

FORT MILES



HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Battery

SPRING 2021



Fort Miles reopens
with new exhibits **and more**

fortmiles.org



Board of Directors

Jeffrey Dibella
Bob Frederick
Interim Co-Presidents

Jim Pierce
Secretary

Larry Boyer
Treasurer

Joe Johnson
Assistant Treasurer

Board Members

Merritt Cooch
Bev Dalecki
Mike Dunkes
Cliff Geisler
Terry McGovern
John Roberts
Will Short

Mark Chura
Executive Director

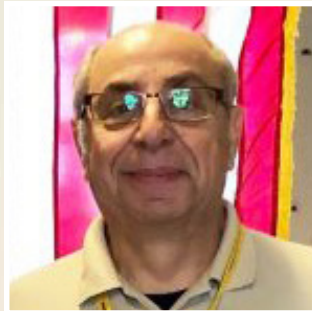
Dr. Gary Wray
President Imeritus

MISSION

Fort Miles Historical Association is a nonprofit group that works to preserve, protect and defend all aspects of Fort Miles, working with community and state stakeholders and other interested parties. FMHA also partners with the State of Delaware to develop the historical potential of Fort Miles.

To learn more, visit
www.fortmiles.org

From the desk of the Co-President



Hello from Fort Miles

By Jeffrey DiBella

We hope you are well and enjoying a bright and healthy 2021. It's been a long, lonely year at the museum. Fort Miles and many other venues have been closed to the public because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We miss our friends and guests. Our FMHA volunteers, with our Delaware State Parks partners, have been working on several projects that we are excited to share when we reopen.

The two most common questions we've heard in 2021 are "When is the fort going to reopen" and "What's new this year?" To answer the first question, outdoor tours resumed in April and continued until mid-May. Summer programs are set to begin in early June. Expect Battery 519 tours and the park's museum programs to be available beginning June 15, 2021. Check fortmiles.org/happenings for the latest.

What's new

FMHA volunteers and our state parks partners have been busy this past year. We intend to complete a number of projects in the next several months. Let's begin in the cantonment area and work our way to Battery

519. The barracks are beginning to look unified. All doors and windows have been painted and each barrack has a clearly posted building number. We've begun repairing and painting exterior roof trim and soffits. This spring, our Bunker Buster teams, led by board member John Roberts, will begin working on selected barrack interiors to prepare for Delaware Defense Day Open House on Sept. 25.

Beginning in mid-July, our state parks partners will begin resurfacing Artillery Park hardscape paths and adding concrete and asphalt paths. The expanded paths will make it easier to navigate between the gun displays and upper and lower parking lots.

Changes inside Battery 519 are impressive. Our Executive Director Mark Chura and the museum's interpretative team have added several exhibits throughout the battery's north wing exhibit area, including numerous colorful interpretative storyboards and backdrops describing exhibits. In the art room, board members Cliff Geisler and Jim Pierce added

paintings, World War II posters, and panels explaining the artwork and ship models. Bunker Busters added lighting, built shelving, display railings and exhibits based on actual 1940s plans and photos.

On Sept. 25, we will host our Delaware Defense Days Open House, when we will unveil the USS Arizona (BB39) artifact we received in March 2020. The Arizona exhibit will include an interactive display where visitors can learn about the Delawareans stationed at Pearl Harbor and surrounding military bases Dec. 7, 1941.

Other news

Those are a few of the visual changes our guests will see this summer. More information about these and other exhibits are included in following articles. We can also report nonvisual changes that have kept us busy in the past several months.

Dr. Gary Wray, our founding president and co-founder of Fort Miles Historical Association, has decided to retire after leading FMHA for 17 years. Gary remains an active FMHA member,

will be our chief historian and continue sharing his knowledge in the winter lecture series. I'm sure you can also find him sitting on his favorite bench by the 16-inch gun and Missouri gun barrel, ready to chat about anything Fort Miles, WWII, or history in general. Bob Fredrick, the former founding vice president, and I will serve as co-presidents.

Our FMHA docent team is incorporating new, refreshed exhibits and interpretative information into the FMHA Summer Sundays Tour Program. This is led by board member Will Short and his senior docents, who are reviewing updated tour materials with the docent team.

Fort Miles Museum board

Two other key projects that the FMHA board and our state parks partners have been working on together are the alignment of current and future exhibits with the Fort Miles Museum Master Plan and creating the Fort Miles Museum organization. Although the master plan is not final, we are using it as a guide to



determine types of displays, their placement and their interpretative presentation.

