

Linda museum honors U.S. veterans

Sunday, November 5, 1995

Display is a tribute to men, women who defended freedom

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Appeal-Democrat

For many veterans, walking through the door is like a time warp. A culture shock that stirs deep seeded feelings of honor, comradeship and, sometimes, bitterness.

The Museum of the Forgotten Warriors is not an official archive of military hardware spun with facts and figures detailing the art of modern warfare.

Rather, as its name implies, the exhibit is a tribute to the men and women who served their country in bloody conflicts around the world.

The two-room gallery off North Beale Road near Beale Air Force base's main gate is the creation of Dann Spear, a non-veteran who opened his collection to the public 11 years ago.

"In a lot of ways this is healing (for veterans)," Spear said Saturday after about 30 people toured his pride and joy.

Spear's fascination with war memorabilia began at age 12. But the reality of war hit when he was a sophomore in high school as older friends were drafted and sent to Vietnam.

Many wrote back to him. The letters now hang for all to read.

Floor to ceiling glass cases lining the walls are crammed with yellowing photographs, handwritten letters from GIs, weapons, uniforms and one-of-a-kind mementos.

Spear uses the items to craft displays that tell the story of an individual's experience on the front lines, and, if they made it back, their homecoming. Many of the items have been donated by local veterans.



Craig Kohlruss/Appeal-Democrat
Vietnam War veteran Louis Patterson of Carmichael reads through the guest book in front of a wall of infantry patches and company insignias during a visit to the Museum of the Forgotten Warriors in Linda.

IF YOU GO

The Museum of Forgotten Warriors

Location: 5865 'A' Road, off North Beale Road in Linda.

Normal hours: Thursdays, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

► The museum will be open Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in recognition of



“When I went to military museums, I always wondered about the people things belonged to,” Spear said.

Sections of the windowless building are devoted to World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf War. Overhead, more than 130 models of various military aircraft are suspended from the ceiling. Spear also displays a few items from the Civil War era.

Spear’s newest display is dedicated to memorabilia from the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion groups and posts.

Outside, the curator’s front lawn is home to a Huey helicopter from the Air National Guard and a Marine Ontos mobile rocket launcher, both of which saw

Veterans Day.

Admission: Free.

For more information, contact curator Dann Spear at 742-3090

action in Vietnam.

Although he has lived most his life in Sutter, World War II veteran Leroy Thompson visited the museum for the first time Saturday.

“I finally made it — it’s awesome,” he said. “It’s much larger than I thought it would be. I spent an hour and didn’t get

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TIDURE TO VETS

medal and an accompanying congratulatory letter to Spear for display in the museum.

Five Vietnam War veterans from Sacramento, Stockton and Elk Grove drove up together Saturday to peruse and remember.

Jimmie Walker of Elk Grove, who served in the 1st Infantry Division in Vietnam during 1968-69, gave Spear a small clear glass bottle inscribed with Chinese letters that he brought back. A dark brown puddle of liquid called “Dai-Lac” — which still smelled pungent — stained the inside.

Spear said Viet Cong dipped their cigarettes into the bottle to absorb the stimulant. He said “Dai-Lac” gave enemy soldiers a boost of energy.

“This is really rare,” Spear said. “I’ve never seen this before.”

Spear is running out of room. But that won’t stop him. He’s already laid a concrete foundation to expand the museum.



Craig Kohlruess/Appeal-Democrat
Dann Spear, curator and founder of the museum, holds one of his first collection pieces: a metal eagle insignia sawed off a Nazi rail car by an American soldier in Germany during World War II. The piece was given to him by a friend when he was in the eighth grade.