



Buna, Papua, 1942. US soldiers at an advanced dressing station with a 'jungle' Christmas tree decorated with surgical cotton wool and cigarette cartons.

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The year in review.

Dear Friends,

I do hope you're having a wonderful festive season with family and friends and enjoying some well-earned time together.

2022 was a tumultuous, but at the same time very rewarding year, for the South Pacific World War II Museum.

The first half of the year, Vanuatu's borders remained closed, which meant things were very quiet for Marina at the Museum. That said, she was in there every day hosting locals from throughout Santo and neighbouring islands. She also hosted a number of local school groups, who were eager to learn about the World War II history of Santo and the New Hebrides. It was wonderful that we were able to keep supporting local schools with our learning programs, while the borders remained closed.



Marina talks about the WWII history of Santo to Year 13 History Option students from Lycee de Luganville who visited us in July.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Marina for the amazing work she has done for the Museum this year. We couldn't have kept things going without her delightful enthusiasm and passion for the Museum project.

As the borders reopened on July 1, things really started to ramp up. Finally we could begin locking things into place for the 80th anniversary commemoration of the SS President Coolidge, in October.

This event had been in the making for some years. In fact, at the conclusion of the 75th anniversary, we started throwing around all sorts of ideas.

The Coolidge Exhibition was something we always planned to do, but in the early days, we had no idea how it would come together. If not for the incredible donation by the Allan Power Estate of many of the items on show, I'm not quite sure what we would have done.



The South Pacific World War II Museum in Luganville, refitted with the S.S. President Coolidge Exhibition and just minutes prior to its opening. Photo Niva Studios.

The amazing refit of the entire Museum to transform it into a small, world class exhibition was stunning and occurred in just four days.

From the giant wall posters and other Coolidge imagery, right down to the exhibition items' display cards made to the 'British Museum Standard', everything looked very professional and proved that even a little museum like ours could put on an event of such a high standard - and the feedback we've had from it has been incredible.

Speaking of incredible, the Coolidge whistle was something I had no idea we could pull off. We threw around the idea of restoring it to working condition when we first received it as part of the Allan Power Collection. However it was broken and in pieces and covered in growth from its many under the water.

(continued...)

Following a ton of research from our Project Manager Jimmy Carter and finding the best people in Luganville to fabricate new parts to rebuild it, the project went ahead.



The Coolidge whistle during initial testing at the Santo Hardware workshop.

As I previously mentioned in our September 2022 newsletter, a huge thanks goes out to Mr and Mrs Lau at LCY Garage and Yves Lau for the work he did turning the new parts for the whistle. I also want to again thank Rommel Tugalon and the guys at the Santo Hardware workshop who reassembled the whistle, fabricated the steam lines and borrowed compressors from around town to make her sing again - and sing she certainly did.

Of course, if I had to single out just one thing from 2022 that personally touched me probably more than anything else, it would be the donation of the S.S. President Coolidge's bell to the Museum. I had hoped that one day the Discombe family would loan the bell to us, but to donate it to the South Pacific WWII Museum, left me speechless.



Christele Frouin (L) and Janet Frouin (R) present the S.S. President Coolidge bell to the Museum.

I cannot thank Janet Frouin, her daughter Christele and the entire Discombe family enough for allowing us to be the custodians of the bell and placing it in our care, for future generations to appreciate.

I don't think many of you would appreciate the incredible work that went on behind the scenes to make the 80th commemoration of the SS President Coolidge such an incredible success. This was an around the clock effort, involving a huge number of people in Luganville, the Museum Board and indeed all those down in Port Vila.

The Vanuatu Tourism Office threw its weight behind the day and became our major sponsor. Air Vanuatu assisted us in getting our huge wall posters up to Santo. Even on the morning of the commemoration, it was still up in the air as to whether our VIPs from Port Vila would make it up due to heavy rains and the airport in Vila being flooded. However, thanks to the wonderful efforts of the High Commissioner of Australia, Heidi Bootle, in conjunction with her counterpart at the New Zealand High Commission, Nicola Simmonds, all our VIPs arrived just in time.