FMHA board members Larry Boyer and Jim Pierce have been our representatives most actively involved in creating the Fort Miles Museum organization. They will serve on the new Fort Miles Museum board with board member Merritt Cooch. They will be joined on the museum board by three state parks and three at-large representatives,.

The board's main task is to develop and carry out a fundraising program to implement the museum master plan, with the goal of becoming a self-sustaining operating museum. FMHA and Delaware State Parks are excited about the progress we've made this year and about the museum's future. You'll hear more about the museum's evolution in future newsletters.

Stop by and say hi

We are excited that the museum is about to reopen, and we look forward to seeing you again and hearing your thoughts on our progress. Thank you for your continued support and contributions. Stop in and say hi when you can. Take care.





Finances remain healthy as COVID-19 fades

By Larry Boyer, FMHA Treasurer

I hope this will be my last entry on COVID-19 and its impact on operations.

Our financial health, while negatively affected during the pandemic, remains robust as we enter the last few weeks of fiscal year 2020-2021. This is because of generous donations from our supporters and continued membership renewals (we're very grateful); our Bunker Buster volunteers keeping renovation costs low; and a generous Delaware annual grant in aid.

Cape Henlopen State Park is beginning to phase in outside activities, and we predict limited Battery 519 tours will begin in June. This, of course, carries an asterisk because COVID can cause dramatic schedule changes with little or no notice. Let's keep our fingers crossed. We expect to reopen our gift shop in Battery 519 when tours resume. The store has been dormant since the pandemic began.

Another positive is our oceanfront wedding venue, which continues to attract business. We have had

brisk wedding rentals this year and next. This is in no small part because FMHA invested in new marketing resources such as a dedicated venue website and strategic ad placements. We also contracted with a new venue manager, Gina Derrickson, who has done a great job of being the face of Fort Miles and attracting and managing venue reservations.

FMHA + DSP = Fort Miles Museum

The core partners (FMHA and Delaware State Parks) continue to work toward a new method of managing the structure of Fort Miles Museum and Historical Area. The most important element will be the Fort Miles Museum board, which will consist of three members each from FMHA, DSP and the community at large. We expect the board composition to be complete by mid-year and the first meeting to be held then. The board will develop strategic planning and fundraising programs. It will oversee daily operations under the guidance of and with the working committees (Operations, Collections, Interpretation, and Fiscal and Fundraising). The steering committee created to develop the charter, by-laws and goals has accomplished its goals and been dissolved.

More information will be available when the board resumes regular meetings. We will report to you through newsletters and at fortmiles.org.

Financial planning and fundraising

The Fiscal and Fundraising Committee (created by the steering committee) has been meeting regularly for about 18 months. FMHA and DSP have collaborated to better understand each other's funding sources and expenses. The first joint planning session was held in March 2021. We identified and prioritized project needs for the next fiscal year. This data will help us develop a longer-term funding strategy to meet those needs. This committee will work to support the museum, through the museum board, to develop a long-term fundraising plan to finish the museum design and construction.

Closing our fiscal year and looking forward to the 21-22 fiscal year, we will hold budget meetings to outline our spending plan while we work on our grant in aid request for next fiscal year.

Thank you for your continued financial support of FMHA. Your contributions help us move forward.

FMHA salutes foundation and business supporters

By **Jim Pierce**, Board Member

FMHA has received grants from Delaware's many foundations that support the nonprofit sector and support in many ways from Sussex County's business community.

We will highlight a foundation and business supporter in each newsletter beginning with this spring 2021 edition.



Delaware Community Foundation

Delaware Community Foundation says on its website, "Our mission is to improve the lives of the people of Delaware by empowering and growing philanthropy through knowledge and relationships, now and in the future."

DCF fulfills its mission by helping organizations committed to its vision. By restoring Fort Miles, telling the fort's story and assisting Delaware State Parks to open Fort Miles Museum, FMHA is one of many organizations to benefit from DCF grants.

FMHA recently received a \$7,500 DCF grant to install a handicap-accessible door in the Fort Miles Museum and Historical Area Orientation Building. The Orientation Building will be the gateway for Fort Miles Museum once improvements are complete. FMHA received this donation under the foundation's Capital Project Grant program. FMHA is grateful to Delaware

Community Foundation for its support of Fort Miles Museum.

Visit delcf.org to learn more about Delaware Community Foundation and how to support its mission.

Coastal Towing & Auto Repair

FMHA also recognizes Coastal Towing & Auto Repair of Lewes for its generosity. Coastal Towing sent one of its vehicles to Hoopers Island, Md., to pick up the aircraft spotter shed that is displayed at Fort Miles.



