

PASS IN REVIEW

"Shedding Light on Idaho's Military History"



The official newsletter of the
Idaho Military Historical Society
and Museum | Summer 2015

Historic stone pillars moved to Memorial Park

Large, native rock pillars that flanked Gowen Field's main gate during WWII now mark the entrance to the base's Memorial Park north of today's main gate.

The pillars became part of the park on June 14 in a dedication ceremony sponsored by the Idaho Army National Guard that included a posting of colors by the U.S. Marine Reserve, remarks from WWII Navy veteran Robert Haga, and a formal dedication by retired LTC Mervin G. McConnel Jr., who sponsored moving the pillars to Memorial Park. Our reenactors also took part by firing a salute from the museum's two 75mm Pack Howitzers.



IMHS Photos/Mike Condrack



Left: (top) Gowen Field's main gate during WWII (Archive photo). (Center) Pillars being loaded for the move to Memorial Park. (Bottom) U.S. Marine Corps members who posted colors prior to the ceremony. Center: (top) WWII Navy veteran Robert Haga recounted his D-Day experience. (Bottom) Retired LTC Melvin G. McConnel Jr. Right: (top) Military leaders and guests during posting of the colors. (Center) Museum reenactors fire a salute from the 75mm Pack Howitzers. (Bottom) Reenactors (from left): Pete Glick, Russ Trebby, Rick Johnson, Bryan Johnson, Jeff Packer, and Ken Swanson.



Meet Vic Higgins, our new Curator of Collections

We are pleased to welcome Victor "Vic" Higgins as our new Curator of Collections. He took on the curator's job in March, replacing the late Charles Blake.

Vic is an Air Force veteran with service as a security police officer in Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield, in Germany and at Mountain Home Air Force Base. He joined the Idaho Air National Guard's 124th Security Forces Squadron in 1991 as a traditional guard member and later served full time while attending school.

He holds bachelor's degrees in history and political science from Boise State University, and is pursuing a master's degree in history.

"This is my dream job," Vic said recently. "I love history, and I get to work with the public." He added that the job does give him a reality check. "Museum staff members do everything here, opening the doors, giving tours and even cleaning restrooms."

He believes true military history is found in the personal experiences of every soldier, sailor and airmen, whether enlisted or commissioned.

"History often focuses on leaders such as Eisenhower or Patton while overlooking the 'rank and file' soldier," Vic said. "Their experiences—even the items they donate to the museum—tell their real stories. And their donations will help tell their stories to museum visitors for decades."

You're invited to attend museum board meetings

The museum's Board of Directors extends an ongoing, open invitation to anyone interested to attend and participate in monthly museum board meetings. The meetings are usually held the last Wednesday of the month at the Museum starting at 18:30 and last for about 60 minutes.

We want and value the involvement and help of our fellow museum supporters. We welcome both questions and suggestions. We don't claim to have all the answers, so we can always use the input,

ideas and enthusiasm of our board members and supporters.

Anyone interested in contributing as a future member on the board is encouraged to attend and learn how they might help to make the museum better and better.

If you are interested in attending, call Jeff Packer at 208-272-4841.



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MilitaryHistoryMuseum



IMHS Photo/Mike Condrack

Vic Higgins, our Curator of Collections, studies a rare German Army map showing Europe's political borders in 1943.

Vic looks for collections that include unique items. He explained that the museum does turn down some donations, most often uniforms and some hardware, because there are so many similar items already in storage waiting to be displayed.

"I have a hard time saying 'no' to donations of items we already have," Vic said. "They are often personal items that are almost sacred because they may possibly be the only connection the family has left with a loved one."

Look for Vic when you visit the museum. Ask him, "What's new here?" You will be glad you did.

PASS IN REVIEW

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Your comments or article suggestions are welcomed. Call the museum at 208-272-4841 during our scheduled hours or visit us on line at museum.mil.idaho.gov.

MG James S. Brooks, 1925–2015

Editor's note: Retired MG James S. Brooks, Idaho's Adjutant General from 1974 to 1985, passed away late last month at his home in Seattle. The following is an excerpt from his obituary published by the Lewiston (Idaho) Tribune on July 11, 2015:

Maj. Gen. James "Jim" Sprague Brooks was born in Los Angeles on Feb. 16, 1925, to Julian (Pat) and Louise (Sprague) Brooks. He was raised in Southern California by his maternal grandparents and died of natural causes at his home in Seattle on June 29, 2015.

