

Military establishment

HUP TWO THREE FOUR, THIS MUSEUM IS ALL ABOUT WAR

James Campbell came to town recently to talk about his new book. Many authors come to town to talk about their new books. Most do this in bookstores. Some talk about their books in the studios of local TV and radio stations.

Campbell, however, came to the Pritzker Military Library, a relatively new addition to the city's cultural landscape, but one that has hosted all manner of events since its opening in 2003: more than 225 of them, including literary gatherings, discussions with Medal of Honor winners and Chicago's only monthly public affairs forum on military issues hosted by John Callaway.

Campbell's book is titled "Ghost Mountain Boys: Their Epic March and the Terrifying Battle for New Guinea—The Forgotten War of the South Pacific." It tells of the men of the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Infantry Division who were assigned to march 130 of the most inhospitable miles imaginable across New Guinea in 1942. Untrained in jungle combat and without maps, basic survival equipment or medicines, the soldiers were doomed. More than 80 percent of them did not make it. The book is finely detailed, gaining emotional punch from the personal accounts of those who survived the journey and letters from those who did not.

Ninety people showed up for Campbell's talk (among them those in Osgood's photo) and Ed Tracy was pleased.

He is the man who got the museum up and running and directs its ambitious programming, which fulfills the facility's slogan, "More than a library... it's an experience." The library and its programs are free, though you must be a member to borrow materials. The hours are weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Located in the building on Fairbanks Court that once housed the legendary Chez Paree nightclub, the handsome, two-story facility was founded by James Pritzker, a billionaire member of the notable—and notably philanthropic—Chicago family and a former Army colonel.

His mission was "to acquire and maintain an accessible collection of materials and develop appropriate programs focusing on the Citizen Soldier in the preservation of democracy."

So far, so good. There are books in the library, 26,000 by last count, and a large collection of artwork and posters, such as the striking one



in Osgood's photo; diaries, letters and journals of soldiers; thousands of photographs and glass negatives; coins, medals and stamps; and other materials valuable to researchers and fascinating to the rest of us.

The surroundings are, as you might expect, very library-like but the place is also marvelously high-tech, with online programming, pod-casting and all the other elements of this modern media age. It has also produced nearly 100 shows that have aired on WYCC-Ch. 20.

Last year the library won a Webby Award, a prestigious international prize honoring excellence on the Internet. And lest the printed word be ignored, last year saw the presentation of the first annual Pritzker Military Library Literature Award for lifetime achievement in military writing.

It was won by Civil War historian James M. McPherson. He received a citation, a medallion and the not inconsiderable sum of \$100,000. □

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