The World War II spotter shed is one of the interesting artifacts displayed in the Fort Miles Museum's Historic Area. Thousands of these sheds were located up and down the East Coast, staffed by civilians to spot enemy aircraft as part of the military's Aircraft Warning System.

FMHA thanks Charlie Moore and all the folks at Coastal Towing & Auto Repair.



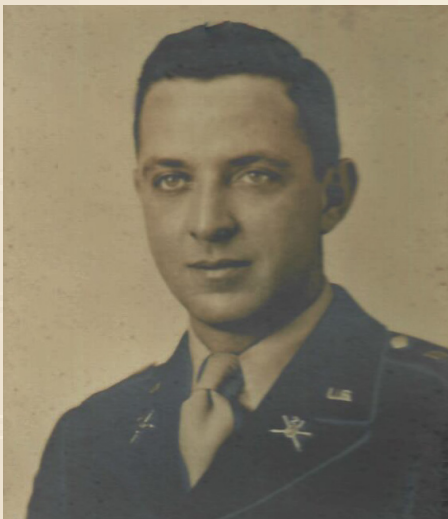
A grandfather proudly served at Fort Miles during WWII

By Merritt Cooch, Board Member

My grandfather, Edward “Ned” W. Cooch Jr., served at Fort Miles from 1942 until 1945. He took great pride in his service there and fortunately recorded many of his Fort Miles memories.

Ned graduated from University of Delaware in June 1941 with a commission as a second lieutenant in the Coast Artillery Corps of the Army. With war raging in Europe, he knew it would not be long before he received his orders. He was assigned to the 21st Coast Artillery, an Army mine-planting unit, and trained at other forts before arriving at Fort Miles in winter 1942.

I remember my grandfather telling us about the first winter in the “tent city” at Fort Miles, before



barracks were built. He was a tough, non-complaining sort, but he would tell anyone who listened how brutal that first winter was. He remembered the viciousness of the war along the coast during these years and witnessed many survivors of German U-boat attacks brought to the mine-planting dock, now the fishing pier. He also told us about the German submarine that surrendered off the coast of Cape May, N.J., then was brought to the mine dock.

My grandfather told us that when his crew was planting mines in Delaware Bay, they weren't on a mine-planting ship, just a reconverted coastal freighter called The Casey. He once said, “It was okay, I suppose, only you couldn't control it!” One day his crew was planting buoyant mines about 10 feet below the surface. My grandfather was working on the L boat, a ship about 60 feet long that connected the ends of the mine cable to a distribution box. The Casey cruised by with a 1,500-pound mine hanging over the side. It was supposed to clear the L boat by 20 feet, but instead the mine swept right down the walkway, brushing the side of the pilothouse on the L boat. Luckily, the mine did not explode, and nobody was hurt, but it was a very close call. The mine detail was provided with the Frank



and the Sylvester, two mine planters that were appropriately designed for the dangerous task at hand.

My grandfather, armed with a loaded rifle, also patrolled the beaches at night. He checked to ensure that Lewes and Rehoboth houses followed blackout orders, in particular the home of the woman he was dating. That woman became my grandmother. My grandfather also manned the radar station at Tower 7, which is open to the public in Cape Henlopen State Park.

My family and I are lucky that he remembered much of his time at Fort Miles and shared those stories, good and bad. Fort Miles truly held a special place in his heart.

Prepared for reopening and 2021 events

By Will Short, Board Member



A new event season is rapidly approaching. With the COVID-19 pandemic on the wane and the vaccination program in full swing, FMHA is looking forward to an active tourist season at Fort Miles. Although the state's Parks and Recreation Division has not opened the museum to the public for visits and tours, we expect it to reopen in mid-June.

FMHA is preparing to resume its Summer Sunday Tours soon after. Beginning June 20, FMHA will open the museum every Sunday through Aug. 29. Doors will open at 10 a.m. and close at 2:30 p.m. We plan to conduct two guided museum tours each Sunday.

An outside walking tour of the Cantonment and Artillery Park is new this year. We refreshed our exhibit in the Battery 519 North Powder Room. Delaware State Parks and FMHA have added artifacts, installed interpretive rails by each exhibit and placed backdrops behind the exhibits. In the South Gun Room, we have provided new interpretation of the

German U-boat Operation Drumbeat that wreaked havoc on merchant shipping off the East Coast in 1942.

