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Record visitor numbers this month



Our first Russian visitors : Anatoly Karachinsky, Nina Grigorieva (centre) and Irina Folina came on a yacht visiting Espiritu Santo, having setout from Auckland, New Zealand.

We knew June was going to be bumper month when we had two cruise ships in the first week, one, the Pacific Jewel with mainly New Zealand passengers, and the other, a smaller boutique liner, the Silver Discoverer.

Besides that, we've had a very constant flow of tourist visitors from the US, England, France, and some places that might surprise you – such as Poland, and even our first Russian visitors.

As well we continue to have many Ni-Van locals. Local children are especially intrigued by what they see at our mini-Museum, inside the project office.

So in June, we've had just over 500 visitors, easily our best month to date. We are always intrigued to meet new people, and in some cases, it will unearth a fruitful connection for our museum project.

Project Endorsements

The museum project is continuing to build its profile and has now received endorsement by Vanuatu's Department of Tourism, the Vanuatu Tourism Office (it's marketing arm), Sanma Provincial Government Council and the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce & Industries.

We thank these organizations for their support and recognition of a project beneficial not only for Espiritu Santo but Vanuatu as a whole.

Inspiring Everyday Heroes

Every month we feature someone who lives upto our Museum motto of Inspiring Everyday Heroes.

This month we feature Milton Staley, who is 99, and one of the last known survivors of the Coolidge sinking.



SOUTH PACIFIC WWII
MUSEUM

Inspiring everyday heroes

Air Vanuatu

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It has been a very special couple of months for us in our mission to tell the untold stories of the South Pacific War.

Milton who has just turned 99 in May, has given a two-hour Interview to the Museum about his wartime service.

It was a real family effort by Milton's loved ones, with nephew Richard Staley arranging the interview and the filming. Milton had been a bit unwell beforehand but answered the call to duty of course.

It took place in Milton's home in California last month, and we were very excited to receive the recording.

We intend that Milton's story will feature in the Museum displays so our visitors can hear firsthand from one of the Greatest Generation about the Coolidge sinking, his time on Espiritu Santo, and his war experience.

We will also be sharing some short clips on our Facebook page, and a longer transcript of Milton's interview in July's issue of our new Santonian newsletter, exclusive to Museum members (see last page if you'd like to become a member).

The Museum is also honoured to have Milton become our first World War II veteran to sign up as a member. He is also, not surprisingly, our oldest current member.

He visited Espiritu Santo some years ago with nephew Richard and was hosted by our very own Mayumi Green.

Milton, we thank you and your family for this treasure to us. We wish you many more birthdays to come.

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



Milton Staley

Our Friends in Darwin

This month the Museum formed its first partnership with a war museum – in this case, the Darwin Military Museum (DMM) and the Royal Australian Artillery Association-NT (RAAA-NT), who own and operate the DMM in Darwin, Australia.

Darwin experienced a number of Japanese air attacks during World War II and in particular, the February 1942 bombing by the elite aircrews that had flown only a few months earlier in the devastating assault on Pearl Harbor.

The DMM is a modern museum that features exciting interactive displays of anti aircraft guns, vehicles and items such as weapons and uniforms from WW2, and draws around 60,000 visitors a year.

Both the DMM and RAAA-NT are proud to be associated with the South Pacific WWII Museum to assist with its development.

We look forward to learning as much as we can from the DMM team about how they operate and then potentially applying some of their thinking to our project as the Museum grows. We are sure that we will learn a lot from their experience in being a highly successful visitor attraction in the Northern Territory of Australia.

Thanks to DMM for agreeing to provide us with assistance and to Australian war historian, and our member, Dr Peter Williams who has helped facilitate the partnership.



Gun displays at Darwin Military Museum

This month in military history



Partners in wartime—one of our favorite images from Espiritu Santo is this picture of soldiers and locals onboard an M18 tank destroyer, taken in January 1945, three years after the Allies

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.

Espiritu Santo was chosen – and 10 days later, a party of Seabees from Efate arrived with a Marine anti-aircraft battery and a company of infantrymen to begin work on Turtle Bay airfield.

It was the beginning of the story we now tell in our Museum project.

Read more about the some of the bases of Espiritu Santo by [clicking here](#).

SBD flight over turtle bay airfield , Espiritu Santo



Sign up for The Santonian

If you become a member of the Museum, you will receive our new extra-value and quarterly newsletter, The Santonian. It features more in-depth stories about the wartime history of these islands.

You can become a member by [clicking here](#)

We're up at 30,000 feet these days

If you are lucky enough to be heading to Vanuatu, keep an eye out on board Air Vanuatu flights.



As part of our Navara Fund sponsorship, the airline is playing a three minute promotional video about the Museum project. Many thanks to Jimmy Carter for his wonderful work on this.

We hope you enjoy it if you get the chance.

And down below the waves

The Museum aims to be the go-to source for information and material concerning wartime events here and on Espiritu Santo.

We're always happy therefore to help outside media queries. The latest has been from Annie Gray of Gray's diving.

They do a series on a "World's Greatest" theme and diving the wreck of the USS Coolidge is going to be part of their World's Greatest Dives episode.

Some Kiwi visitors travelling Aelan style to visit our project office



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“Inspiring everyday heroes”



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