

## Museum welcomes exciting new exhibit

Following up on last month's story, we now have a fabulous new exhibit at the Museum - thanks to the wonderful generosity of Rosemary and Richard Lo from the LCM group of companies

Hot on the heels of our Coolidge donation from the Alan Power Estate, we now have the WWII bank vault door and its frame, mounted on a purpose-built concrete foundation outside the Museum's main entrance.

With the old concrete block bank vault being demolished to make way for accommodation, Rosemary and Richard ensured the centrepiece of the old vault would go to the Museum as a permanent exhibit and a reminder of life on Base Button during World War II.

We're extremely grateful to the Los for their donation, and their ongoing support for the Museum project.



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# Breaking the bank

When the Museum first heard of the plans to redevelop the bank vault site in central Luganville, we immediately knew we had to obtain its vault door before it was sold for scrap.

Luckily for us, Rosemary and Richard Lo the owners of LCM, one of the largest and most successful business groups in Luganville, were one step ahead of us. They secured the vault door on behalf of the Museum, and through the resources of Santo Hardware - part of the LCM group - it was made ready for transport.

The vault door, which weighs around 2.5 tonnes took the efforts of a great many staff from Santo Hardware, ably led by Museum Chairman and Santo Hardware Managing Director Bradley Wood.

The coordinated effort required the door and its frame to be separated from the original concrete blocks and steel reinforcing that held it in place for almost 80 years.

After creating an extra deep foundation from reinforced concrete just outside the Museum entrance, the vault door was transported to the site on the back of a large Santo Hardware truck.

One of the hardware store's forklift trucks was on standby at the site to unload the precious cargo and lift it into position.

After securing the frame to the concrete foundation, additional stays were attached from the frame to the roof of the Museum for added support.



One of Santo Hardware's larger forklifts was used to unload the vault door and raise it into its vertical position oncemore.



The bank vault door in its new home outside the Museum.

The vault door is believed to be a Mosler vault door and at the time of writing, we are still trying to confirm its exact details and specifications.

The Mosler company was the favoured brand of vault doors of the US military for decades and were regarded as the finest of their kind in the world.

In fact, it's Mosler vaults that protect the Fort Knox gold depository in the United States. They're also the doors that protect the US ICBM missile silos. (continued...)

Even more amazing is it's a nuclear hardened, 50 tonne, concrete and steel Mosler vault that the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights are stored in.

Each morning, the three documents in their helium filled cases, ascend from the vault and go on display in the National Archives in Washington DC. At the end of the day they descend back down into the vault on a purpose built scissor lift.

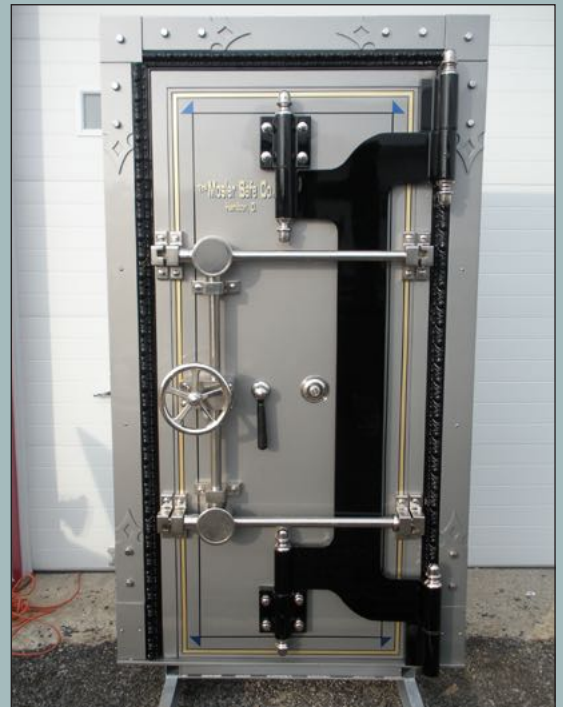


A working scale model of the original Mosler vault lift in the National Archives that was built by the Mosler company. Photo US Archives.

While our vault door doesn't come with credentials quite like those of later Mosler vaults, it's amazing to think that one of the best vault doors in the world found a home on Espiritu Santo.



Supposedly one of the vault doors at Fort Knox, built by the Mosler company in 1936.



A fully retored Mosler vault door and frame.



Museum Chairman Bradley Wood with son Jayden following the final finishing off of the new display outside the Museum.