FMHA has updated its tour outline and guide documents. We started docent retraining April 24 to introduce new materials and tour the refreshed exhibits. Jeff Romans, a docent and certified CPR instructor, will teach docents CPR this month.

Thanks to the efforts of Gina Derrickson, our events coordinator, the Fort Miles oceanfront event venue has been booked for two private events in May and one each month from June through October. Besides these events, FMHA volunteers are supporting the May 15 Race4Warriors by staffing a hydration table on the Rehoboth Beach boardwalk. During the weekend of Sept. 17 through 19, FMHA is hosting the Tunnel to Tower Racing Event and Gala at the event venue.

Our FMHA volunteers consistently meet the challenge to prepare the museum for each event and provide top-shelf customer service to our guests. This year our event support teams are led by Don Macauley, Roy Messmer and Jeff Romans.

We're grateful for all the work the Bunker Busters have completed during the pandemic: restoring, refreshing and maintaining our museum and its exhibits. Their skill, labor and teamwork make this possible.

We also appreciate our parks partners; the Fort Miles steering and working committees; and the FMHA board of directors for their support and contributions. These groups have laid the groundwork for the museum's reopening and event season.





Tour Fort Miles **this summer**

Camouflage: Wildlife to Warfare

Tuesdays, June 15 through Aug. 31 - 10:30 a.m.

Dolphins, moths and squid are some of the animals that have inspired military disguises. Join us as we dive into the world of camouflage and explore how soldiers keep themselves safe and hidden. Program meets at the campground amphitheater. For ages 7 and up with an adult.

Free with park entrance fee

Fort Miles Lantern Tour

Wednesdays, June 23 through July 28 - 8:30 p.m.

Wednesdays, Aug. 4 through Aug. 25 - 8 p.m.

In 1943, World War II was in full swing, but it was much different than anticipated. Tour Battery 519 by lantern light as we reveal U-boats on the prowl, sailors in distress and what World War II turned out to be for soldiers stationed at Fort Miles. Tours meet at the Orientation Building. For ages 10 and up with a paying adult.

\$5 per person

Cold War Bike Tour

Fridays, June 18 through Aug. 27 - 10:30 a.m.

Ride along with a park historian to see Cold War relics in Cape Henlopen. Hear tales of Doomsday ships, spies, Soviet submarine tracking and more. Bring your bike. Tours meet at the Orientation Building. For ages 10 and up with a paying adult.

\$5 per person

Discover Battery 519

Tuesdays and Fridays, June 15 through Aug. 31 - 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, June 16 through Aug. 31 - 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 2:30 p.m.

Construction of Battery 519 began in 1941 under the threat of war. Tour the battery to discover what the threats were and how Fort Miles planned to defend the United States. Tours meet at Battery 519. For ages 7 and up with a paying adult.

\$5 per person



New exhibits, programs make Fort Miles a must-see

By Tyler Dreiblatt

We were disappointed to suspend programming the past few months, but we made good use of the extra time. Two new exhibits will open in Battery 519, and our interpreters have been hard at work developing these programs.

The first display is a multi-part exhibit called Stories of Service. It features first-hand accounts from the men and women who were at Fort Miles during the 1940s. The exhibit, in the North Powder Room, will give visitors a comprehensive view of life at the fort during World War II through photos, artifacts and audio clips. The exhibit opening will depend on when the Division of Parks and Recreation allows nature centers to reopen but we expect summer visitors will be able to view this exciting addition.

In September, we will unveil our fragment of the USS Arizona. This exhibit explores the sinking of the Arizona during the Pearl Harbor attack and its impact on the country, Delaware and Delawareans, then and now. Located in the North Gun Block event area, it will be one of the first things visitors see when they enter the museum. Fort Miles is one of few sites in the country with this type of relic and we are eager to share these powerful stories with the public.

Lantern tours, bike rides

We are ready to return to programming with a mix of old favorites and new offerings. Tours of the battery will be offered Tuesday through Saturday, with weekly lantern tours and bike rides. If the health situation allows, we'll also bring back our popular truck tours and artillery demonstrations. Historical interpreter Mark Pesl has developed a camouflage program we are

excited to introduce, and historical interpreter Mark Wilson has created two in-depth coast artillery presentations.

We have worked with retired Navy Capt. Bill Manthorpe on a Navy-focused bike tour. As the author of "A Century of Service: The U.S. Navy on Cape Henlopen," Captain Manthorpe wrote the book on the subject and is a wealth of knowledge for visitors.

