



In Search of El dorado

A daily journal of my travels and adventures in my.....Search for Eldorado

Hello to Family & Friends

Thursday, February 4th 2021 Day 19



In 1965 a marine was looking at all the military academies for the best one to send his son to. He was disappointed and brought together a bunch of his Marine buddies to form this Academy. It is a full on campus facility for grades 7-12. 100% of their graduates go on to college.



CAPTURED IRAQI FLAG

BROUGHT BACK 03-05



THIS SMALL SCALE MODEL OF THE MONUMENT WAS CREATED BY DR. FELIX DE WELDON SHORTLY AFTER HE SAW THE FAMOUS PICTURE OF THE FLAG RAISING. IT NOW RESIDES IN A PLACE OF HONOR IN ANTIGO, WI AT THE BRADLEY FUNERAL HOME.

The museum is only three rooms and a hallway and one of the rooms has the chairs and TV for watching the excellent 32 minute video about The Battle for Iwo Jima. There are masses of memorabilia, some info tags too small to read. I guess that's why their raising money for a new building.



The photo left gives you an idea of how large the statue is. Below is an actual WWII map of Iwo Jima. A) Mount Suribachi (where the flag was raised) B) Blood Beach C) Airfield 1 D) Airfield 2



Six hundred sixty miles south of Tokyo, about halfway to the Mariana Islands, lies the island of Iwo Jima (Sulfur Island). A strategic mid-point in America's goal in bombing mainland Japan and ending WWII. The Japanese have mined sulfur there for generations, leaving a network of tunnels beneath the face of the island. The emperor has assigned his best, American trained, general to fortify and defend the island.





General Kuribayashi strips the island of its oak trees and uses them to shore up an additional 18-36 miles of tunnels on four levels beneath the surface. All gun emplacements are made invisible to American recon planes. U.S. Generals feel, based on taking other Japanese held islands, that Iwo Jima should be conquered in three days.

The U.S. bombarded Iwo Jima for 72 straight hours to weaken the Japanese forces and make it easier to invade the island. Even as Marines landed the shelling continued. But the Japanese had taken so many practice shots from their hidden bunkers at every point of the shore, that every shot had a major impact. It was called Blood Beach due to the carnage and loss of life in the first days of the attack. There were 26,000 casualties on Iwo Jima, an island of only eight square miles, 6,800 of those were killed. The Marines lost an average of one man every two minutes over the 36 days needed to secure the island.

IN HONOR AND MEMORY
OF THE MEN OF THE
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
WHO HAVE GIVEN
THEIR LIVES TO THEIR COUNTRY
SINCE 10 NOVEMBER 1775

The 28th Regiment, 5th Division, was ordered to capture Mount Suribachi. They reached the base of the mountain on the afternoon of February 21, and by nightfall the next day surrounded it almost completely. On the morning of February 23, Marines of Company E, 2nd Battalion, started the tortuous climb on the rough terrain to the top. At 10:30 a.m., men all over the island were thrilled by the sight of a small American flag flying atop Mount Suribachi.



That afternoon, when the slopes were clear of enemy resistance, a second, larger flag was raised by six Marines. News photographer Joe Rosenthal caught the afternoon flagraising in an inspiring Pulitzer prize-winning photograph.





When the photo was later released, sculptor Dr. Felix W. de Weldon, then on duty with the U.S. Navy, was so moved by the scene that he constructed a scale model (the photo on page two) within 48 hours, which became the symbol for the 7th and final war bond drive.

After the war de Weldon felt that the inspiring event should be depicted on a massive scale in our nation's capital. He labored nine-and-a-half years to prepare a model from molding plaster. Two of the three surviving Marines posed for de Weldon who modeled them in clay. He used photos for the missing four. He wanted the statue to be as real as possible.

When it was offered to Washington, they could not at first accept. They informed de Weldon that the plaster statue would not be able to withstand the temperatures and climate of Washington and would be destroyed by Mother Nature within years. The solution was to have each piece of the statue be a mold instead, bronzed and reassembled. The statute was dedicated in Arlington Cemetery on November 10, 1954, the 179th anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corp.



(I think this is the best shot)

The original plaster mold was moved back to de Weldon's summer home and studio in Newport, RI for storage.

In 1981 de Weldon gave his work of art to the Marine Military Academy and on April 16, 1982 the dedication ceremony took place on the MMA parade grounds.

The 32 foot figures are shown erecting a 78 foot steel flagpole. The figures, placed on a rock slope, rise about six feet from the ten foot base.

I visited Arlington Cemetery about 24 years ago. I don't remember seeing this and I am sure I would have looked for it. Any of you girls remember it?

Being a John Wayne fan I enjoy watching *The Sands of Iwo Jima* on occasion.

They have a ceremony on February 19th every year, the anniversary of our attack on Iwo Jima. I doubt I'll still be in the area.

