

## PRESS RELEASE

### One-of-a-kind WWII memorial dedicated on Pacific Island of Yap, July 2010

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Yap Island, FSM, August 27, 2010:** - The Yap Visitors Bureau (YVB), Yap State Government, U.S. Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), U.S. Navy, and Missing Air Crew Project (MACP) together dedicated one of the most unique World War II memorials ever on July 27, 2010 on Yap Island. The newly constructed memorial displays the actual wreckage of an F6F Hellcat shot down over the island on September 6, 1944. It pays tribute to the plane's pilot Ens. Joseph Cox of Sand Point, Idaho as well as the hundreds of other Americans lost near this Pacific Island during WWII.



Ens. Joseph Cox memorial dedication on July 27, 2010, Yap Island, FSM.

In the historical context of WWII and the Pacific theatre American losses near Yap (now part of the FSM) were substantial, yet continue to be overlooked even today.

Strategically located between the Philippines and Guam, Japanese occupied Yap was targeted almost daily from June 1944 to August 1945 at the cost of hundreds of American men, 110 of which remain classified as missing in action.

Pat Ranfranz of Cameron, Wisconsin, founder of the MACP, has spent over 20 years researching Yap during WWII and the stories behind each airman and his mission, hoping to preserve their memories for generations to come. Pat's uncle is among the airmen that remain missing. Each year since 2005, Pat and his wife Cherie have traveled to Yap looking for missing American planes. They have located and recovered numerous aircraft over the last five years and continue to seek out new sites during each visit.

Pat originally located the Ens. Joseph Cox F6F Hellcat crash site in October 2005. The plane is one of 36 that were shot down near the island during WWII. Pat worked with the YVB to save Joseph's wreckage from the expanding Yap landfill in 2008. It was relocated to government held land and displayed on a concrete pad next to an all-weather sign and memorial marker describing the man, the plane, and the mission. "It is truly one of the most unique wrecks and now memorial sites in the Pacific," explains Pat. "After the war, most of the wreckage throughout the world was picked over and removed. Fortunately in this case, the Yapese have respected the wreckage as grave sites and taken care to preserve them and remember the American men who lost their lives during the war."



Pat Ranfranz and Mark Noah (History Flight Organization) stand near the Ens. Cox original crash site in 2008 before the wreckage was moved to government land to be spared by the approaching Yap landfill.

The memorial dedication, attended by hundreds of Yapese, took place near Yap's Public Works building on Tuesday, July 27, 2010. Among the dignitaries attending were Yap Governor Sebastian Anefal, Lieutenant Governor Tony Tareg, U.S. Ambassador to the FSM Peter A. Prahar, U.S. Navy Civilian Affairs Commander Bryce Gibb. Most importantly in attendance were three

members of the Ens. Joseph Cox family, including his 90 year old brother Ellis Cox, as well as two relatives of another soldier, Ens. Howard Holding – all of whom made the sixty-hour round trip to attend the dedication. Ens. Holding collided with Ens. Cox the day they were shot down. Pat Ranfranz recovered the Ens. Holding wreckage in 2006.

The touching memorial dedication included statements by many of the dignitaries listed above and the rendering of military honors and presentation of American flags to the Cox and Holding families by Cdr. Gibb. Marble memorial plaques were also given to each family as a remembrance by Pat Ranfranz. Ambassador Prahar took time to recognize the Yapese lost in the recent conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan. "Although it has been almost 65 years since the men were shot down and killed, it was hard to find a dry eye throughout the memorial dedication," Pat recalls. "Watching the 90 year old brother of the pilot, Ellis Cox, see the wreckage of his brother's plane for the first time is something I will never forget. It makes all the research, search trips and time and money worth the effort even if we never find another missing American plane. I hope one day soon we can hold a similar memorial dedication for my missing uncle, T/Sgt John R. McCullough, but we still need to find the plane."

Pat Ranfranz expresses his gratitude for the work that was done to make the memorial dedication doable. "This would not have been possible without the work done by the people of Yap and the Yap Visitors Bureau to save and preserve the American crash sites and wreckages that remained after the war. Too many people have forgotten the men who gave their lives for our freedom during WWII. This memorial and others on Yap Island will help to immortalize the forgotten and bring meaning to their sacrifices."

The YVB and MACP have been working together for several years to preserve and remember the American airmen who lost their lives over Yap during WWII. For more information about the memorial dedication and Missing Air Crew Project, visit: [www.missingaircrew.com](http://www.missingaircrew.com) or [www.visit Yap.com](http://www.visit Yap.com).

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- Ens. Cox Memorial Dedication pictures from July 27, 2010
  - <http://www.missingaircrew.com/trip/mem10/>
- U.S. AMBASSADOR PARTICIPATES IN WWII MEMORIAL DEDICATION, DISCUSSES US-FUNDED EFFORTS IN YAP Press Release:
  - <http://www.missingaircrew.com/pdf/Media-USAmbassador.pdf>
- About the loss of Ens. Cox and Ens. Holding: Yap Island Mission Loss – 6 September 1944
  - <http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/6sept1944.asp>
- Finding the wreckage in October 2005
  - <http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/album/hellcat1/>
- Revisiting the wreckage in September 2006
  - <http://www.missingaircrew.com/trip/american5/>
- Saving the wreckage from the landfill
  - <http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap2008/cox/index.asp>
- Yap Island WWII Tourism and Memorial Project and setting up the Ens. Joseph Cox, F6F-5 Hellcat Memorial Site
  - <http://www.missingaircrew.com/yvb/>

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