Check Facebook

This program schedule also depends on state approval. Tour sizes may be smaller. We successfully offered multiple smaller tours last year and are prepared to do so again. Check our Facebook page ([facebook.com/FortMilesHistoricSite](https://www.facebook.com/FortMilesHistoricSite)) to see reopening plans and tour dates.

Despite uncertainty, we are ready for a dynamic season. New exhibits and classic programs make Fort Miles a must-see. I am excited to share it with you.



Bunker Busters are ahead of schedule, looking to summer

By John Roberts

Our guys and gals have been busy. So much so, we're well ahead on our list of projects. Congratulations to all for all the hard work.

Fire Control Tower No. 3

We have new windows in the vertical slits in this tower. They replicate the originals in design, except we used heavy-gauge stainless steel screens. The cedar frames are sealed, and the hardware is also stainless steel. These are far better than the originals, and some of those lasted since their initial construction in the early 1940s. Drive by -- they look great.

This summer's to-do list includes work on the rectangular windows at the base of the tower.

Battery Herring

Our crew cleaned the debris from Battery Herring and installed basic lighting. We need a generator to operate the lights, but flashlights are no longer required. The purpose is to interpret this structure, especially its operation for SOSUS, the Sound Surveillance System, during the Cold War.

Long term, we're planning this with the other bunkers. These will be special tours, intended to broaden the interpretation and the interest in all the features this fort has to offer.

Battery 519 event venue

We installed acoustic panels in the ceiling of this room to minimize echoes.

We added track lighting for events and are finishing the audio/visual equipment set. These updates look great.

Diorama refresh

We are updating the diorama to improve its interpretive content. We're adding LEDs to all points of interest, and a placard with appropriate content will be placed above each button. The diorama is

definitely interesting but doesn't have a lot of meaning. This will change. We are considering electronic media content. It's important for our visitors to appreciate this facility's extensive and expansive wartime reach.

12-inch gun elevation automation
The 12-inch gun now is a static display. A new project will allow us to level the barrel, load the gun, close the breech (which can't be done when elevated), then elevate and prepare for firing. We'll be able to conduct loading and firing exercises, although, of course, firing will be virtual. We have a budget; we have a quote for a sliding window; we have verified the elevation mechanism is functional; and we have an automation plan.

We can have certain groups use the rail system, the shot cart, the ram and other features to operate a casemated coast artillery weapon.

Barracks

Our team has been spending the nice days reglazing windows, resealing chimneys and continuing other maintenance work. The barracks are looking better all the time.

We are proud of the skills and efforts of our Bunker Busters. They are so proficient, it's rare that we need contractors for most projects. As an example, we needed to remove the trunnion caps from the 12-inch gun. One of our guys went to the local fire department and borrowed its Jaws of Life. Just 45 minutes after making the request, we were finished. That level of talent and responsiveness sets us apart. Thanks to our crew.



Bookends to World War II at Fort Miles

By Cliff Geisler

On Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese carrier-borne aircraft launched a surprise attack on U.S. Navy ships at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The Japanese caught the U.S. fleet unprepared, and their airplanes quickly inflicted severe damage to the U.S. warships. Most of the military casualties, 1,177 sailors and Marines, lost their lives aboard the USS Arizona (BB39), which was tied up at Battleship Row adjacent to Ford Island in the center of Pearl Harbor.

The Arizona sank keel down in fairly shallow water. While the forward portion of the vessel was shattered by a Japanese bomb, the aft remained relatively intact. The Navy began salvage work on the Arizona almost immediately. It became evident in a matter of weeks, however, that the ship was damaged beyond repair. The wreckage above the sunken hulk, where crewmen remain entombed, was cut away and dumped at a remote location at the Pearl Harbor naval base.

Efforts to memorialize the sailors and Marines lost on the Arizona

came to fruition in the early 1960s with the construction of the USS Arizona Memorial, a structure that sits above the wreck in Pearl Harbor. The memorial, administered by the U.S. Park Service, is visited by thousands of people every year.

The disposition of the wreckage removed from the Arizona remained in question until 1995, when Congress authorized the Navy to donate fragments to museums, war memorials and other nonprofits for display to the public.

Efforts to obtain the Arizona relic now located at Fort Miles Museum began in 2018 when the Fort Miles Historical Association board of directors petitioned the Navy for a piece of the wreckage. After a wait of nearly two years, Fort Miles Museum received a 650-pound fragment of steel removed from the aft portion of the ship.