Jim was raised during the Great Depression years but enjoyed the "laid-back" culture found in the beach community where the younger generation spent much of their spare time enjoying beach-related activities. He graduated from Newport Harbor Union High School in 1942 - just six months after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

After working for a year on the construction of Army camps, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Forces in April 1943. He went through the Aviation Cadet Program, and was commissioned a second lieutenant and awarded his Pilot Wings in August 1944.

After combat training, he was assigned to and flew with the 90th Bombardment Group in the Pacific Theater - the Philippines and Okinawa. Following the end of World War II hostilities, he served a year with military government in Japan, on the southern island of Kyushu. He returned to the U.S. and was released from active duty in October 1946.

In May of 1947, Jim moved from California to Boise to attend Boise



MG James S. Brooks, Idaho's Adjutant General 1974–1985.

Junior College. He married the former Loa M. Woolf that year and enrolled at BJC. At the same time, he enlisted as a "traditional" (part-time) member of the Idaho Army National Guard.

Following two years at BJC, he then transferred to Oregon State College, graduating in 1951 with a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering.

Upon graduation, he was offered full-time employment with the Idaho State Military Department. During the next 14 years, Jim served in many different assignments with the Guard, both civilian and military.

He was promoted to captain in 1951, to major in 1957, to lieutenant colonel in 1961 and colonel 1964. In 1964, he was also selected to be assistant adjutant general and chief of staff of the Idaho Army Guard and served in that position for 10 years. In December 1965, he was promoted to brigadier general. During this time, he returned to flying status in 1954 and flew for a total of 35 years of his career. He was awarded recognition as a Master Army Aviator.

In 1974, Gov. Cecil Andrus appointed Jim to be the adjutant general for Idaho and commander of both the Idaho Army and Air National Guard.

As additional duties he was also appointed as chief of the Bureau of Disaster Services and director of Selective Service for the State

of Idaho.

He was promoted and awarded federal recognition as a major general in June 1975.

During his tenure as adjutant general, Brooks also served on several committees at the national level, including chairman of the Army Reserve Forces Policy Committee with responsibilities to advise the secretary and chief of staff of the Army on Reserve and Guard affairs. He also served as aviation consultant to the chief of the National Guard Bureau.

His military decorations include the American Theater Service Ribbon, the Asiatic Pacific Theater

— See *James S. Brooks*, page 4

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Don't forget to renew your IMHS membership!

A renewal form is available on our webpage: <http://museum.mil.idaho.gov/Application.htm>.

Annual renewal rates are:

General Membership:	\$25
Senior (60 and older):	\$15
Associate (Spouse):	\$10
Student:	\$10
Lifetime Membership:	\$375

(Lifetime payment may be spread out over a one-year period)

The Idaho State Tax Commission offers a tax credit for contributions to Idaho's educational entities which include "An Idaho public or private nonprofit museum."

The Idaho Military Historical Society is such an organization and donations to the Society qualify for this credit. Please remember the Museum as you plan your donations for the year.

MG James S. Brooks from page 3

Service Ribbon with three battle stars, the WWII Victory Medal, the Philippine Liberation Medal, the Japan Occupation Medal, the Idaho Military Service Ribbon for more than 30 years of service, the Selective Service Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster (second award) and the Army Distinguished Service Medal - among other awards for a clearly long and distinguished career.

Jim retired in 1985, after 42 years of military service. During those years and following retirement, he was involved in many community activities.

He served as a member and rotating chairman of the Boise Airport Commission for 27 years, as an original member of the Boise City Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, as chairman of the Boise Mayor's Transit Advisory Committee, and as chairman of the Idaho Transportation Department's Public Transportation Advisory Council. He also served as chairman of the Boise County Planning

Advisory Committee, as a member of the Greater Boise Chamber of Commerce's Military Affairs Committee, a member of the Idaho Law Enforcement Planning Commission, a board member of the Boise City-Ada County Housing Authority, chairman of the Eagle Sewer Board and president of the Pacific Heights Homeowners Association in Eagle, Idaho.

Jim and his wife, Loa, raised three children: Georgia, Kerri, and J. Pat. Kerri passed away from cancer in 1983. Loa passed away in 2008.

