way to operational condition. Recently the Living History team was able to fully outfit fifteen volunteers in early World War II uniforms complete with 1903 Springfields and BARs. The permanent collection is bursting at the seams with more Fort MacArthur related photographs and artifacts arriving constantly. Our Old Fort MacArthur Days living history event is one of the largest in the region, and we are exhibiting our collection at other special events as part of our outreach program. In short we have made tremendous progress.

Our progress and success however are often tempered with sadness and setbacks. This year we lost one of our best volunteers, Mr. Bob Ringl. Our veterans too are passing away in larger numbers. As we suffer the pains of loss and the happiness of success, one thing stays consistent — the Museum — which will be here long after we are gone. The best that we can do is give our maximum effort. It is through all of our efforts that Fort MacArthur Museum will succeed even more. I hope that all of you have enjoyed our success and are with us through the struggles yet to come. Together we can make this Museum even better and I am proud to be here with you during our 20th anniversary.



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Veteran Spotlight

By Stephen R. Nelson, Museum Director

In this issue we meet Pvt. First Class Earl Dill, Battery K, 3rd Coast Artillery. Dill was born and raised in Pennsylvania. Earl fondly recalls his service at Ft. MacArthur saying that it was pretty good duty. Prior to his Army service he enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps and served as a laborer in Company 306, Camp S66 in Mill Hall Pennsylvania. In 1942 Dill was called up for military service and was inducted in his home state. Leaving New Cumberland, Pennsylvania he boarded the troop train and was seated next to Gregory Orletsky, another recruit destined for Ft. MacArthur. Upon arrival Dill, Orletsky and the other new recruits were sent topside for their basic training. Dill recalls that his basic training company was all limited service selectees. All of the men were classified as 1B and they were chosen to free up the soldiers that were 1A for overseas service. Dill recalls that every man had some physical disability. In Dill's case he was nearly blind in his left eye, but his right eye was able to see above normal. Dill's strength in his right eye was to prove helpful in basic training.

On the rifle range, Dill recalls that many of the soldiers were from cities and had never fired a rifle before. Dill had hunted since his childhood and had extensive experience with guns. He was the only soldier in the company to score Expert with the M1 rifle. Since he had so much experience, Dill tried to assist some of the less experienced recruits. Many of them held the rifle away from the shoulders and ended up black and blue. Dill coached them on holding the butt tight against the soldiers but after their first shots they became scared and regularly missed the targets

completely. Dill recalls that he tried but they just wouldn't listen.

After their training Dill was separated from his friend Greg Orletsky. Dill was assigned to Battery K, Searchlights, and Orletsky was assigned to Battery G. Dill's first assignment with Battery K was in the Mess Hall kitchen. This proved an enjoyable but temporary assignment as he was soon sent to 2700 East Ocean Blvd. in Long Beach to serve the searchlights near Battery G's 90mm AMTB guns. Dill recalls that the accommodations were unique. The showers and toilets were formerly part of the public bathhouse that the Army seized for the Battery's use. Dill recalls that this position had one of Ft. MacArthur's renowned K9 guard dogs assigned to it. The dog arrived by truck at dusk and was picked up again each morning and transported back to the main post each morning. One of the dogs, Fritz, was a favorite of the troops. Dill remembers that Fritz was ultimately discharged and returned to his civilian owner after the war. Dill generously donated a photograph of Fritz to the Museum's growing collection of K9 related material.

Dill recalls that the 90mm guns were frequently used in practices and drills. Usually the gun had a .50 cal. barrel and action mounted atop to save on the expense of firing live 90mm rounds. Dill recalls the tragic accident in May 1944 when the crew of Battery G conducted a live fire training drill with the 90mms. The crew was working on improving their rate of fire. Unfortunately one of the ammunition handlers got too close to the recoiling breach of the gun and had the next round knocked from his hands. The shell hit nose first and was either a point detonating or combination fuze. Whatever the case the shell detonated sending

shrapnel throughout the gun crew. Several men had their feet and legs severely damaged. One man, private Edward Fox, was killed. (See Russell Snider and Doug Wall veteran spotlights for more information on the accident.)

