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### MICRONESIAN ROUND-UP

#### THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK 2003-2004

by

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*War in the Pacific National Park, Guam*

#### INTRODUCTION

War in the Pacific National Historical Park is located on Guam, approximately 13 degrees north of the equator and about 3,300 miles southwest of Hawaii. The park, comprised of seven noncontiguous units and containing 1928 acres (1002 which are submerged), is one of 385 different parks within the US National Park Service. The historical park was established in August 18, 1978 “to commemorate the bravery and sacrifice of those participating in the campaigns of the Pacific Theater of WWII and to conserve and interpret outstanding natural, scenic, and historic values and objects on the island of Guam.” Within the park’s boundaries are two historic battlefields, gun emplacements, memorials, monuments, trenches, and historic structures which all serve as silent reminders of the bloody battles that ensued on the Island of Guam. In addition to the cultural resources, War in the Pacific NHP also contains amazing natural resources including limestone forests, wetlands, a mahogany forest, and a coral reef which is one of the most diverse in the Park Service.

#### THE FORCED CLOSURE OF THE MUSEUM, LIBRARY, AND VISITOR’S CENTER

While the park tried to plan for and anticipate visitor and resource needs for the last twenty five years, in December 2002, something they couldn’t plan for, a supertyphoon, struck the island of Guam. On December 8th 2002, Supertyphoon Pongsona destroyed the park’s T. Stell Newman Visitor’s Center which housed the park’s museum, research library, and administrative offices. While Supertyphoon Pongsona may have destroyed the physical facilities, it has been unable to stymie the park staff’s enthusiasm or eagerness to share its resources and knowledge with the public. Even though the staff of eleven has been forced to work out of the attic, tool closets, supply rooms, and tire rooms of the maintenance garage for the past two years, they have continued to share their knowledge with the residents of the island whose history, cultural, and natural resources they are working to preserve, conserve, protect, and interpret. By employing innovative and nontraditional methods, the park has been able to accomplish their mission despite the challenging circum-

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stances and they have been able to expand their outreach to a wider audience than ever before.

## A NEW WAY OF DOING THINGS

### Outreach and Interpretation

Lacking a visitor's center, park staff continued their efforts to provide outreach to the community. About once a month park staff would visit either the Guam public or the Department of Defense (Navy or Air Force) schools to help teach about the events of WWII and to inform the students about the mission of the War in the Pacific NHP. During these outreach events, each member of the park staff would bring natural resource specimens or historical artifacts that would help explain the island's cultural, natural, and historical resources. During these outreach events staff members would be stationed at different tables and would simultaneously give presentations on one specific aspect of the park. After fifteen minutes at one table, the students would be rotated to another special interest table so they could participate in another presentation. The students enjoyed the diverse presentations as there was always something that appealed to everyone. During these presentations, students were able to learn about the park's natural and cultural resources, learn more about Guam's wartime history, and gain a better understanding of the events of WWII in the Pacific Theater. In the absence of a museum and visitor center, park staff such as rangers, the park's Ecologist and Biological Technicians, the Museum Curator, and the Superintendent will continue to provide outreach into the classrooms.

### The New Website and the Launch of a Virtual Museum

One of the biggest accomplishments of the park this year was the establishment of the park's new website and "virtual museum" ([www.nps.gov/wapa/indepth](http://www.nps.gov/wapa/indepth)). Thanks to a grant from the Guam Humanities Council and funding from the Arizona Memorial Museum Association, War in the Pacific NHP was able to design and launch an extensive website which makes park resources available to the

public through the internet. Since the closure of the museum and administrative offices in December 2002, the museum collection was forced into essentially "dead storage" and the extensive research library was made completely inaccessible to both the staff and the public. In order to allow the public to access our museum resources, over 800 images from our historical photo collection were scanned and placed online in albums organized both thematically and geographically. In addition to placing these historical images on-line, natural resource staff members also added several hundred photos to marine and terrestrial "nature guides" ([www.npswapa.org/gallery/War-in-the-Pacific-NHP](http://www.npswapa.org/gallery/War-in-the-Pacific-NHP)) to help provide residents with reference images to be able to help identify the various aquatic and terrestrial species which are present in the park and on Guam. In addition to posting photos to the site, many articles, publications, and archival documents from the museum collection related to WWII were added to the site including links to other informative WWII sites. Park brochures, information on the various park units and the park's administrative and management documents were also included in the new website as a way to communicate with the public while we lacked a visitor's center, museum, and park headquarters. In addition to this new site offering visitors virtual access to our museum collection images and archival documents, the site was also a way to communicate with both people on and off Guam to inform them about our events and activities ([www.nps.gov/wapa/pphml/news.html](http://www.nps.gov/wapa/pphml/news.html)).

The website was launched on July 19th 2004 and at the writing of this article the site already had 20,100 "hits" since its debut. Even though WAPA lacks a physical building to offer exhibits, interpretation, and information about our park and the events of WWII in the Pacific, through our website we are able to reach a wider audience than ever before as visitors are not constrained by hours of operation, mobility, or geography. Given that in the past, the majority of on-site visitors were Japanese, the park has secured funding to translate selected pages of the new website into Japanese. To the park's knowledge, this will be the

first time that any National Park Service website has ever been translated into Japanese. Future plans include translating the site into additional languages such as Chamorro, Chinese, and Korean.