What an event, what a year.

To close, I would like to thank our sponsors, our suppliers and everyone who has contributed to the Museum in some way. Whether you're one of our followers on social media, a donor of items and exhibits, a financial contributor, a donor of services, or one of the many supporters who have helped us, but choose to remain anonymous, I thank you. We all thank you, for your ongoing support.

We're looking forward to seeing where 2023 takes us and hope you will come along for the ride.

Regards,

Bradley Wood
Chairman

THIS MONTH IN MILITARY HISTORY

What shall we do for Christmas?

On Christmas day, you were probably with family, eating Christmas lunch. And of course military personnel serving somewhere in the South Pacific were also partaking of festivities to the best of their abilities.

However, modern war was no respecter of sentimentality and dates.

So, in December 1942, on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day – according to official US communiques – air operations were carried out regardless.



B-17E Flying Fortress 41-9122 'Eager Beavers' of the 11th Bomb Group, 42nd BS on Guadalcanal 1942.

The least desirable of the Christmas missions to unwrap was undoubtedly one to the fearsome base at Rabaul.

So here are the Christmas hits of 1942, courtesy of the US armed forces and their official communiques:

On December 24th:

U.S. aircraft from Guadalcanal bombed and strafed the Japanese airfield and shore installations at Munda on New Georgia Island. Enemy planes and weak anti-aircraft fire resisted the attack. Strafing silenced the anti-aircraft batteries and 14 of the intercepting planes were shot down. Ten additional planes were destroyed on the ground. All U. S. planes returned undamaged.

(continued...)

Later in the day U. S. aircraft bombed a group of landing barges engaged in reinforcing and supplying enemy troops in the Munda area. Four barges reached shore. The airfield was bombed from low altitude in the absence of any enemy resistance.

On December 25th:

A flight of Army "Flying Fortresses" from the airfield at Guadalcanal bombed enemy shipping in the harbour of Rabaul on the island of New Britain. Three direct hits were scored on a large transport (or cargo ship) and several near hits fell close to three small cargo ships. A force of enemy fighters took off but did not attack our bombers.



Japanese transport ships in the harbor at Rabaul suffer hits and near misses from U.S. bombers.
Picture: Warfarehistorynetwork.com

On December 26th:

Douglas "Dauntless" dive bombers from Guadalcanal attacked a small group of enemy ships south of Vangunu Island in the New Georgia group of the Solomons. An enemy ship of 3,000 tons was sunk near Wickham Island during the attack. A second enemy ship also was sunk during this attack.

Dauntless dive bombers, escorted by fighters, bombed and strafed the airfield at Munda on New Georgia Island.

If you were wondering, Japan – with a very small Christian population - does not formally celebrate Christmas, although in recent years some of the traditions have grown in popularity.

Pacific charm offensive.

This is the story of the world's first documented therapy dog. A cute little Yorkshire Terrier named Smoky, who charmed her way into the hearts of soldiers, sailors, airmen, doctors and nurses throughout the Pacific and the United States. The tiny little dog's travels are nothing short of extraordinary and her adventures from New Guinea, to Australia, to Biak Island, to the Philippines, Okinawa, and Korea and finally home to America made her a household name.

William 'Bill' Wynne trained with the US Army Air Force (USAAF) as an aerial photographer.

He was assigned to the aerial photography laboratory of the 5th USAAF, 26th Photographic Reconnaissance (Photo Recon) Squadron at Hollandia Airfield Complex, Nadzab, New Guinea.

In March 1944, Ed Downey who was Bill's tentmate, was driving on a jungle road near the base when his



William 'Bill' Wynne in 1946. Photo Robert Wynne.