Shortly after the accident Dill was transferred to the Huntington Beach searchlight position located at the very end of the Huntington Beach Pier. Dill recalls that this was a very good detail. There were no Army facilities nearby and the crew had to eat at a local restaurant and the Army paid for it.

While his experience at Huntington Beach was good, he was soon sent to the searchlight position at Port Hueneme. While the barracks, mess hall and other facilities were good, the searchlight was located at the harbor entrance and the observation station was situated right next to a fog horn! On clear days and nights the work was fine but during the frequent foggy nights and mornings the duty was almost unbearable due to the incredible noise. While in Port Hueneme the searchlight crew ate with one of the Fort's northern gun batteries located nearby (Probably Battery F or Battery C, 3rd CA). The searchlight position was within the Navy base and the crew had to pass through Navy guards every day so each member was issued a Navy pass. The barracks were situated close to a Navy barracks. Despite their different branch of service, the crew established friendships with the sailors. Dill recalls one of the most interesting parts of this job was that they only saw an officer on payday so the routine was pretty relaxed and the crew had some degree of freedom.

Dill's final service position was at Sunset Beach. Here Dill once again was able to eat at a civilian restaurant compliments of the Army. By this time the Battery had been re-designated Battery A, Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles. In 1945 Dill was sent back to Ft. MacArthur proper for an Aircraft Recognition course. The course consisted of slide presentations of various aircraft, both Allied and

Axis. The Instructor reported after their first viewing: "By the end of this course you'll be able to name every plane that you've seen". All of the soldiers laughed, but Dill recalls that the final exam was the same slide show and most if not all soldiers passed the test. Dill still has his "Certificate of Proficiency" in Aircraft Recognition.

Curiously, Dill recalls a humorous incident regarding aircraft recognition. While standing around during a break, a plane flew over the Fort. One of the men said "that plane sounds different". Dill looked up and said "That's a Japanese Zero". All the other soldier's started to laugh at him. Dill replied: "Go ahead and laugh but that's what it is". About a week later a story appeared in the newspaper that the Army was flying a captured Japanese Zero over a lot of Army forts and no one had reported anything. Dill got the last laugh. Dill returned to the Sunset Beach position and was there when the war ended. Upon the conclusion of hostilities the searchlight position was closed down and the men returned to the Fort. Dill and one other soldier were assigned to remain at the position until trucks came to recover the searchlights and equipment. They remained there for nearly a month!

Dill was discharged in February 1946 and returned to Pennsylvania. Dill donated numerous photographs and documents to the Museum. Among these photos are very rare shots of the searchlights topside near the storage buildings and two great images of a searchlight display at the Coliseum in downtown Los Angeles. Dill also included photographs of the Battery Mascots "Brownie" and "Singapore", images of Captain William's (a highly decorated WWI veteran) and other images of Battery K. To date, Dill's photographs are the only Battery K photographs and documents that have yet surfaced. We are very grateful to Mr. Earl Dill for this unique and important contribution.

Museum Store News

NIKE Shirt is in Production

We are pleased to announce that the long anticipated NIKE shirt has been delivered to the screen printer and production should be underway shortly. The new shirt features the ADA crossed cannon and missile in the front, and an adaptation of the "Nike Family" with the Fort MacArthur name and years of operation.

The new shirt will be finished and in stock by the opening of this year's Old Fort MacArthur Days event at a cost of \$19.99 for all sizes.

This shirt features a 7 color printing process for vibrant color and long ware. You might want to buy one of these quickly because they are going to sell out fast.



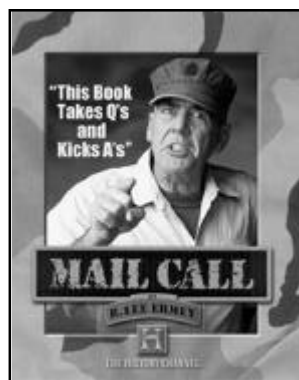
Last of the K-9 Command Shirts

The last of the limited edition Fort MacArthur K-9 Command shirts are now on the shelf with only a few sizes and colors still available. The shirts cost \$19.99 which helps us to fund the ongoing effort to restore the Fort MacArthur K-9 Cemetery.



