

MILITARY SEA SERVICES MUSEUM, INC.



SEA SERVICES SCUTTLEBUTT

December 2014



*Anthony E. LaMorte Sr. 1934 - 2014*

*The Museum lost a dedicated, loyal, energetic, hard-working friend when retired sailor and President of the Museum, Tony LaMorte passed away suddenly on 16 October. It would be difficult to point out any single display of the considerable number showcasing our memorabilia that Tony had not designed, built or assisted with. Besides being very clever at displaying the historical items, he and his wife Mary Anne planned and prepared most of the fund raising dinners hosted by the Museum. For any task that was undertaken at the Museum, Tony was leading the charge. His contributions will be viewed and appreciated for years to come .*

*Thank you Tony for helping to create the Military Sea Services Museum. A valuable asset to all who love history, all who served in the sea services, the city of Sebring, and all of Highlands County. The Museum helps visitors understand how important the sea services' role was/is in protecting our great nation and the sacrifices made by sea services personnel, especially during war time.*

*Tony: Wishing You Fair Winds and Following Seas  
Rest in Peace*

**Military Sea Services Museum**  
1402 Roseland Avenue, Sebring,  
Florida, 33870 Phone: (863) 385-0992  
E-Mail: [navmargrd@gmail.com](mailto:navmargrd@gmail.com)

**Hours of Operation**  
Open: Wednesday through Saturday  
Noon to 4:00 p.m.  
Web site: <http://milseasvcmuseum.org/>

## ***Anthony E. LaMorte, Sr.***

***Anthony E. LaMorte Sr. aged 79, passed away on Thursday, October 16, 2014 in Davenport, FL. He was born on October 17, 1934 in Newark, New Jersey to the late Gerardo and Emily (Zizza) LaMorte. Anthony served during the Vietnam War and retired from the U.S. Navy in 1973. He had been a resident of Sebring since 1987 coming from Elberon, NJ. He was a member of Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Avon Park. Other organizations he was involved in were: Fleet Reserve Association, National Rifle Association, and was the current President of the Military Sea Services Museum in Sebring.***

***He enjoyed building model ships and airplanes and was very young at heart. He loved his family and enjoyed spending time with them. Anthony is survived by his wife Mary Anne Lamorte of Sebring, FL, children JoLynn Branson - KS, Anthony LaMorte, Jr. - KS, Gina Kay McKee (Mitchell) - KS, Deborah Trout (Scott) - NJ, Thomas LaMorte (Stacy) - Sebring, FL, Theresa Juliano (Fred) - Sebring, FL, one sister: Lorraine Belanger - NJ, two brothers: Edward LaMorte - NJ and Gerardo LaMorte (Shirley) - NJ, seventeen grandchildren and four great grandsons. Along with his parents, Anthony was preceded in death by a brother, Donald LaMorte and grandson, Mitchell Ryan Trout.***

***Services were held October 23, 2014 and burial at Lakeview Memorial Gardens in Avon Park followed.***

***Memorial contributions may be made in Anthony's memory to:  
Military Sea Services Museum, 1402 Roseland Avenue, Sebring, FL 33870.***

***Their web site: [www.milseasvcmuseum.org](http://www.milseasvcmuseum.org).***

***Online condolences may be left at: [www.stephensonnelssonfh.com](http://www.stephensonnelssonfh.com)***



**John Cecil**

## **A message from the President**

To introduce myself: I am John E. Cecil and for the last eight years have served as Vice President of the Museum. We will all miss Tony's presence at the Museum and I will do my very best to insure that the traditions and the protection of the historical items housed there continues.

I served in the United States Navy for 7 years; 1965 - 1972 as a third class Boatswains Mate. My wife Sandra and I moved to the Sebring area in 2001 and we joined the Military Sea Services Museum in 2003.

The holidays are here when the warmth of family gatherings bring hugs, kisses and the wonderful kitchen aromas, also of wood fires, incense, decorations and Christmas trees. It also brings a lot of activities such as social gatherings, presents to buy and food to prepare.

