

# DeLand, Florida—USA



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PLACE  
MATTERS

## DNAS Museum News - AUGUST, 2020

# Military Memorabilia Donations



The DeLand Naval Air Station Museum recently accepted donations of military memorabilia collections from Scott Heitz and Nathan Wertheimer, both long time military collectors.

Included were aircraft and ship models, photos, uniforms and other items that will soon be on display in the museum.



**SCOTT HEITZ**



**NATHAN WERTHEIMER**



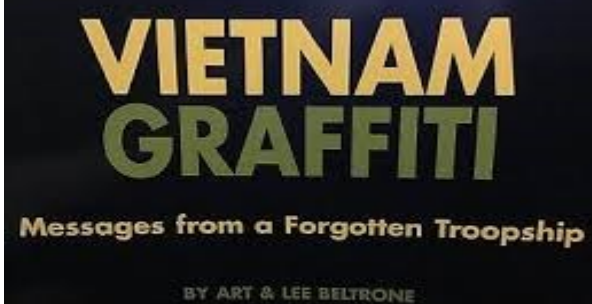
# VIETNAM GRAFFITI

## Messages from A Forgotten Troopship

## The General Nelson M. Walker



A special thanks to DNAS Museum Board Director Raquel Julich for introducing Art and Lee Beltrone from the Vietnam Graffiti Project. ([www.namgraffiti.com](http://www.namgraffiti.com)). We have been in contact with Art Beltrone who explained the traveling Vietnam Graffiti exhibit is coming to an end and memorabilia from the collection will be distributed to various military museums for public view. The DeLand Naval Air Station Museum is being considered to receive pieces from the collection.



Vietnam Wartime Ship Graffiti Art Discovered on the USS General Nelson M. Walker in scrapyard



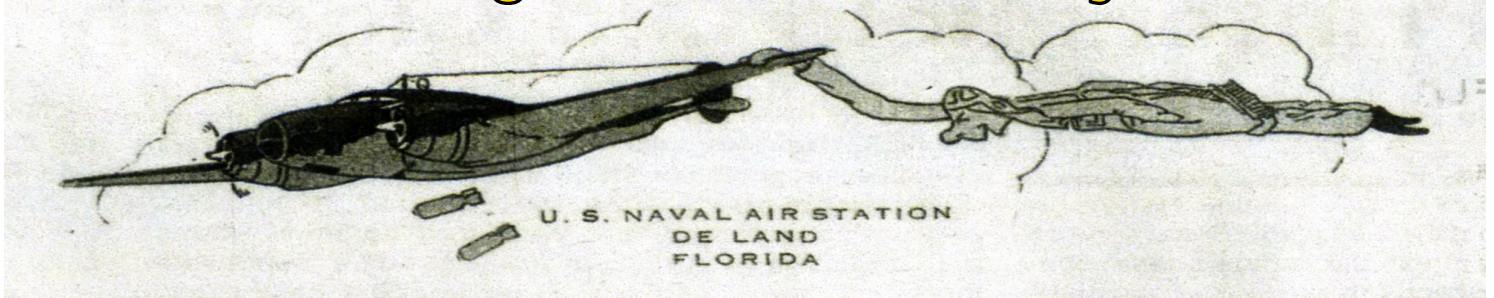
Email the DNAS Museum ([dnas.museum.org@gmail.com](mailto:dnas.museum.org@gmail.com))

if you served during this time and have a story to tell about graffiti art on ships.



# WWII DeLAND NAS RECOLLECTIONS

## Remembering Moe Westberry - SOOIE !!



### DeLAND'S FIRST SKYDIVER

By Lifetime Member Ed Carson as related by:

The late CPO Kenneth Torbett, DNAS WWII Flight Line Chief &  
AMM3c Moe Westberry, SBD Navy Rear Gunner

In 1943, the DeLand Naval Air Station began receiving their allotment of Douglas Dauntless" SBD Dive Bombers from the refurb facility in San Diego, California. As new airplanes were manufactured they would be placed in service to replace an airframe that had reached the end of its expected life service or damaged. These airframes would be taken to the San Diego facility, repaired and made airworthy, then released to the Naval Training Command for use as trainers of the pilots and crews. The DeLand Naval Air Station (DNAS) received 85 of the refurbished SBD's.

CPO Kenneth Torbett, one of the advance personnel (housed in the Putnam Hotel) was assigned to the DNAS under construction. As a Line Chief he assigned pilots and crew to each aircraft when the Base was activated. In 2005, and an inaugural member of the DeLand Naval Air Station Museum, Ken Torbett related to DNAS Museum Docents the following "Sea Story"

A typical flight of five Dive bombers would depart DNAS in formation, to the south over the City of Deland then turn west at Deerfoot road to approach the practice bombing target in Lake County known as "Rebaul" where the outline of a battleship was produced using the materials, used to mark a football field, in a commandeered cattle pasture. The aircraft flew at 8,000 feet, the flight leader had to identify the target, roll out of formation, aim his bomb sight, and dive to 2,000 feet and release his smoke bomb, recover from the dive, and reform the flight formation, as the other pilots, in succession, performed the same operation.