FMHA is proud to announce that the Arizona relic will go on public display in fall 2021. The exhibit, called Oil Still Bleeds, will include stories of Delawareans who were

present at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

In 1996, the Navy selected Pearl Harbor as the final home of the USS Missouri, the American battleship where the Japanese surrendered in September 1945. The Missouri, now a museum ship, is only a few hundred yards from the Arizona Memorial. The historical symmetry is unmistakable. The ship where World War II ended was retired near the USS Arizona, a ship lost the day the war began.

Our Arizona relic will be placed near the 16-inch gun barrel displayed outside Fort Miles Museum. That barrel, taken from the USS Missouri, was on the battleship when Japan surrendered on its foredeck. World War II ended, almost literally, in the shadow of the 16-inch gun outside our museum. With the addition of the USS Arizona relic to its collection, Fort Miles Museum will create, on a smaller scale, the same type of historical bookends that exist at Pearl Harbor.

The President Emeritus History Corner.....

The hedgehog to the rescue

The German military was one of the most powerful in World War II. Germany had so much confidence in its capabilities that it declared war on the United States on Dec. 11, 1941. Germany immediately sent its submarine force to attack the relatively unprotected U.S. East Coast, including Delaware. The Germans called their five-boat attack unit Operation Drumbeat, after the booming kettle drums of a large orchestra (think of a Wagner opera).

The lead U-boat of Operation Drumbeat, U-123, submerged off Rehoboth Beach in mid-January 1942, lying in wait for shipping to enter or leave Delaware Bay. Later that month, U-373 laid a minefield off Fort Miles that sank the tug John R. Williams in June 1942, killing most of its crew. The situation off the East Coast was grim as hundreds of ships were sunk and thousands of sailors and passengers were killed by the attacks of almost 40 U-boats. The successful German submarine attack on the East Coast caught the United States unprepared.

But help was on the way. The German naval code was broken; U.S. submarine hunting improved; and sonar, radar and coast airpower became more important in the battle against U-boats. One reason the Army built an airbase in Dover, Del., was to combat the U-boat attack off the East Coast, a base that now is one of the largest in the country.

One weapon used against U-boats was the depth charge, a large drum filled with explosives thrown from the deck of a ship and set to explode at a certain depth, to kill the submarine. Depth charges were problematic: the chance of hitting a sub with them was very low and German U-boat captains became adroit at eluding them. A different, more effective weapon was needed to kill submarines.

The Royal Navy had been working on a spigot mortar called a hedgehog that allowed a submarine hunter to fire its mortar bombs about 800 feet in front of the hunter as it chased the submarine. Each of 24 7.2-inch, 65-pound mortar bombs was in a box forward on the hunter (usually under the bridge) in six rows of four that

were fired two at a time in salvo. The 24 bombs were staggered in two racks and fired in a delay, forming a rough circle when they hit the water in front of the bow of the hunter/killer. They landed about 100 yards ahead of the attacker, landing 15 feet apart and sank at about 23 feet per second. One hit could destroy a U-boat. The hedgehog only detonated if it hit a submarine, telling the attacker if he succeeded. By using the hedgehog, the attacker could continue to locate the submarine with his sonar during the attack. During the later war years, more than 250 hedgehog attacks sank 47 U-boats, a much higher percentage of submarine “kills” than with depth charges (one sinking for every 80 attacks).

Perhaps the most famous sinking of a U-boat occurred at the end of the war, U-853 off Block Island, R.I., in May 1945. The successful hedgehog attack on U-853 was recorded by the Navy. The largest artifact of that hedgehog kill is located in our Fort Miles Museum, the Flak 38 20mm cannon from that submarine on permanent display.

The Germans countered the use of hedgehogs, developing the first acoustic homing torpedo in 1943. Today, the Russian and Indian navies use a modern form of the hedgehog for anti-submarine work. Most other navies, including the United States, have replaced the hedgehog with the German response, the acoustic homing torpedo usually dropped from attacking planes or helicopters.

Hedgehogs, radar and other Allied technological improvements (including overwhelming air power) ultimately negated the German submarine effort. By late 1943, the superiority the German sub captains enjoyed early in the war had shifted to making their boats metal tombs for their crews.

The greatest loss by any nation in WWII was the German submarine fleet, where 30,000 German U-boat crewmen were killed from a complement of 40,000 sailors. Sadly, the U.S. submarine fleet suffered similar losses, with the death of 22 percent of all U.S. submariners, the highest loss rate of any U.S. service in the war. The submarine business was deadly for all countries in WWII.



From the desk of the President Emeritus.....