# New VSA Volunteer for the Museum



Thanks to the tireless hard work of VSA's Program Manager for Vanuatu, Trevor Johnson, the Museum now has a fundraising expert on board to really kick things off in 2022.

Joanne Cowie, who is based in Auckland, New Zealand brings a wealth of experience to the Museum project.

Jo is currently the Head of Marketing and Fundraising at Coastguard New Zealand which is a registered charity and provides the primary marine search and rescue service around New Zealand's coast and on its major lakes and waterways. Her many years of



VSA volunteer Joe Cowie in one of the NZ Coastguard rescue boats.

fundraising experience will benefit the Museum in so many ways and contribute to raising the necessary funds to begin work on Stage 1 of the new museum.

A huge thank you to Jo for volunteering her time with us and of course to Trevor and the entire VSA team for their continued support of the South Pacific WWII Museum.



Who knows where Stage 1 might take us.

# You've seen the film, now read the book

In November of 2020, at the height of lockdowns and pandemic outbreaks, the Museum embarked on a wonderful project.

The Museum's WWII history researcher and expert in the United States, Donna Esposito, was asked for some assistance by Dr John Anderson, from Baltimore in the United States. He was looking to prepare a



Angelina Mango relaxing on Espiritu Santo where she was stationed as a US Army nurse during World War II.

presentation for the nursing staff at Johns Hopkins University Hospital about his mother's time as a nurse serving with the US Army during World War II.

John's mother, Angelina Mango served much of her time in the Army at the 25th Evacuation Hospital on Santo, which is where the Museum fits in. John was hoping to make use of some of the photos in our



Dr John Anderson records his video and voice over at home during the Covid lockdown in Baltimore USA.

collection, to supplement those he already had from his late mother.

However, instead of creating a PowerPoint presentation as John had originally envisaged, Museum Project Manager James Carter, thought the story could be better told through a short video. And so the production process began.

Given all the issues with Covid, everything had to be done in limited locations. After a number of script writes and re-writes, John recorded a video and voice over in his home - which was under lockdown at the time.

James who was commencing the edit, was also in lockdown in Melbourne, Australia. So he also had plenty of time for editing the video.



The US Army 25th Evacuation Hospital on Espiritu Santo.

So for around a week, James spent day and night cutting and recutting, researching and formatting video and photographs into the edit.

By around this time last year, the edit was complete and sent on to John in time for Christmas with his family.

(continued...)

Fast forward to mid 2021 and John had a wonderful idea. Would a publisher be interested in taking on the story and creating a book about Angelina's life on Santo? The ups and downs, the joy and sadness and the relationship that blossomed with the man that would become John's father, Gustavus, that culminated in their marriage on the island.



Angelina and her nursing buddies at their camp on Santo.

It took a great deal of emailing and hard work from John. However, he had something in his bag of tricks that a publisher couldn't resist. That video.

Sure enough, Pocol Press in Pennsylvania fell in love with the story and signed John up. And the great news? Just this week, John's book *A Nurses War in the South Pacific* by Dr John Anderson, M.D. is available on Amazon, in paperback and Kindle. Hopefully in the new year, we'll also make the book available through the museum.

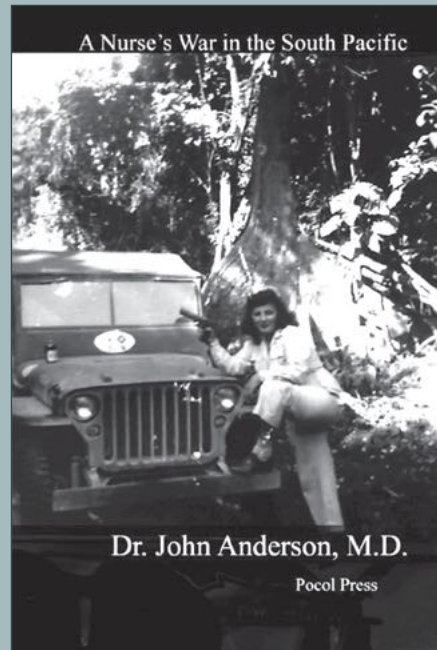
From everyone at the South Pacific WWII Museum, we wish John all the success in the world with his book.



Angelina Mango and Gustavas Anderson at their wedding ceremony on Espiritu Santo.

