

Bigfala, big success

Our biggest fundraiser of the year is over for 2021, raising 908,717 vt (approximately A\$10,760) in much needed funds for the South Pacific WWII Museum.

The Museum's Bigfala Sale in July, drew crowds from all over Santo eager to pick up a bargain or two. From the moment we threw open the flaps to our marquee, we knew we were going to be busy.

The Sale, the brainchild of Museum Chairman Bradley Wood, sees a container load of excess hardware and homewares stock from GMID/Fill The Container Australia, get sold at heavily discounted prices - the profits of which, go straight back to the Museum.

The most popular items were those used in construction such as concrete reinforcing mesh, corrugated roofing, PVC pipe and cement sheet. While smaller items such as shovels, work boots, plastic pots and tarpaulins were also hot sellers.

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Given the Sale marquee was only 10 or so metres from the Museum, that also meant a lot of locals not only bagged a bargain, but we had many 'first timers' have a look through the Museum. Lengkon and Marina were rushed off their feet trying to look after both sites, but luckily for us, Santo Hardware staff were there to lend a hand. They did an extraordinary job moving products down to the Sale, looking after payments and ensuring everything ran smoothly.

The South Pacific WWII Museum would like to take this opportunity to thank Hamish Saunders from GMID/ Fill-the-Container for once again getting behind the Museum with a container load of fantastic sale products.



A range of shoes and boots were on sale and sold well.

We'd also like to thank the wonderfully generous Richard & Rosemary Lo from the LCM group for their ongoing support through Santo Hardware.

The Luganville Municipal Council Town Clerk is always very helpful in granting us the use of the empty space opposite Museum to set up the Bigfala Sale. Thank you sir.



Our customers got their bargains home any way they could.

A special thanks must also be given for Santo Hardware Sales staff Angela, Rosie, Justin, Karu, and Jordie for all their superb work during this sale. You guys are the best.



Nails were sold by the kilo and eagerly snapped up.

To our Project Office Manager Lengkon Tokon, thank you for all your hard work jumping between the Sale and the Museum to look after visitors. And of course Marina Moli at the Museum for so calmly and warmly showing everyone through the Museum and answering who knows how many questions about the Pacific War.

And lastly, a huge thank you must go to Museum Chairman and Santo Hardware MD Bradley Wood whose enthusiasm and passion for the Museum remains as strong as it was when we first embarked on this project.



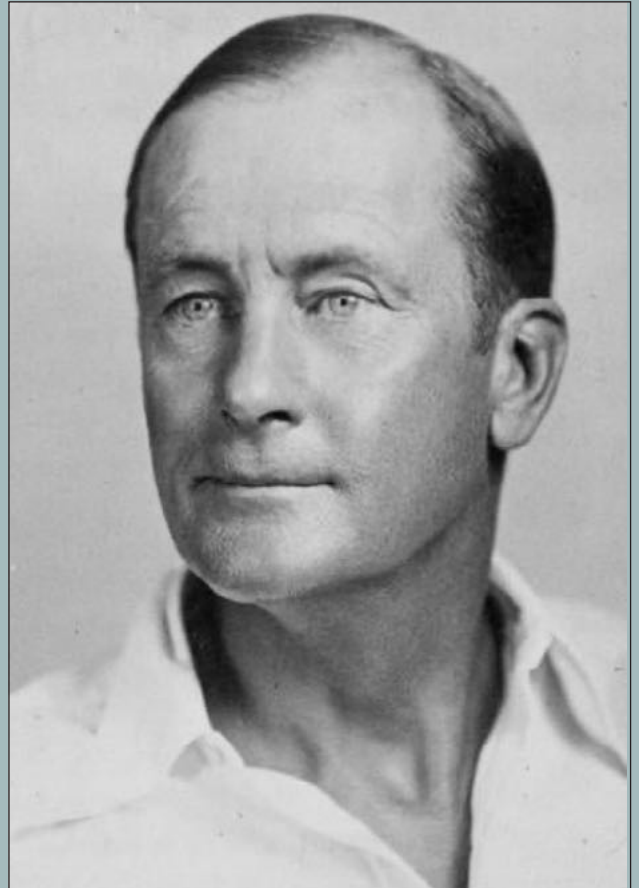
Over for another year as the marquee comes down in Unity Park.