Please don't forget our troops as they stand guard over us and our country ready at a moment's notice to give all. May God bless you and your families this season and in the coming year.

John

Dear Editor,

This will serve to remind you of our conversation on the passing of Tony LaMorte. At first this seemed a simple matter, just a few words acknowledging the years of devoted work that Tony spent making, in large part, the Museum it is today.

In retrospect I am probably the worst selection to attempt this task. Please bear in mind that I never spent as much as three minutes, socially, with Tony. Our entire association was within the confines of the Museum.

My entire association with Tony can be summarized in a few simple paragraphs. The routine never varied; so, let us spin the clock back a bit and see what transpired.

When most men had the duty, they elected to spend their idle hours in the Museum office perched behind the desk. If I could possibly avoid it I never went in the office itself preferring to spend my time in a comfortable overstuffed chair in the Museum library. On the days when I had the duty this scene rarely varied. Shortly after lunch hour there would rarely be any public traffic and the silence would be interrupted only by the slamming of the front door. At that point a familiar booming voice would ricochet off every wall in the building. "Where's the old man?" There was of course, no doubt as to where I could be found and shortly the man would appear in the library, deposit himself in the nearest overstuffed chair and fold himself into a comfortable position. All would be silent for a moment until "Hey old man, did you get the photo I sent you?" "Yes dad, I did."

This opening gambit would launch a back and forth discussion that might last an hour or until interrupted by some unthinking visitor to the Museum. We never discussed Museum business, personnel or problems of any type. Our chats were limited to old ships of the Navy, Coast Guard and the occasional merchant vessel. A great fleet, long gone to the breakers, followed by old shipmates now gone on their last cruise.

It seems to this old man that our entire memory bank is simply hundreds of unrelated items simply thrown together and extracted at will. If that is the case I am extremely grateful for the few hours spent in idle conversation.

Thanks Tony.

ALLIE

### Memoriam

We are saddened to hear of the passing of our new President's son.

John's son, John E. Cecil II, passed away on 1 December 2014 in Hawkins, Texas, at the age of 43. He worked as a automobile body repairman in Texas.

Fair winds and following seas John II. Rest in Peace. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Cecil families.

### **Highlands University Prep Visits the Museum**

On 7 November, twenty students and four faculty members from Highlands University Preparatory School toured the Museum. Volunteers John Cecil, Roy Fairfied, Bud Farmer and Gene Kissner were delighted to show off the Museum. The students and faculty expressed sincere interest in the many artifacts and memorabilia found in the Museum. Subsequent to the visit, many of the students sent letters of appreciation to the Museum. Space does not allow us to include all the letters. A few randomly selected letters are included at the end of the Scuttlebutt. All the letters are displayed in the Museum.

### **Museum goes to Fred Wild Elementary School**

On Veteran's Day, Roy Fairfied, Gordon White, and Bud Farmer took numerous Museum artifacts to Fred Wild Elementary School's Veteran's Day ceremony. The display and information provided by Roy, Gordon, and Bud were a big hit with students, teachers, and other guest at the ceremony. The students subsequently sent many letters of appreciation to the Museum. Some photos and a few randomly selected letters can be found at the end of the Scuttlebutt. All the letters are displayed in the Museum.

### **The Battle of Nihau**

One interesting sidelight to the Pearl Harbor story is that of the first Japanese combatant of WW II to set foot on U.S. soil. His name has been lost to history; he is remembered only as the pilot of a Japanese fighter damaged over Pearl Harbor and forced down in a field on the quiet Hawaiian island of Nihau, twenty miles west of Kauai.

For decades this island had been governed by a single family clan who had purchased it from King Kamehameha IV in 1864. Westerners were shunned by the inhabitants, whose only link with the outside was a weekly sampan from Kauai. As a result of their isolation they had no idea what was unfolding to the southeast on the island of Oahu this week in 1941.

