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South Pacific WWII Museum

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A real hero we remember fondly



In this second newsletter edition, and last for 2016, we honor and remember the life and heroic act of Captain Elwood Joseph Euart, who died during the sinking of the SS President Coolidge in Espiritu Santo, on the 26th of October 1942. The remains of Captain Elwood J Euart finally returned home this year and was laid to rest next to his parents, the late Mr Elwood Francis Aloysius and the late Mrs Winifred Casey Euart at the St. Francis Cemetery in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. This is how the story unfolds..

The SS President Coolidge sank 90 minutes after hitting two underwater mines on the 26th of October 1942. The 28 year old army captain had made it ashore, along with approximately 5300 others, but did what a vast majority wouldn't do, he voluntarily turned back to the sinking ship after finding out that six of his fellow comrades were trapped in the ship.

"He gave his life to save his fellow comrades.. that's the kind of guy he was"

A Survivor, Richard Brown Schneider from the US Army, 43rd Infantry Division recalled seeing from shore the attempts of rescuing someone from a door without success before the Coolidge sunk. Reports indicate that Capt. Euart and two other men helped six men out of the sinking ship. At first, Capt. Euart and the other heroes were trapped but somehow two of them made it to safety, and Capt. Euart went down with the Coolidge. " He gave his life to save his fellow comrades... that's the kind of guy he was" were the words of Paul Vallee, one of Captain Euart's nephew, when talking to WPRI news.

In August 1948, a search team from the US Army's 604th Quartermaster Registration Company visited Espiritu Santo to search for Capt. Euart's remains but it was determined "un-recoverable" due to the depth and nature of the wreckage. After 70 years, Mr. Rex Moli, a local guide of Allan Power Dive Tours, spotted what appeared to be human remains some meters through a passage from a sea door, the same door referred to by Richard Brown Schneider and known today as Euart's Door.



Image: 1942 photo of last rescue attempts to save Capt. Euart when ship was heavily listing. Euart's door closest to lifeboat (Photo: NARA)

Allan Power then contacted the Australian High Commission in Port Vila who relayed message to the US Embassy in Papua New Guinea then to the US authorities in Hawaii. In March 2015 a US underwater recovery team from DPAA, together with Allan Power Dive Tours, Santo Island Dive and other local business operators brought the diver's discovery to the surface. The operation lasted for almost a week commencing 3rd of March 2015, recovering additional remains and material evidence from the ship. The human remains were sent to Hawaii for DNA tests to conclusively confirm the identify as that of Captain Euart.



Image: Part of the US recovery team & local operators - March 2015 (Photo: Santo Island Dive)

"We aim to inspire all to understand the sacrifice and achievement of others in defending freedom for all"

For more information, donation and pledges of support
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Captain Elwood J Euart of the 103rd Field Artillery, 43rd Infantry Division was buried on the 31st of August 2016, with full military honours surrounded by his eleven nephews and nieces from his six other deceased siblings, as well as relatives of other service persons on the Coolidge, Government officials and other dignitaries.



Image: Among the recovered remains were Capt. Euart's dog tags



Image: Captain Euart was laid to rest with full military honors, Pawtucket Rhode Island, 31 August 2016 (Photo: WPRI.com)

A representative of the Elwood J Euart Association in Espiritu Santo, Mr William Widup, travelled from Vanuatu to Rhode Island to also witness this historical event.

Captain Euart was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross - the 2nd highest medal for heroism by US army

On the same day as Captain Euart's funeral was taking place in Rhode Island, the Elwood J Euart Association members from the Island of Espiritu Santo gathered with the Vanuatu Mobile Force at the Captain Elwood J Euart monument, to honour his memory. The Monument was built by Captain Euart's comrades after the tragedy, to honour their Captain, friend and hero.

In recognition for his heroic acts, Captain Euart was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross - the 2nd highest medal for heroism by US army - as well as the Purple Heart and Rhode Island Cross.



Image: Chairman of the Elwood J Euart Association, Mr . Bradley Wood addressing dignitaries and attendees to the Capt. Elwood J Euart's Memorial Service, Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu - 31st August 2016

In Honor of a true Hero—Vanuatu

- ✓ The Seadoor where Capt. Euart entered through and lashed himself to the lower end of a rope to enable six others to climb to safety as the ship heavily listed is referred to today as "Euart's door". Coolidge is among the top 10 world wreck diving sites attracting divers from around the World.
- ✓ Capt. Euart's monument built by his army men in 1942 is still accessible today at Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu.
- ✓ The Elwood J Euart Association, named after Capt. Euart, was established in 2013 as a charitable organization to manage and administer the development of the new South Pacific WWII Museum to be built in Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu.

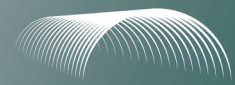


Image above: Present day Captain Elwood J Euart Monument on shore to the SS President Coolidge wreckage, Espiritu Santo, built and engraved by Captain Euart's men in 1942.

Image below: Captain Elwood J Euart (Photo: Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency)



We wish all our friends, followers and supporters a Merry Christmas



SOUTH PACIFIC WWII MUSEUM

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