Harlon H. Block, of Weslaco, Texas, was 18 years old in 1943 when he enlisted in the Marine Corps. As a member of the 2nd Battalion, 28th Marines, 5th Marine Division, his company was one of the first ashore on February 19, 1945 when allied forces stormed the Pacific Island of Iwo Jima.



Academy. Corporal Block is the Marine seen at the base of the flagpole, pushing it into the volcanic rock.

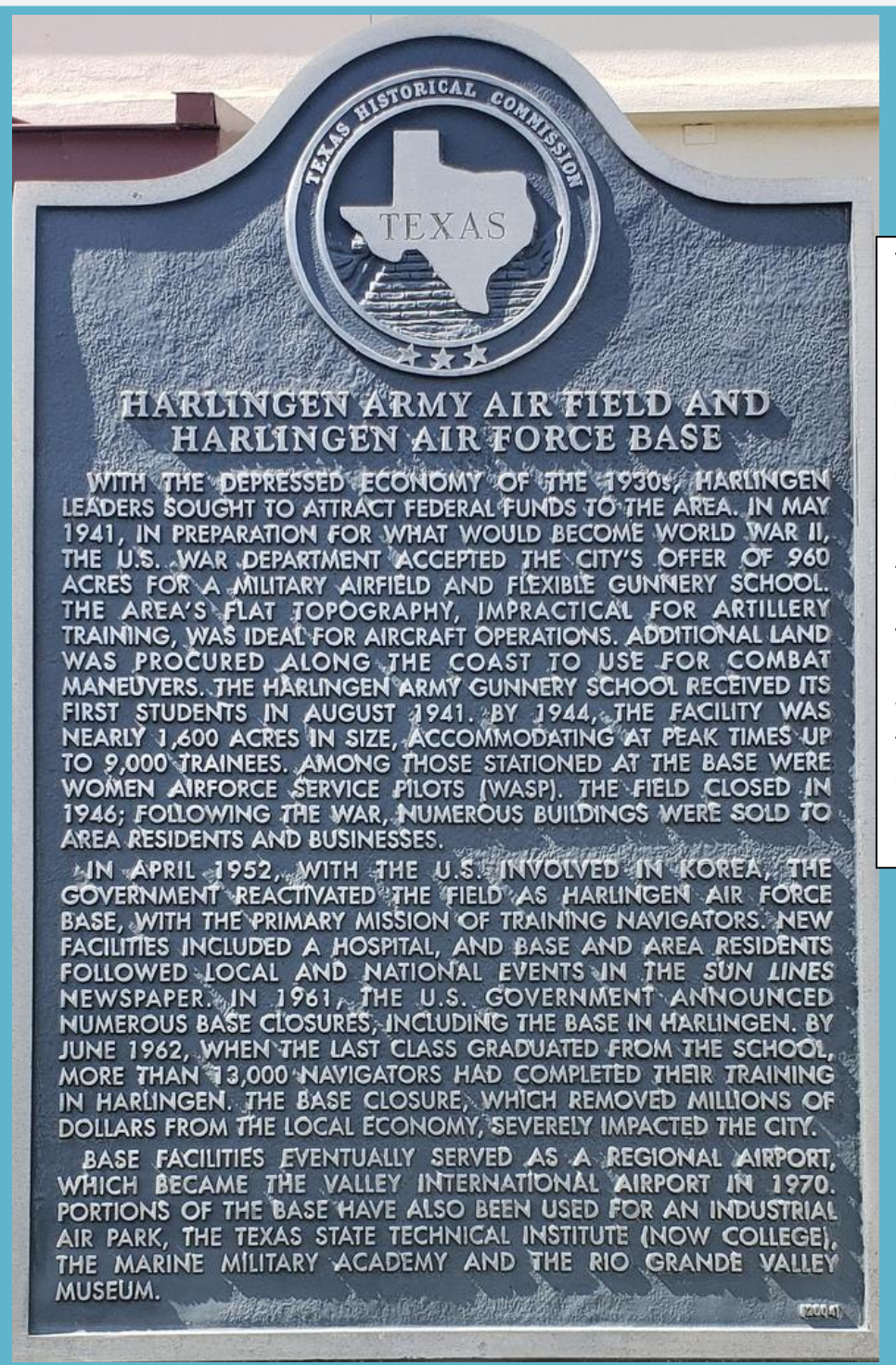
On March 1, just six days after the flagraising, Block was killed in subsequent fighting on Iwo Jima, and buried in the 5th Marine Division Cemetery there. After the war, his remains were returned to Weslaco.