The SBD aircraft had a rear gunner seated behind the pilot on a swivel seat that could face to the rear and operate the twin 30 Cal. Machine guns, or face forward and monitor a second altimeter to inform the pilot of his decreasing height while aiming the aircraft thru its bombsight. The gunner's seat was equipped with only a lap belt; the pilot also had chest strap restraints. Each formation would use its own designated radio channel. This allowed several formations in the air to operate without the radio interference of the other formations performing separate operations. When within 5 miles of the Air Base they would have to dial to the Base frequency for directions from the "Air Boss".

The lead instructor pilot of one of these training flights, after recovering from the practice bomb drop and circling to collect the remainder of the flight, received a radio call from his wingman pilot.

“DE-XXX do you know where your gunner is?” Flight leader: “Where do you think! Behind me!”

“DE-XXX I suggest you turn your head, he is straddling your, tail holding onto the rudder”

Flight Leader: To all pilots in the formation, “Cease operations and return to base”

The Flight Leader established contact with the Air Boss and requested instructions. The Air Boss having nothing in his operations manual to cover such an event placed an emergency call to the Base Executive Officer, responsible for the day to day operations of the Air Base.



Flight Line personnel, having Air Boss monitors, (CPO Torbett was one of those) were quick to offer their ‘hoped up flatbed truck, to gather some mattresses from the barracks and be capable of speeding down the runway underneath the low flying aircraft so the gunner could jump onto the speeding truck.

Upon arrival of the XO into the control tower, he immediately squashed the speeding truck idea with the remark “everyone involved would be killed”. The air space around the Air Station was cleared except for DE-XXX and his Wingman. Visual sighting confirmed that the gunner was wearing a parachute. Instructions were given for the planes to ascend to 5,000 feet in formation such that the wingman’s gunner could establish eye contact with

the gunner on tail and do hand signals indicating that he should jump from the plane and use his parachute as the two aircraft circled the airfield.

Visual communication was established between the gunners, signals were relayed. The response of the tail rider was a repeated movement of his head from side to side, indicating “No Way”. The exasperated XO ordered the wingman to land and for DE-XXX to fly over the center of the airfield and do a Barrel Roll maneuver that would drop the tail rider from the aircraft. Which they did. The tail riding gunners parachute opened, however, prevailing winds blew him westward from the Base and he landed close to Perkins Highway (Hwy 11) IN A PIG PEN! (The farmer, one of two, that collected the food scraps from the Base as “free” food to feed their pigs.) The Gunner was not injured, he however, was covered head to toe with the muddy slop of a pig pen.

**Forward to 2005:** Ken Torbett opined that the story was included in a copy of the “Navy Times” a publication that was circulated to the entire Navy all over the world.

Emory Bennett Veterans Nursing Home delivered several Veterans to DeLand, Friday November 11, 2005 for the Veterans Parade and Annual DNASM Hangar Dance. A Museum Docent became aware of an exceptionally thin, white stubble bearded individual moving hesitantly thru the Display Room and found a seat in one of the conference table chairs. He appeared to be transfixed on the model of the Douglas SBD that was suspended from the ceiling of the room. The Docent entering in conversation with the individual, inquired as to which Service that he had served in? His answer was the Navy, that in fact that he had trained at the DeLand Naval Air Station in 1943. The next question was what did he think of DeLand in 1943? His answer was it was a nice place except “he fell out of one of those airplanes here” (Ding! Dong!, the Torbett bell rang)

The “gunner” in what was questioned as a “Sea Story” had returned to the site of the story. AMM3C Moe (Sooie) Westberry was ending his fight with terminal cancer at the Veterans Nursing Facility in Daytona.

In 1943 the Navy Print Shop at DNAS printed letter head for the commissary of an aircraft with “Dilbert” hanging from one of its wings. Moe autographed one of them during his visit and copies of the stationary are in the DNASM files.

**Our Thanks to Ed Carson For a great memory of one of our DeLand NAS WWII Veterans**



# DNAS Museum Remains Closed During Pandemic

## Volunteers Working Behind The Scene

Even though the DNAS Museum is closed to the public until we determine it is safe to re-open, many of our great volunteers (while keeping our social distance) are still working behind the scene at the museum or from home. We appreciate their assistance and ongoing support. The DNAS Museum is an all volunteer museum and we rely 100% on Community Support. You can support the museum during the pandemic by renewing your membership (even if you can't participate, be a supporting member), make a donation through our website [www.delandnavalairmuseum.org](http://www.delandnavalairmuseum.org) or mail a donation to DNAS Museum, 910 Biscayne Boulevard, DeLand, FL 32724. Use AmazonSmile for orders. Any amount is appreciated!