Willys Jeep broke down. As he worked on the engine he heard a strange noise coming from somewhere in the surrounding jungle. He went to investigate the sound and soon found a little dog scratching in the dirt at the bottom of a foxhole.

Ed retrieved the little dog and brought her back to the base. Ed then gave the small dog to Airfield mechanic, Sergeant Dare. Soon after Bill visited Dare and saw the dog. Being a dog lover, he offered him two Australian pounds for the dog.

Dare wanted three pounds, and as Bill mulled it over, he started wondering how he would care for a dog in a jungle environment, in the middle of a war. The next day Sergeant Dare went to the photo lab where Bill was working and offered to sell him the tiny dog for the original offer of two Australian pounds - the equivalent of \$6.44 in US dollars at that time. This time Bill said yes, and decided to call her Smoky.

After adopting Smoky, Bill faced the challenges of looking after her in the jungles of New Guinea - not the usual environment for a Yorkshire Terrier. But being a dog lover, Bill would do anything to see his new companion was well cared for - and cared for she was.

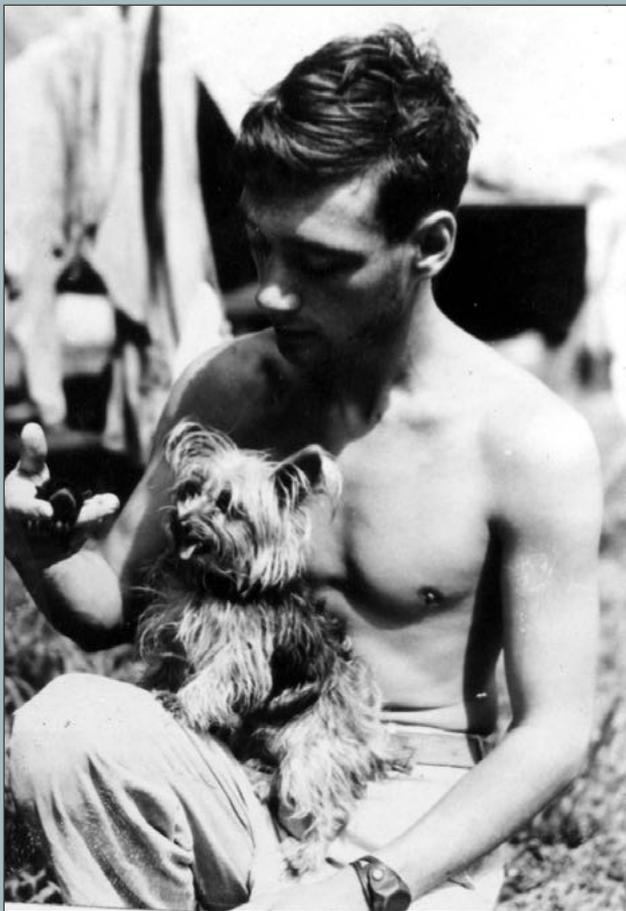


Smoky's daily bath was in a military helmet, like this one in New Guinea in 1944. Photo Smoky War Dog LLC.

Bill gave Smoky daily baths in his helmet to keep her free of ticks and other insects. And with no dog food to feed her, he discovered Smoky liked bacon, ham, eggs, and bully beef. (continued...)

Bill started teaching Smoky commands and tricks, which she learned quickly. So much so, Bill and Smoky began putting on shows for personnel at the base. Of course many at the base began to wonder where the dog came from, and how she got there in the first place. Questions that would not be answered until after the war.

In 1944, a contest was held to find 'The Best Mascot of the Southwest Pacific Area.' Of course cute little Smoky won! Not long after, Bill woke up with a 105 degree fever and was taken to the US 233rd Field Hospital in Nadzab, where was diagnosed with dengue fever.



An early shot of Bill and tiny little Smoky somewhere in the Pacific.

While in hospital Bill's mates smuggled Smoky in and before too long, she won the nurses over. So much so, they asked to take her on rounds to "cheer up" the patients.

