

World War II life at Fort Miles comes alive

With weapons and vehicles, re-enactors set the stage for historical, educational event

By Glenn Rolfe
Sussex County Post

LEWES — Sporadic gunfire echoed across Cape Henlopen State Park Saturday as living history came alive during Delaware Goes to War: Victory in Europe at the Fort Miles historical area.

Hundreds of people from Delaware and beyond witnessed weapons demonstrations, Battery 519 plotting demonstrations, World War II music performed by the W.W. Tunes and the re-enactment of the surrender of German U-boat U-858, plus other historical attractions.

Numerous military vehicles and uniformed German and American soldiers abounded at the event, staged through the concerted efforts of the Fort Miles Historical Association, the 261st Coast Artillery and 1252nd Service Command living history groups and Delaware State Parks.

Together the 261st and 1252nd form the Harbor Defenses of the Delaware.



Members of the W.W. Tunes provide the 1940s/World War II musical backdrop at Delaware Goes to War: Victory in Europe staged Saturday at Fort Miles in Cape Henlopen State Park. Sussex County Post/Glenn Rolfe

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Spectators of all ages got a close-up, hands-on look at vehicles and weapons during Delaware Goes to War: Victory in Europe held last Saturday at Fort Miles in Cape Henlopen State Park.



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World War II weapons demonstrations drew large crowds during the Delaware Goes to War: Victory in Europe event at Fort Miles.

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Morning drizzle apparently did not deter attendance.

"It's been a great day," said Mike Rogers, 261st Coast Artillery commander. "It's one of our bigger years."

With about an hour remaining in the scheduled six-hour event more than 700 patrons had toured Battery 519.

Special presentations focused on Delaware military history, Civil Air Patrol during World War II, Navy presence at Cape Henlopen and plans for USS Mis-

souri's 16-inch gun barrel.

The mission is to tell Fort Miles' story of World War II through the eyes of the common soldier. While no German soldiers were actually at Fort Miles during WWII, re-enactors from Grossdeutschland provided that perspective.

Fort Miles was declared operational just before the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. It was built to defend Delaware Bay and Delaware River and protect domestic shipping from enemy fire, mainly the German surface fleet.



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Mike Gadman of Hawley, Pa., a German soldier re-enactor with Grossdeutschland, shares information on this semi-automatic weapon.