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THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK IN MICRONESIA The Past and the Potential

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War in the Pacific National Park, Guam

While almost 400 unique and discreet National Park Service units dot the landscapes and seascapes of the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Samoa, the Caribbean Sea and the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean, it is perhaps a modestly sized park in Guam that has the most ability to affect change and influence the international sphere.

In the National Park Service (NPS), each park is born out Congressional legislation; War in the Pacific National Historical Park's (NHP) 1978 enabling legislation directs the NPS to "commemorate the bravery and sacrifice of the Pacific theater of World War II and to conserve and interpret outstanding natural, scenic, and historic values and objects on the island of Guam for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations" (P.L. 95- 348, section 6a.) To implement this congressional mandate War in the Pacific NHP developed a management plan (1983) that defined the goals and objectives for the park unit. While every park has enabling legislation and management objectives, War in the Pacific NHP in Guam is quite different than the majority of other parks in that this park's objectives actually dictate

that it foster and work with other governments.

According to the park's General Management Plan, the park is "to cooperate with the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and other emerging Micronesian governments to provide training and professional assistance for park and recreation planning and management, and to receive advice and assistance" (National Park Service, 1983, p. 5.) The park's Statement for Management written in 1988, directs the park to "develop mutual training opportunities, information, and personnel exchanges with local agencies, Micronesia, Japan, and other countries of the Pacific Rim" (National Park Service, 1988, p. 45.)

While traveling internationally has become more difficult for federal employees in recent years, it has not entirely stopped War in the Pacific NHP from establishing some truly beneficial partnerships. One of these beneficial partnerships was with the Micronesian Seminar.

In 2003, Super typhoon Pongsona forced the permanent closure of the War in the Pacific's T. Stell Newman Visitor Center, museum, and administrative offices. Without a

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physical building to house the park's collection of artifacts and interpretive exhibits NPS employees were left with few resources to operate the park and had no ability to share the story of the Pacific theater with park visitors. Undaunted and determined to fulfill the park's mission, the park set about constructing a new museum, a virtual one, using the only tool available to them in the aftermath of the typhoon, the World Wide Web.

The interpretive story for War in the Pacific NHP encompasses all the locations and events of the Pacific theater during the Second World War. Unfortunately the photographs within the Park's collection focused almost exclusively on the events that occurred on the island of Guam during the recapture of the island from the Japanese (July-August 1944.) The collection contained few photographs of the events and battles of Micronesia, Melanesia, the Philippine Islands, Japan, and the attack on Pearl Harbor. In order to fully illustrate the battles of the Pacific theater, it would be essential for the NPS to locate other sources to augment and supplement the park's then narrowly focused historical photo collection.



Figure 1. Part of the WAPA exhibit on the Japanese occupation of Guam.

The Micronesian Seminar in Pohnpei is a well respected research institution located within the Federated States of Micronesia. The Micronesian Seminar actively collects photos from individuals, museums, historic preservation offices, colleges and universities, research institutes, and other sources and institutions in Japan, Micronesia, and the U.S. Mainland.

Hoping to benefit from the wealth of this photo archive, NPS staff contacted the Director, Fran Hezel. When the NPS informed Hezel that they had recently scanned approximately 1,200 historical images of Guam during WWII, he was eager to obtain copies of these public domain images to bolster his collection. While he was interested in acquiring copies of the NPS photographs, he was also generous to offer the NPS access to the Seminar's collection of World War II images from Micronesia.

In January 2004, as a researcher in residence at the Micronesian Seminar, the curator from the War in the Pacific NHP scanned more than digital 2,000 images in two weeks that photo-document the events of WWII in places such as Palau, Peleliu, Chuuk, Ulithi, Enewetak, Kwajalein, Majuro, Tinian, Saipan, and smaller and less known atolls of the geographic region of Micronesia. These images helped the park broaden its scope from a Guam-centric photo collection to an image archive that was rich and well-rounded with scores of images from each of the Micronesian campaigns. In exchange, the Micronesian Seminar also able to acquire 1200 scanned, high resolution images from the NPS collection to augment their holdings and this spared both institutions the time and expense of having to travel to the U. S. National Archives in Washington D.C. to obtain such images.