While Bill was hospitalised, the nurses would pick up Smoky - who was allowed to sleep in Bill's bed - every morning to go on rounds and would return her to Bill's bed at the end of the day.

Following Bill's discharge, his squadron doctor, Dr. Beryl D. Rosenberg, offered him some leave in Brisbane, Australia — with Smoky, of course.

While in Brisbane, Bill was asked by Barbara Wood Smith, Assistant Field Director, with the American Red Cross to take Smoky to the US Navy 109th Fleet Hospital to visit the patients and cheer them up with a show.

Bill and Smoky performed in eight wards that day to the delight of all the patients and hospital staff. Barbara also asked if Bill and Smoky would visit the patients at Brisbane's US Army 42nd General Hospital. They performed in 12 wards and the little dog brought smiles and joy to her audiences of injured, wounded, homesick, and war-weary troops.

Smoky brought so much joy to the troops, that in September 1944, Barbara Wood Smith wrote a thank you letter to Cpl. 'Smoky' on official American Red Cross stationery. That letter read:

Dear Cpl. Smoky:

It has been several weeks now since you visited our hospital and I suspect that by now you and Bill are back at work. You should certainly feel a nice warm glow of satisfaction at all the pleasure you brought to the patients here at our hospital. They enjoyed your visit so much and are still talking about you.

Some of them are boys who have lain in bed for months and have gotten very tired of looking at nothing but four walls and other sailors. We all know that laughter is something that helps people get better and you certainly administered enough of it here to improve the health of any number of our boys.

May we congratulate you for being that almost unheard of combination — a lady artiste without temperament! You entertained in eight wards that one afternoon and seemed just as full of energy and just as obliging at the end of your tour as at the beginning.

The boys particularly liked your "dead dog" act and the way you jumped up and streaked after Bill when he

(continued...)

gave you the word. We think that you're a wonderful morale builder and we hope that you'll have the opportunity to entertain a lot more boys later on, go back to Bill's home in Cleveland and carry on the good work there.

There's always a welcome for you here, where you and Bill will be pleasantly remembered.

Sincerely, and with thanks from all of us,

*Barbara Wood Smith
Assistant Field Director*

After two weeks in Australia, Bill returned to his squadron which had since moved to Biak Island after its capture from Japanese forces.

On September 16, 1944, Bill accepted an assignment with the 3rd Emergency Rescue Squadron looking for downed pilots. On his first mission he flew in a Stinson L-5 Sentinel. The aircraft sometimes flew 50 feet above the ground as they surveyed battle sites. They found a crash site, circled it three times and Bill took photos as proof of the crash and that there were no survivors.



The diminutive Stinson L-5 Sentinel, of the type Bill Wynne flew in - once. Photo Jo Hunter.

When Bill returned from his first mission and the dangers of this type of flying were revealed to his mates, they asked Bill asked the obvious question. - Who would get Smoky if something were to happen to him?

On Bill's second and future missions he (and Smoky) flew in a PBY Catalina. Bill and Smoky were crew additions and Bill explained to the crew that Smoky was a mascot and would bring them good luck. From then on, Smoky flew inside a canvas musette bag (a type of knapsack).

When there was no combat/rescue action she sometimes ran around the plane.



A PBY Catalina aircraft similar to the one Smoky and Bill flew in. The aircraft was used for reconnaissance, search and rescue, anti-submarine warfare, convoy escort, maritime patrol, and cargo transport. Photo Air & Space Magazine - Smithsonian.

The 26th Photo Recon next found a home in the Philippines. It was there that Bill said she went from being a pet companion to a bone fide war dog.

Communication lines needed to be run under a runway at Lingayen Gulf, Philippines. To complete the task with manpower, it would have taken around 70 men digging for approximately three days. It would have also shut down the airfield to Allied aircraft and with daily air attacks by the Japanese, the lives of many men could have been lost. Smoky, with a line attached to her collar, completed the job in around three minutes. (continued...)



