

Santo hosts a US Navy encore

The U.S. Navy made a welcome return to Luganville this month, arriving aboard the USS John L. Canley (ESB 6) as part of Pacific Partnership 2025 — the Indo-Pacific's largest annual humanitarian and disaster-preparedness mission.

Over the week-long visit, U.S. personnel and partner-nation teams worked alongside the Government of Vanuatu, local organisations, and community leaders

to deliver free medical, dental and eye-care services, engineering support, and disaster-management workshops across Sanma Province. Outreach teams set up at Tata Presbyterian

School, Unity Park, Vulesepe Health Centre, Fanafo Health Centre, and the Northern Provincial Hospital, where hundreds of Santo residents received services and friendly conversation in equal measure.



Crew from the USS John L. Canley take time out from their humanitarian efforts to visit the South Pacific WWII Museum. Photo – Lemy Nacisse.

But the visit to Santo wasn't all work.

(continued...)

Official Navara Sponsors



Many of the crew took time to explore Luganville — and one of their favourite stops was the South Pacific WWII Museum. Sailors, engineers and medical staff alike wandered through the exhibits, swapping stories with Museum guides and learning about the very base—



Museum Chairman Bradley Wood chats with Navy crew members about the history of Base Button. Photo – Lemy Nacisse.

old “Button”—where tens of thousands of American servicemen once lived and worked during WWII. More than a few remarked how impressed they were by the Museum’s growing collection and the passion behind it.



A crew member from the Canley gets his first drive of a World War II Willys Jeep - and wasn't he excited. Still frame – Bradley Wood.

into a hands-on experience. Crew members climbed into the passenger seat for a ride, grinning like kids on leave, and a lucky few were even handed the wheel. For a moment, they weren't sailors in 2025 — they were stepping straight into 1942, driving the same model Jeep their predecessors once bounced around Santo in.

The week closed on a high note: successful missions completed, new friendships made, and a reminder that Santo's wartime past still connects with the present in ways that surprise and delight visitors.



Part of the enormous medical, dental and eye-care facilities set up in Unity Park, Luganville by personnel from the USS John L Canley. Photo – Lemy Nacisse.

The highlight for several sailors, though, came courtesy of Museum Chairman Bradley Wood and one very special vehicle: the Museum’s fully restored 1942 Willys Jeep. What began as a quick photo opportunity turned

The U.S. Navy’s visit brought practical help to communities across Sanma Province — and a welcome touch of shared history to the Museum that proudly preserves the island’s story.

THIS MONTH IN MILITARY HISTORY

Heavyweight dogfight

When you think of dogfights, you think of nimble fighter planes and pilots straining to gain the slightest advantage. Spitfire v ME-109, or Zero against a Wildcat.

The Flying Fortress was Miss-Fit, a B17-E. Under a different skipper, it had in late October shot down a Mavis, an encounter later recounted by reporter Ira Wolfert who was onboard for the mission. The two had tangled for 44 minutes.

When Miss-Fit headed out on November 21, 1942, it was piloted by Lt Robert Smith, but with no reporter on board this time! However, there is an adrenaline filled account from the Japanese side – courtesy of Lt.

Tsuneo Hitsuji.

He was the pilot, and survived the war to author a book, *The Last Flying Boat*.

His account tells how the Japanese were despairing of their losses – 16 to date. Very few who reported getting into an air encounter survived to tell the tale.

So, when his Mavis ran into a B17 south of Guadalcanal, at 7 in the morning, he resolved to make the encounter a quick one, so that the bomber would not radio



Clash of the Titans by Jack Fellows. A depiction of the air-to-air battle between B-17E "Miss Fit" and the Japanese H6K aircraft. Painting – Jack Fellows/Pacific Wrecks.

However, in November 1942, with the battle of Guadalcanal coming to its climatic moment, a giant four engine B-17 bomber flying out of Espiritu Santo fought a dogfight with an equally large aircraft.

The H6K5 Mavis, considered to be the finest flying boat of the war.

That may sound like a freakish encounter, but in fact, it had happened roughly a month earlier to the SAME B-17 and a different Mavis.