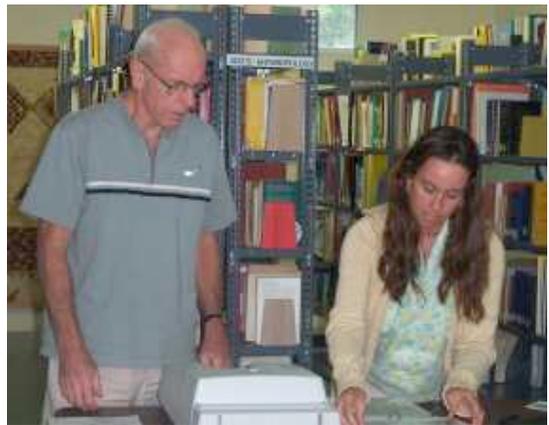


Figure 2. Collaboration between WAPA and the Micronesian Seminar in the collection of WWII images relating to Micronesia.

In addition to sharing images and partnering with the Micronesian Seminar in Pohnpei,

War in the Pacific NHP and the American Memorial Park also partner with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Museum of History and Culture to help prevent collection damage from natural disasters and to expedite the recovery process following such events. This May, the curator of the War in the Pacific NHP museum collection met with the Robert H. Hunter, Director of the CNMI Museum, to discuss resource-sharing for emergency preparedness and collection recovery. Both parties agreed that resource-sharing would be extremely beneficial to both the NPS and CNMI museums and it was decided that a memorandum of agreement would be crafted that would allow each museum, in the case of an emergency to store artifacts at the other museum. Having an emergency storage facility already identified before an emergency occurs would clearly expedite the recovery process and facilitate salvage efforts. In addition to allowing for emergency and temporary storage at one another's museums, the CNMI museum also generously offered to allow the American Memorial Park to use their cold storage to freeze artifacts and papers to help prevent mold growth following a disaster; the NPS in return invited all CNMI museum staff to participate in upcoming trainings that the NPS would conduct on Saipan such as emergency preparedness; the handling, moving, and packing of artifacts; and collection recovery and salvage. By these two small museums working in concert, they both can benefit from shared personnel, trainings, and resources in order to best prepare for, protect, and recover from disasters. While these are the two most recent examples of the national parks in Guam and Saipan cooperating with the organizations in the FSM and the CNMI, the possibilities are endless.

Given our common resources and shared challenges, one might imagine that in the future War in the Pacific NHP be able to broaden its scope by establishing a cooperative learning center or facilitate international partnerships for the study of Micronesian culture and historical preservation. Through such a center or program, NPS staff such as planners, cultural resource managers, anthropologists, and pres-

ervation experts would fulfill the NPS mission by offering technical expertise, support, and help for preservation and cultural heritage management projects. It is envisioned that through such partnerships managed within Micronesia the NPS would be able to effectively assist Micronesian Historic Preservation Offices with National Historic Landmark grants, provide assistance with National Register nominations, help with compliance, give guidance on conducting ethnographies, assist with archeology surveys or museum collection management, and possibly aid in other preservation activities in the Pacific. Given that Guam is the major transportation hub of Micronesia, it also lends itself to being a central meeting point and an attractive location to host preservation trainings, seminars, workshop, meetings, or symposiums. If the NPS were to assume a leadership role it could host trainings in which people from throughout Micronesia would benefit from the expertise of either visiting or permanently Guam-based preservation experts, ethnographers, archeologists, or curators. By channeling resources into a specific centrally-located site, it would allow other Historic Preservation Offices (HPOs), cultural based organizations, and other agencies to benefit from the technical expertise and trainings that this center of expertise may offer.

In addition to providing trainings, such center could also maintain a research library and database which would have each Micronesian HPOs' and other organizations' reports, plans, studies, and publications protected and accurately cataloged. By having a central repository, a current database, and having this database be on-line, cultural resource managers, researchers, and preservationists would benefit because they could access information and details about the preservation projects that have occurred in the region. This information would enable local professionals to discover how other entities may have had success in protecting, preserving, or rehabilitating similar resources. By pooling resources and consolidating trainings, information, and research at a central location, those tasked with preserving the resources of Micronesia would have contacts, information, and resources available rela-

tively easy on Guam as opposed to having to travel either in Hawaii or the mainland. While currently there is no identified funding or concrete plans for such a center. War in the Pacific NHP aspires to fulfill its mandate by providing or organizing technical expertise, coordinating pertinent trainings that could benefit cultural resource and heritage managers in the region, and helping consolidate and maintain resources so a corpus of resource management information is maintained and available to help people make informed resource management decisions within the Micronesian region.

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