The funds raised will be used to help keep the Museum open while Vanuatu's borders remain closed. It will assist in the payment of utilities at the Museum, staff wages, website development and of course enable us to reunite dog tags with family back home.

With the President's blessing

On July 7, 1943, the USS Honolulu (CL-48) slipped out of Espiritu Santo carrying its usual complement of sailors. And one very unusual category of passenger – an award winning historian.

That man was Harvard professor Samuel Eliot Morison, partway through an extensive tour of the South Pacific theatre of war.



When the United States entered World War II, Morison was a Harvard professor who had led an expedition retracing Christopher Columbus's Atlantic routes. He successfully lobbied the White House to cover the war, with the goal of writing a history of U.S. naval operations.

Aged 54 when war began, Morison – who had achieved acclaim for his history of Christopher Columbus – had agitated for active service. Turned down on account of his age, he lobbied and lobbied – and eventually caught the ear of President Roosevelt (who was helpfully, a friend) with a case that he could write a history of the United States Navy in the Second World War.

Morison however did not intend to write history from the backseat, thousands of miles from where the war was happening.

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The USS Honolulu (CL-48) in Honolulu Harbour, July 1939.

So armed with presidential blessing, he would travel to many war zones, which was why in 1943, he was onboard the cruiser Honolulu, flagship to Operation Toenails, the capture of Rendova and New Georgia to the northwest.

To say Morison had an eventful voyage out of Espiritu Santo is an understatement – the Honolulu was at the centre of the fierce naval battle of Kolombangara. One sailor noted Morison was calmly taking notes during the battle while other more anxious shipmates thought it a wiser use of time to adjust their lifejackets.

Morison survived the battle, and other missions – most narrowly cheating death in a kamikaze attack in 1945.

He and his team of subordinates would end up producing the 15-volume history of the US Navy in the conflict.



The USS Honolulu (CL-48) underway in camouflage pattern paintwork in 1944.

It was published between 1947 and 1962 – a herculean task and not without major controversies along the way.

The work remains the bedrock of much history written since, and is considered the best of the official written histories produced by any nation post-war.

You can read much more about Morison in this US Naval Institute article at:

<https://bit.ly/3BDT2lo>

Museum welcomes new visitors

The borders might still be closed to international visitors, but that doesn't stop a steady stream of locals and holiday makers from other islands (particularly Efate), visiting the Museum.

School groups, families, couples, kids on school holidays, have all dropped by to say hello to Lengkon and Marina.

A huge thank you to you all for dropping in. Seeing all your wonderful faces reminds us of why we keep the Museum open. And a big thank you for the donations to the Museum. We'll get them on display once we've identified them.

These are just some of the visitors to the Museum during July.



July 6

Year 7 Aore Adventist students, who had finished classes for the day came to see the Museum and our display of other items up at the Espiritu Hotel (The Tu).



July 7

The Galaxy Football Club who recently won the Vanuatu Football Federation champions league tournament here in Luganville, dropped by to say hello.



July 9

The Potgieter family dropped in with some donations. Son Ben wanted to donate Coke bottles he found on Santo to the Museum.



July 9

Aiden, who has visited us in the past, brought his cousins with him on this visit. That's him in the light blue t-shirt and his cousin Junior with the 'ARMY' t-shirt and the fabulous haircut.



July 9

The Armstrong family from Efate also visited us. They were up in Santo on a family trip during their school holidays.



July 9

Class 6 students from Luganville Adventist School got together during their holidays and decided to visit us for the first time.

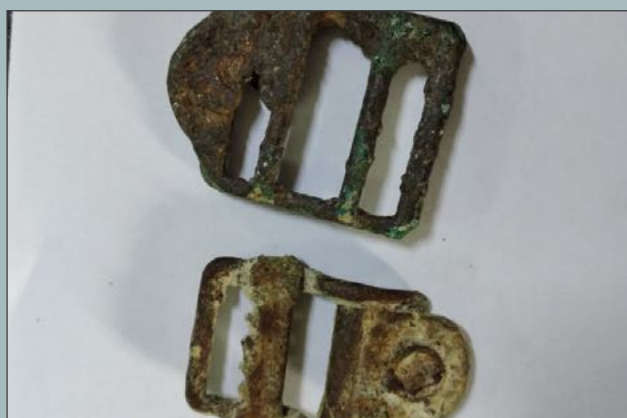


July 14

We had more wonderful junior donors dropping into the Museum. They were Sasha Monteiro, Lucia Valentine, and Brielle Teece who donated the bottles, and Niko Monteiro who donated the smaller items.



