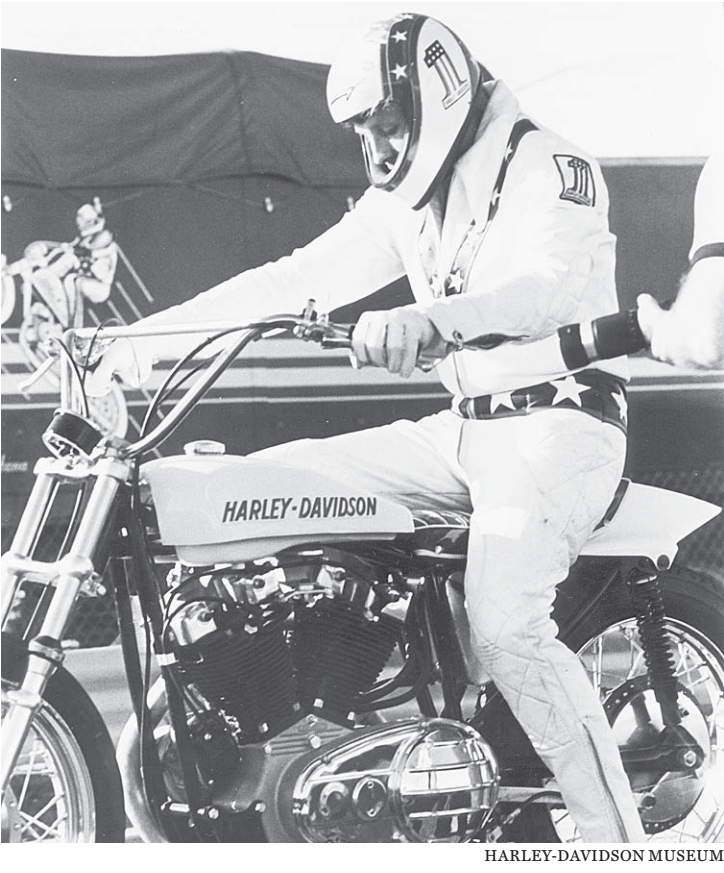




Evel Knievel on his Harley-Davidson XR750, his bike of choice.

Currents

Knieval on exhibit

Milwaukee's Harley-Davidson Museum hosts "True Evel: The Amazing Story of Evel Knievel" through Sept. 6. This exhibit, the first-ever retrospective of the daredevil's life (1938-2007), showcases everything from leather jumpsuits to the 16-foot half-motorcycle, half-rocket "Skycycle" Knievel used to attempt to jump Idaho's Snake River Canyon. This year marks the 35th anniversary of the stuntman's famous jump at London's Wembley Stadium, when he crashed while attempting to propel himself over 13 buses. Museum tickets: adults \$16, students, seniors, military, and Harley Owners Group members \$12; ages 5-17 \$10; under 5 free. 877-436-8738. h-dmuseum.com

A different Fenway Park vantage point

Get a good look at Fenway Park when you stay at the Hotel Commonwealth this summer, as part of its Fenway Family Fun package. Your deluxe Baseball Suite, which sleeps two adults and two children, overlooks the park. You'll receive four tickets for a "backstage" Fenway tour, Sox memorabilia, a family-friendly DVD selection, free popcorn delivered to your room, and help planning family activities during your stay. Not a fan? Sign up for the Friends of the Franklin Park Zoo package and see its new open-air Aussie Aviary (home to grass parakeets), and then visit the kangaroos and camels; your package includes four zoo passes in addition to the standard amenities. Fenway rates start at \$289 per room per night, zoo packages at \$349 per room, good through Sept. 30. 617-532-5019, www.hotelcommonwealth.com

KARI BODNARCHUK

Destinations

FOOD

Spuds eye festival spotlight

AUG. 27-28
BARNESVILLE, Minn.
Potato Days Festival: Your mother probably told you not to play with your food, but she never said anything about playing in it. The most exciting event at spudfest is mashed potato wrestling, but there are also potato picking, peeling, carving, cooking, and sacking contests; potato sack races, a potato sack fashion show, and a Miss Tator Tot pageant for contestants ages 4 and 5. Start with a potato pancake breakfast, then gorge on french fries, potato soup, potato sausage, German potato dumplings, and Norwegian lefse (a flatbread cooked on a griddle). *Various locations; admission free, some contest fees. 800-525-4901, www.potatodays.com.*

