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EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS THE HIGH DESERT’S HOME FRONT DURING WWII
Historian Dr. David del Mar to discuss the region’s contributions during a special exhibition opening

Bend, OR—The High Desert Museum’s exhibition WWII: The High Desert Home Front commemorates the 75th anniversary of the United States’ entry into World War II. From training camps to internment centers and practice battlefields to victory farms, the High Desert played a central role in the war effort. The exhibition will feature photographs, immersive scenes, artifacts – including a vintage 1942 Harley-Davidson Liberator – and stories of local veterans who served in WWII collected by Central Oregon chapters of the Band of Brothers. The exhibition opens to the public Saturday, January 28.

“Locally, Camp Abbot was a U.S. Army base used to train combat engineers during World War II. Today it’s well-known as Sunriver Resort,” said the Museum’s Curator of Western History Laura Ferguson, Ph.D. “But this exhibition also reveals other wartime activities that took place in the High Desert including some of the most celebrated and tragic chapters of our country’s history.”

In 1942, Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, paving the way for the War Relocation Authority to remove Japanese Americans living along the West Coast and place them in detention centers. The exhibition features works of art created by those interned and illuminates Japanese Americans’ wartime experiences.

With many Americans fighting overseas, the nation faced a major labor shortage. High Desert farmers needed help harvesting their crops. The Emergency Farm Labor Service recruited a diverse workforce that included Japanese Americans, German prisoners of war, the Women’s Land Army and the Victory Farm Volunteers. International workers, especially those from Mexico, were among the largest group of farm laborers. An agreement between the United States and Mexico, the Bracero Program, brought contractual laborers to the U.S. The program promised good housing and competitive wages, although many encountered harsh conditions instead. The exhibition highlights these programs and includes an immersive scene of a 1940s kitchen and victory garden.

The region’s rural and remote nature also made it the perfect site, from the perspective of those working on the Manhattan Project, for the production and testing of nuclear weapons. It was home to Hanford Engineer Works, the Nevada National Security Site and New Mexico’s Trinity Site. The
exhibition reveals the role of these sites in the war effort and the lasting effects of nuclear production and testing.

The featured speaker for an exclusive members’ exhibition opening on Friday, January 27 is Dr. David del Mar, a historian at Portland State University. He will examine ways in which the war altered life in the High Desert and served as a turning point throughout the West. The members’ exhibition opening will be held from 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm and is free for members and $5 for member guests. RSVP for the opening reception at www.highdesertmuseum.org/rsvp or contact Ann Arbow at 541-382-4754 ext. 241. Veterans and active duty military personnel are invited to attend the exclusive opening reception regardless of Museum membership or to view the exhibition over the opening weekend free of charge.


WWII: The High Desert Home Front is made possible by the Bend Bulletin, Bend Cultural Tourism Fund, Deschutes Brewery, Horizon Broadcasting Group, NW Travel Magazine and OPB, and with support from Bigfoot Beverages, Century Insurance Group and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation.

About the High Desert Museum: Through exhibits, wildlife and living history, the High Desert Museum creates learning experiences to help audiences discover their connection to the past, their role in the present and their responsibility to the future. The Museum is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization that was founded in 1982

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