

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND OBSERVANCES AT THE NIMITZ

Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson will be the keynote speaker at the Memorial Day Commemoration Monday, May 31, at 10 AM in the Memorial Courtyard of the National Museum of the Pacific War. Commissioner Patterson is a native of Houston, a Texas A&M graduate and a Marine. He served in Vietnam as a pilot. Five consecutive generations of Patterson's family have served our nation in time of war. His son, a Marine attack helicopter pilot, recently returned from his second tour of duty in Iraq.

Patterson retired from the Marine Corps Reserve as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1993. He is only the second Republican to serve as Land Commissioner since Reconstruction, a post he has held since 2003. Prior to this he represented the Houston area in the Texas Senate. His legislative successes include passage of the historic concealed handgun law and the creation of the Texas State Veterans Home Program. He chaired the first Veterans Affairs committee in the upper house of the Legislature.

Established in 1836, The Texas General Land Office is the oldest state agency in Texas. As Land Commissioner, Patterson is primarily responsible for the management of 13 million acres of state mineral, surface and submerged lands for the benefit of the Permanent School Fund. The Land Office also acts as the steward of the Texas Coast, provides benefits for Texas veterans and protects the historic documents in the Land Office Archives.

Upon the conclusion of the Memorial Day ceremonies, more than 50 commemorative wreaths will be placed at various plaques that are lining the limestone walls of the Courtyard. Each will be placed in honor and remembrance of a unit or ship that served in World War II or an individual service member.

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Volunteer Living History re-enactors will present three shows each day earlier in the weekend on Saturday and Sunday, May 29 and 30. The 75-minute shows begin at 10:30 AM, 1 PM and 3:30 PM each day at the Pacific Combat Zone on E. Austin at Elk Streets, two blocks east of the Museum's main campus. Visitors will learn about the American and Japanese forces as they prepared for battle on a Pacific island. Weapons will be discussed and demonstrated. All of these weapons will be used in a final attack on the Japanese-held island. Attendees will feel the rumble of a Sherman tank as it moves past the audience and onto the battle field. The only operational WWII flame-thrower in Texas is used in the final assault.

Appropriate for the entire family, admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for students. World War II veterans and children under six are admitted free of charge. Tickets may be purchased at the Pacific Combat Zone at the beginning of each performance or in advance at the Front Desks of the Admiral Nimitz Museum on Main Street and the

George H.W. Bush Gallery on East Austin Street.

The Pacific Combat Zone's "Ship Store" will be in full operation before, during and after each performance. In addition to various snacks, bottled water and soda, there will be an assortment of adult and youth field gear, hats and tee shirts. Children's helmets, toy guns, army action figures and gliders will be offered for sale. Rounding out the list are photographs of the volunteer re-enactors (available for autographs, too).

Culminating the Memorial Day Weekend will be an Author's Forum on Monday, May 31 featuring Bruce Gamble, author of *Fortress Rabaul: The Battle for the Southwest Pacific, January 1942-April 1943*. This is the story of Japan invading the Southwest Pacific island of New Britain the beginning of 1942. Rabaul, on the northern tip of the island, was quickly developed into a major military complex. The area became the key to Japanese operations in the region. "Fortress Rabaul" was an appropriate name for the Japanese Empire's mightiest base in the Southwest Pacific. The Forum will begin at 1:30 PM Memorial Day in the Ballroom of the historic Nimitz Hotel, now the Admiral Nimitz Museum on Main Street. Books are available at the Book Store on Main and the Museum Store in the Bush Gallery. Admission to the Forum is free of charge.

The National Museum of the Pacific War, a Texas Historical Commission property operated by the Admiral Nimitz Foundation, is located in Fredericksburg, hometown of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. It is the only institution in the continental United States dedicated exclusively to telling the story of the Pacific Theater in World War II.

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