When the damaged fighter ground to a halt a Hawaiian who lived nearby disarmed the pilot and collected his papers. The stranger from the sky was placed under guard and a messenger was dispatched to fetch two Japanese inhabitants of the island. With their interpreting assistance the island chieftain learned of the pilot's participation in the attack on Oahu. It was decided to hold the pilot in custody until the weekly sampan arrived the next day, Monday, December 8th.

But, the boat did not arrive on Monday. Curious islanders waited patiently, but by this day, Friday, a boat had not yet appeared. Now becoming concerned, the islanders built a large bonfire, a visible signal requesting assistance.

Worried that his chances were slipping away, the pilot convinced one of the Japanese to abet his escape. Together they removed one of the machine guns from the downed fighter and emplaced it overlooking the island's main village of Puuwai.

Threats to riddle the entire village unless his papers were returned were defused, however, when an islander named Benehakaka Kanahele crawled unseen into the gun nest and removed the ammunition.

## **The Battle of Nihau cont'd.**

Enraged, and still armed with a pistol, the pilot took the 51-year-old Kanahele and his wife hostage. Kanahele was forced onto a mission to secure the pilot's papers, but fearing for the safety of this wife, he quickly returned empty-handed.

The angry pilot waved his pistol wildly in the direction of Kanahele's wife, at which point, the large Hawaiian had had enough. He lunged for the pilot. Though shot three times in the ensuing scuffle, he managed to throw his enemy against a stone wall, killing him instantly.

Meanwhile an outrigger that had been sent across the channel to Kauai returned with military investigators aboard a U.S. Coast Guard lighthouse tender. Though the "Battle" of Niihau has largely been forgotten, in its day it fueled concerns over an anticipated Japanese invasion of the Hawaiian Islands.

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A reader submitted this interesting additional comment!

Sir,

You've provided some details to this story that I have not previously heard. History, often makes better reading than fiction because it happens to be true. Most Americans do not know that it was this very incident that provoked the Japanese interment during WWII. The Roosevelt administration was most alarmed by the fact that an enemy soldier could successfully appeal for and obtain the assistance of a stable married couple on the island purely on the strength of common ethnic identity, especially when this couple had no history of Japanese nationalism or any other indication of being in any way out of the ordinary. The ignorance of this incident helps perpetuate one of the greater myths of the 20th century, that Americans of Japanese ancestry were interned out of purely irrational fear. The popular myth also hides the fact that 40% of those interned were of German origin. Americans of German ancestry and surname sued in U.S. courts for recognition and reparation similar to that given to Americans of Japanese descent, but were denied redress by the U.S. Supreme Court. On a related issue, it is worth noting that at least one of the eight German spies executed for infiltrating the East Coast during WWII possessed American citizenship.

CDR Christopher D. Clagett, MC, USN  
MD, MPH, MSBA  
Division Officer, Prev Med  
Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (Formerly NEHC)

Contributed by Commander Eugene "Doc" Savage, USN (Ret)

## **Stories Wanted**

We would like to publish in the Scuttlebutt short stories of Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard personal experiences, and/or short stories of sea services historical events. We are sure there are plenty of stories out there that would be of interest to Scuttlebutt readers. Please email your stories to [navmargrd@gmail.com](mailto:navmargrd@gmail.com) or mail to the Museum.

## Anniversaries

21 Dec 1861. Congress created Navy Medal of Honor for Sailors and Marines.

13 Dec 1936. U.S. National Guard established.

07 Dec 1941. "A date which will live in infamy." Japan attacked Pearl Harbor killing 2,403 U.S. citizens.

08 Dec 1941. The U.S. and Allied countries, except the USSR, declared war on Japan.

11 Dec 1941. Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

18 Dec 1965. U.S. Navy River Patrol Force, Operation Game Warden, began in Vietnam.

08 Dec 1967. U.S. Navy Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps established.

23 Dec 1968. Eighty-two USS PUEBLO crew members released after 11 months imprisonment and torture by the North Koreans.

20 Dec 1989. U.S. invaded Panama in Operation Just Cause.

15 Dec 2011. Iraq War ended.

06 Jan 1942. Eleven U.S. Navy nurses captured when Manila fell to the Japanese. Sixty-seven U.S. Army nurses were captured when Corregidor fell to the Japanese in May 1942. The Navy nurses were liberated on 23 Feb 1945. The Army nurses were liberated on 3 Feb 1945.