They're are all students of PVIS and were on school holidays with their families.



July 23

Professor Matthew Spriggs, the Honorary Curator of Archaeology at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre in Port Vila and his wife Rosemary (who is originally from Pentecost), visited us. They were up from Port Vila on holiday and celebrating their 10th wedding anniversary.

Belly flop.

Or why 457 aircraft landed 'wheels up' for no apparent reason

It was regarded by many as the most rugged aircraft of World War II. And while the B-17 suffered some of the most horrific losses of any aircraft during the war - more than 40% were downed over Europe - its legendary status remains just as strong today as it did all those years ago.

Santo had three bomber airfields where hundreds of B-17 aircraft were maintained, prepped, fuelled and armed before being sent off on bombing missions throughout the Pacific.



The stricken B-17 "All American" miraculously flew home after an horrendous collision with a German fighter over Europe.



B-17G 43-38172 of the 8th AF 398th BG 601st BS which was damaged on a bombing mission over Cologne, Germany, October 15 1944.



A restored B-17 over an airshow in the USA.

It was an astounding aircraft. The almost indestructible workhorse of the American bombing effort in both the European and Pacific Theatres, was immensely popular with the aircrews that flew them. It's no wonder when you see the state some of the aircraft were in when they made it home. In fact, it's astounding that some even remained airborne.

But not all B-17s suffered severe damage as a direct result of attack by enemy fighters and exploding anti-aircraft shells. What if, for no apparent reason, you're bringing your B-17 in for a textbook, easy as pie, regulation landing and all of a sudden you find your aircraft sliding out of control on its belly down the runway in a shower of sparks and shredding metal until you come to an unceremonious stop, hopefully with everyone on board still in one piece.

The landing was 'by the book'. So what went wrong? What went wrong for you and 456 other pilots, who in a 22 month period, landed their aircraft with the gear up - but swore they did everything correctly.

It wasn't until the end of the war that the Air Force decided to investigate the cause.

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The perfect Fitt for the investigation

The Air Force firmly believed that the cause of the accidents had to be a 'mental thing'. Some sort of unexplained pilot error that caused the pilots to crash their aircraft. So who better to investigate it than a psychologist. But not any psychologist, one with a PhD in the relatively new field of Applied Experimental and Engineering Psychology.

His name was Paul Fitts and he and his colleague Alphonse Chapanis from the Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory at what was Wright Field (now Wright-Patterson Air Force Base), near Dayton, Ohio set about investigating the hundreds of B-17 crashes.



Paul Fitts post World War II.

Fitts examined the original accident reports, which more often than not would say "pilot error". If a plane crashed, the assumption was, the pilot did something wrong to cause the crash. Maybe their training was lacking. Maybe they had some sort of medical episode. Or maybe they shouldn't have been selected to be a pilot in the first place. Putting it simply, it was their fault.

Fitts went and interviewed many of the pilots, looking for some clue. Accident prone pilots should, according to Fitts, demonstrate some sort of randomness in the cockpit prior to the crash. There was none. For all the accidents involving B-17s slamming into the runway the circumstances were very similar.

Pilots of B-17s would come in for smooth landings and yet for some reason never deployed their landing gear, but thinking everything was fine.



A B-17 following a 'wheels up' belly landing.

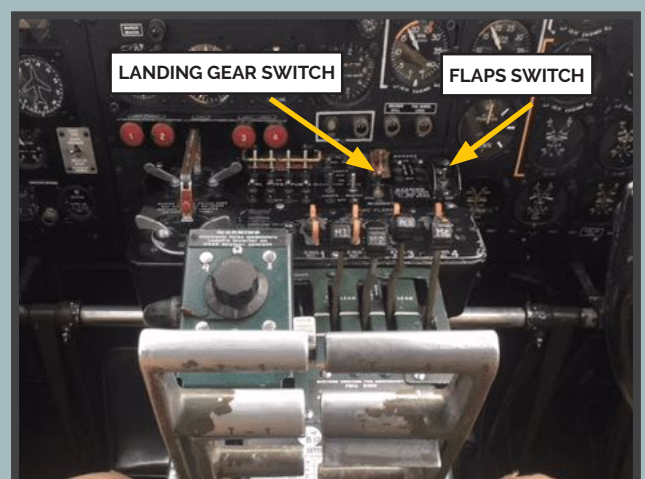
Chapanis redefines cockpit design

Which was where Fitts' associate at the lab, Alfonse Chapanis, who was a pioneer in ergonomics and industrial design, came into the picture. He was tasked with investigating the aircraft themselves. He also spoke to the pilots, watched them in the cockpits and examined their training. Nothing stood out at first. Until he spotted something in the cockpit so trivial and yet so important, it changed their design forever. "Designer error."