Smoky enters a 70 foot culvert running underneath an airstrip runway at Lingayen Gulf, Philippines, in January 1945. Photograph Bill Wynne.

The 26th Photo Recon Squadron moved on from the Philippines to Okinawa and finally to Korea.



Smoky visits the US Army 120th General Hospital in Manila, Philippines, June 1945. Left to right: hospital patient, Smoky, American Red Cross Field Director Barbara Wood Smith and Bill Wynne. Photo Bill Wynne.

On November 1, 1945, the squadron received orders to return to the United States.

However, US Army regulations stated no animals will go back to the US on a War Department ship. Bill knew he couldn't leave Smoky behind, so he devised a way to bring her aboard the ship in an oxygen carrying case.

Smoky made it on board the USS General Walter H. Gordon. She never once barked, and the bag was not inspected. Bill found a top bunk in a corner - the bunks were stacked five high - to help conceal her.



The USS General Walter H. Gordon underway in San Francisco Bay post war. Photo US Naval Heritage and History Command.

At the start of the voyage the ship encountered rough seas, and Bill was very seasick. He spent days sick in his bunk, so men from the 26th would sneak Smoky to the upper deck for 'potty' breaks, forming a ring around her as they walked on the deck, to keep her hidden.

After managing to keep Smoky concealed, a US Navy officer looking for someone else, discovered her. The officer asked if the dog was registered to be on the ship, to which Bill replied "no." An hour later he was called to report to the ship's office. He showed pictures of Smoky entertaining the sick and wounded, the letter from the Red Cross thanking Bill and Smoky for helping the morale of patients in the hospital and noted Smoky's 1944 selection as 'The Best Mascot of the Southwest Pacific Area.' Bill was told he may have to pay a bond to bring the dog into the US which could be as much as \$1,000 dollars. Bill agreed to the terms and he and the ship's captain signed a document that cleared the ship of any responsibility for 'one dog.'

USS GENERAL WILLIAM H. GORDON (AP 117)
c/o Fleet Post Office, New York, N. Y.
Office of the Army Transportation Officer

DECLARATION OF DOMESTIC ANIMAL

I, Opl William A. Wynne 3552847A, do hereby declare the possession of one dog and agree to accept all responsibility for the importation of said domestic animal into the United States including compliance with requirements of the U. S. Customs Service for inspection and authorization by the Bureau of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture and I am prepared to comply with any and all quarantine requirements and to post any cash bond that may be necessary.

Signed by me this 10th day of November, 1945.

Signature William A. Wynne
Serial # 3552847A
Group # 31

WITNESS:
Signature Stan P. Coombs
Name & Rank Capt Coe

Ship Clearance
** TO BE SIGNED IN DUPLICATE **

'Declaration of Domestic Animal' document signed by Bill Wynne on November 4, 1945. Photo Bill Wynne.

With Smoky officially out of hiding, she and Bill put on shows for the men. Bill even noticed that the ship's captain and the troop commander would sometimes watch the show from the bridge and had smiles on their faces.

On November 13, 1945, the USS Walter H. Gordon docked in Seattle. (continued...)

After arriving in the US, Bill and Smoky's story started to take on a life of its own. At one train stop on their way to Bill's home in Ohio, a man with the USO noticed Bill carrying Smoky. After hearing their story, someone called the Indianapolis Star. The newspaper ran a story which was picked up by a wire service.

Bill and Smoky finally arrived home in Cleveland, Ohio, on November 30, 1945.

A week after Bill arrived home the Cleveland Press asked to interview him. On December 7, 1945, the paper ran a front page story headlined, TINY DOG HOME FROM THE WAR. The New York Daily News, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun, and Herald America also published stories.



Bill and Smoky at the end of the war.

