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Canberra connections

It's been a hugely busy month for our Museum team in building relationships with both Australia and the United States.

Committee members Brad Wood, Steve Turner and Jimmy Carter travelled to the Australian federal capital, Canberra.

There, we met Dr Brendan Nelson, Director of the Australian War Memorial; Hon Alex Hawke MP the Minister for International Development and the Pacific and Assistant Defence Minister; and Mr John Hennessey-Niland, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy.

Dr Nelson, a former Member of Parliament and Defence Minister, heads up what is widely regarded as one of the world's finest museums. Dr Nelson gave us some wonderful insights into running a museum, potential sister museum alliances down the track and ways the AWM might help us in the future.

Minister Hawke also provided some invaluable advice with his experience running a portfolio that includes Vanuatu within its charter. The Minister also has an interest in WWII history and is a big fan of PBY Catalina aircraft.



Committee Member Steve Turner, Project Manager James Carter, AWM Director Dr Brendan Nelson and Chairman

And finally, after being ushered into a meeting room within the beautiful grounds of the US Embassy (sans all electronic devices!), we met with Mr John Hennessey-Niland, the Embassy's Political Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission.

A delightful person, Mr Hennessey-Niland amongst other things has offered to assist us with introductions to major museums and other organisations in the U.S. that may be of assistance to us. We just need to establish our 'wish list', work out the logistics and hopefully some doors will open for us in the United States.

The team thanks everyone who assisted us during the week and arranged the meetings for us and of course, Dr Nelson, Minister Hawke and Mr Hennessey-Niland.





Our Marina and Jenny Da Rin at Pekoa airport on a beautiful but windy Santo day.

That wasn't the end of our diplomacy this month. Museum staff and committee members also met with the Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu, Her Excellency Ms Jenny Da Rin in Espiritu Santo. We briefed the High Commissioner on our Canberra trip and brought her up to speed on the museum's latest developments. We're extremely grateful to Ms Da Rin for giving up her time to meet with us.



Coolidge sinking survivor Bill Busier, and Paul Vallee. Picture courtesy of Channel WCAX3 Vermont

Another Coolidge survivor

Every October of course we remember the sinking of the SS President Coolidge, the single most famous story of the war on Espiritu Santo.

The posthumous hero of the sinking was Captain Elwood J Euart, who our association is named after.

It's a great thrill to hear that Paul Vallee, a nephew of Captain Euart, has been able to find another living survivor of that day.

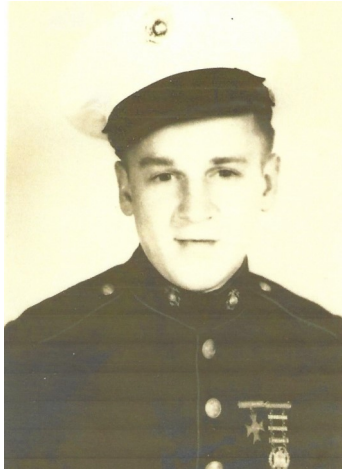
Mr Vallee, who lives in Vermont, was watching a local TV channel when it profiled a veteran, Bill Busier, who mentioned he had been on the Coolidge when it sank.

Paul arranged to visit Bill, who also lives in Vermont. You can read the full story here.

<https://bit.ly/36tdKut>

Well done Paul, thank you for helping build our knowledge of that day. Paul is interested in finding if there are any other survivors. Please contact us at admin@southpacificwwiimuseum.com so we can share information to him.

And of course, we always remember Milton Staley. Milton passed away earlier this year but not before he gifted us his memories in a remarkable interview you can view on our website or at our Luganville mini museum.



Last month we told the story of how Marine PFC and radar operator Joseph Kaminski was commended in 1943 for his work in alerting the base to an inbound Japanese bomber. Unfortunately we had mislaid these fabulous images of Joseph, provided by his proud son and museum member, Bob. So here they are: Joseph in his full dress uniform, then a little more informal on Espiritu Santo, and finally, very informal, with a picture of a trophy bat he shot here. Bob says his father was always particularly proud of that picture.

Our Inspiring Everyday Heroes

Our hero this month is linked to our major supporter and Navara Fund sponsor, BSP Bank.

Jennifer Kalpokas Doan has been appointed to the Bank board. Jennifer is the first female Ni-Vanuatu to be on the board. She comes from Lelepa Island, North Efate.

Jennifer has worked as a public servant, and then as a Senior Program Manager at the Australian High Commission in Vanuatu for over 11 years before becoming Deputy Team Leader for the Balance of Power Program in Port Vila.

She says it's an honour to take the role and hopes to be an example by paving the way for more women to take on similar responsibilities in the future. BSP earlier this year signed up for a second year as one of our major sponsors.

Inspiring Everyday Heroes is our brand and means how the stories of yesterday and our project can inspire today's new generation.



Jennifer Kalpokas Doan (centre) with some of the team at BSP Bank – picture courtesy of Vanuatu Daily Post.

This month in military history

On October 25th, 1943, troops of the New Zealand 3rd Division landed in the Treasury Islands as part of the battles to encircle substantial Japanese forces in the Solomons. It was the first opposed amphibious landing by New Zealand troops since Gallipoli in 1915. By early 1944, severe manpower shortages led to the division's disbanding. Sadly many New Zealanders know little about these men, compared to those fighting in North Africa and Europe with the famous 2nd Division.