Jim remarried in 2010 and is survived by his wife, Joan Brooks of Seattle; his sister, Patricia Furtado of Vista, Calif.; his daughter, Georgia Solls of Peoria, Ill.; his son, Pat Brooks of Portland, Ore.; his granddaughter, Nikki Morgan of Cordova, Tenn.; stepchildren Randy (Tina) Hodgins and Melissa (Roger) Breakfield; and five stepgrandchildren.

General Brooks was buried in the Idaho Veterans Cemetery in Boise, Idaho.

Museum volunteers needed

The Idaho Military History Museum has a great need for volunteers to conduct an effective museum and educational program. We are looking for volunteers with the following skills:

Museum Docents and Living History Volunteers

We need docents (tour guide/Museum host) for midweek and weekends.

WWII Reenactors

Our WWII Living History Group is looking for new recruits.

Guys: If you are at least 16 years old, have parental permission, and

completed a Hunter Safety Training Course, you are eligible to become a member of the group.

Gals: We are looking for female Living Historians to portray Military Nurses and Home Front Ladies to expand our public event displays. We are especially interested in forming a medical group that can staff our new military ambulance. If you are interested in becoming a WWII Living Historian Re-enactor, please contact us.

Carpenters

Display construction and diorama

— See *Museum volunteers*, page 6



Heroic Past... Proud Future

Endowment Donations

In memory of
Charles Brandenberry,
made by
Stan Herzinger, Frank and
Gen Boguslawski, and
Mary L. Leonard

In memory of
John Elliott,
made by
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Hollinger
and Ray Mathews

Remembering Major General Brooks ...

Written remarks from retired IDANG Col. William C. Miler on the passing of MG James S. Brooks:

"I came to know Jim Brooks as we developed the Idaho Military Museum at Gowen Field. He consented to an oral history session with our corporate secretary Gayle Alvarez. His vision and financial support were impressive and consistent

"Among the retired Idaho Army and Air Guard generals I've known, Jim Brooks rises above.

"His continued service to his nation, state, city and community are exemplary and illustrate the character of an outstanding man.

"I'm reminded of his avuncular nature, and was honored to be a minor friend to this superb soldier. Maybe it was the shared understanding between long-time aviators."

Our F-86 Sabre Jet: There's more to the story

By Bill Miller
IMHS Board Member

First, a footnote to a larger story: The engine from the Museum's F-86A aircraft will soon be sailing to South Korea. A buyer in Korea contacted IMHS Lifetime Member Bill Miller wanting to buy the IMHS' J-47 engine for an aviation technical school near Seoul. The IMHS Board agreed to sell the engine to Mr. Chan for \$5,000.

Arrangements were made to sell the engine through an intermediary, Steve Kaminsky of Boise, who then employed Navis Pack & Ship to crate and ship the engine to Incheon, South Korea, for delivery to the school. The picture above shows the engine on July 9, before it was trucked to Navis' Meridian facility for crating and shipment.

Now for the larger story: Our F-86—actually F-86F-2, serial number 51-2826—was one of a dozen F-86s that were part of an important test to evaluate using more powerful armament.

Early combat results in the Korean War found the Sabre lacking sufficient hitting power with its six .50 calibre machine guns. Many of the North Korean MiG-15s pursued and hit by the Sabre's guns weren't being seriously damaged or downed.

The Air Force quickly began a test program on 10 F-86H Sabres to add four 20mm cannons to replace their six .50 caliber machine guns. Under this "GUN-VAL" test, the specially-modified aircraft were redesigned with the aim of finding new armament that would inflict greater damage on the enemy's MiG-15s.

The test Sabres were configured with the German-designed "Maus-



Photos courtesy of Bill Miller

The J-47 engine from our F-86 Sabre Jet—the same engine that powered the aircraft on combat missions during the Korean War—has been sold to a Korean aviation school for \$5,000. The Sabre Jet has been repainted and re-marked to resemble another F-86 once flown by Idaho's Air National Guard.

er" cannon, a WWII design, and were modified to accommodate the 6-foot barrel and larger ammunition.

Stateside tests proved satisfactory, and in January, 1953 Korean combat operations began with the newly armed F-86F-2 Sabres.

Initially designated the T-160, the new gun was used in action over Korea in early 1953. Soon problems arose: at higher altitudes, the 20 mm cannon's muzzle blast disrupted the airflow into the Sabre's air intakes, resulting in engine flameouts. One Gun Val Sabre was actually lost after sustaining a flameout and the pilot couldn't get a restart.