As the aircraft was coming in for a landing, the pilot would reach for what he thought was the landing gear when in fact it was the flaps. The issue was that the flaps and landing gear controls - in this case switches - looked and felt exactly the same.

By activating the wing flaps, they dramatically slowed the descent of the aircraft, driving it into the ground with the landing gear still up!

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The B-17s problematic cockpit switches. This is a restored B-17G "Sentimental Journey" flying today. Photo: Big Jake in Florida.

Redefining cockpit design

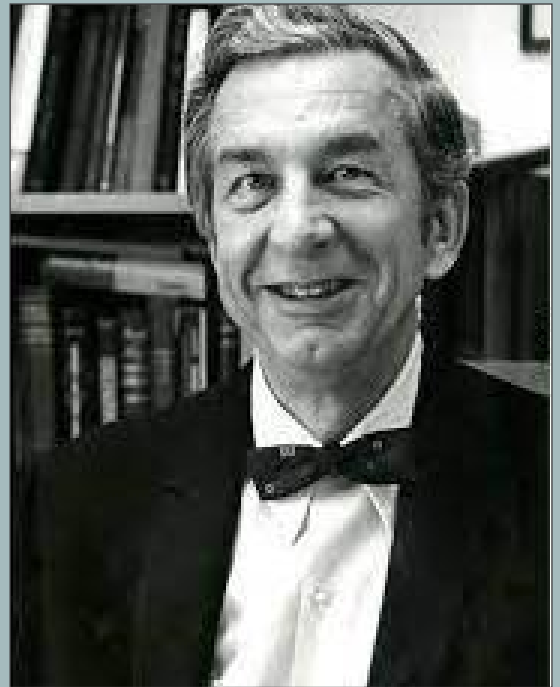
Chapanis' solution to the problem was simple. He redesigned the knobs and levers to give them all a distinctive shape, that could be distinguished 'by feel' even at night. The landing gear would have a wheel shape for a knob and the flaps a flat square - both reminiscent of the things they were controlling

Shape coding is still used in the cockpits of every aircraft manufactured today. A look at the flaps and landing gear knobs in a modern aircraft and you'll see how that simple change by Chapanis is still used to help prevent the mysterious mishaps that plagued the B-17s of the USAAF 70 years ago.

Chapanis went on to do some remarkable, and some would say ground-breaking work.

He's probably best known for his work with Bell Labs where he helped design the keypad you'll find on almost every phone we use today.

He was a remarkable thinker who could see what many couldn't and proved to the US Air Force, that it wasn't their pilots that were at fault, but their aircraft.



Alphonse Chapanis



Today's Airworthiness Standards still follow the ergonomic designs developed by Alphonse Chapanis not long after the war ended.



The differences between today's flap controls and landing gear activation levers make it almost impossible to mix them up.

Inspiring everyday heroes

With the Olympics in full swing in Japan, it's time to salute the Vanuatu team that's travelled to the Games in Tokyo.



The Vanuatu Olympics team ready for Tokyo take off. Photo courtesy Vanuatu Daily Post.

The world always focuses on the big nations and their stories – but it's the minnows who have the longest roads just to get to the starting gates.

Their athletes don't have anywhere near the same resources, and most significantly, the chance to compete regularly at top level.

But the Olympics is also about taking part – and that's never been a greater feat than in the time of pandemic.

Three Vanuatu athletes have made the journey to Tokyo – all of whom have had a taste before of the world's biggest sporting event. They are:

Rillio Rii in the men's single sculls.

Yoshua Shing in the men's singles table tennis.

And Hugo Cumbo, in the 81 kilogram judo class.

A big round of support for them and their support team – our Inspiring Everyday Heroes.



Vanuatu table tennis player Yoshua Shing is set to make his third consecutive appearance at the Olympic Games in Tokyo after having previously played at London 2012 and Rio 2016 ©Getty Images

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



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