If you haven't seen the Angelina Mango video and would like to watch it, it's available on the Museum's YouTube channel here:

[https://youtu.be/z0LLBhkG5\\_M](https://youtu.be/z0LLBhkG5_M)



John's book is out now and available through [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

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**THIS MONTH IN MILITARY HISTORY**


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# The deadliest dance

At the start of November 1943, the soldiers of the Marine 2nd Division were told that after a major amphibious exercise off the coast of New Zealand, they would be loaded onto trucks and taken back to the country's capital, Wellington, for a large dance.

The division had seen hard fighting on Guadalcanal, and on arrival in New Zealand in May, the original fighting force was found to be decimated by malaria. New recruits would have to be melded together with the remaining veterans.



Elements of the US 2nd Marine Division march through the streets of Wellington, New Zealand on the way to their training camps.

The troops soon became a welcome addition to wartime New Zealand but after six months, they were to learn the reason for all that training.

Instead of heading back to Wellington, the marines instead found their amphibious ships weighing anchor and heading north. They were sailing to carry out Operation Galvanic – the first steps in the US drive to open a new central Pacific front against Japan.



US Marines take some time off to learn the New Zealand Haka.

(continued...)

Their target would be Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands. It was very different to anything the Marine Corps had encountered before – instead of the jungles of the Solomons, Tarawa was a low-lying atoll, ringed by reefs and turned into a fortress by its Japanese garrison.

Around half the marine division were veterans, the rest fighting for the first time. Their convoy sailed to Efate island – arriving on November 7 and carrying out landing exercises – although their tracked amphibious landing vehicles were nowhere to be seen.



Aerial view of Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll before invasion of the island by U.S. Marines, 18 September 1943

Warships bombarded Eretoka Island, and the troops landed at Mele Bay on Efate.

But the reality that met the Marines on D-Day, November 20, could never have been replicated in exercises.

One in four of the Marines were killed or wounded in the fighting, while nearly all the 3600 Japanese defenders, and many of the 1200 Korean labourers, were killed.



Ferrying supplies past an LCM-3 sunk at Tarawa.



# Museum and VTO partner for DEMA



Guests and friends join Millie Ogden (Second from the right) at the Vanuatu stand at the DEMA dive convention in Las Vegas.

During November, the world's largest dive convention was held at the Las Vegas Convention Center in the USA.

Organised by the Dive Equipment & Marketing Association (DEMA), the event highlights not only the latest equipment, but it provides an exciting opportunity for the world's best diving locations to promote themselves to the world.

Through the Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO), Vanuatu has always been well represented with a small stand, promoting some of the incredible diving throughout Vanuatu's islands.

The stand was manned by Trade Commissioner of the Republic of Vanuatu in California, Millie Ogden, who is also the owner of 3 Link Communications. An exciting new satellite broadband provider in Vanuatu.

The Museum was able to lend a hand with the preparation of artwork for banners to go on the stand. As these had to be done over the weekend prior to the event, the Museum was able to provide the resources to do this at very short notice.

We think the end result looks fantastic!



The Vanuatu stand came together brilliantly thanks to some great work from Millie Ogden and the South Pacific World War II Museum.



There was plenty of competition from other Pacific Island nations at the DEMA conference - including a large contingent from Fiji.

# Inspiring everyday heroes

Our Inspiring Everyday Heroes this month have had to battle many obstacles to achieve their goals.

They're six young Ni-Vanuatu who have become the first officers of ProMedical to graduate with diplomas in paramedical science.

ProMedical is a charity which has provided emergency medical service since 2004 and operates on Efate and Espiritu Santo.

Pascal Nakou, Georges Jack, Celine Eliab, Philemon Kampai, Yvong Toa and Jerome Sese were awarded their diplomas recently.

The chairman of the Vanuatu Emergency Services Association board, Douglas Patterson says the graduation of the 6 candidates is a major milestone for everyone.

"Acquiring these diplomas comes at the end of quite a long journey for these pro medical staff," he said.

The VESA Board chairman says the students faced challenges such as limited resources, reliable access to internet, availability of computers and the lack of mentors.

General Surgeon at the Northern Provincial Hospital, Doctor Basil Leodoro presented the graduates with their Ministry of Health practising license certificate.



The six new paramedic diploma graduates. Photo courtesy of Vanuatu Daily Post.

"For people in their most vulnerable state, you have a role to get rid of that suffering and to bring them to a place they can get the care. With these certificates I ask you to take this responsibility with commitment."

**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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