AUG. 18-22
DELCAMBRE, La.
Delcambre Shrimp Festival: This Cajun community 20 miles southeast of Lafayette bought their crustaceans from local shrimpers before the BP spill, and they're determined that the party will go on. Fais-do-do's (Cajun dance parties) take place most evenings and all day on Saturday, and the carnival rides let you tempt fate after filling up on boiled shrimp, fried shrimp, shrimp in picante sauce, and more. *Gate fee of \$5 charged Friday and Saturday. Festival Grounds, Highway 14, 337-685-2653, www.shrimpfestival.net*

AUG. 19-21
RED RIVER, N.M.
Hot Chili Days, Cool Mountain Nights: If this former mining town northeast of Taos isn't heaven for chile-heads, it must be pretty close. Three straight days of alt-country music led by Larry Joe Taylor (Texas's answer to Jimmy Buffett) are peppered with almost nonstop eating of spicy food. Saturday features three cook-offs: a Lone Star BBQ Society event, the Red River Red cook-off sanctioned by the Chili Appreciation Society International, and the New Mexico State Green Chile Championship. *Various locations; three-day wristbands for admission to all events \$52; individual concerts \$7-\$15. 877-754-1708, www.redriver.org*



POTATO DAYS

The mash pit accommodates wrestlers at Barnesville, Minn.'s, Potato Days Festival.

SEPT. 4-5
BUFFALO
National Buffalo Wing Festival: An awful lot of people must like their poultry deep-fried and piquant. Last year, 91,000 attended this festival and gorged on 40 tons of chicken wings, a bar food delicacy said to have originated in 1964 at Frank & Theresa's Famous Anchor Bar in Buffalo. Wing-makers across the country compete in the National Wing Sauce-Off. The US Chicken Wing Eating Championship is a big prize for competitive eaters. Non-competitive types can crunch at the concession stands. *Coca-Cola Field, 275 Washington St., \$5, under 9 free. 716-565-4141, www.buffalowings.com*

Events are sometimes canceled, rescheduled, or sold out; check online. Patricia Harris and David Lyon can be reached at harris.lyon@verizon.net. Read their food and travel blog at www.hungrytravelers.com.

PLAN AHEAD

SEPT. 25-26
LOS ANGELES
28th American Wine & Food Festival: This festival's firmament twinkles with both star chefs and movie stars in two days of fund-raising feedings to benefit the Meals on Wheels programs of Los Angeles. For \$750 per person (\$7,000 per table), you can join Wolfgang Puck and friends at the Chefs Grand Tasting Dinner at Spago on Sunday. Roughly 1,200 of La La Land's finest will gather on the Universal Studios backlot for the Saturday night feast with free-flowing libations and nonstop music (\$300). *Spago Beverly Hills, 176 North Canon Drive, Beverly Hills; Universal Studios backlot, 3900 Lankersheim Blvd., Gate 3, Universal City, 310-574-3663, www.auff.org*

PATRICIA HARRIS AND DAVID LYON

Georgia museum honors the battleground warriors

Exhibits salute infantrymen from York to Afghanistan

By Paul E. Kandarian

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

COLUMBUS, Ga. — There are telling moments to be found in the new National Infantry Museum just outside Fort Benning. One is inside a re-created Vietnam jungle exhibit, a dark and moist place of near stifling humidity. Helicopter sounds throb overhead, and veterans' voice-overs on small video screens provide commentary on the horrors of battle.

Watching on a day I visited were fresh-faced young infantrymen, somberly taking in the images of war far from the grounds upon which they hone their battle skills at Fort Benning, site of the US Army Infantry School. The soldiers watched silently, separated from the soldiers on the screens by 45 years but forever connected by the shared purpose of mission and duty.

The US infantryman finally has his due in this museum, a \$100 million facility that opened last year, with Colin Powell, former secretary of state and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, giving the keynote speech.

"This site is much more than a mere memorial, and the word museum is entirely inadequate to describe it," said Powell, who trained at Fort Benning as a young officer. "It is the only attraction in the country to tell the story of the infantry from the perspective of the soldier."

The museum, with a large rounda entryway and a towering stone column topped by a charging bronze infantryman, is nearly 200,000 square feet of exhibit, classroom, and attraction space. It is full of thousands of artifacts that trace the history of the US Infantry since its beginning 235 years ago.

The most moving exhibit would seem to be the first, "The Last Hundred Yards," a slightly inclined, enclosed space of 300 feet. A longheld military concept is that the last 100 yards of any battle belong to the infantrymen who must charge that last, dan-



PHOTOS BY PAUL E. KANDARIAN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The National Infantry Museum opened a little over a year ago. Its signature exhibit is "The Last Hundred Yards," which features dioramas of eight major infantry battles, from the American Revolution to Operation Desert Storm (below).

gerous span to finish the battle.