Mail-Call the book

Don't forget to get your autographed copy of the new book Mail-Call by R. Lee Ermey when you visit the Fort this July for Old Fort MacArthur Days. The book costs just \$19.99. As a bonus the Gunny will be on hand Sunday July 10th to personally autograph your copy.



Ft Mac Looses one of it's Own

By Joseph Janesic, Vice President
Fort MacArthur Museum Assn Board of Directors

In April 2005 the Fort MacArthur Museum received word that long time museum volunteer Bob Ringl has passed away.

Bob had recently left the museum to take a position with the US Department of Energy back in his home state of Illinois.

Bob Ringl was a talented musician who often exhibited his skills by performing bugle calls such as those that would have been used at the fort and was always entertaining the public at museum events and ceremonies. He was a kind and friendly man who was always going the extra mile for the museum and all of us will miss him. At the time of his passing, Bob was 40 years old and he is survived by his parents, as well as his brother and sister.



Picture of the Quarter

Work Continues on the 352nd Coast Artillery Searchlight Btn. Memorial Light



Old Fort MacArthur Days

19th annual
Artillery Show 2005



FORT MACARTHUR MUSEUM
BATTERY OSGOOD-FARLEY HISTORIC SITE

3601 S. Gaffey Street, San Pedro, CA 90731

www.ftmac.org * 310-548-2631

Saturday, July 9th 9am - 5pm

Sunday, July 10th 9am - 4pm

Admission:

\$10 adults

\$ 5 children under 12

Proceeds help support the
preservation, restoration,
and education programs of
the Fort MacArthur
Museum

CAUTION - This Event Has Loud Noise



Be a part of history;
come out and see more
than 20 acres of exhibits,
reenactments, and
entertainment.



Special Appearances by

* Mora's Modern Rhythmists Dance Orchestra, hosted by the legendary Maxwell DeMille, on Saturday.

* R. Lee Ermey, "The Gunny", host of the hit cable T.V. series MAIL CALL on The History Chanel.

Buy his new book from the museum store and have it autographed on Sunday.



Summer Dance Series

By John Kanister, Education Coordinator

The Fort MacArthur Museum is going to kick off this summer with a series of fundraising dances. The first dance of the series is going to be a "1920's Seaside Ball" on Saturday, June 4th. The Seaside Ball will be held at the newly restored Cabrillo Beach Bathhouse Ballroom on Cabrillo Beach. This is the last remaining bathhouse in the City of Los Angeles and it is probably the first ball held there in 60 years! The list of entertainment will include the return of Master of Ceremonies Maxwell DeMille and Mora's Modern Rhythmists 1920's Dance Orchestra. Singers Kayre Morrison and Richard Halpern will be joining us along with the Hollywood Hornets, a national award winning dance team.

The Roaring 20's Vintage Car Club will be sharing their vintage automobiles with us as well. We request that you dress in vintage or evening attire. Drinks and snacks will be available for sale along with our museum shop. All ages are welcome and there is plenty of free parking. The Seaside Ball will start at 8pm and will go until midnight. Admission for the ball is \$20. For directions or more info go to www.ftmac.org or www.maxwelldemille.com

The second dance of the summer series will be held during the museums annual "Old Ft. Mac Arthur Days" on Saturday, July 9th. Master of Ceremonies and Dean Moras 1930's Dance Orchestra will be joining us once again. We will have have a special surprise from a local San Pedro swing dance team and much more.

The dance will be held in the museums court yard across from the museum gift shop. The band will play from 1-4pm. This will be a perfect opportunity to relax and enjoy a special performance on a warm Old Ft. Mac Day!