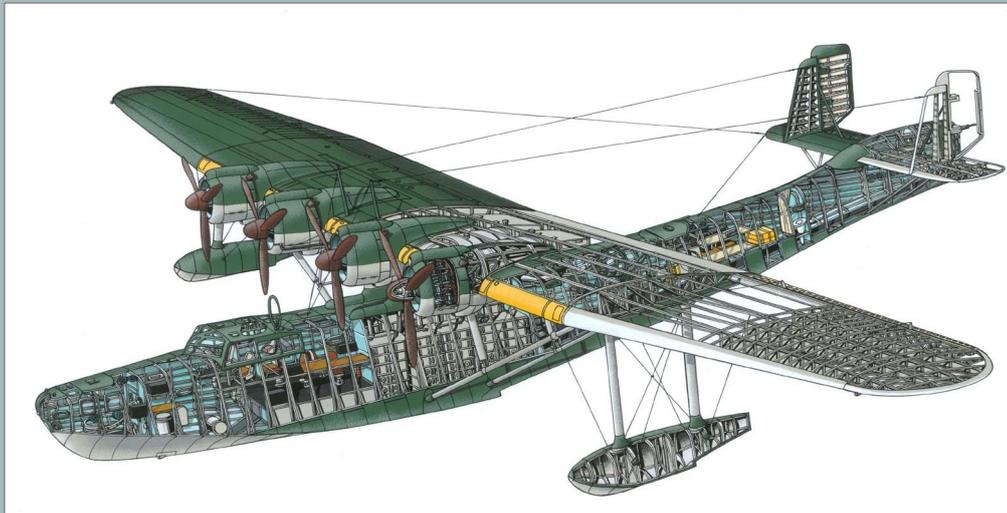


A colourised Boeing B-17E Flying Fortress in flight, circa 1941. Photo – U.S. Air Force.

(continued..)

up for reinforcements, even fighter planes. The bomber was faster and better armed, but the slower Mavis could turn quicker. Thus, Lt Hitsuji turned towards the

Shortland Island, and upon landing, began to flood. The crew later counted 93 bullet holes. It is thought the plane was effectively a write off.



A fantastic cutaway illustration of the Kawanishi H6K flying boat. Illustration – reddit

The near-death experience saw the flying boats fitted with crude rubber sheathing for fuel tanks, more guns loaded, armour plates for key crew, and extra gunnery training.

The changes added one and a half tons of weight – but the seaplane was largely able to maintain its performance.

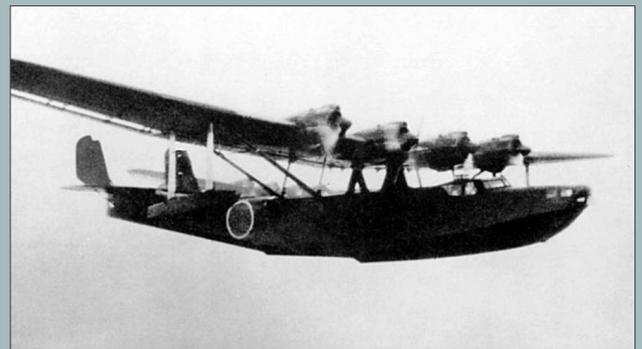
B17, and his tail gunner scored a hit on the port engine. The Fortress, trailing black smoke, turned away and broke off.

Hitsuji told his crew to eat their breakfast and watch out for another attack.

Sure enough, shortly before 9, another B-17, Miss-Fit, came into view.

This time, the Mavis was unable to pull the same surprise, and the bomber managed to make six passes, leaving the Japanese seaplane riddled. However, as a last act, the tail gunner fired a full drum of 20mm shells into the Fortress, which trailing smoke, had to break off.

The Japanese plane staggered back to its base at



Kawanishi H6K 'Mavis' Flying Boat 03. Photo – Pacific Eagles.

Thanks to the indispensable Pacific Wrecks website for information on both planes, the dogfights, and the translated extract from The Last Flying Boat.



A Kawanishi H6K in flight. Note bomb rack with bombs on wing-brace. Photo – Wikipedia.