### **Events, Ceremonies, And Exhibits**

This year marked the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Guam and many events were scheduled to commemorate the occasion. The park hosted "Movies in the Park" where *Tora! Tora!* was shown on a large tarp strung between two coconut trees in the middle of the Asan Beach Unit. Many families attended the free event and snacked on popcorn while watching the movie under the stars while lounging on the park's lawn next to the ocean.

During the Memorial Day weekend, a guest astronomer from the University of Guam brought telescopes to the park and gave an informative presentation on the stars and planets that could be seen in Guam's skies. In addition to being able to watch WWII movies in the park and allowing residents to appreciate the night sky, in cooperation with the Department of Parks and Recreation, guided hikes or "boonie stumps" were offered each weekend to the historical WWII sites on island during the month of July.

In an attempt to offer the public a new exhibit related to WWII, the park designed and fabricated a traveling exhibit on nose-art called "Planes and Pin-Ups". Nose art refers to the paintings or drawings that were painted on the fuselages of many WWII aircrafts. The paintings, often of beautiful women or cartoon characters, were painted to help boost morale and these art-forms also allowed men to identify with the planes they flew or serviced. This exhibit includes two large interpretive panels, a slide show of nose art images upon a simulated aircraft's fuselage, and a short video that documents and analyzes the phenomenon of aircraft art in the Pacific Theater of WWII. This traveling exhibit was crafted so that it could be displayed on Guam and at museums and events throughout the islands and in the mainland until the park can open a new museum with permanent exhibits.

In order to celebrate Liberation Day, the park rented the KAHA art gallery at Two Lovers Point and exhibited their newly fabricated "Planes and Pin Ups Exhibit" in addition to displaying five traveling exhibits on loan from the Admiral Nimitz Museum in Fredricksburg, Texas. These Admiral Nimitz exhibits were on nose art, POWs during WWII, Admiral Isorku Yamamoto, women in WWII, and the air war for Guadalcanal. While War in the Pacific lacked their own museum, they were able to create a museum environment for the month of July and August by renting a gallery, developing their own exhibit, and borrowing others from a WWII museum in Texas.

During Liberation week the park also hosted a web-site debut for the returning liberators, their families, and the Guam public so that all could learn what resources were on the new website, see how to navigate to the various portions of the site, and offer their input on what they would like to see on the site in the future.



*Figure 1 Some of the 1,826 flags that were placed on the historical battlefield of the Asan Beach unit. These flags commemorate those American servicemen who sacrificed their lives to liberate the Chamorro people from Japanese occupation.*

On the 20th of July there was a wreath laying ceremony held at the Asan Bay Overlook to commemorate those returning veterans who participated in the recapture of Guam 60 years ago as well as to honor those who died in the struggle. On July 21st, Liberation Day, the Park and the US Navy hosted a ceremony at the Asan invasion beach at the same time troops invaded the island sixty years previous. During

this ceremony, the Superintendent presented the National Park Service Medallions to returning liberators.

In addition to ceremonies and events going on throughout Liberation week, 1,826 American flags were placed into the lawn of the historical Asan Beach Unit of the park to honor those servicemen that lost their lives during the struggle for the island. Each flag was placed to recognize the bravery and sacrifice of those who sacrificed their lives in order to free the Chamorro people from the Japanese occupation which endured for two and a half years during WWII.

In the last months the Natural Resource Division has been conducting extensive research on Guam's coral reefs and the Cultural Division has been devoted to digitizing museum collection images to expand the website. In addition, the museum division has refurbished both the antiaircraft gun and the coastal defense gun at Ga'an point to maintain the guns in a stable condition in the ever-challenging Guam climate.



*Figure 2 Preliminary design sketch of the upcoming WAPA museum and curatorial facility.*

## THE FUTURE

Recently, War in the Pacific National Historical Park and the National Park Service signed a memorandum of understanding with the US Navy. This agreement will allow the National Park Service to renovate and rehabilitate an existing Navy building outside the Navy's main gates. This building will be home to the future T. Stell Newman Visitor Center and Museum and will contain a new curatorial facility to house the ever-expanding museum collections for both War in the Pacific National Historical

Park and American Memorial Park on Saipan. While the park rehabilitates this building so it can be transformed into the new museum, they will begin to offer tours to the various historical sites on the US Navy Base. This will be the first time that tours on the Base will be available to park visitors.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY AND CONTACT

Tammy Duchesne is the museum curator for War in the Pacific NHP on Guam and for American Memorial Park on Saipan. She received a BA from Tulane University in Spanish and Anthropology in 1996 and taught middle school Spanish in Massachusetts for five years. While teaching, she studied towards a MA in Teaching and received her degree from the Elms College in 1999. She resigned from teaching in 2001 and moved to Guam to pursue her interest in Micronesia studies at the University of Guam. While studying in the Micronesian Studies Program at the university, Duchesne began working at the War in the Pacific Museum in a variety of capacities. In 2003 she became the museum curator of the park and in May 2004 she completed her thesis entitled "Micronesian WWII Songs: Collective Voices Sing Island Histories". At present she is working to help open the new American Memorial Park museum in Saipan and trying to plan for a variety of upcoming events at War in the Pacific NHP including moving the museum collection and trying to reopen the War in the Pacific museum.

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