Soon a cure for the muzzle-blast flameouts was found—a deflector device at the gun muzzle to deflect the muzzle blast away from the intakes, solving the problem, and the turkey shoot began in earnest.

Combat shooting scores of the Gun Val Sabres validated the Air Force's initial assumptions of lack of firepower. The following statistics show the Sabres' success with their new 20mm cannons:

- Gun Val flights – 368
- Combat missions – 307
- MiGs fired at – 41
- MiGs hit – 22
- MiGs destroyed – 6
- MiGs probably destroyed – 4
- MiGs damaged – 13–18

Our IMHS Museum's Sabre, serial number 51-2826, was a Gun Val Korean Sabre. Combat results were not recorded by individual aircraft; however, with 307 combat missions scoring 22 MiG hits, its certain that "826" hurt some MiGs.

Following the Korean War, the Gun Val Sabres were transferred to the states, and our museum's No. 826 eventually was assigned with the Colorado ANG's "The Minutemen" flight demonstration team. The picture of the Minutemen in diamond formation on page 6 shows #826 flying on the right wing. "826" was later sent to Cheyenne, Wyoming for disposition.

Some time after that, it was bought by the late Merle Maine of Ontario Oregon, adding to his collection of about 15 jet warbirds.

Merle sold it to Bill Miller, representing the Idaho Military Museum, and 826 was trucked to our museum site in 2012. The purchase of our F-86 purchase was funded by a grant from the J. A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation, for which we remain sincerely grateful.

Miller and a crew of volunteers shined it, repainted, and marked it to replicate Idaho ANG F-86A

— See Sabre Jet, page 6

Sabre Jet from page 6



Photo courtesy of Bill Miller

My apologies to any purists I may upset for re-marking No. 826 to show 190th Fighter Squadron identification.

Take time to inspect our Sabre Jet on your next visit. Our mission here is to demonstrate and preserve Idaho's military history. I believe we have met this goal in a "First Class" fashion.

Museum volunteers from page 4

layouts. Several display cases need to be repaired before they can be used to display artifacts.

Oral History Development

Lots of stories need to be recorded before it is too late. There is a lot of interest in this project. We need a project director.

Fund Raising

We are a non-profit organization trying to build up an Endowment and maintain day to day operations. We are also looking for experienced Grant Writers.

Library and Archival Operations

We need a computer savvy volunteer to help out. A basic knowledge of Excel would be helpful. We are also looking for an assistant

librarian.

Historians/ Historical Researchers
We have several items and projects in need of an historical researcher.

If you're interested in serving in the museum in any volunteer capacity, please email Gayle Alvarez at galvarez@imd.idaho.gov or call the museum at (208) 272-4841 during business hours: Tuesday through Saturday noon to 4 p.m.

If you are a military retiree, veteran, military history buff, or student who enjoys history and wants to help serve the community, give us a call or visit the museum. You may discover that we have just the volunteer opportunity you have been looking for.

F-51 'Mustangs,' the IDANG's first aircraft

Editor's note: The following excerpts are from the "Idaho Air National Guard 40th Anniversary" book published by the 124th Reconnaissance Group in 1986.

"Our first "Mustangs" landed at Gowen Field in November of 1946, three weeks after the 190th Fighter (Single Engine) Squadron—our first Air National Guard unit—was formed. The unit was lead by Col. Thomas G. Lanphier.

"We received a total of 25 P-51s, which became F-51s in 1947 when the newly-created U. S. Air Force reclassified pursuit aircraft as fighters.

"The single-seat 'Mustang,' known as the fastest single engine, propeller driven aircraft in the world, could exceed 400 miles per hour and had a service ceiling of 25,000 feet. The aircraft was armed with six .50 caliber wing-mounted machine guns, and could be rigged to carry bombs.

"Our F-51s, veterans of countless combat missions during WWII, carried 'Idaho ANG' markings for the next seven years, including the 190th's federal service during the Korean Conflict.

"The 'Mustangs' left Gowen Field in 1953, to be replaced by 25 F-86A Sabre Jets, the Air Force's first swept-wing jet fighter."



Above: An IDANG F-51 Mustang parked on the ramp at Gowen Field in 1950. It was one of 25 'Mustangs' flown by Idaho airmen from 1946 to 1953. Below: A Mustang, believed to be flown by Col. Thomas Lanphier, the IDANG's first commander, "buzzes" Gowen Field's flightline. (Archive photos)



Meet Elaine, Idaho's own 'Rosie, the Riveter'

By Lea Simpson
Special to the Idaho Military History Society

Yes, Pocatello, Idaho had its own genuine, real-life "Rosie the Riveter." Her name is Elaine Frances Bower Lopes.