The last dance of the summer series will be a "South Pacific Evening". We did this last year and it

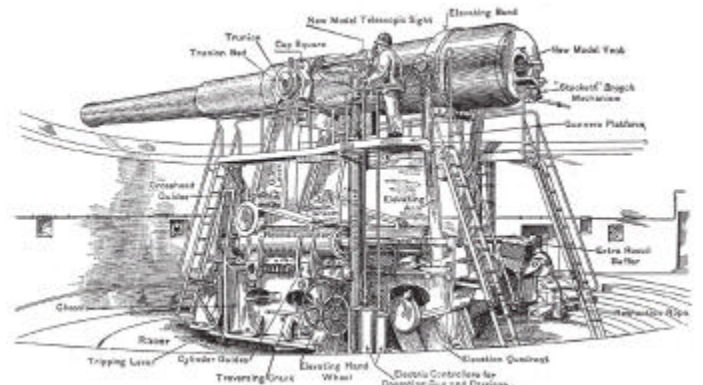
The Fort MacArthur Alert

was so much fun that we are going to do it again! The "South Pacific Evening" will take place at the museum on Saturday, August 27th from 5-10pm for \$10.

Once again Master of Ceremonies Maxwell DeMille will be returning along with the band debut of Jonathan Stout's 1940's Dance Orchestra. Word has it that hula dancers might be seen along with some other surprises! See vintage vehicles and delicious food and drink will be for purchase. Please dress in vintage attire or wear your favorite Hawaiian shirt. This is a wonderful "From Here to Eternity"/ luau experience that will bring the summer to a close. Aloha!

Renew Your Membership

If it has been more than four issues since you last renewed your membership, now is the perfect opportunity go bring yourself up to date. Your continuing support is vital to the programs offered by the Fort MacArthur Museum.



Benefits of Membership

- * A 10% Discount on all items purchased from the Museum Store
- * A Subscription to our newsletter "The Fort MacArthur Alert"
- * Admittance to special "members only events"

Membership is open to everyone, the categories are as follows

Individual \$25.00 * Sustaining \$35.00 * Supporting \$100.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Send Payments To
The Fort MacArthur Museum Association
P.O. Box 268
San Pedro, CA 90731

Fort MacArthur Go's to CAMP

By Joseph Janesic, Vice President
Fort MacArthur Museum Assn Board of Directors

This year's annual conference of the Council on America's Military Past was held from May 4-8, 2005 at the Red Lion Inn in San Diego. Conference participants from across the country interested in preserving our nation military history gathered to listen to presentation, and tour sites in Southern California and Arizona.

Some of the highlights of this year's conference included tours of old Fort Emery in Imperial Beach, the aircraft carrier USS Midway, upper and lower Fort Rosecrans, the RMS Queen Mary, the Drum Barracks Museum, and the Fort MacArthur Museum.

The CAMP organization offers those interested in military history the unique opportunity to tour some great current and former military sites and to meet those involved with their preservation.

One of the highlights of this year's conference was the presentation of a paper by Fort MacArthur Director, Stephen R Nelson on the history of the K-9 Command here at the fort. The paper was well received and was followed by a tour of the museum. For more information about CAMP and its programs, please visit www.campjamp.org on the internet.



Restoration shop progress

By Stephen R. Nelson, Museum Director

The restoration shop continues to grow. We recently purchased a large lot of auto shop equipment from a local school including grinders, sheet metal equipment, a sand blaster,

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and a lathe. Our shop team is on the way to getting the equipment up and running so that we may be a self contained restoration facility.

In addition to the equipment, Ralph Medina has finished restoring five 1941 Mess Hall tables for use in displays and special events. The tables are beautiful and have already been used. The project took nearly six months and the results are truly outstanding.

Tom Grove, our volunteer machinist, has worked similar wonders with metal. Most recently he was able to completely fabricate a gear housing for the Sperry searchlight's manual operating lever. Tom accomplished feat by scaling up a drawing found in the manual. It is an amazing piece of work virtually indistinguishable from the original which is good considering that there is yet an original to be discovered!

Pete Demitt and Cisco Lacy continue to work on the 352nd Coast Artillery Searchlight Battalion Memorial. The 1942 GE Searchlight is nearly stripped of its ghastly pick paint that was applied by a commercial operator and the light is actually looking much more military. A recovery team visited a remote desert storage facility and was able to recover some very significant parts for the restoration, including the main switch! Installation was a bit of a task but the switch and control box are now complete. We'll know just how complete when we put power to it. The recovery team included Barry Herlihy, Dennis DuVall and Steve Nelson. We hope to have the light operating by Old Fort MacArthur Days barring any unforeseen problems.

So as progress continues, we invite you to stop by and check out the projects, they are quite remarkable.