01 Jan 1962. U.S. Navy Seal teams established.

23 Jan 1968 USS PUEBLO (AGER-2) captured by North Koreans in international waters in the Sea of Japan. One PUEBLO crew member was killed and seven others sustained shrapnel wounds. The 82 surviving crew members were imprisoned in North Korea.

29 Jan 1980. USCG BLACKTHORN, following an overhaul, was leaving Tampa Bay for her homeport in Galveston, TX, when she collided with the tanker SS CAPRICOM near the Tampa Bay Sunshine Skyway bridge. Shortly after the collision, BLACKTHORN capsized and sank killing 23 crew members. Twenty-seven crew members survived. BLACKTHORN was raised for investigation, but was scuttled after completion of the investigation. USCG BLACKTHORN now serves as an artificial reef for recreational fishing and diving in the Gulf of Mexico.

17 Jan 1991. Persian Gulf War (Desert Storm) began.

18 Jan 1991. USS NICHOLAS (FFG-47) working with Kuwaiti fast attack craft ISTIQLAL found that nine of the 11 oil platforms in Kuwait's Dorrah oil field about 40 miles off Kuwait's coast were occupied by Iraqi soldiers. Army AHIP Helicopters and SH-60 Helicopters from NICHOLAS, firing guided missiles, neutralized two of the platforms. Shipboard firing from NICHOLAS and ISTIQLAL neutralized the other seven platforms. Teams from NICHOLAS boarded the platforms and destroyed the Iraqi fortifications. Five Iraqi soldiers were killed and 23 were taken prisoner. No U.S. or Kuwait casualties.



Howard and Dot Fleetwood at the 2007 Military Ball.



Howard enjoys explaining one of the displays to a piper who participated in a 9/11 Remembrance Day at the Museum.



Howard and Gene Kissner share a joke.

*Just as Linda Kissner was finishing up the layout of the "The Scuttlebutt" we received a phone call from Dot Fleetwood with the sad news of her husband Howard Fleetwood's passing the early morning of December 8th. Howard was 84 years old.*

*Howard was a founding member and the first President of the Military Sea Services Museum. He was instrumental in the successful launch of the facility that is appreciated so much today. As an administrator in civilian life, Howard used his experience to navigate the challenging paperwork required by Federal and State Governments to qualify the Museum as a non-profit (501-3C) organization. Beginning its existence with volunteer labor by Howard and the other founding members and their donations of items to be displayed and an extremely "challenged" budget, Howard persevered. The retired Navy chief was extremely resourceful in recruiting members for the newly established Museum. He was also very effective in obtaining financial and material help from outside sources, convincing them that the efforts being made by the members would be shared and appreciated by many. During his presidency, Howard assumed the duties of the Treasurer when the first Treasurer had to give up due to ill health. Howard functioned as both President and Treasurer for a couple of years until a new volunteer came aboard and was elected Treasurer. Howard continued as President for several years until he reluctantly stepped down because of his deteriorating health. That is when Tony LaMorte was elected President. Howard continued to volunteer at the Museum for several more years until his health prevented him from coming in. In the minds of those that knew Howard, there is no doubt that he loved the Museum and dedicated all he had to its success.*

*Thank you Howard Fleetwood for your contribution in preserving the history of the military sea services.*

*May You Have Fair Winds and Following Seas.  
Rest in Peace*

## Highlands University Prep Visits the Museum

Students sent letters of appreciation to the Museum. Space does not allow us to include them all, but here are a few that were randomly selected. All the letters are displayed in the Museum.

