

**A MOMENT IN TIME
(WWII Remembered)**

“The delicious sparkling tropic sea, the long beautiful beach, the minute palms of the copra plantation waving in the sea breeze, the dark green band of jungle, and the dun mass and power of the mountains rising behind it to rocky peaks.”- a postcard façade of a place called Guadalcanal, but remembered differently by Corporal Louis Holt when he landed in the 3rd wave as part of the First Marine Division on 7 August 1942- the first ground action by Americans since Pearl Harbor.

Time perhaps was running out for WWII veterans whose place in history is so elegantly reflected in the architectural splendor of the WWII Memorial in Washington DC dedicated in May of 2004 to the 16 million who served and the 400,000 who died. It is said 1000 of us die each day, so in humility and awe we traveled (having been selected) as part of Honor Flight II (South Alabama) and paid our respects to the fallen and the remnants. Too, we owe our thanks to the professional tutelage of Dr. Barry Lee Booth and his outstanding staff who prepared the way and lent their expertise by guardian and administrative aid

First it was a stop at the WWII Memorial and a hello from Senator and Ms Bob Dole. Dole, the symbol of the WWII era, the driving force of this creation, was glad to see us, so often having visited here with others. We noticed that the columns in circular splendor cited each state and territory, displayed structures depicting both the Pacific and Atlantic fronts, and the Rainbow Pool in the center. It joined in continuing long range vista of the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial. We joined Representative Bonner at the Alabama site, then visited later with Senator Sessions.

Then by bus, in proximity to the Lincoln Memorial on higher ground as though it were looking down on the Korean Memorial displayed by a field of soldiers in inclement weather, with ponchos, weapons and the

look of seeking out the enemy. A 3-person statue series is nearby. Unseen from the distance, hidden in a small valley, is the black wall in its zig-zag pattern along the depression, etched with over 58,000 names-the Vietnam Memorial. To locate a friend, a loved one, or just to find a name, one must visit the roster site, revealing names in either alphabetic or death sequence order, hence to a panel to find those you seek.

Soon we are enchanted by the famous Marine Memorial and see in replica the famous raising of the flag by fighters on Mt. Suribachi, signifying victory at Iwo Jima. History jumps out at you and recalls one of the last battles of WWII in the Pacific. For the 20,000 plus Japanese who died there, a comparable number of wounded and killed Americans were victims as well.

To Arlington, the row after row of white stones, as eyes, looking at you where the fallen lay in repose. We stop and watch the 24 hour, 7 day a-week guard of the Tomb of the Unknowns, now three stone sanctuaries. We are there to pay our respects and salute the laying of wreaths, first a POW/MIA, then a WWII floral array. A moment of quiet reverence, observed throughout, then capped by the precise changing of the guard. A tug at the heart and a feeling of pride.

When your surrounded by heroes, it is difficult at our age to recall their memories and even their names....but it was all part of the mosaic of that wonderful day....so I shall try and reflect as best I can.Soldier Philpot who landed at Marseilles, moved along the Italian/French border as part of the 103rd Infantry Division, to see heavy combat in the Vosges Mountains and be part of the liberation of Dachau concentration camp....Navy Ensign Fremaux could write a Michener-like story of the South Pacific: the Solomons, Guadalcanal, Tulagi, Emiran Island, and Bismarck Archipelago among many other locales.... Iona, the WAC drill instructor at Fort Oglethorpe, Ga who remembers the many young lady soldiers she turned out...Ezra, the Field Artillery officer with the

776th FA Bn, 3rd Army, and later service in the Korean War.... Colonel Glenn Frazier, survivor of the Bataan Death march and captivity to be part of the 'The War' portrait of Ken Burns –part of the Mobile wartime visit.I asked our Naval hero from his days on the USS Hornet, the Doolittle Raid platform, and survival of the Hornet sinking if the legend of Doolittle was true (the napkin sketch of the raid at Bacons by the Sea-a restaurant in Mary Esther, Fl, the practice at nearby Hurlburt Field, and he said, Yes sir!).....Soldier Gile, WWII Ordnance to Infantry, 26th Infantry, became an Army aviator whose expertise included teaching young Vietnamese officers to fly helicopters and writing about air assault operational doctrine(Black Hawk).

When I think of WWII, I remember the artistry of Tom Lea, whose face of a glaze-eyed Marine, looks out possibly unseeing after experiencing the horror of the battle of Peleliu. This was pictures by Life and narrative by Winston Churchill, an anthology of that war. Louis Holt was in the 2nd wave on that unforgettable island.

Perhaps fitting we recall the famous inspirational phrase given by General Alexander Vandegrift as his men prepared to embark for Guadalcanal.

“God favors the bold and strong of heart.”

Those were the days, my friends.