



Photo by Dave Padan

Wreckage of a Japanese fighter on display.

P-40N Warhawk, a P-40E Kittyhawk, or a North American P-51 Mustang is to be wheeled out onto the tarmac for work.

A newer addition to the museum is the hulk of a Japanese Zero fighter found just three years ago on an abandoned Japanese airstrip in the Marshall Islands. Surrounded by lush vegetation, the plane's display area was set up to resemble the island setting that hid the wreckage for so many years.

While the Warhawk Air Museum is officially dedicated to preserving the American air war experience, a growing portion of its collection deals with German and Japanese aviators. A Japanese flying suit is on display in one cabinet, along with an aerial camera, and mementoes donated by a Japanese flying ace.

Visitors, too, "come from everywhere," and interest in the museum is not limited to those from the wartime generation. Recently high schoolers booked the museum for a dance and decorated it as a USO hall. "We wheeled the planes outside, and they had a great time," says Paul.

The list of equipment on display is impressive: Bombs, portable bird cages that once held Signal Corps homing pigeons, Seabee uniforms, gas masks, a kite to be used to haul a radio transmitter antenna aloft, a portable field hospital (including a foot-operated dental drill), a

Very gun, snow skis for a P-51, jet and prop aircraft engines, and the famous Norden bombsight, to name a few.

The museum pays extraordinary attention to the role of ordinary Americans during the war. Posters offer tribute to Rosie the Riveter, who took over on the factory floor. An assortment of USO, Red Cross, and WAVE uniforms salute the women who got even closer to the action; the passage of half a century cannot trivialize a mother's flag, seen here on display.

The collection is personal, Paul believes, because so much of it was donated by former combatants or their families. "A lot of this stuff has been stored. This radio was kept in one family's attic. Folks just bring it in because they want to see it properly cared for."

Paul says she is particularly proud of the museum's collection of magazines and newspapers from the era. Protected in plastic, they tell the story from the beginning, at Pearl Harbor, to the end of the conflict so many years, and so many lives, later. A visit here is sobering but worthwhile.

The museum's mailing address is 4787 Riverfront Place, Boise, ID 83703. The phone number is (208) 454-2854. There is a nominal admission fee.