

Press Release

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“Enough gripping drama, heroism, and heartbreak in McGee's almost encyclopedic *Solomons Campaigns* to supply Hollywood with material for a century.”

—*Marine Corps League*

60th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor

Commemorative events at the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans attracted the largest group of Pacific campaign veterans since the signing of the surrender documents on the USS Missouri.

SANTA BARBARA, CA, December 17, 2001—Author William L. McGee was among a noted group of World War II military historians invited by the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana to participate in events commemorating the 60th anniversary of Pearl Harbor on December 7 - 9, 2001.

The largest group of Pacific campaign veterans—since the signing of the surrender documents on the USS *Missouri*—was gathered in New Orleans for these events.

McGee was signing the first two volumes in his Pacific war trilogy, *Amphibious Operations in the South Pacific in World War II* – Vol. I, *The Amphibians Are Coming! Emergence of the 'Gator Navy and its Revolutionary Landing Craft* (2000) and Vol. II, *The Solomons Campaigns, 1942-1943: From Guadalcanal to Bougainville, Pacific War Turning Point* (2001), the latter released this month in time for the 60th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. (The Guadalcanal Campaign began eight months to the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor and was America's first offensive in World War II.)

Other noted authors invited to the commemorative events included Col. (later, Brig.Gen.) Paul W. Tibbets signing his *Return of the Enola Gay*. Col. Tibbets was responsible for the organization, training, and command of the world's first nuclear strike force. On the morning of August 6, 1945, Col. Tibbets piloted the Enola Gay, the B-29 Superfortress used to drop the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

The museum unveiled its new Pacific wing, *D-Day Invasions in the Pacific*, for WWII battles in the Pacific. The exhibit describes all of the Pacific amphibious invasions during WWII and follows the war as it was fought across the vast expanse of the Pacific.

Over a three-day period, the city of New Orleans pulled out all the stops to honor those described by television news commentator and author Tom Brokaw as the “Greatest Generation.”

Events began Friday, December 7 at 7:55 a.m., with the pealing of bells citywide to commemorate the moment 60 years ago that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, an event that thrust the United States into World War II.

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A two-hour Pacific Victory Parade followed from 10 a.m. to noon. Hundreds of WWII veterans of the Pacific Theater, including 13 Medal of Honor recipients, rode through downtown New Orleans on military trucks and Humvees, accompanied by military marching units, color guards and bands, vintage war vehicles, and an aerial review, plus lots of confetti. The parade passed the museum where former President George Bush and senior military brass reviewed the troops and veterans. Dr. Stephen Ambrose, author of *Band of Brothers*, and a founding member of the museum, spoke to the crowd about patriotism then—and now. Actor Tom Hanks, present at the museum's opening in June 2000, addressed the crowd and expressed his personal thanks to all the veterans who made the world safe.

Dr. Ambrose noted that this gathering of WWII veterans provided an "experience of a lifetime. Never again will such an opportunity exist to see and speak with such a wide representation of WWII heroes—and to say thank you."

Following the parade, crowds filed into the Morial Convention Center for a "Gathering of Eagles," a kind of WWII fair. Veterans mingled, 1940s bands performed, and a USO troupe sang and danced. A simulated WWII field hospital showed how the wounded were treated. One interesting statistic: Over 97% of the wounded that made it to these field hospitals lived—an amazing statistic considering the wartime conditions.

Other events throughout the weekend included:

- "Conversations with Veterans," a panel discussion with eyewitnesses to some of the memorable moments of Pacific battles, moderated by WWII historians Don Miller and Capt. Ron Drez.
- Port visits by four ships, ranging from a vintage Coast Guard cutter to a new amphibious assault ship, docked at French Quarter wharves.
- A troupe of 350 re-enactors, aided by vintage aircraft, re-created the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Marine assault on Tarawa at Lake Pontchartrain Beach.
- A black-tie gala and movie premiere of "A Price for Peace," the feature-length documentary on the Pacific battles commissioned by the National D-Day Museum.
- A Saturday evening USO dance at the Marriott Hotel. A WWII canteen dance was recreated, replete with a USO song-and-dance team, an open bar and a buffet dinner. Guests were encouraged to wear 1940s dress and dance the jitterbug and fox trot.

The weekend ended on Sunday with a special memorial service held at the St. Louis Cathedral honoring Pacific war veterans.

McGee, a WWII veteran and retired broadcaster, has garnered glowing reviews for his meticulously researched and highly readable military histories. In addition to three books in print on WWII history, McGee has authored numerous books on broadcast advertising and marketing.

Visit www.BMCpublications.com for WWII military histories by William L. McGee.

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