The Last Battle

By Stephen Harding

A book review by Tammi Johnson

Imagine you are a French political prisoner in WWII. Not imprisoned in a concentration camp but set up in more luxurious surroundings in a castle that has been involuntarily requisitioned in Austria by the Nazis to hold these men and women of some importance who might prove valuable should the war swing Hitler's way. Suddenly, the war ends and the German soldiers protecting you and the castle abandon you with no clear way out of your predicament. In the meantime, members of the SS who know you are there and plot to kill all of you in retaliation. Your future is uncertain as are your chances of making it out alive.

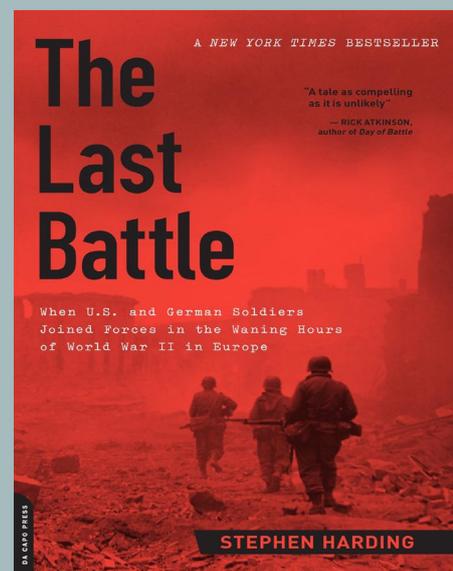
Along comes an American, Captain John "Jack" C. Lee and a contingent of Austrian soldiers led by Major Josef "Sepp" Gangl, also involuntarily drafted to serve the German cause, arrive to save the day. With no more allegiance to the Nazi regime, these men band together and head to Castle Itter to protect these politicians, military men, their wives and even mistresses from the dangerous rogue SS soldiers. What follows was truly unprecedented in WWII with the joining of allied and former enemy resources in literally the last battle waged in the European Theatre of WWII on May 5th, 1945.

Castle or "Schloss" Itter is in the North Tyrol region of Austria. The site in the mountains has been the location of a fortress since the 13th century, and its current structure was completed in the mid-19th century. This location made for a formidable stronghold in which to house these particular prisoners. Steve does a brilliant job of setting up the character development of the people in the story, including making the castle a member of the cast. Once you get past the historical narrative of how this all came together, the story takes off madly into the actions that rescued the prisoners,

saved the castle and its inhabitants and how the good guys on both sides won the day. There is also a cantankerous Sherman tank, named Besotten Jenny, who rates a mention.

The book made the New York Times Best-Seller list shortly after publication. The action here reads like a movie, fast and intriguing. Ironic, as a film is scheduled to begin shooting in late winter of 2026, something to look forward to!

-Tammi Johnson



History docks alongside Villa Vie

The cruise ship Villa Vie Odyssey called into Luganville, bringing a steady stream of visitors to the South Pacific WWII Museum. Guests were warmly welcomed by Marina and Lemy, who guided them through the exhibits and answered questions about the island's unique wartime history.



Passengers from the cruise ship Villa Vie Odyssey visit the museum and are given a fascinating history lesson from staff member Marina Moli. Photo – Lemy Nacisse.

The visit also marked the unveiling of the Museum's new welcome display outside the cruise ship terminal. Featuring fresh posters and the Museum's iconic 1942 Willys Jeep, the display quickly became a talking point and enticed many visitors to make their way to the Museum for a closer look.



Museum board member and volunteer Lemy Nacisse looks after the new museum display at the cruise ship terminal. Photo – Bradley Wood.



Marina Moli explains Coolidge items on display in the museum to passengers from the Villa Vie Odyssey. Photo – Lemy Nacisse.

The combination of engaging staff, interactive exhibits, and eye-catching displays helped ensure that cruise visitors left with a deeper appreciation for Santo's wartime story — and plenty of memories to take home.



An aerial photograph of Luganville from 1943 makes for fascinating viewing for passengers from the cruise ship. Photo – Lemy Nacisse.

When the runway grew

Bob Hope, Base Button, and the day Santo built a stage

When the USO's Bob Hope troupe rolled into the South Pacific in 1944, they brought jokes, songs and a small miracle of morale to thousands of servicemen scattered across jungle airfields and coral strips. One story from Espiritu Santo—little told outside old sailors' diaries and Base Button newsletters—captures the spirit of wartime improvisation on Santo better than any photograph: the day the island simply made its runway longer so Bob Hope's transport plane could land.