She was born in Montesano, Washington, but her family moved to Cheney, Washington when she was a child to be near her paternal grandparents, the Bower family, who had a home on First Street. Her own family moved into a house on Second Street.

Her father was a logger in Montesano, but then got a job at the Cheney flour mill. She went to school in Cheney until the sixth grade, when her family relocated to Sandpoint, Idaho, where her maternal grandparents, the Allenson family, resided.

Her typical Northwest childhood ended when World War II broke out. Before graduating from Sandpoint High School, she decided to accompany a close girlfriend to Boise, Idaho by bus, where the friend was to marry a serviceman.

In 1943, the Civil Air Service was actively recruiting workers, and Lopes decided to join up after seeing her friend married off. She was 18-years-old.

She was immediately placed in a training program in Boise, then assigned to Pocatello Army Airfield, just outside of Pocatello, Idaho. It was a pilot and aircrew training base to the 476th Fighter Group initially, then later to the 265th Army Air Force. Lopes' job was to repair the damage done to the B-17 "Flying Fortress" and B-24 "Liberator" training planes. She riveted into place new aluminum plates of the skin covering the fuselage or the wings.

"The damage was mostly from rough landings. One plane was nicknamed 'The Cactus Clipper' due to its constant need for repair. If a plane had damage from bullet holes, they didn't come back to us," she mused. But due to the demanding nature of learning to fly the B-24s, there were some fatal crashes, although not very often.

Everyone working at the base took it hard when these happened and after witnessing the carnage, "The women would just sit with their heads bowed, their hands covering their faces. Later on, they found that



they couldn't prepare any dishes that required hamburger meat."

Lopes was constantly pestering one of the lieutenants in charge to allow her to go up in one of the planes.

She explains, "He was an old crab and got tired of listening to me ask to go up." So one day he agreed with a sigh, "Okay, go check out a parachute." She finally got her ride in one of the B-24s.

She and her female coworkers shared an apartment in Pocatello, about 10 miles away. "One of the girls had a car and we all drove out together."

The camaraderie amongst the civilian repair technicians and the active duty servicemen was good-natured and close. "They were good guys. They were just kids, you know, and so was I."

They used to joke around to relieve the unrelenting tension of wartime realities. One comment by the pilots that Lopes remembers in particular was, "Just rinse out the nose turret and get me another gunner."

One day, a base photographer was taking photographs of the operations and caught her working on top of one of the wings of an aircraft. "It wasn't a very flattering picture because I was bending over, riveting a plate, and my bottom was hanging out. I don't know why he took the picture ..." she says with a wry smile. She still has the photograph, packed away somewhere amongst her belongings.

After the war, Lopes returned to Washington State and got a job at the Cheney Telephone Company. She worked as a switchboard operator there for 11 years. She got married and had four children.

The friend's marriage that she went to Boise for didn't last long because the serviceman died in the war and was buried at sea. She has long since lost track of the friend.

Lopes is back in Cheney and has a quiet humility about the role she played in the war effort, although she is glad she was able to contribute. "I would do it again in a minute if I had to."

New veterans memorial dedicated in Parma

Military veterans and public safety officers from Parma who have lost their lives in the line of duty were honored in a public ceremony Monday, May 25 with the dedication of a new monument erected in their memory in Old Fort Boise Park. The event, hosted by the City of Parma, included performances by the Parma High School band, the school's singing group and remarks by Parma mayor Nathan Leigh.

The monument's centerpiece, a dark marble pillar inscribed with names of the community's fallen heroes, is surrounded by eight gray markers representing all branches of the military and local public safety agencies. Three flagpoles are set behind the marble pillar.

The new monument was designed by retired Senior Master Sergeant Albert Eickson, Parma's chief of police, and built by Parma-area volunteers, including several Eagle Scout candidates. Most of the materials were donated by local businesses.



Parma's Old Fort Boise Memorial honors military service members and public safety officers who have lost their lives in service to their nation and community. It was dedicated May 25, 2015 in a public ceremony in Old Fort Boise Park.

Idaho Military Historical Society

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"Shedding light on Idaho's military history"

