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SS President Coolidge Survivor donates Dog Tags to South Pacific WWII Museum

MILTON L. STALEY was probably the last survivor to return to Espiritu Santo when he visited in March 2008 with his nephew Richard Staley. He was among a few thousand others who got ashore while sinking of then troops carrier and ex-cruise liner after striking two own mines when entering the Second Channel of Espiritu Santo on 26 October 1942.

In 2016, Milton's nephew contacted Mayumi Green, a friend of theirs in Santo who filmed and interviewed Milton in 2008, requesting her help to arrange an underwater photo shooting of Milton's Dog Tags on the 3 inch Gun Tub where he stood on the SS President Coolidge just before hitting the first mine, to tribute the last survivor to visit Espiritu Santo and to honour Milton who won the Silver Star from being part of the war in Europe after departing Santo, one of which was his involvement in the 1944 D-Day landing, which was the biggest invasion by sea in history. In a joint effort with Santo Dive Operators the photograph was taken by Mr. Kevin Green. The Dog Tags was then donated to the Museum, and Richard also promising to send a framed copy of the image 'Milt contemplating the wreck site with the Coolidge and her complement 'ghosted in' when the time is right. Thank you Milton and Richard.

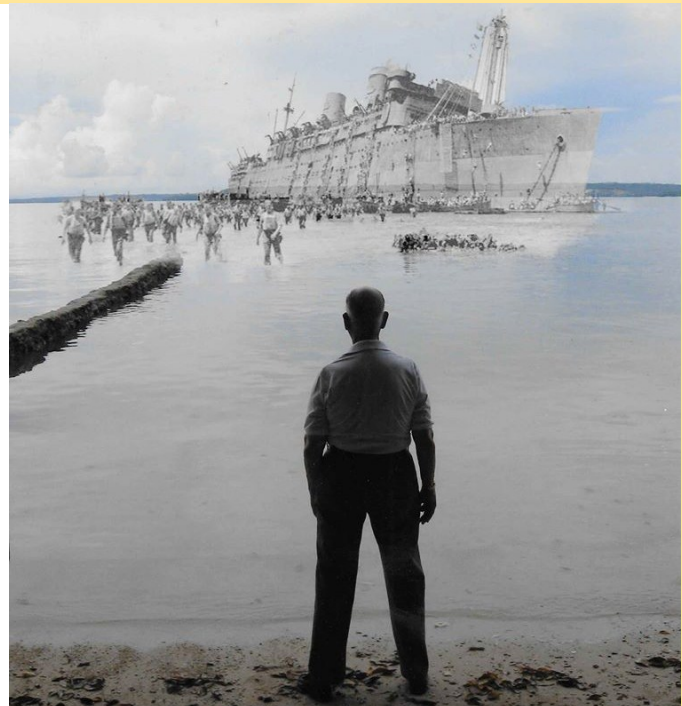
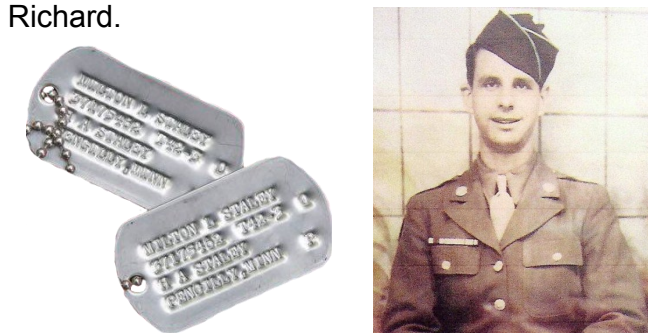


Image above: Milton in 2008, looking at where he and his mates swam ashore. Special graphics effects by William Dunningway.

Image below: Milton's dog tags photographed at the Gun Tub on today's Coolidge's resting site where Milton was standing just before the first mine hit. Coolidge remains one of the Top 10 World's best wreck dives today.



ABSD-1 Floating Dry Dock on Espiritu Santo

A glimpse of WWII history

Espiritu Santo became the principal naval base and major air-force and supply base in the Pacific by mid-1943. It consisted of the naval air services and facilities ranging from overhauling and servicing facilities, aviation engine repair and overhaul facilities, large ship repair facilities, large storage and supply depot, large ammunition depot including a mine depot, a large fleet recreational centre, 3 bomber airbases, 1 fighter airstrip, a seaplane base and other facilities of smaller and less spectacular sorts were located on the island.

The ship repair unit on the island was capable of executing regular massive repairs, with a dry dock also based on the island. The large [floating dry-dock USS Artisan \(ABSD-1\)](#), was probably the largest available that time at the region, was towed to Espiritu Santo in two separate convoys and put together at [Palikulo Bay](#). One of the sections sank in the process and killed 13, and later became operational at the end of 1943 with eight sections put together. In April 1944, all ten sections were assembled, allowing it to operate on full capacity. At 10 sections it is 927 feet long with a lifting capacity of 90,000 tons. [Here](#) is a video of the ASDB-1 floating drydock at the Second Channel, Espiritu Santo, during repair of the battleship USS IDAHO in August 1944.

Among other smaller dry docks was a cruise-capacity floating dock, [YFD-21](#) of 20,000 tons lifting capacity also based on the island.

Image: USS ABSD-1 with [USS Cleveland](#) in the dock, Espiritu Santo, Jan 1944. (US Navy via navsource.org)



US Embassy visit to Espiritu Santo

On Saturday 25th February 2017, Mr. Brad Coley representing the US Ambassador to Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, visited Espiritu Santo. Among other dignitaries who met with the Economic Officer to the PNG based US embassy, were the Chairman and Executive members of the Elwood J Euart Association.

Mr. Coley was provided with a copy of the museum's promotional [video](#) and concept plans along with a letter requesting the embassy's endorsement and support of the project. Mr. Coley confirmed that the embassy does not provide funding support for large scale projects such as the Museum project, however reassures of other support opportunities that the embassy can provide by way of introducing the museum development to US based museums and related WWII foundations, to support the project's fundraising efforts.

The Elwood J Euart Association is working towards a fundraising launch in Vanuatu and another in the US. Part of its preparatory works towards this launching will involve registering a [501 \(c\)\(3\)](#) charitable and non-profit organization in the United States.


Honorary Member

JAMES KLUCK has been a valued honorary member of the Museum since its inception. He is a registered and professional accountant who owns and manages his own accounting firm, James Kluck & Associates, and has been generously supporting the business and financial aspect of the Association. The Elwood J Euart Association wishes to thank James for all his support and commitment.

Our current research

We are searching for information on whether [PT 109](#), or its captain [John F. Kennedy](#) who later became USA's 35th President, did come through Espiritu Santo during WWII.

Check out our next newsletter to find out more on our research findings.

 **PayPal** Help us build the South Pacific WWII Museum
Online donations to [Elwood J Euart Association](#) Paypal account

"We aim to inspire all to understand the sacrifice and achievement of others in defending freedom for all"

For more information, donation and pledges of support
CONTACT: Elwood J Euart Association
Email: info@southpacificwwiimuseum.com
Website: www.southpacificwwiimuseum.com
Phone: (678) 36 227 Fax: (678) 36 829
PO Box 850 Luganville Espiritu Santo Vanuatu