

SHORT HISTORY OF THE ALASKA VETERANS MUSEUM (AVM)

We began in 2001 with a dream, a few VFW Brothers and sisters and other concerned citizens. They wanted a museum to tell the stories of individual Servicemen and Servicewomen, as well as showcase the military's contributions to Alaska, using weapons, uniforms, artifacts, photos, posters, models, dioramas and more. Forest and Cathy Brooks had helped form a similar museum in Centralia then Chehalis, WA and were ready to help start one here.

AVM became a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation in 2002 and that's also when we were awarded our Alaska Business License. It took 10 years to build support and name recognition, advertising on holidays, marching in parades, supporting local community events to get the name out there, briefing over 212 various community groups. Finally in spring and summer 2008, we built our first public exhibit on "Castner's Cutthroats: Forgotten Heroes" at the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. We debuted it with a panel discussion featuring the last three living Alaska Scouts, Lt Earl Acuff, Sgt Ed Walker, T5 (Corporal) Billy Buck, and author Jim Rearden. We also paid tribute to T5 (Corporal) Buck Delkettie who had passed away prior to our exhibit, but whose oral history we had collected (playing at our museum are clips from all four of the Scouts we interviewed). Buck Delkettie's stories were what gave rise to the idea of setting up an exhibit in a museum to call attention to our quest. The exhibit was to be up six months but remained there for 19 months and the Anchorage Museum's Historian, Marilyn Knapp, said it was the most popular local exhibit the museum had had. She said when it was taken down "I miss my old friend there in the atrium - it was a great exhibit. School students loved it"

We followed that success with exhibits at the Alaska Aviation Museum on the Aleutian Tigers (the 11th Fighter Squadron), AVM assistance on the 11th Air Force Warbirds, one on the USS Grunion which featured photos and submarine artifacts, a large model of the submarine and more, plus a movie about finding her after 65 years and a Skype session with the skipper's eldest son. At the Native Heritage Center we had an exhibit on the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG) and Major Marvin "Muktuk" Marston, with many of his items on loan from the Anchorage Museum. We also put up displays on the Aleutian Campaign: A Forgotten War at the Chugiak-Eagle River Library and at the Loussac Library. We placed and dedicated the ATG statue on 11 Nov 2011 in front of AVM. Winter hours: open Wed-Sat 10-5; summer Mon-Sat 10-6.

On April 17, 2011 we opened in a 1,433 square foot storefront at the 4th Ave Market Place, 333 W 4th Ave, Ste 227, Anchorage; 677-8802. We have now welcomed over 2,100 visitors and we're waiting to greet YOU! We need shakers and movers and folks with power, prestige, and money to help us "grow" our museum. We are always searching for Board members who can help staff a shift or two a week (3.5-7 hours), raise funds and find volunteers for us, as well as other opportunities.