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ZMMH NEWS

President's Comments by Cliff Moffett

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As president of our military museum, I'm proud to share several exciting updates that reflect the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. Together, we continue to grow and improve, preserving the legacy of those who served and educating future generations.

One of the most visible improvements this season is the repainting of our historic C-53D on display. This project was no small task; it required hours of careful prep work and attention to detail. The aircraft now gleams with fresh color and restored markings, proudly representing its role in history. The finished result honors not only the machine but the brave individuals who flew it and relied on it.

Inside the museum, we've also installed brand-new display cases. Through the concerted support from state Senator Danny Burgess, these cases enable us to showcase rare and fragile artifacts that had previously been stored or displayed under less-than-ideal conditions. With improved security, we can now showcase more of our collection safely and attractively. Visitors will notice a difference immediately—our exhibits have never looked better.

In addition, we're installing informational touch-screens throughout the museum. These interactive displays will provide visitors with expanded stories, videos, and historical context to enhance their learning experience. This technology represents a significant step forward in how we connect with the public, especially younger generations.

All of this has been made possible by the extraordinary efforts of our volunteers. From exhibit setup and tour guiding, these individuals generously donate their time and talents to help our museum thrive. Their passion is visible in every polished surface, every carefully placed artifact, and every story shared with a guest. It's no exaggeration to say that our volunteers are the beating heart of this institution.

We've also begun preparations for several exciting upcoming events. Each project moves us one step closer to our goal of being a premier destination for learning, remembrance, and community.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our mission. Your dedication—whether through volunteering, donating, or simply spreading the word—is what keeps our museum strong.

Tunnel Rats

Officials of your museum are currently seeking any memorabilia related to the Tunnel Rats of the Vietnam War for display and preservation in our collection.

During the Vietnam War, one of the most dangerous and demanding assignments belonged to the "Tunnel Rats"—specially selected soldiers tasked with entering and navigating the Viet Cong's vast underground tunnel systems. These tunnels, stretching for hundreds of miles, were used for hiding, transport, communication, storage, and surprise attacks. Their existence posed a major challenge to U.S. forces, requiring a unique solution, and the Tunnel Rats were born.

Typically, Tunnel Rats were small in stature, allowing them to fit into the cramped, claustrophobic passageways. Armed only with a flashlight, a pistol (often a .45 or a quieter .38 revolver), and sometimes a knife or a gas mask, these soldiers would drop into dark, narrow holes, often unaware of what lay ahead. They could encounter booby traps, enemy combatants, snakes, rats, or suffocating conditions. Some tunnels were rigged with trip wires, hidden punji sticks, or even flooded sections to deter entry.

The mission was simple in concept but terrifying in execution: search and clear the tunnels, destroy supplies, gather intelligence, and map the system. Yet the danger wasn't just physical. The psychological toll was immense. Many Tunnel Rats later dealt with severe PTSD, brought on by the stress of working in such isolating and perilous conditions.

Despite the hardships, the Tunnel Rats' efforts were invaluable. They disrupted Viet Cong operations, collected critical intelligence, and exposed the complexity of the underground networks, especially in places like Cu Chi, where tunnel systems rivaled small cities in scope.

Their unofficial motto, "Non Gratum Anus Rodentum" (Latin for "Not Worth a Rat's Ass"), speaks to their grim humor and the dangerous reality they faced daily. Although they received little recognition at the time, the bravery and resilience of the Tunnel Rats have since become a symbol of the unconventional and deeply personal nature of the Vietnam War.

Today, their service is remembered with reverence. The Tunnel Rats demonstrated a rare combination of physical courage and mental toughness, operating alone in the enemy's backyard, under the earth, in a war unlike any other. Their legacy reminds us that some of the most heroic acts in warfare occur out of sight, deep underground, in the silence and shadows of history.

If you or someone you know served as a Tunnel Rat, or have items—such as gear, photographs, or personal stories—connected to these brave individuals, we would be honored to receive them as a donation.

The contributions of Tunnel Rats represent a unique and often overlooked chapter of military history. By sharing these artifacts, you help us educate future generations and properly recognize the courage it took to go underground in the most dangerous of conditions.

If you're willing to donate or have questions about how to contribute, please get in touch with us. Your support helps keep this vital legacy alive.

VOLUNTEERS

Our D-Day event was a huge sucess



Ally Takes a Ride



Matthew Gives a Demonstration



Harold Conducts a Tour



A Good Crowd



Jasper Our Youngest Volunteer

Battle for Veterans – Three Days of History, Honor, and Heritage

The Zephyrhills Museum of Military History is proud to present our highly anticipated *Battle for Veterans* three-day event — an unforgettable tribute to America's military history, those who served, and the enduring spirit of freedom they fought to protect. This action-packed weekend will take place on November 7th-9th (Friday-Sunday, 10 AM-5 PM) in the field across from the Museum, and promises excitement, education, and entertainment for visitors of all ages.

Step back in time as the museum comes alive with the sights, sounds, and stories of our nation's military past. Throughout the event, guests will be treated to authentic military displays showcasing a remarkable collection of vehicles, uniforms, weapons, and equipment from different eras of service. Reenactors in full period attire will bring history to life, telling the stories of the men and women who stood on the front lines and worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

The major highlight of the *Battle for Veterans* is the thrilling live tank demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday at 2 PM. Provided by WW2 Armor, visitors will witness the raw power and engineering brilliance of these armored giants as they rumble into action. The demonstrations will not only showcase the capabilities of the tanks but also provide insight into their critical role in combat operations. For many, it will be a rare opportunity to see these historic machines in motion rather than behind museum ropes.

Experience the adrenaline and drama of military engagements recreated with precision and respect. WW2 Armor reenactment teams work tirelessly to ensure historical accuracy, from tactics and maneuvers to the uniforms and gear. These battlefield portrayals serve as both education and tribute — honoring the sacrifices made by those who served while helping younger generations understand the realities of war.

A variety of food trucks will be on-site all three days, offering everything from savory meals to sweet treats. The family-friendly atmosphere means there's something for everyone, from military enthusiasts to casual visitors simply looking for a great day out.

During the event, the museum itself will be open for visitors to explore its extensive exhibits. From rare artifacts to personal stories, our collection provides a deeper understanding of the military experience across generations. Knowledgeable volunteers and staff will be available to answer questions and share fascinating details about the items on display.

The *Battle for Veterans* event is free to attend, with no admission charge for the museum or the outdoor activities. Parking is also free, making it easy for everyone to take part in this celebration of history and service. We invite veterans, families, history buffs, and the entire community to join us for this extraordinary weekend. Come see history in action, honor those who served, and create memories that will last a lifetime.

Calendar

September 2025	October 2025	November 2025
Sep 4 — Board Meeting —11 AM	Oct 2 — Board Meeting—11 AM	Nov 1— Open 10 AM to 4 PM
Sep 6 — Open 10 AM to 4 PM	Oct 4 — Open 10 AM to 4 PM	Nov 7, 8, 9 — BFV 10 AM to 5 PM
Sep 13 — Open 10 AM to 4 PM	Oct 11 —Open 10 AM to 4 PM	Nov 15— Open 10 AM to 4 PM
Sep 20 — Open 10 AM to 4 PM	Oct 18 — Open 10 AM to 4 PM	Nov 22— Open 10 AM to 4 PM
Sep 27 — Open 10 AM to 4 PM	Oct 25 — Open 10 AM to 4 PM	Nov 29— Open 10 AM to 4 PM
		Mar 30 — Open 10 AM to 4 PM