Dear Military Staff (John, Gene, Bud, Gordon, and Ray),

Thank-you so much for the wonderful fieldtrip you provided for HUPrep. I learned so much about our Military Sea Services, such as, what they eat, where they sleep, and how they communicate to each-other. I want to learn more about these services and hope to visit your museum again.

Sincerely,

Tehya

Dear Military Services Museum,  
Thank you so much for taking the time to give us a tour of the museum and telling us things we have never known before. I have definitely learned many things and how important the people who serve are to this country.

Sincerely,  
Kassandra

Dear Veterans,

Thank you for giving us the tour of the museum and for serving our country. I know that it must have been hard to leave your family and go defend America. I had a cool time seeing all of the things that you have in the museum and all of the amazingly big bullet shells. I think that you will definitely see me and my family back at the museum. I thank you again for helping our country keep its freedom. You all were very kind and took a lot of time out of your day to give us a tour of the whole museum.

Sincerely, Alastair

To Veterans,

Thank you for showing our class the Veterans Museum. I found the museum to be a very interesting experience. I saw things at the museum that I did not know were used in the Navy such as telescopes. I also learned a lot of new facts about the sailors of that time, such as what the sailors ate. I already knew that sailors ate food rations before I went to the museum, but I did not know what was in the food rations. I also learned about the ammo used by sailors and the living condition of the sailors. I also enjoyed the Morse code machine. This museum was a very good experience for me and I hope to go again soon.

I would also like to thank you for your service in the Navy. I thank you for going in the Navy and fighting so that our country could have freedom. I thank you for the months and years that you gave out of your lives have to protect America so that this country could have freedom and protection. Thanks for everything,

Phillip Green 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Huprep.

## Museum goes to Fred Wild Elementary School

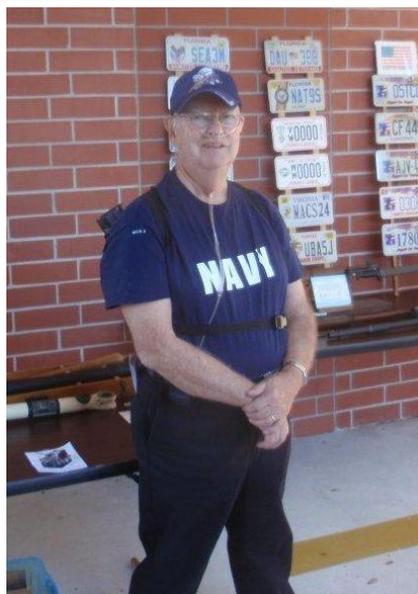
The students sent many letters of appreciation to the Museum. Here are some photos and a few randomly selected letters. All the letters are displayed in the Museum.



Roy Fairfield (left) and Bud Farmer explain some of the articles they took to the school for the Veterans Day commemoration program.



Students at Fred Wild Elementary School proudly wearing red, white and blue.



Gordon White assisted Roy and Bud in transporting items and explaining their place in history to attendees.

*Dear Veteran,*

*Thank you for being our guest today at Fred Wild Elementary. Our students and staff are honored to pay tribute to our nation's Veterans today and everyday. The United States of America is the greatest nation on earth because of you! It is the sacrifice, loyalty, and commitment of the men and women of the United States military that have created and maintained the "land of the free" and the "home of the brave." Thank you never seems to be enough for your great sacrifices but thank you for your service!*

*With heartfelt gratitude,  
Mrs. Michelle L. Baxter*



Dear Veteran

We want to thank you for the freedom we love you all for helping us and fighting for our country.

Sincerely  
Alexandra Pons



Dear Veteran

Thank you for our freedom. You are my hero. You saved me and you set me free. I would do that for you too. Because you are awe some. And brave.

Sincerely,  
Tori Altmann



Dear veteran,  
Thank you for our freedom because you're my hero Army, Navy, Air Force, soldiers and your cool Army, Navy, air Force soldiers.

sincerely  
Abdias



Dear veteran,  
Thank you for giving us your freedom and Liberty. Thank you for respecting and supporting our country.

Sincerely,  
Steven Ariza

