



Official Navara Sponsors

Air Vanuatu



Bob Hill



A first for the Museum

It's not every day you receive a phone call from the Lord Mayor's office asking whether he could meet with Museum staff for a special presentation.

That's exactly what happened to South Pacific WWII Museum Project Office Manager Lengkon Tokon and Support Officer Marina Moli in Luganville.

The Museum team were very much intrigued. What was this all about? And the Lord Mayor no less.

Sure enough Lord Mayor Peter Patty came by the Museum and Project Development Office to present a special award to the South Pacific WWII Museum.



The 'Award of Recognition' acknowledges the important role the Museum is fulfilling through:

- The preservation of Luganville's World War II history;
- The untold stories being uncovered by the Museum;
- The dedication of the staff, particularly following tropical Cyclone Harold and the Covid-19 outbreak;
- And our cooperation and communication of the Museum.

The team were absolutely thrilled to accept the award on behalf of the Museum, which came as a total surprise to everyone.

The Museum would like to take this opportunity to publicly recognise everyone for their contributions that have made the Museum the success it so richly deserves.

We'd like to thank its Chairman Bradley Wood, Treasurer Bill Widup, Secretary Mayumi Green, Board Members Rayman Leung and Mary O'Reilly, Project Manager James Carter, former Project Office Manager Alma Wensi, current Project Office Manager Lengkon Tokon, Support Officer Marina Moli, New Zealand VSA volunteers Heather Ware and Kevin McCarthy and American College Intern Allie Cobb.

Bank South Pacific continues Museum support

The South Pacific World War II Museum is delighted to announce that Navara sponsor, Bank South Pacific (BSP) has signed on for a third year.

In announcing its support for 2020/2021, Ms. Moana Korikalo, Head of Retail & Marketing at BSP said, "we are delighted to reaffirm our support for such an important project. The Museum is doing a wonderful job educating the younger and indeed older generations about Vanuatu's vital role in supporting the Allied war effort in the South



**We're extremely grateful
for BSP's continued
support of the
Museum project.**

Lengkon Tokon - Project Office Manager

Pacific during World War II."

Museum Chairman Bradley Wood was thrilled to have BSP on board for a third year. "We are very grateful for the wonderful assistance we have received from BSP. I can't thank Ms. Korikalo and her team enough for what they've done to ensure we keep the Museum dream alive, particularly during what are difficult times for everyone."

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a black top, is smiling at the camera. She is standing in what appears to be a museum office or display area. In the background, there are various historical artifacts and documents. To her left, there are framed photographs and a large gold medal. To her right, there are glass display cases containing various items, including a map of Vanuatu and a framed document. The overall setting is a well-lit, organized space with a focus on historical and cultural items.

Surprise superstar visit

With the Museum shut for the Sanma Day public holiday last month, a knock on the front door had the ever busy Project Office Manager Lengkon intrigued as to who it might be.

Opening the door, Lengkon was floored to see Vanuatu's own international musical superstar Vanessa Quai standing there, hoping for a tour prior to performing in Sanma Provincial Park later that day. It seems Vanessa is a big fan of Vanuatu's history and according to Lengkon, almost insisted on seeing the Museum before her show.

Of course Lengkon was only too happy to show Vanessa around. The only downside... Lengkon felt completely underdressed for such a momentous occasion.

Putting the pieces together

As promised, this is the untold story we were able to discover behind one of our recently acquired dog tags, Merrill Patrick Reagan.

Merrill was born on December 26, 1914 in Bismarck, North Dakota to Patrick J. Reagan and Rhoda (Easton) Reagan. He had three older sisters. During the 1920s, the family relocated to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Merrill graduated from Central High School in Minneapolis in 1934.

He was working for Minneapolis Blue Printing Co. when he registered for the draft in 1940.

Merrill married Eleanor Woodworth in February of 1941.

He enlisted in the US Navy in early March of 1942. After training at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, he was transferred to the battleship USS Alabama (BB-60) on November 28, 1942.

Merrill was primarily a photographer, which makes sense given his background in printing. His father died in 1945 and his obituary mentions that Merrill is a photographer in the United States Navy.



A collection worth preserving

Merrill Reagan's dog tag was one of a collection of dog tags donated to the Museum by Ms. Florence Lengkon in Port Vila earlier this year.



SERIAL NUMBER 2153	1. NAME (Print) MERRILL PATRICK REAGAN		ORDER NUMBER E 2050
2. ADDRESS (Print) * 4641 - 2 AVE. S MPLS HENN MINN			
3. TELEPHONE Co. 9974	4. AGE IN YEARS 25	5. PLACE OF BIRTH BISMARCK	6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.
7. DATE OF BIRTH DEC. 26 1914	8. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS 423 - 2 AVE S MPLS MINN		9. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON MRS. J. A. BELL H. MANUSON SISTER
10. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS 4641 - 2 AVE. S. MPLS. HENN MINN.			
11. EMPLOYER'S NAME E. C. THOMAS. MINNEAPOLIS BLUE PRINTING			
12. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS 423 - 2 AVE S MPLS MINN			
13. I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ADDRESS AND THAT THIS IS MY TRUE AND CORRECT ADDRESS REGISTRATION CARD D. N. S. FORM 1			
Merrill P. Reagan			

A Navy career as a photographer on battleships

This young man from a town in a state in Northern America bordering USA and Canada who most probably had never seen the ocean, was now set to record WWII through photographs in the Pacific Theatre. Merrill served aboard the Alabama continuously until August 27, 1945. He was then transferred to the battleship USS Massachusetts (BB-59), which he served aboard until June of 1946. (Continued...)

