



## CAMP GORDON JOHNSTON ASSOCIATION, INC.

Post Office Box 1334 Carrabelle, Florida 32322  
(850) 697-8575 [campgordonjohnston.com](http://campgordonjohnston.com)

### The AMPHIBIAN JAN/FEB 2025

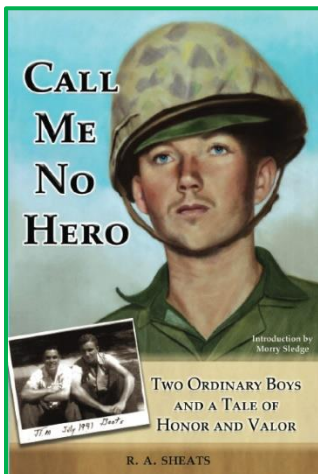
January and February are rather quiet on the forgotten coast. Our regular seasonal visitors arrive after the holidays, occupying the RV parks and rentals to escape the cold of northern climes and enjoy the mild Panhandle winter. Festival season starts in late January and runs until mid-May. The Camp Gordon Johnston WWII Museum partners with the Crooked River Lighthouse and the Carrabelle History Museum at these festivals to promote the fascinating history of Carrabelle. The Museum had 267 visitors in January and 483 visitors in February!



**Featured Serviceperson:** Wilburn "Curley" Messer, (1925-2015) came to Carrabelle from Kentucky to help build Camp Gordon Johnston, then trained here with the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in 1943. After serving in the Pacific Theater with the 38th Curley married his wife Audrey Riley and served Carrabelle and Franklin County for decades in many elected and appointed positions, ending with serving as Mayor of Carrabelle until his death at age 92. Salute!

**Featured Artifact:** Walther P-38 Pistol donated by John Winn of Tallahassee.

We certainly have weapons in our collection, but not many with a known story and collector. This impressive German pistol included the certificate of authorization issued by the US Forces European Theater, issued 28 September 1945.



On February 23, Curator Manny Gass and Archivist Lisa Keith-Lucas represented the Camp Gordon Johnston Museum at the 80th Anniversary Commemoration of Monticello Native Ernest "Boots" Thomas's raising of the American flag on Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima. Thomas and his comrades raised the first flag; the second and bigger flag was captured by photographer Joe Rosenthal. Thomas was killed in combat shortly after this flag was raised. A book about Thomas and his best friend Jim Sledge, Call Me No Hero, was published by R.A. Sheats in 2016. We had the honor of hearing Sledge speak at this event.

**Did you know?** In late May 1944, the British Intelligence enlisted an Australian soldier and actor named M. E. Clifton James (April 1898 – 5 May 1963) who looked just like Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery to learn his speech and mannerisms, dressed him as "Monty" and flew him to Gibraltar. They made sure informers saw him and let slip that he was on his way to North Africa. The Germans were convinced that an invasion was not imminent, as Montgomery would most certainly be in command of ground forces in such an operation.



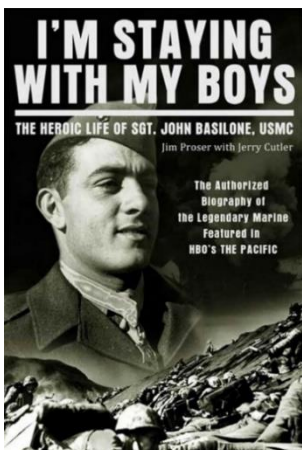
The "Real Monty" Field Marshal Montgomery in 1943.



Clifton James posing as Field Marshal Montgomery.



Clifton James posing as Field Marshal Montgomery in Gibraltar in 1944.



**Featured Book:** I'm Staying With my Boys  
The Biography of Medal of Honor Recipient John Basilone USMC, who was killed on Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945.

Basilone was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions on Guadalcanal. He was returned to the US to help with the War Bond campaign but insisted on being deployed with his men. Basilone's story is featured in the miniseries, The Pacific.

**March Exhibit:** Women in WWII March is Women's History month.

**Coming April 1:** The Holocaust. Every year the museum puts out a special exhibit to remember the victims of the Holocaust, the genocide of six million Jews and of millions of other Holocaust victims by Nazi Germany and its allies. This will be our fifth year showing this exhibit. It is important to teach this history to future generations so that the mistakes of the past are never repeated

