

By Andrea Koskley  
Appeal-Democrat

**D**ann Spear obtained his first pieces of war memorabilia at age 10.

The only photograph documenting these first items shows him proudly standing next to a glass case containing some of the World War II pieces, including a canteen and a German helmet.

That photo is strategically placed on one wall at the Museum of the Forgotten Warriors, so it does not stand out amongst the thousands of pieces of war memorabilia. Spear owns and operates the museum on A Road, off North Beale Road, near Beale Air Force Base.

# MUSEUM: Veterans' stories behind items

From A1

veterans and their families to visit.

"I even have a flag sent to me from someone in Australia," Spear said. "I have also a photograph of Shoshana Johnson who was a prisoner of war with Jessica Lynch in 2003 while serving in Iraq. I've never met her, but it was neat that she sent me a picture of everyone after they were released along with a note explaining their experience."

Spear lives on property adjoining the museum. The museum is open from 7 to 9 p.m. every Thursday and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the first Saturday of each month.

Spear said in addition to the 55,000 pieces displayed, thousands more are waiting to share a veteran's story.

On exhibit at the museum are thousands of donated pieces and artifacts - from Civil War uniforms, flags and photos to items of the Iraq war. They're why the museum has become a "sacred ground" for veterans.

"Some call it their church," said Spear, 59. "There have been a lot of tears and a lot of laughs here." The most recent pieces are from two service members stationed at Beale who signed their uniforms after returning from Iraq.

Spear established the museum in 1985 to not only educate family and friends of veterans about the experience of war, but also to tell a story. "It's not about war here," Spear said. "It's about the people."

Spear is looking to expand the experience by adding a 6,000-square-foot educational library to the existing 3,000-square-foot building. The addition will cost about \$400,000.

"We want it to last into perpetuity," Spear said. "This is the best way we thought it could happen." To help his cause, Spear recently obtained nonprofit status from the federal government in order to begin collecting money through a variety of fundraisers to pay for the expansion.

There is no cost to enter the museum. Spear said he's taken money out of his own pocket in order to keep the museum going and allow hundreds of

Inside a framed glass case with rusted weapons and old combat boots, Bert Johnson's photo hangs.

In that 8-by-10-inch frame, there is a shot of Johnson taken 40 years ago. There are also two handwritten letters addressed to his family relating his experiences in Vietnam, as well as another image of him holding a machine gun.

"That leaf there is from a rubber tree," said Johnson, a frequent visitor to the museum. "I signed it and sent it to my mom. It was green when I sent it, now it looks like it came from the desert."

Johnson, 60, a Bay Area resident, uses a cane to navigate the aisles of the museum and show off the display containing his belongings. He first came to the museum six years ago.

"I was surprised to see a lot of this again," he said, referring to many of the combat items and uniforms he hadn't seen in awhile. "It's been over 40 years. There is a tremendous amount from all wars. There's a brotherhood in the military."

Each item donated to the museum is accompanied by a handwritten description and a photo of the veteran.

"I like the personal touch," Spear said. "Otherwise (each uniform) is just a piece of cloth. But here you have a name and a picture and a story. It's very unique."

Army veteran Wayne Addison said coming to the museum is his way of healing. "It doesn't glorify war," said Addison, 59, of Yuba City. "It does just the opposite. It brings back a sense of pride. Everyone's

here, from World War I to Korea."

From G.I. Joe dolls depicting some of the most memorable figures from all wars to propaganda promoting war efforts and soil samples of battlefields, the museum tells stories of those who've served.

Yuba County Supervisor Don Schrader gave a flag from his orderly room during his service in Vietnam and some other small items to the museum.

"I knew it wouldn't mean a whole lot to my kids," Schrader said. "But to give it to a collection like that, it's an opportunity to see it all together and it's an opportunity for the next generation to understand."

Schrader said the museum "is one of the best kept secrets of Yuba County."

Spear never served in the mili-

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## KNOW AND GO

- **HOURS:** 7 to 9 p.m. every Thursday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the first Saturday of each month. Special Veterans Day weekend hours: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday and Monday
- **LOCATION:** 5865 A Road, off North Beale Road, near the North Beale entrance to Beale Air Force Base
- **ADMISSION:** Free; donations are now accepted
- **CONTACT:** [www.museumoftheforgottenwarriors.org](http://www.museumoftheforgottenwarriors.org)

**See the video at**  
[appealdemocrat.com](http://appealdemocrat.com)

## VETERANS DAY EVENTS

**TODAY**

- G.I. Breakfast, Elks Lodge, 920 D St., Marysville, 7 a.m.
- Veterans Day Parade, D Street, downtown Marysville, 10 a.m.
- 59th Army Band California Army National Guard concert, Marysville Community Auditorium, 1919 B St., 3 p.m.
- Veterans Day Program and Dinner, Lions Community Fruitland Road, Loma Rica, 4 p.m., \$7 for adults, \$5 for children.

**MONDAY**

- Yuba-Sutter Veterans Stand Down Committee provides weather gear to veterans in need, American Legion/Eight Wars Hall, 17th and B streets, Marysville, 10 a.m.
- Blood drive in honor of veterans, Masonic Lodge Yuba, 501 Second St., Yuba City, 3 to 6 p.m. Conductor Source.

Although he hasn't witnessed war, Spear said, the museum is his way of giving back. "It's about the people. It's

grouned around it takes people to "This is a thank come home."

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