The USS Alabama earned 9 Battle Stars during World War II. Merrill Reagan would have been aboard the ship for every one of those engagements.

The ship was initially deployed to the North Atlantic in late 1942 before being transferred to the Pacific Theatre in August of 1943.

Records show the ship was in Efate in September 1943 and December 1943-January 1944. According to the ship's war diary, it was moored at Havannah Harbour, Efate from September 14 to 27, 1943, before participating in some maneuvers throughout October, including voyages into Fiji before departing to participate in the Gilbert Islands campaign.

The Alabama then returned to the New Hebrides, arriving at Segond Channel, Espiritu Santo on December 12, 1943. It departed for Efate on December 14 and remained anchored there until January 5, 1944, before sailing on to Pearl Harbour.



A USS Alabama 'recognition photograph'.

On August 27, 1945, Merrill was transferred to the battleship USS Massachusetts (BB-59). The Massachusetts returned to the US mainland in September 1945, but muster rolls include him on the ship until June 1946.

His cemetery interment form from 1961 (shown left), indicates he was discharged on September 30, 1945.

Post war, Merrill and Eleanor had three children, two daughters and a son.

Following his time in the Navy, Merrill was employed by the Olsen Photo Supply Company. He passed away in 1961 at the age of 46. He is buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A huge thank you to reseracher and historian Donna Esposito for tracking down Merrill's Navy records.

LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL Reagan, Merrill Patrick		GRADE PHOM 1	SERVICE NUMBER 638 40 66	NAME OF CEMETERY Fort Snelling National
DATES OF SERVICE ENLISTMENT: 30 Mar 1942 SEPARATION: 30 Sep 1945 RETIRED: <input type="checkbox"/> DIED ON AD: <input type="checkbox"/>		SERVICE DATA (Company, Regiment, Division, or other organization and basic area of service) USNR		CHECK IF REMAINS CREATED
STATE: Minnesota		EMBLEM (Check one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHRISTIAN <input type="checkbox"/> NONE		
DATE OF BIRTH: MO: Dec 26 1914	DATE OF DEATH: MO: Sep 3 1961	DATE OF INTERMENT: MO: Sep 6 1961	GRAVE LOCATION: SECTION: H GRAVE NO.: 2053	DEPTH OF GRAVE: 5 ft
NAME AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN OR OTHER RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Include postal zone and relationship) Mrs. Eleanor Reagan, Widow 3841 Baker Road Hopkins, Minnesota		HEADSTONE OR MARKER ORDERED GREEN MOUNTAIN MARBLE CORP. WEST BUTLAND, VT.		
REMARKS (Authority for interment, disinterment) Auth: Msg # 22 Navy Br MFRC dtd 5 Sep 1961 Grave 2054, Sec H, reserved for widow		SHIPPING POINT FOR HEADSTONE (Nearest freight station) OCT 18 1961 B-1152851 Fort Snelling, Minnesota		
PLACE OF DEATH VA Hospital, Minneapolis, Minnesota		RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION OF DECEDENT Protestant		
NAME OF FUNERAL DIRECTOR Welander-Just		NAME OF CHAPLAIN OFFICIATING AT BURIAL SERVICE Rev. Hoerts		
TYPED NAME OF SUPERINTENDENT Ralph E. Dea		SIGNATURE OF SUPERINTENDENT <i>Ralph E. Dea</i>		
DA FORM 1 MAY 58 2122 9 0 5 8 0 0 9 0 0 1 RECORD OF INTERMENT (TM 10-287) 1				

The USS Alabama began initial training to prepare the ship's crew for wartime service, first out of Casco Bay, Maine in November 1942 - as is shown in this photo - before moving to Chesapeake Bay.



School's in at the Museum

Local schools are very much embracing the history of Espiritu Santo, particularly that of World War II. And what better place to find out about Santo's wartime history than at the South Pacific WWII Museum in Unity Park.



The Museum recently had a visit from Ms. Temakon's Class 5b students from Santo East Primary school in Luganville. They came to the Museum as part of their curriculum to learn more about the history of where they live.



Project Office Manager Lengkon, became their tour guide and showed the students around our mini museum. They had the opportunity to learn about Espiritu Santo's World War II history, when Luganville was home to thousands of US soldiers and sailors. They even got to hold some of the exhibits from WWII.



South Pacific WWII Museum
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Vanuatu

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