On the fifth day of battle, Block's rifle platoon was sent to raise a large American flag on the island's highest point, Mount Suribachi. The event was captured in a world-famous photograph by Joe Rosenthal, which inspired Felix de Weldon to sculpt the Iwo Jima War Memorial for the Arlington National Cemetery. The original model of that monument is the memorial here at Marine Military

On February 18, 1995, during a ceremony commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima, Corporal Harlon H. Block was enshrined here next to the Iwo Jima Memorial, where the world will forever honor his bravery, and pay tribute to the United States Marines, and all other members of our nation's Armed Forces.



As mentioned earlier the movie was good. Upon completion an older gentleman entered the room and gave us some more history of Iwo Jima. He served as a marine in Vietnam but was born in Iowa during the battle for Iwo Jima. He added a lot of depth to the story we had just heard, and later on it was mentioned that he was not expected to be there today. So we got an added bonus.



This Heritage Museum was not on my original itinerary, but it was listed in that tourism magazine I mentioned yesterday, so I gave it a shot. It was open, sort of. The Art portion was displaying the quilts shown on the next couple pages, but the old buildings and the Heritage Museum were closed due to Covid.

The quilts are an exhibition of the National Quilting competition that was held in Padukah, Kentucky. I think the top three were first, second and third, but I'm not sure now.



PASO REAL STAGECOACH INN (1860-1904)

Paso Real was one of the primary stops on the old stage coach trail that ran from Beeville, TX. To Brownsville, TX. The site also served as a ferry crossing. General Zachary Taylor crossed there when he was in the area during the Mexican War (1846-48). A school, general store and post office served the community when the stage ran through the eastern part of the counties. The original Stagecoach Inn was in operation approximately 1860-1904 offering lodging and good to travelers.

Right is a model of the General Store, below is the actual building with a view through the window.





Too bad, it looks interesting.



CITY'S FIRST HOME, BUILT 1904,
BY THE FOUNDER, LON C. HILL,
PROMOTER OF RAILROADS AND
IRRIGATION TO THE LOWER
RIO GRANDE VALLEY.
CLIMATE-ADAPTED VICTORIAN
HOUSE. HERE VALLEY PIONEERS
MET AND PLANNED IMPORTANT
DEVELOPMENTS.
RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK-1965

Another item from that magazine is the downtown mural tour. My research did not find that mentioned. With time to kill I ate lunch and headed downtown for a walk. Supposedly, a map is available at the VC. One was not included in the bag of brochures I picked up so I had to bring it up on my phone, get oriented, find the mural, take a picture, and then start all over again.



On the top we have 'Building a Community of Learners' by Chris Valdez, 2005. Middle, ha ha, I can see you skipping ahead already. Don't worry, just the photos. Although it was hard to get the one above with all the cars parked in front, that's the reason for the angle.



It was at this point where I became a little tired of the effort I was using to find the murals and take the photos in the 86 degree heat and 30 MPH winds. I was just turning to head back to the RV when the artwork below caught my eye.



The History of Mexico and Mankind

I crossed the railroad tracks to find this pavilion. There was no mention of this exhibit in the magazine either, and I can't understand why. (I am parked in a large strip mall lot writing the newsletter and a patrol car just drove by. He didn't stop so maybe I'm good for the night. I was planning on moving next door to the WalMart lot before bedtime) Even now, this is all I can find on the web - *Created by Mexican artist Raúl Esparza Sanchez, the elaborate ceramic panels that compose this mural arrived in South Texas by way of the California Museum of Science and Industry. Beginning with the "Origins of Ideas, Life and the Universe," the panels depict Pre-Hispanic cultures, the Mayan calendar, the arrival of the Spanish, and Mexico's independence from Spain.* I could have taken a photo of each of the nine panels and the caption written by the artist beneath, but this is one of those times where the captions are very wide and I would have had to retype everything or it would be too small to read on this page. This is just my Average Joe opinion, but I thought this was better than all the murals put together, and yet they don't even promote it. Too bad.

The rest of the photos are of murals I found on my way back to the RV.









So as not to have any Wasted Days and Wasted Nights, who out there is a Freddy Fender fan?

I recognize a few of his songs, but he was mostly pop and country. He was born here in San Benito in 1937. He is buried here, supposedly with a little memorial plaza, and there's a museum. I might hit those tomorrow, just for something to do.

I am nearing the bottom of Texas. I am only about five miles north of the Rio Grande and Mexico, but I will hit the coast again before coming back across and paralleling the border for a ways. That will be the time to be more vigilant.

I enjoyed the Iwo Jima Memorial; it would have been nice to be able to investigate those buildings at the Heritage Museum; the ceramic artwork was nice but the murals just ok.

I stopped at an Elks Lodge for water. Many of them have RV parking spots for use by members, but I was hoping they would let me just fill up the tank, and they did.

Today was an art filled excursion with many different forms. From sculpture to quilting to architecture to painted murals to ceramics. I hope you enjoyed it.

Until next time.....