Smoky and Bill continued to entertain people after the war and performed at veterans' hospitals, schools, orphanages, nursing homes, hospitals, and other organisations. They even became part of a children's TV show in Cleveland, called 'Castles in the Air.'

Bill eventually accepted a job with The Plain Dealer, a Cleveland newspaper, as a photographer. He would

later become a photojournalist and was associated with the paper for 31 years. Bill received many awards for his work as a photojournalist and in 1973 was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.



Bill and Smoky back home in the USA and the stars kids TV shows and still entertaining people all over the country.

When Bill returned home from work on February 21, 1957, he found Smoky in her bed. She had died peacefully in her sleep. Bill admitted he was inconsolable. His wife Margie suggested they bury the little dog near "Our Tree" - a beech tree that a young Bill and Margie had carved their initials into, years before. The next day, with their children, Bill and Margie found the tree, and with Smoky's body in a shoebox they buried her.

Josephine Robertson, a writer at The Plain Dealer, wrote an obituary for Smoky and told her wartime story.

A local Cleveland woman, Grace Guderian Heidenreich, read the obituary and telephoned Bill and Margie. Grace was a US Army nurse in New Guinea in early 1944. Her fiancé at the time and later her husband, had bought a Yorkshire Terrier for her from a veterinarian in Brisbane. The dog was a Christmas holiday gift, so Grace named her 'Christmas.'
(continued...)

(Christmas was one of the words that got Smoky excited and turning in circles.)

Following Grace's attendance at a Bob Hope USO show in New Guinea, little 'Christmas' disappeared. She had photos of the dog to show Bill. As the stories merged, Bill concluded that his little dog, found in a foxhole, was indeed one in the same. How many Yorkshire Terriers were lost in the jungles of New Guinea during World War II?

In 2003 Bill was informed that a monument to honour Smoky would be placed near the beech tree in the Rocky River Reservation Metropolitan Park in Cleveland, where Smoky was buried in 1947.

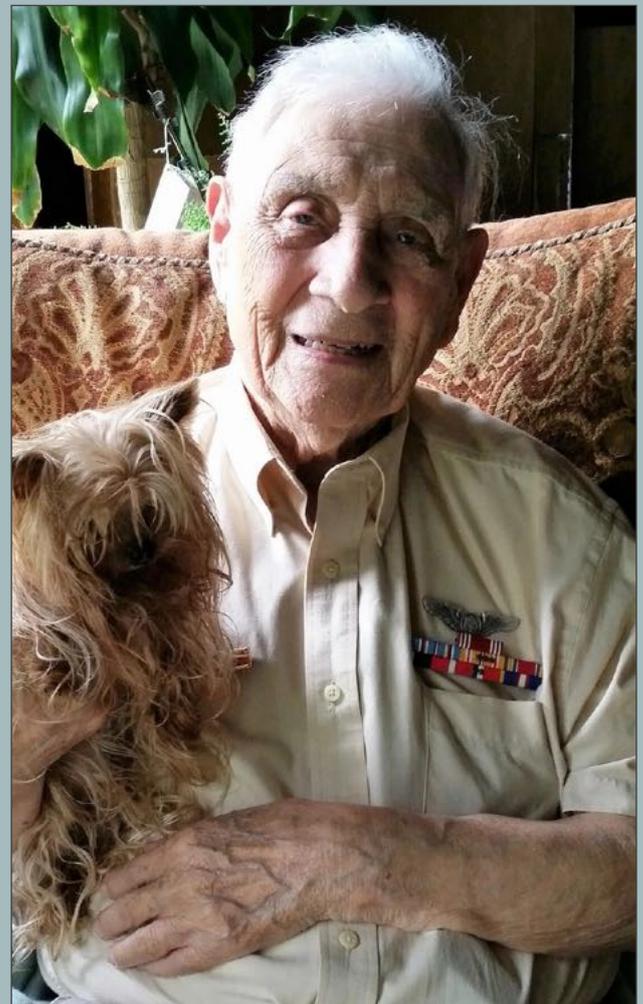


Smoky's memorial in Cleveland, The memorial to all dogs who have served in war is adjacent to where Smoky was originally buried by Bill Wynne and his family. Photo foursquare.com - Amy H.

