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Friends of the Fort Lewis Military Museum

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Peace and Goodwill from Fort Lewis, Washington



photo circa 1918

A Camp Lewis soldier befriends local elk.

**The Friends of the Fort Lewis Military
Museum**

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Editor Alan Archambault

President's Report

This time last year as I wrote my comments, the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division had just deployed to Iraq. Now the Army's first Stryker brigade returns to Fort Lewis, while another Fort Lewis Stryker unit, the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division deploys to replace them.

The Officers' Club at McChord AFB has been an excellent site for our periodic brunches, and we will continue to use McChord until we discern that the Fort Lewis club system can offer us comparable quality in service and price. Our brunch in October featured a thoroughly interesting presentation on various aspects of World War I by Mr. Steven McGeorge. Our upcoming brunch in January 2005 will feature COL Christopher Toomey, commander of the 555th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (formerly the 555th Combat Engineer Group), who will speak about the operations of the unit during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The "Triple Nickel" donated an artifact from that operation to the Museum which is now on display—the hand brandishing a sword, from the statue of Saddam Hussein that was toppled by the unit. The display was dedicated by the 555th in a ceremony at the Museum on 15 October.

The Museum received splendid support from the installation staff this year. The men's and women's bathrooms were renovated, a much needed improvement. Year-end funds resulted in a contract to paint the neediest vehicles in the Museum outdoor exhibit. It also appears that action will be taken to move forward with the installation of an elevator which will provide access to the upper floors for the physically handicapped.

The Cannon Shop continues to do well. An amount of \$2,000 from proceeds of shop operations was provided to *The Friends* in September. Special thanks are owed to the dedicated volunteers, who have done great work all year. As you decide on holiday gifts for family and friends, remember that *The Cannon Shop* is a great source for books, posters, model cannons and many other items for young and old.

As a volunteer at *The Cannon Shop*, I notice more deploying soldiers visiting the Museum with their parents. For many of the parents, this is their first visit to a military museum, and it is gratifying to see how impressed they are by the history they experience as they tour the Museum. The Museum continues to be a wonderful symbol of excellence on Fort Lewis, praised by visitors from outside and within the installation. For this, a sincere "Thank You" to Alan Archambault and his staff for the work they do day in and day out. Thanks also to each of you for your continued support of the Museum through *The Friends*. Best wishes to you and your loved ones for a joyous holiday season!

Ian Larson

Curator's Report

As I prepare this last issue of the *Banner* for 2004, Thanksgiving Day and the Christmas holidays are right around the corner. I am very thankful for the wonderful support that our *Friends of the Fort Lewis Military Museum* provide to Fort Lewis and the Army's heritage on a daily basis. Simply stated, "We could not do it without you." As COL Larson mentioned in his report, the museum provides a place for soldiers and their families, as well as other visitors, to reflect and appreciate the history and heritage of Fort Lewis and the role that the American soldier has played in the exploration, settlement, and defense of our nation.

2004 has been an exciting and challenging year for the Museum staff, and I look for the Fort Lewis Military Museum to grow in importance as many of our citizens realize what a crucial role our soldiers play in the global war on terrorism. My staff and I are proud to represent Fort Lewis, and the soldiers who so nobly serve us, in the best possible manner. In the year ahead we hope to continue to improve and do all we can to make the museum and its programs the best possible showcase for our proud past and optimistic future.

Best wishes to all our Museum Friends for a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Alan Archambault



Christmas 1804 with the Corps of Discovery



Christmas Day, 1804

Alan S. Archambault

Captains Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and the members of the Corps of Discovery celebrated the first Christmas of the expedition at the recently completed Fort Mandan. The fort was built by the corps on the east bank of the Missouri River, next door to the Mandan Indian village, in what is now North Dakota. The men ate, drank, and danced to the fiddle of Private Pierre "Peter" Crusatte. First Sergeant John Ordway recorded the holiday festivities in his journal; "We fired the swivels (small cannon mounted on the keelboat) at day break & each man fired one round. Our officers gave the party a drink of taffee. We had the best to eat that could be had & continued firing, dancing & frolicking during the whole day. We enjoyed a merry Christmas during the day and evening until nine o'clock- all in peace and quietness."

The Christmas Season of 1944

American soldiers were deployed to several battlefields during the Christmas Season of 1944. In the Philippines, Japanese troops were putting up stiff resistance to the Allied advance. In Europe the U.S. Army met one of its greatest challenges of the war. On 16 December 1944, a massive German counter-attack was launched in the Ardennes region of Belgium. Initially, the German spearhead fell on untried or battle-weary American troops who, in spite of many brave delaying actions, fell back before the German onslaught. As the Germans had hoped, the heavy winter cloud cover kept Allied air power from assisting the ground troops. As the U.S. troops fell back, it created a "Bulge" in the Allied lines which gave the battle its name.

Although the American high command was caught off-guard by the German offensive, they quickly shifted thousands of battle seasoned troops to meet the threat. Among the highlights of the battle was the gallant defense of Bastogne and the 3rd U.S. Army's grueling winter campaign to reach the Ardennes and assist in stemming the German advance.

The Germans paid dearly for their risky counter-attack. By 16 January 1945, American troops had reclaimed the ground lost in the German attacks and by 25 January the Battle of the Bulge was over. The German forces had sustained over 100,000 irreplaceable casualties. The Americans had also paid for their bravery with 80,987 casualties, including 10,276 killed, 47,493 wounded and 23,218 missing.



U.S. Army Christmas card, 1944.



The Battle of the Bulge

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