Bob Hope's USO troupe. From L-R, Hope's writer Barney Dean, dancer Patty Thomas, Bob Hope, comedian Jerry Colonna, singer Frances Langford and singer Tony Romano. Photo – Various.

By 1942 Espiritu Santo—codename “Base Button”—had become the beating heart of the U.S. advance through the Solomons. What had been quiet coconut plantations exploded almost overnight into the largest American base in the entire South Pacific. Seabees and Army engineers carved runways out of jungle ridges, dredged harbours for cargo ships, and laid down coral roads that wound past tent cities, workshops, hospitals, and storage depots stretching for kilometres. The west side of the Second Channel buzzed with seaplanes, Turtle Bay with fighters, and the Second Channel to the east with an armada of supply vessels that kept the war moving northward.

Life on Santo alternated between hard labour, routine military grind, and the occasional strange,

unforgettable moment that only a wartime crossroads could produce. That is exactly why the rumour of a Bob Hope show set the island alight.

Hope and his troupe were touring forward areas, bringing music and laughter to men who hadn't seen home—or a woman, or a theatre, or anything resembling normal life—in months. His arrival was not just entertainment; it was connection.



Second Channel in August 1943 looking south towards Aore Island. An incredible hive of activity with a non-stop parade of supply vessels and navy ships awaiting repair. Photo – US Archives.

There was only one problem: his transport aircraft was too big for the strip.

The airfield assigned for the show had what many in the Pacific had at that time—an honest attempt at



Bomber No. 2 Airfield on Santo. Was this the airfield that was too short for Bob Hope's aircraft? Possibly, however there were three bomber airfields to choose from. Photo – US Archives. (continued...)



The construction of Bomber No.2 airfield was back-breaking work. Here Marston matting is laid by Seabees over a coral base. Photo – US Archives.

a runway, assembled at speed, made mostly from chopped coral, sweat, and the sheer stubborn will of men who needed airplanes to land somewhere, soon. According to multiple personal accounts, the Pentagon message was blunt: the strip is too short. The plane cannot land. Cancel the show.

The men of Base Button disagreed.

What happened next sits somewhere between engineering achievement and tall tale—but it appears in enough diaries, letters, and post-war interviews that it carries the ring of truth. Word went out across the camp. Seabees dropped what they were doing, Marines lent muscle, and Navy crews added whatever equipment they could find. Trucks rolled. Graders coughed to life. Piles of coral—usually rationed carefully for construction—suddenly moved with suspicious speed. Marston matting was dragged out and laid down like great metal carpet tiles. Officers reportedly gave the unofficial instruction: If Hope's plane needs more runway, then by God, we will give it more runway.

And they did.

By the time the aircraft approached, the strip had grown—longer, firmer, tidier, and more welcoming than it had been that morning. The big transport landed, the dust settled, and out came Bob Hope, ready to perform on an island that had quite literally rebuilt itself in his honour.

The show that night, performed in the kind of

tropical rain that turns everything into mud, became one of the most-remembered events of Hope's Pacific tour. Men crowded shoulder to shoulder, some standing on crates or climbing onto the backs of trucks. The glow of makeshift lights reflected off raincoats and helmets. Hope told jokes that no doubt landed harder because they were carried on top of exhaustion, homesickness, and the relief of laughter. For a few hours, the war felt very far away.

This short, almost comic episode says something profound about what Base Button was: a sprawling, improvised metropolis of war where necessity bred invention, and where humour and hardship lived side by side. If a job needed doing—whether it was extending a runway for a celebrity comedian or repairing a Corsair's wing before dawn—it simply got done. That's the way it was.

But the story also opens a door to Santo's quieter wartime legacy, the one that still rests in the jungle, the bush, and the turquoise water today. Long after Hope's voice drifted away on the humid air, the island retained the machinery of war: aircraft abandoned in mangrove



The museum's P-38 wreckage. A fabulous donation to the museum by a local landowner. Photo – Bradley Wood.

beds, engines lying in riverbeds, and the skeletons of crashed fighters hidden like metal ghosts beneath canopy and reef. Some vanished from memory; others became local landmarks known only to nearby villages; a few were rediscovered decades later when divers, historians, or even farmers stumbled upon them.