Staying active after retirement

By Dr. Gary Wray

At the Dec. 19, 2020, meeting of the Fort Miles Historical Association board of directors, I announced my retirement from the leadership of the organization.

Lots of folks have asked me why. My only reason: It was time. All good things must end and, after 17 years of leadership, I felt it was time to step aside and let others lead. We have worked hard to build a very competent team to take over and move the organization to the next level.

Leadership training teaches that the people in charge must know when to step aside and let others take over. I learned that lesson well in my years leading organizations, be they school boards, nonprofits or other groups. I feel confident that the leadership team for FMHA will be able to expand and improve the organization that I co-founded.

I remain an active member of the group. The board has named me president emeritus and chief historian and I welcome that new role. Jeff DiBella and co-founder Bob Frederick will share leadership for the near future, ably assisted by Secretary Jim Pierce and Treasurer Larry Boyer. In the next year, the board will add members to

replace several long-term board members who have retired. Those new members will provide new perspectives, a positive for FMHA.

An honor for Jennings

Fort Miles is an ocean fort, protecting Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean from attack by sea. Using this as the background, I was asked by Bill Manthorpe (an FMHA member) to nominate the late Lee Jennings, co-founder of FMHA and the first Delaware State Parks historian, for the Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame. I welcomed this task. On May 21, 2021, Lee will be inducted into the Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame. Lee's widow, Linda, will attend with other family members. I was inducted into the Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame in 2016. The inclusion of two of the four co-founders of the seacoast Fort Miles as members makes quite a statement about the organization.

Early days

I first met Lee more than 20 years ago when I gave a lecture on Fort Miles at Rehoboth Convention Center in my role as a university history professor. More than 200 people attended, including many Delaware State Parks staff, sitting in the front row in their green and

brown logo shirts. They were led by Parks chief Chazz Salkin, sitting next to Lee. I was introduced to Lee when he and Chazz approached me after the lecture. They attended to hear about the fort because Lee in his new job was going to focus on the rehabilitation of the Fort Miles historical area and my lecture would help with planning.

Lee and I hit it off right away. He was focused and dedicated, did not suffer fools lightly, and was like a pit bull when he bit into a project. He did not like to fail and was a creative thinker. A natural problem solver and communicator, he was ready to tackle projects large and small. Many projects waited at the rundown Fort Miles complex: No heat, no water, no electricity, dark and damp inside, open to the elements. Time had not been good to the facility. Lee knew he would need help to get the work done. That's where I entered the picture.

Forming FMHA

Lee and I decided to form a nonprofit "friends" group to supply volunteers to work with state parks to develop the potential of Fort Miles. I had been contacted by the past mayor of Dewey Beach, Bob Frederick, who was interested in restoring one of two towers south of town (Towers 3 and 4) to increase tourism. Lee and I brought Bob into the conversation with Bob's friend and longtime Dewey Beach supporter, David Main. The four of us decided to blend our ideas and form the nonprofit Fort Miles Historical Association. David is a lawyer in the Washington, D.C., area and has a beach home in Dewey Beach, where he has been active for years. David prepared the nonprofit papers, and the organization was born in early summer 2003. In August

2003, beneath Tower 3 at Dewey Beach, we announced to a small crowd that the organization was formed and what we intended to accomplish.

Newspaper support

We had great support from two newspapers, The News Journal and Cape Gazette. The Journal's eastern Sussex lead reporter, Molly Murray, was very interested in all things maritime and water oriented. She took an interest in us, too, and wrote articles about our progress. We also received support from Cape Gazette and its editor, Dennis Forney. I had worked with them when I was the direct of education for Cape Henlopen School District (I had their children in school when I was principal of the Lewes school in the '70s and early '80s). It was natural that we would work together on Fort Miles news articles.

Forming a board to lead the organization was an important

step. I asked Steve Hyle, an early supporter, to be treasurer and my first cousin, Ted George, to be secretary. Both accepted, so with David and Lee and Bob we had a "merry little band." I asked one of my former students, Joe Johnson of Lewes and founder and owner of Shore Electric, to be a board member. I gave talks about Fort Miles locally and met Bev Dalecki at a luncheon at South Coastal AARP in Bethany Beach. Bev told me her father had been stationed at Fort Miles and I immediately realized that she, too, belonged on the board. Bev and Joe are still FMHA board members. We gradually added board members as interest gained momentum.

