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Holiday Jubilee An era gone by

- **Re-enactors and history buffs commemorate World War II and Pearl Harbor Day at the Museum of the Cape Fear's annual event.**

By **Michael Futch**

Staff writer

Fred Burt wore olive drab in the raw cold, the bright sunlight filtering through the bare limbs of the trees that stand behind the Museum of the Cape Fear. This Fuquay-Varina farmer was dressed in Army paratrooper garb, circa World War II.

Burt wore a standard M1942 paratrooper uniform with field gear, jump boots and an overseas cap on his head. A period GI haircut and wire frame eyeglasses completed the nostalgic look.

The heavy, black leather gloves that the 56-year-old wore were of the 21st century variety.

"I ought to have these gloves off," he said, "but it's too dagdum cold."

Burt was one of the half-dozen World War II American GI re-enactors looking to re-create an era gone by on Sunday afternoon during the eighth annual Holiday Jubilee. Because the event fell on Dec. 7, folks with the Museum of the Cape Fear Historical Complex anchored this year's event around a Pearl Harbor Day theme.

Sunday marked the 67th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which led to this nation's entry into World War II.

In years past, visitors to the Holiday Jubilee could dip candles, make old-fashioned toys and sample treats concocted from Victorian recipes. Fred Burt had been to one or two of those, too, only he came as a Confederate re-enactor for the Civil War encampments.

This time traveler is what Holiday Jubilee organizer Heidi Bleazey called "a double-dipper."

"I just enjoy doing it," he said. "I've got the time. I still do the Civil War. If it came down to it, I'd do the Civil War."

On this occasion, though, museum visitors revisited the 1940s.

They could gawk at vintage Army vehicles and equipment on the grounds from the war years, listen to a live big band perform the still-beloved sounds of that time, and visit the museum and 1897 Poe House while in the mood.

The 12-piece band played under a tent that was intended to re-create a USO setting "for the boys" along the '40s. Some people even danced on a patio at the back of the Poe House as the Lumberton-based Second Time Around played such numbers as "String of Pearls" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" along with holiday favorites like "Winter Wonderland."

Sixty-one-year-old Ron Simpson ate it up.

He's a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel. His father, Bill, served as an Army master sergeant during the second World War.

"It's Pearl Harbor Day, and I felt like honoring my dad and the World War II veterans," he said, just before the band took a break.

"World War II was a big event. I think it led us to where we are today and our freedom. I don't know where we would be today if we hadn't won that war," Simpson added.

Ian Armstrong calls himself a World War II history buff.

He's 10 years old.

On Sunday, Ian and his mother, Jami, were checking out the refurbished Army vehicles and all the soldier accessories. The centerpieces included a classic Harley-Davidson motorcycle, an old Army Jeep and a 2½-ton Army truck known in military circles as "a deuce and a half."

A long paratrooper jacket, a reproduction of those worn during WWII that he got in July, nearly swallowed the boy up. He saves his allowance to buy the occasional piece of equipment from that time period. His collection of U.S.-issued Army equipment includes an M-1 Garand ammo cartridge belt, a canteen, a shovel, a garrison cap and a musette bag.

"I just think it's cool," he said.

He's into the American side of the war. His older brother, Alex, is fascinated by the German army of World War II. But because he was fighting the flu, Alex stayed home Sunday. Ian and Jami Armstrong were taking pictures for him.

"I just wanted to look at the stuff," Ian said.

George Stefanski called the deuce and a half “the workhorse of the Allied armies.” Like Burt and the other re-enactors, he was there to field any questions on the equipment and accessories. These included guns, grenades, helmets and K-rations.

An old tin of Spam also was spread on the ground on an Army blanket.

“That’s what they ate,” Burt said. “Spam is really not that bad. People who complain about food have never eaten what the Army eats out in the field. I still eat a can of it every now and then.”

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Staff photos pages 1B and 4B by Octavio Jones

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