In recent years, this rediscovery has taken on new energy. Not-for-profit groups such as Sealark

(continued..)



The airfield that nobody knew existed on Santo. it was used for reconnaissance aircraft and as an emergency strip for fighter aircraft. Photo – Unknown.

Explorations have devoted themselves to locating missing-in-action sites and mapping wartime wrecks across the South Pacific. Their work—technical, careful, and often deeply moving—has helped identify sites that had been little more than rumours in the jungle.

Professional dive teams and archaeological researchers have documented submerged aircraft in Santo's waters, including wrecks in Second Channel and beyond. In the interior, search teams have located



This crashed Corsair near Big Bay was the result of a training accident, when two of the fighter aircraft collided in mid-air. Photo – Bradley.

downed Corsairs resting where they fell more than 80 years ago, their metal slowly surrendering to vines and soil.

For the South Pacific WWII Museum, these finds are

not just relics; they are stories. A serial number on a tail section can reconnect a family to a pilot who never came home. A mangled propeller in the jungle can tell the story of a training accident that villagers still remember. Each mapped wreck, each recorded oral history, each careful excavation adds texture to Santo's wartime past—and restores individual voices to a conflict often told in numbers and dates.

This is where the Bob Hope story loops gently back to the present. The runway that grew overnight was a small moment in a massive war, but it shows how deeply people cared—even then—about connection, morale, and memory. Today, Santo cares in a different but equally meaningful way: by preserving what remains, by sharing its stories, and by ensuring that the history scattered across its land and sea is never forgotten.

The island that once built a stage in the rain now builds understanding. It invites divers, historians, school groups, and visitors into the same landscape where thousands once served. And through the work of organisations like Sealark and the Museum's own research projects, Santo continues to reveal new chapters of its wartime story—chapters uncovered not with bulldozers and Marston mat, but with respect, curiosity and community partnership.

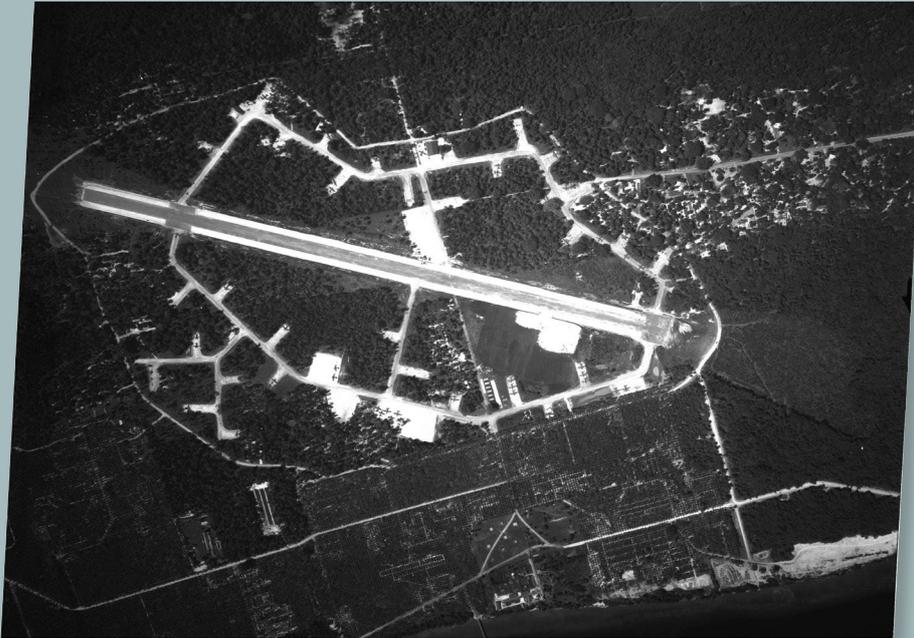
So the tale of Bob Hope's expanded runway is more than a light anecdote. It's a reminder that Santo's wartime heritage has always been shaped by people—those who built, those who served, those who performed, and those who now work to protect the traces they left behind.

The laughter that rolled across that muddy airstrip in 1944 has long faded, but the stories endure.