It is the museum's signature exhibit, with lifelike scenes from eight major infantry battles, starting with the American Revolution and finishing with Operation Desert Storm. Here are small reenacted battle dioramas that feature cast figures of infantry soldiers bearing authentic weapons, a World War II glider, and Huey helicopter. Haunting music from the Mel Gibson movie "We Were Soldiers" filters down from above.

Here you will see World War I doughboys on rubble-strewn streets, old war footage playing on broken buildings. There is an Army paratrooper displayed at the recapture of Corregidor in 1945, war film playing within his parachute, and across from that, soldiers scaling a rock wall at Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944, with vintage film played upon it. Just up the walkway is a display of bayonet-bearing infantrymen at Millett's bayonet attack in the Korean War, and beyond that a Huey helicopter landing in a Vietnamese field.

Beyond "The Last 100 Yards" are displays of training of modern infantrymen, with exhibits of weaponry and a massive blue-lighted display, "Today's Commitment," showing where infantrymen are found around the world,



including Afghanistan, Iraq, South Korea, Kosovo, the Philippines, Germany, and Italy.

Downstairs are six massive exhibits, The Era Gallery, starting with "Securing Our Freedoms (1607-1815) and ending with "The Sole Superpower" (1989-present). It is a largely apolitical showing of the United States' military might throughout the ages, with a stunning assortment of war memorabilia.

In the World War II exhibit portion of "A World Power" (1920-47), for example, you will see such spoils of war as Nazi commander Hermann Goering's jewel-encrusted baton and a burned copy of Hitler's "Mein Kampf," with the Nazi leader's

speeches raging on a loudspeaker as he whipped up the winds of hate and war.

There is also a bronze bust of Hitler on display here that Allied troops modified into a trash can, an epaulet from the uniform of Benito Mussolini, the Fascist dictator of Italy, and Japanese samurai swords. In "The Cold War" gallery are massive chunks of the Berlin Wall.

Other "wow moment" memorabilia include the service cap and ribbons of the most decorated soldier of World War II, Audie Murphy, and the original letter from General Omar Bradley, his "Top Secret Orders of the Day, June 4, 1944," two days before the invasion of France. In it he

If you go . . .

National Infantry Museum
1775 Legacy Way
Columbus, Ga.
706-685-5800
www.nationalinfantrymuseum.com
Admission is free.

tells soldiers of the 1st Army they are about to be part of "the greatest amphibious operation ever undertaken by any army" and that "the future of this war, the future of our country depends on your success." Next to it is a letter from Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower telling soldiers, "We will accept nothing less than full victory," which history shows is what was achieved.

Also in the museum's grand hall is the "Hall of Valor," a glass-enclosed space dedicated to nearly 1,500 Medal of Honor recipients from the Army Infantry, each honored by a small plaque on the walls. A computer kiosk allows visitors to look up full citations for each honoree.

Outside the museum proper, the homage to the infantryman continues at the five-acre parade

field with grandstand seating for 2,100. Within the ground is soil taken from battlefields in each of the country's wars, from Yorktown through Afghanistan, the soil spread by descendants of those who fought in those wars, or veterans of more recent ones.

The facility first hosted the infantry graduation on its parade grounds last year. Jerry A. White, a retired Army major general and president of the National Infantry Association, said then: "When these young men march proudly past us they will be literally walking on the same soil as where their forefathers fought and died. It is a tangible connection to the legacy they have just joined."

Just beyond the parade ground is "World War II Street," a collection of vintage buildings from Fort Benning, two of which were used by General George S. Patton Jr. before he left for the North African campaign in World War II.

There had been a museum at Fort Benning, but it was a makeshift one housed in an old hospital building, said Cyndy Cerbin, director of communications. The city of Columbus was instrumental in making the museum happen, she said.

"City fathers said they needed to think big and they did," she said. "Many feel this museum is Smithsonian quality."

It also features an IMAX theater and full-service restaurant.

The museum is a unique partnership of the nonprofit National Infantry Association Foundation and the Army, the former managing the facility, the latter owning all the artifacts. A National Armor Museum is in the works, Cerbin said, which could coincide with the Army's armor school moving to Fort Benning from Fort Knox, Ky.

The National Infantry Museum is a place at once chilling and uplifting, testimony to the horror of war and the courage of the infantry. Visitors may find themselves walking through it with a sense of national pride.

"This is what we owe to those who went before," Powell said at last year's dedication ceremony. "This is the place. This is the home. This is their legacy."

Paul E. Kandarian can be reached at kandarian@globe.com.