Early years

The early years of Fort Miles were very busy with rehabbing Battery 519 and the cantonment. Our first goal inside the bunker was to clean years of clutter, garbage and graffiti and make it presentable

for tours. That project occupied several years. Our second goal was to restore the barracks area to its 1943 appearance. That was a major effort because the military converted the barracks into small motel rooms for enlisted families at Fort Meade to vacation at the beach without having to pay for motel rooms. Each barracks was gutted and gradually brought back to its 1943 look. Lee found money to reroof them so they could be used for events. This project sounds simple, but it has taken years of work.

By 2006, we had improved the cantonment area. But much more work remained, particularly inside the dark and damp and critter-infested Battery 519. What was needed was far beyond the capabilities of the Fort Miles board. More on that in the next newsletter.

FMHA thanks members, welcomes newcomers

One indication of a successful organization is the growth of its membership. When Fort Miles Historical Association started in 2003, it had four members. Eighteen years later, our membership has grown to slightly less than 400. Our success is due largely to our volunteers, their financial support, their volunteer hours, and the encouragement and positive feedback they provide. The FMHA board would like to thank all our members for their support.

We welcome the following people who joined FMHA since January 2020.

Michelle Beilke
Shannon Kellogg
Robert Strobeck
Aren Breen
James King
Rose Taylor
Ann Cioffi
Daniel Kurtz

Donna Thouret
Randall Eich
Kim Leisey
Harry Thompkins
Albert Failla
Walter McCann
Karen van Es
Trevor Feist

William McDaniel
John Warren
Kendall Glanding
Jane Morris
Richard Wong
John Hendrickson
Marc Raphael
Carol Wright

Sally Hubbs
Bill Sharkey
Jim Zambito
Patricia Jankauskas
William Stanton

We thank these newest members and, of course, our long-term members for your trust in our vision of creating a world-class Fort Miles Museum of coastal defense. Your interest and support are essential to making the vision real.

Thank you for considering a Fort Miles Historical Association **membership.**

Building on our core base of over 400 members is critical to continue to enhance and expand the operations of the Fort Miles Museum. Our goal is to help create the finest World War II museum located at an authentic World War II coastal defense facility.

Yes, I would like to support the ongoing development of the Fort Miles Museum and Fort Miles Historical Area by joining FMHA.

To join/upgrade membership online and pay by credit card, **visit fortmiles.org.**

To join/upgrade membership by mail, **fill out this form.**

One name per membership. Thanks!

Membership Level _____ Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Mail this form with your check to:

FMHA, PO Box 52, Lewes DE 19958

Select Membership Level

Student - \$15.00 (USD) Subscription period: 1 year. Receives 10% Museum Gift Shop discount and newsletters. Applies to individuals ages 17 and under. Students 18 & older must apply for other levels of membership.

Captain 2021 - \$30.00 (USD) Subscription period: 1 year. Receives 10% Gift Shop discount and FMHA newsletters.

Major 2021 - \$100.00 (USD) Subscription period: 1 year. Receives Captain benefits + a Museum challenge coin upon joining or upgrading an existing membership.

Colonel 2021 - \$250.00 (USD) Subscription period: 1 year. Receives Captain benefits + a Museum challenge coin and a \$25 gift certificate for use in the Museum Gift Shop upon joining or upgrading an existing membership.

General Level, (Life Member) - \$1,000.00 (USD) Subscription period: Unlimited. Receives Captain benefits + 2 Museum challenge coins and a \$50 gift certificate upon joining or upgrading an existing membership. No further renewals are required to maintain this level.



Order Your Engraved Paver

For the Wall of Honor at the Fort Miles Museum

Now you can support the new Fort Miles Museum, receive a tax deduction and see your name or that of a loved one honored on a handsome brick paver. Each engraved paver will be displayed in Battery 519, America's first WWII museum at an actual military site. More than 10,000 visitors annually will see your paver. We will send a tribute card to whom you designate, telling them of this special honor.

The tax-deductible cost for each paver is \$200, including delivery and installation.

Engraving Instructions

Limit 3 lines of 16 characters per line. Spaces, punctuation and symbols count as characters

Line 1 _____

Line 1 _____

Line 2 _____

Line 2 _____

Line 3 _____

Line 3 _____

YES, I want to purchase a paver at the Fort Miles Museum. All donations are tax deductible. Enclosed is my check made payable to the Fort Miles Historical Association.

\$ _____ for _____ paver/s.

Name

Phone

Street

City

State

Zip

Email

Send orders to: Fort Miles Historical Association | Dr. Gary Wray, President
120 E. Wild Rabbit Run | Lewes, DE 19958



Fort Miles Historical Association
120 East Wild Rabbit Run
Lewes, DE 19958