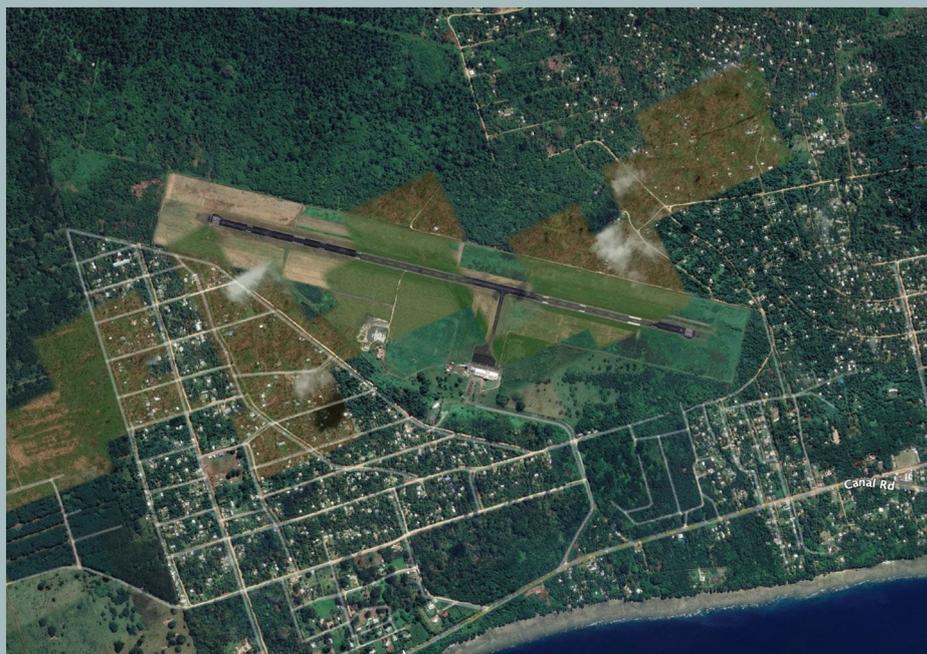
And with each new discovery in the jungle or beneath the sea, they continue to grow—just like that runway once did, one determined shovelful at a time.

From B-17s to B-737s

Bomber #2 Airfield was one of the three bomber fields on Santo during World War II. These days it's Santo's international airport. But back in 1943, there were bombers parked all around the airfield in revetments, that would protect parked aircraft if the airfield ever came under attack. Bomber #2 is our Santo comparison this month.



If you look closely at this aerial photograph of Bomber #2 taken from 7000 feet on 14 October 1943, you can see an amazing number of B-17 and B-24 bombers - 40+ in fact.



Today we can still see signs of the old taxiways and roads that have been incorporated into Santo International Airport or used as public roads outside the airport boundary.

The Battle for the Swamp Ghost

And the fight to protect Pacific war wrecks

For more than eighty years, the jungles, reefs, and river flats of the South Pacific have guarded the last remains of the Second World War. Aircraft lie where they fell, slowly sinking into mud or coral. Rusting trucks and bulldozers sit half-claimed by vines. These relics are more than curiosities: they are the last physical chapters of a conflict that changed the Pacific forever, deeply connected to the land, the communities who live beside them, and the ancestors who witnessed their arrival.

Yet across the region, these wartime relics face a quieter, modern threat—one fuelled not by nations at war, but by private collectors and salvage operators eager to turn them into highly profitable commodities.

Few stories illustrate this better than that of the “Swamp Ghost,” a B-17E Flying Fortress that crash-landed in 1942 in Papua New Guinea’s Oro Province.



The B-17E Flying Fortress, nicknamed the Swamp Ghost lies pretty much as it had for 40 years in a large swamp in the Papua New Guinea province of Oro. Photo – Robert Greinert.

For decades it sat untouched, honoured by local landowners as both a historical artefact and a part of their family story. And then, in 2006, it was taken—removed without compensation, shipped to the United States, and placed on display in a museum thousands of kilometres from the land where it fell.

Today, nearly twenty years later, Papua New Guinea is calling for its return. And the struggle surrounding the Swamp Ghost has become a symbol of a much larger fight: the Pacific’s effort to protect its wartime heritage from disappearing overseas.