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Historian Harold Visits Museum,  
ready to resume tours when the museum opens

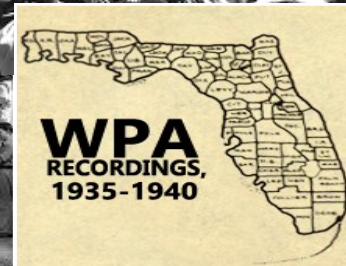
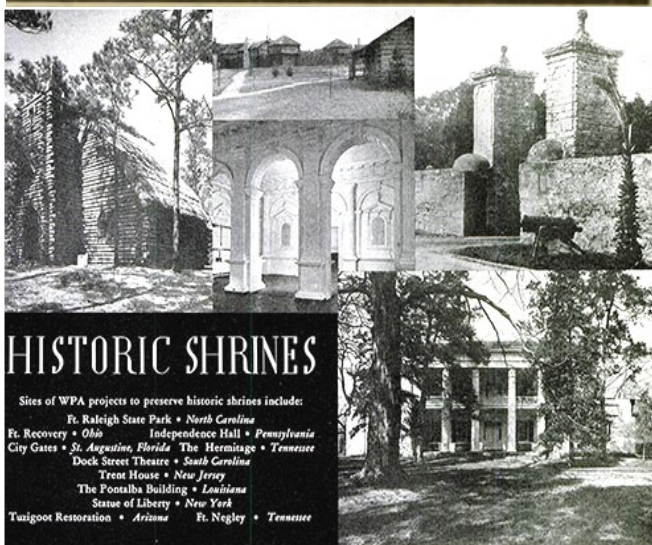
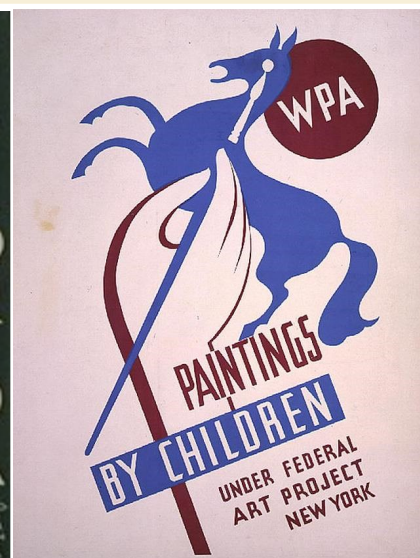
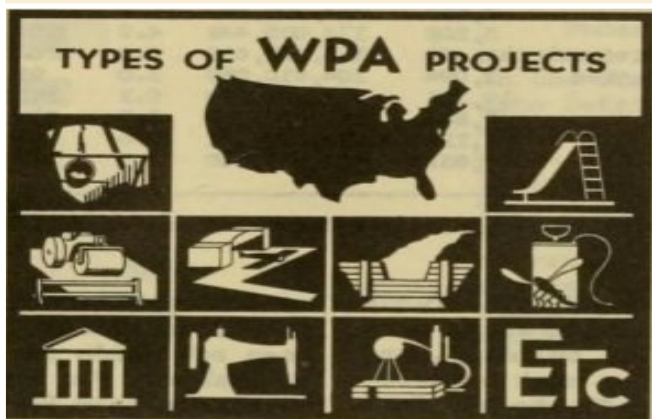


Paddy McCallister, The Veteran's Voice Newspaper,  
stopped by to research the PTF-3 Patrol Boat  
for an article being published soon  
[www.theveteransvoice.com](http://www.theveteransvoice.com)



# Pre-WWII Work Progress Administration (WPA)

From 1939-1943, The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was an American New Deal agency, employing millions of job-seekers to carry out public works projects. Workers built or repaired about 800 airports, 125,000 public buildings, 75,000 bridges and 50,000 miles of roads. At its peak in 1938, it provided paid jobs for three million unemployed men and women, as well as youth in a separate division, the National Youth Administration. The WPA also employed musicians, artists, writers, actors and directors in large arts, drama, media, and literacy projects. The five projects dedicated to these were: the Federal Writers' Project (FWP), the Historical Records Survey (HRS), (included Veteran's Grave Registration Project) the Federal Theatre Project (FTP), the Federal Music Project (FMP), and the Federal Art Project (FAP). These documents are of great importance for American history. Theater and music groups toured throughout the United States, and gave more than 225,000 performances. The WPA prepared many workers with new skills needed as they joined the military during WWII.





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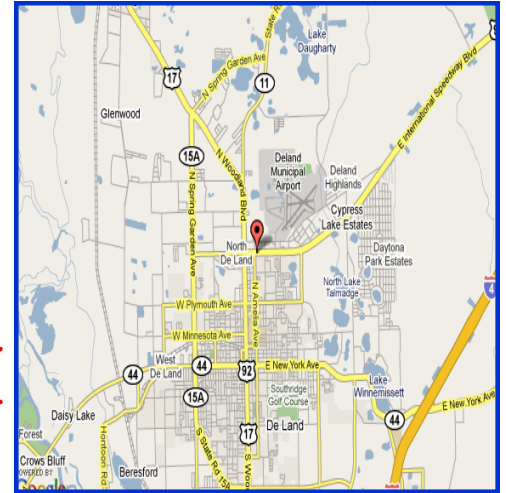
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[www.delandnavalairmuseum.org](http://www.delandnavalairmuseum.org)

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