Bill went looking for the old beech tree where Smoky's grave was located. For hours he searched the park, before finally finding the now fallen beech tree - with its initials - which led to him finding the grave. Smoky's remains were placed in a WWII .30 calibre ammunition case.

The monument marks Smoky's grave and was unveiled on Veterans Day, November 11, 2005.

On April 19, 2021, Bill Wynne passed away at the age of 99.



William 'Bill' Wynne at 96, with his dog Smoky II. Photo Bill Wynne.

Smoky is recognised as the world's first documented therapy dog. Her amazing work began in 1944 in the jungles of New Guinea and continued throughout the remainder of WWII.

Smoky's life has been celebrated and rewarded throughout the world since World War II. (continued...)

These are just some of those:

- Ohio Veterinary Medicine Association 'Animal Hall of Fame,' Columbus, Ohio, 1995.
- Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. The successor to the WWII 26th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron was the 26th Air Space Intelligence Squadron which displayed Smoky's memorabilia in 2003.
- The Imperial War Museum, London, England. From November 2006 – May 2007 an 'Animals of War Exhibit' displayed Smoky's war blanket.
- Australian Defense Force Trackers and War Dogs Association awarded Smoky the 'War Dog Operational Medal' in 2010.
- The World War II Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana, displayed a bronze statue of Smoky in a helmet in 2010 as part of an exhibit to 'Animals of War'
- The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals 'Certificate of Bravery and Devotion,' England, 2011.
- Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Brisbane, Australia, 2012.
- Australian War Dog Museum, Sydney, Australia, 2014. Awarded the Australian 'War Dog Medal.' The award was backdated as the first combat medal to be awarded to a dog.
- Papua New Guinea, 2015.
- The Australian Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), 'Purple Cross,' December 11, 2015. The 'Purple Cross' is a rare and high honour awarded to an animal war hero. In 163 years, Smoky was only the tenth animal to receive this honour.



The memorial at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Brisbane recognising Smokey and all animals that served in war.



The RSPCA's Purple Cross awarded to Smokey.

This story of Smoky and Bill has been reproduced in part from a story featured in ww2history.org and excerpts from William A. Wynne's book *Yorkie Doodle Dandy: A memoir*. It's 7th edition is available from Amazon. Another wonderful book written in consultation with Bill Wynne is *Smoky, the Dog That Saved My Life, The Bill Wynne Story* by Nancy Roe Pimm. Other images © Smoky War Dog LLC.

Inspiring everyday heroes

While it happened a few months ago, our hero for December is Nishant Kumar, the team physio with the Fijian national Bula Boys football team who saved a young boy after the he was hit by a bus in Stade, Port Vila.

In fact the entire team are being hailed as heroes after they sprang into action to save the little boy following the accident. The Fijian team had been training at Stade Centrale when they saw the little boy get hit by the bus.

Fiji team physiotherapist Nishant Kumar sprang into action, assisted by the Fijian players.

Kumar put on a neck brace around the injured boy's

neck and placed him in the recovery resuscitation position with his head tilted to the side. While some players directed traffic around the accident scene,



Nishant Kumar is recognised for saving the young boy's life.

other players carried the boy onto the team bus to get him to a local hospital.

Just as they did this, a Pro Medical ambulance arrived on the scene and paramedics put the severely injured boy into the ambulance and stabilised his condition, before driving him to hospital.

Nishant Kumar was later honoured with a token of appreciation by the Vanuatu media for saving the little boy's life during half time of the Solomon Islands vs New Caledonia football match at Korman Stadium.

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



Fiji team physio Nishant Kumar attends to the injured boy assisted by Fijian players. Photo Fiji Times/Anushil Kumar.



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