A Fortress falls

For provisional landowner Ian Jajira, the story of the Swamp Ghost has always been personal. His grandfather saw the bomber come down—an enormous, four-engined machine dropping into the swamp near the Kokoda Track in the middle of the war. It terrified the villagers, who were already living in fear of a

conflict suddenly landing on their doorstep.

But as years passed, the wreck became part of local life. Generations of children grew up hearing stories about the big American bomber resting quietly in the swamp. Its guns, radios, and instruments remained untouched—a perfectly preserved time capsule of 1942. Australian soldiers training nearby in the 1970s

gave it the name that stuck: the Swamp Ghost.

For many in Oro Province, the plane was more than steel and aluminium. It was a reminder of the war, a historical monument, and part of their cultural landscape.

Collectors come calling

By the 1980s, word of the pristine Flying Fortress had spread far beyond Papua New Guinea. To private collectors and warbird restorers, aircraft like the Swamp Ghost were worth fortunes—sometimes

(continued...)



Melborne warbird collector, pilot and restorer Judy Pay with her beautiful and extremely rare P-40F Kittyhawk, now the star of air shows Australia-wide. The aircraft was recovered as a badly damaged wreck from Erromango Island in Vanuatu in 1989. Photo – Karl von Moller.

millions of dollars. And with the Pacific dotted with wartime wrecks still resting exactly where they fell, an industry emerged dedicated to finding, salvaging, and exporting them.

One of the most active figures was Australian salvor Robert Grinert, known by governments and collectors alike for locating and removing aircraft across the region. A later parliamentary inquiry estimated that he had taken around two dozen aircraft from Papua New Guinea alone.



Robert Grinert with Papua New Guinea villagers in 2004. Photo – John Douglas.

In 2006, Grinert obtained a permit to remove the Swamp Ghost. Local landowners recall that the salvage team arrived with a heavily guarded, closed-off operation. When the aircraft was stripped from the swamp and prepared for shipment, villagers were kept at a distance—far enough away, according to Jajira, that

they could not see what was happening until it was too late.

Under Papua New Guinea law, wartime wrecks belong jointly to the national government and the landowners on whose land they rest. Both are legally entitled to compensation if a relic is removed. But in this case, landholders say they never received a single kina.

“They promised that funding would be divided among the provincial government and landowners,” Jajira recalls.

“Nothing happened.”

A ghost in a new home

By the time international media caught up with the story in 2015, the aircraft had been shipped to Hawaii and installed at the Pearl Harbour Aviation Museum.



Swamp Ghost on temporary display at Pearl Harbour Aviation Museum, prior to restoration commencing. Photo – Flickr.

When confronted by Australia's 60 Minutes, Grinert declined to discuss the allegations about his activities in Papua New Guinea. The questions only fuelled frustration back home.

Among the most outspoken critics was Oro Province Governor Gary Juffa. As Commissioner of Customs at the time of the salvage, he remembered the political manoeuvring that allowed the export

(continued..)

to proceed. Officials supporting the removal argued that Papua New Guinea would receive a replica in exchange. That replica never arrived.



Swamp Ghost's fuselage being lifted out of the swamp by a Russian built, heavy-lift helicopter. Photo – War History Online.

Today, Juffa is lobbying the PNG government and its diplomatic missions to begin the process of having the aircraft returned.

"That property is the property of Papua New Guinea," he says firmly. "It was taken across there by an Australian character who identified all these WWII aircraft, then found ways to ship them abroad."

The wild west of Pacific wreck salvage

The Pacific's wartime wrecks sit at the intersection of history, heritage, and profit. Many are of enormous archaeological value, offering insights into wartime engineering, battlefield events, and human stories. Many also lie close to communities who have lived with them—sometimes literally in their gardens or lagoons—for generations.



In the Solomon Islands, wrecks can be found almost everywhere. This Betty bomber was in the process of being exported around seven years ago but got caught up in export permit approvals. Photo – Michael Holmesby/Vintage Aviation News.

But their financial value attracts a different kind of attention. Justin Talen of Pacific Wrecks, an organisation dedicated to documenting wreck sites and assisting with wartime repatriations, describes the trade bluntly:

"There are people all over the world willing to bend and break rules to acquire these aircraft," he explains. "At any price, they're worth millions of dollars."

