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Success in the US

The South Pacific World War II Museum has achieved charitable status in the United States.

The milestone has taken over nine months to achieve. During that time we've been working closely with a consulting firm in the US that has been assisting us in reaching what is called 501(c)(3) charity status.

Of greatest benefit to the museum with the granting by the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS), is that we will be able to receive grants from private US foundations and the US government.

More importantly, the museum will be able to provide tax deductions to those from the US wishing to make a donation to the museum.

Our late Project Office Manager Alma Wensi worked very hard to pursue the 501(c)(3), as the process was not without its challenges.

One of those was a Government shutdown in the United States at the turn of the year, which caused substantial backlogs for departments such as the IRS.

The achievement is also a great credit to our



US board members Sue Herrick and Jim Boswell who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes in the US to bring this exciting milestone to fruition.

Sue also paid tribute to Alma's work.

"I hope he is looking down with a smile as it was his persistence that kept us going."

And please remember that you can already show your support for our work by becoming a Museum member. You can read more about it here.



Inspiring everyday heroes

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On Ironbottom Sound

In our April newsletter we featured the stories of several war veteran descendants who were making a trip to see Espiritu Santo for themselves.

One of those was Teri Ellerbe. Her father Harold served in the US Navy and survived the terrible US Navy defeat at the Battle of Savo Island, where his ship the USS Astoria was sunk in what became known as Ironbottom Sound. He went onto serve on Espiritu Santo.

Teri with our help was able to work out where he was probably based, at the ship repair unit, ironically a small walk from our project office site.

After Santo, Teri's cruise ship headed to Guadalcanal, and she has now shared with us the moving moment when she sailed near the waters her father had fought on. Here are her words:

"We entered Ironbottom Sound around 3:30 am on April 20. I woke up around that time and sat out on the veranda for an hour or so. It was incredibly calm and there was a full moon, so I could see the bay and lights on Guadalcanal.

"It was an emotional experience for me. I have read a lot about the battle of Savo Island and stories from survivors who described in great detail what the experience was like.

"Picturing in my mind the chaos, fire and destruction happening in the area brought up a good amount of sadness thinking about all my father and all the other men had to experience. But gratitude that my father had survived this battle was, I think, the strongest emotion.

"After our stop at Roderick Bay in the Solomon Islands, the captain diverted toward Savo Island and I was able to see in the light of day where all of the activity had taken place.

"We went almost as far as the location of the USS Astoria before turning back north again to get back on course.

"Between Luganville and Ironbottom Sound, this journey has been extremely fulfilling. I am very hopeful that we can get back when the museum is finished - I would love to spend more time in the area."

Thank you for sharing those memories Teri – stories like yours across 70 years are for us the essence of creating a museum.

(Our apologies to Teri and family for incorrectly naming her father as Howard in the April newsletter. His name is Harold).



Teri Ellerbe's father Harold, survivor from the Battle of Savo Island.

Tell us what you think

We told you about our US intern Allie Cobb in our last newsletter. One of the tasks Allie is working on is to develop a draft of our Museum narrative.

That's a description of the sorts of topics and stories the Museum could have at its heart when it opens. We don't pretend to have all the answers on that, of course.

So we're very keen to hear your feedback. We plan to send all of you a Survey Monkey questionnaire electronically in due course, which we'd love you to fill out. Don't worry, it won't be long.

But if you have any thoughts in the meantime, email us as admin@southpacificwwiimuseum.com



Inspiring Everyday Heroes



Our Inspiring Everyday Heroes feature this month is a truly groundbreaking announcement for Vanuatu.

Lawyer Mrs Viran Molisa Trief is to be appointed a Judge of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Vanuatu. Mrs Trief will be the first Ni-Vanuatu female lawyer to be appointed as a judge.

She has a wealth of experience from the legal profession, including as Solicitor General at the State Law Office for 7 years appearing in the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal on behalf of the State.

She is also the Program Coordinator of the Stretem Rod Blong Justice and Sefti, a Vanuatu Australian Policing and Justice Program. Mrs Trief is expected to take up her role in mid-July this year.

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

Help us remember Alma

We said in our last newsletter that we would in the next month gather thoughts and stories about our dearly missed manager Alma Wensi, who passed away unexpectedly on May 25th.

We've had a think about that. In Ni Vanuatu kastom (custom), there is a further marking of a person's death 100 days after they passed away. We think it will be most fitting thus to have our tribute to Alma in our September newsletter.

If you have any thoughts or words to share about Alma with us, please do so for inclusion. Our email address is admin@southpacificwwiimuseum.com

This month in military history

On June 28, 1942, a reconnaissance party of three men left Efate to find an airfield site further north and within flying distance of Guadalcanal, where the US was planning an invasion. We know about that journey from the writings of Lt Colonel Ritchie Garrison. In his book about his time in New Hebrides, he explains that their team was ordered to charter what he called a "Chinese junk" crewed by locals.


"The vessel was certainly not a yacht, but accommodations were adequate," he wrote.

He tells of sailing past Malekula before reaching Luganville in the Second Channel.

"Luganville sounds as though it was a town of some sorts. In reality it was . . . the location of the French Colonial District Officer, a small trading store that catered to the handful of French planters."

As a result of the scouting mission, the US was to select Espiritu as its key forward base with the first air strip, at Turtle Bay, under construction just over a month later. If you'd like to read much more about that first mission to the island, you can do so by becoming a member of our Museum. Current members receive the Santonian, a quarterly special newsletter with much more of the history of the war in New Hebrides. It's next issue is out at the end of July, so be quick!

Find out more about joining [here](#)

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"Inspiring everyday heroes"



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