



An Exciting Year Ahead

Welcome to 2021.

This being the first edition of our monthly magazine for the year, we'd like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and encouragement throughout 2020. It certainly was a year we're all not going to forget in a hurry. So, here's hoping this year will be one we can all look forward to.

The Museum has some big plans over the next 12 months. Some are starting to come together, while others, we'll just have to wait and see where things take us.

Whatever happens, we're very pleased and excited that you'll be joining us along the way.

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The Bigfala Returns

Around this time last year, we held our first Bigfala Sale in Unity Park. The fundraiser event was made possible through the kind donation of Hamish Saunders from GMID Australia who generously donated a huge assortment of household goods, hardware, hand tools, boots, power tools and much more. The profits from the sale of those goods, which was around 700,000 vatu, went towards the Museum project.



Once again thanks to Hamish's support and of course that of Santo Hardware, the Bigfala Sale will be back again in Unity Park, bigger and better than ever.

This year we're planning to make it even more of a family event with food stalls, entertainers, and other fun activities for everyone to enjoy. A date hasn't been set yet, but once we start locking things in, we'll make further announcements on our website, social media and in local newspapers and radio.

Japanese Ambassador Visits Santo

The new Japanese Ambassador to Vanuatu Mr Chiba Hirohisa has certainly been busy around Santo during January with a number of visits and handovers.

The ProMedical team were delighted to receive the keys to a state-of-the-art Toyota 4WD ambulance from Mr Chiba. ProMedical's Station Manager Jerome Sese was on hand to accept the generous donation from the Government of Japan.

As is customary with ProMedical's fleet, each ambulance is given a name. Children from Luganville International School were asked to submit names, including Amirah Wensi, who suggested the ambulance should be named after her dad, Alma.

As many residents of Luganville would know, Alma was a very active church member, a Youth Group Leader, a loving husband and proud father. What's more he was our Museum Manager until his sad passing in 2019.



Japanese Ambassador to Vanuatu Mr Chiba Hirohisa presents ProMedical Station Manager Jerome Sese with their new Toyota Ambulance. Amirah Wensi and her mum were also there for the ribbon cutting ceremony.

'Alma' also means 'lifts the spirits and feeds the soul' We couldn't think of a more deserving name for the ambulance.

Mr Chiba also went to inspect Santo's hydroelectric power station upgrade project. The Government of Japan also provided grant aid to improve power generation from the Sarakata River through the installation of a new hydraulic turbine and other improvements.



The Ambassador at Santo's hydroelectric power station.



Lengkon and Marina with Ambassador Chiba.

Following his visit to the power station, we were thrilled to have the Ambassador drop by the Museum. Mr Chiba spent time with Lengkon and Marina where he was most interested in hearing about the plans we have for the project.

The Government of Japan has always been very generous Pacific neighbour to Vanuatu. Their recent support, during such difficult times, are wonderful gestures of goodwill and certainly reinforce the bond between our two nations.

In A Father's Footsteps

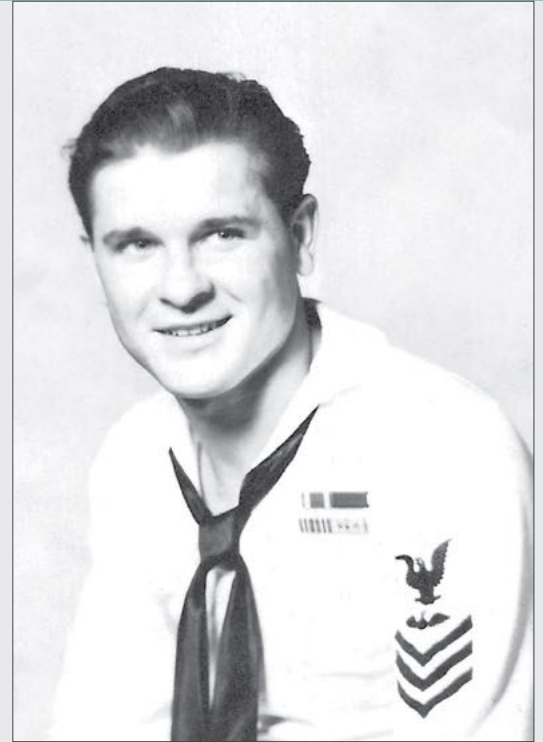
Mike Lechwar from St Louis, Missouri in the USA dropped the Museum a message via our website early last year. Since then, he has become not only a Museum Member, but a great friend of the Museum. As a result of that friendship, Mike is donating his father's collection of photographs that were taken while Edward served on Espiritu Santo during the war. Mike's also planning to donate many books he has on the US Navy and the Pacific Theatre.

Edward L Lechwar spent a good proportion of his war years on Santo at Turtle Bay Fighter Airfield from 1942 to mid 1944. There he worked as part of the US Navy's Carrier Aircraft Support Unit or CASU 10 where he was in charge of the Armoury. CASU units were based all over the world during the war and took care of a lot of the routine maintenance of carrier aircraft while their ships were in port.

Mike has a special attachment to Santo and feels that it is very important to ensure his surname, Lechwar, remains connected in some permanent way to Santo. Mike said, "my father was a young boy when he went to war. He moved on to manhood at Santo."

In 2010 Mike and his son Justin travelled to Santo to retrace some of his dad's footsteps. After an obligatory visit to Million Dollar Point and other sites of World War II significance, Mike and his son drove up the East Coast Highway to visit the very spot where Edward was based.

Following his visit, Mike said, "Dad's spirit lives there and his life was



Edward L. Lechwar in 1942, soon after joining up.

fashioned by the opposing forces of war and the friendly people of Espiritu Santo. No month went by during his life without a reference being made to that place. A place of conflict, friendship, freedom and heartache."



Edward Lechwar and his Navy mates relax in a bar.



The Ordnance crew of CASU 10 at Turtle Bay Airfield.

Thanks to Mike, we have hi-res scans of the photographs in the collection. At some point in the future, we will arrange to obtain from Mike the books and items he wishes to donate, in memory of his dad. Upon their

arrival, they will be known as the Edward L. Lechwar Collection.

In future issues of our newsletter, we'll have more news of other photographic collections that have been donated to the Museum.



Justin and Mike at Million Dollar Point in 2010.



Edward and his wife in 1944.



Edward outside his tent during training.

Inspiring everyday heroes

This month's hero is the late Romain Rivier, a Judo black belt with the Vanuatu Judo Federation.

Romain came to Port Vila when he was 5 and grew up in Vanuatu which he came to call home. It was here his



A Vanuatu Judo Federation tournament in December 2020.

of missions around the world. His passion for sport continued whilst in the army and he not only continued his Judo, he also joined the French army Pacific XV rugby team and toured New Caledonia.

Sadly, Romain passed away after a battle with cancer on October 5 last year, aged just 31. He left behind his partner Emilie Donjon and two little daughters Aïnhua and Amaïa.

Romain was due to receive his black belt in December from the Vanuatu Judo Federation. So instead his brother received the belt on his brother's behalf.



Romain with the flag of the country he called home.

love for judo began and after attending school in Port Vila and Noumea, he joined the military specialising in Civil Engineering. Following commando training and becoming a shooting instructor he carried out a number

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



South Pacific WWII Museum
Unity Park, Main Street,
Luganville, Espiritu Santo
Vanuatu

email: info@southpacificwwiimuseum.com
web: southpacificwwiimuseum.com