Some salvors operate legally and respectfully, working with governments and landowners. Others push at the edges of regulation—or ignore it entirely. Pieces vanish. Sites are stripped. And once these relics leave Pacific soil, they may never return.

Preserving heritage in Vanuatu

In Vanuatu, the South Pacific WWII Museum has been at the forefront of efforts to document, protect, and share wartime relics. From aircraft wrecks in Santo's hinterlands to sunken Japanese and American aircraft lying in nearby waters, the Museum has partnered with diving organisations such as Sealark to locate and document submerged aircraft and ships.



Ni-Vanuatuan diver Kingsley Garae Mera illuminates an upside down Grumman F4F-4 Wildcat. These are the first images taken of the site in 47.5m of water during Sealark Exploration's survey of the Segond Channel in 2022. Photo – Ewan Stevenson of Sealark Exploration.

These efforts are about more than discovery—they are about safeguarding history. Each wreck tells a story: of the pilots, sailors, and soldiers who lived and died in these islands, and of the local communities who witnessed the conflict. By recording and sometimes recovering fragile artefacts, the Museum ensures that the memories embedded in these sites remain part of Vanuatu's heritage rather than being sold overseas.

The Museum also educates visitors about the significance of these sites, helping foster a sense of stewardship among locals and tourists alike.



The Museum unearthed a Corsair fighter back in 2014. The aircraft is still in the same location today. Photo – Karl von Moller.

Through archival research, oral histories, and collaboration with international experts, the South Pacific WWII Museum demonstrates that responsible conservation is possible—even in a region scattered with wrecks, reefs, and remote jungles.

A call for stronger protections

Across the Pacific—Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Micronesia, Vanuatu, and beyond—the story is repeating. As wartime wrecks become rarer, their value rises, placing communities, cash-strapped governments, and culturally significant sites at risk.



The wreck of a Corsair on northern Espiritu Santo. The Museum was taken to this site in September 2025. Unfortunately many parts of the aircraft have already been scavenged. Photo – Bradley.

For the South Pacific, the challenge is clear: how to protect the region's wartime heritage from being spirited away, while still encouraging responsible conservation, research, and—when appropriate—repatriation.

Papua New Guinea's push to reclaim the Swamp Ghost may become a landmark moment. It raises questions about ownership, cultural connection, consent, and historic justice. But above all, it highlights what communities across the region already know: these wrecks are not abandoned junk. They are guardians of memory.

As the islands of the Pacific continue to balance heritage, tourism, economic needs, and historical responsibility, one fact remains undeniable: the stories of these relics belong to the places—and the people—who have carried them through time. And organisations like the South Pacific WWII Museum are proving that with research, care, and collaboration, that memory can be preserved for future generations.



The rear fuselage of the Museum's SBD-4 Dauntless dive bomber wreck. It might not be the most complete of wrecks, but at least it's out of the elements and being preserved. Photo – Marina Moli.

Inspiring everyday heroes

Everyone loves a parade for the winners. Especially the people of Vanuatu. So, why not celebrate two sets of heroes.

That's what happened in Port Vila – after both the men's and women's football teams had plenty to celebrate from the MSG Prime Minister's Football Cup in Papua New Guinea.

It was the first time the event has had a women's competition, and Vanuatu Women finished third, after

defeating Solomon Islands.

But the men's team would go one better – although they made everyone sweat against the home side, the PNG Kapuls.

Their game was tied at 2-2 at full time, so it was off to the dreaded penalty shootout spot to decide the winner.

It looked like PNG would win early on, but then a succession of saves from Vanuatu goalkeeper Koloran Firiam pulled them back.

That's when Bill Kaltack rose to the moment, smacking home the winning penalty shot and giving Vanuatu a treasured victory over the defending champs.

So, there was no dampening the enthusiasm of the home fans when the two teams made it back – even when their plane was delayed until early evening.

Many hundreds lined the roads, and no doubt the celebrations continued long afterwards.



Locals line the streets of Port Vila to welcome home Vanuatu's men's and women's football teams after their historic wins. Photo – Vanuatu Daily Post.

Honouring the past to empower and inspire the next generation.



**SOUTH PACIFIC WWII
MUSEUM
VANUATU**

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

info@southpacificwwiimuseum.com
southpacificwwiimuseum.com

