

Sub patches honor vets, service



Randy Metcalf/The Explorer, Sue Rainey and Dick Jarenski of Marana are reflected in a glass case holding the patches from each of the 52 submarines lost during World War II. The couple used blogs and websites to let people know they were in need of the 300-plus patches donated for their display, to be placed at a veterans' museum in Missouri.



Marana couple gathers markers for museum display

By Randy Metcalf, The Explorer

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When Dick Jarenski and Sue Rainey travel home from the USS Sterlet reunion this year, they'll have a little extra room in their car.

Paying homage to the submarines and crew members of World War II, Dick and partner Sue gathered every commemorative patch they could for a large display for the Veterans Museum in Branson, Mo.

For the past six months, since Dick noticed the Veteran's Museum in Branson didn't have anything to honor the submarine veterans, the couple has been collecting submarine patches. By visiting numerous blogs and forums on the Internet, Dick put out a call to as many submarine veterans and patch collectors that he could.

Within a month and a half, he had more than 300 patches.

Each patch collected honored a submarine that was either used for training, for missions or was commissioned for the United States' involvement in WWII. The period extended from the bombing on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941 to the end of the war on Sept. 2, 1945.

During that time, more than 350 submarines were used. Of the six displays of patches, one of the 4-foot by 6-foot displays is dedicated to the 52 submarines, 374 officers and 3,131 submarine personnel who lost their lives while serving during the war.

"We feel a great pride of being able to say, to the millions of visitors each year to the veteran's museum, we got to honor these veterans of WWII," Dick said. "It's a big honor to do this. And it's going to be a great sense of pride for everyone."

Below each patch sits a commemorative inscription naming the submarine the patch is honoring, its years of service and, if it is still afloat, where it is currently located. Sue spearheaded the task of getting the plaques made along with manually organizing and mounting the patches within the display cases.

On Oct. 2, from 2 to 4 p.m., the patches will be on display at the Wheeler Taft Abbett Sr., Library before being taken to Branson for permanent display.

Marana residents create patches display that honors World War II submarine veterans

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By Chuck Barth

Susan Rainey, left, Treasurer, and Richard "Ski" Jarenski, on the right, Commander, of the USS Sterlet Association, both from Marana, are spending their summer preparing a special display of submarine patches for permanent display at "Veteran's City," in Branson, Mo., later this year. Some of the display can be seen in the background.



MARANA — Richard "Ski" Jarenski, Commander, and Susan Rainey, Treasurer, of the USS Sterlet (SS392) Association, both from Marana, are spending their summer preparing in a special way for a reunion set to take place Oct. 3, in Branson, Mo.

It was during an August 2008 Reunion Planners Conference in Branson, known as the "Veteran's City," that Jarenski noticed that there was no tribute to the Submarines of World War II. He and Susan conceived of a display of patches from vets of submarines and their crews that served during World War II.

The Vietnam Veterans Museum in Branson gave the go ahead to house the project and Jarenski went to work with a passion.

"I put a memo out to all my submarine blogs in the United States that I wanted to do a patch display on World War II submarines," said Jarenski. "I didn't include nuclear boats because they don't have the significance that this display does. And we're losing so many World War II vets every day. They need to be remembered.

"There's nothing like this in the United States. There's no display of this magnitude," added Jarenski.

He credits Rainey, his spousal equivalent, with doing all the display work, but the raw materials had to come from somewhere and that job fell to Jarenski.

"I put a letter out to veterans and by the end of January this year veterans from all over the United States donated over 350 patches," Jarenski said. "They either bought them from a patch company or took them out of their scrapbooks.

"Many of these guys wrote tear jerking letters because they'd never thought about it, especially the World War II people had rooted it out of their minds," added Jarenski.

The display also includes a special collection of patches honoring the lost submarines and approximately 374 officers and 3,131 enlisted men still on "Eternal Patrol" lost at sea during their service.

According to the materials with the patches, from America's entry into World War II after Pearl Harbor in December 1941 until the Japanese Surrender in September 1945 U.S. submarines were responsible for sinking more than half of all Japanese tonnage, destroying most of the Japanese Merchant Fleet, isolating Pacific Islands, crippling Japanese industry and preventing resupply and reinforcement of island garrisons.

These numbers are more startling considering that submarine forces comprised less than two percent of the Navy.

The patches represent the diesel boats that sailed from World War II through action in Vietnam. That's where Jarenski served aboard the Sterlet. The boat is named for a Russian fish that lives in the black sea and produces his quality caviar.

All boats from this era are named for fish and they are technically known as boats not ships.

Before the trip to Branson the patches will be displayed for all in the area at the Wheeler Taft Abbett Library in Marana. Details of that event are being worked out.

Jarenski hopes to have members of World War II submarine crews from the Tucson area attend that event. He plans to invite Arizona State and Federal Lawmakers to the display. He especially wants to invite Senator John McCain whose father captained a submarine.

As far as the trip to Missouri, Jarenski got a break on an Enterprise rent-a-truck. Turns out that the owner and founder of the company flew fighter planes off the USS Enterprise aircraft carrier during World War II. The Navy man was eager to help and cut the cost to a real affordable level.