PRESS KIT

FROM TEXAS TO BASTOGNE

Texas Aggies Go to War

14.12.2014 > 31.08.2016 - BASTOGNE

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www.fromtexasdobastogne.com
EXPO

From Texas to Bastogne.
Texas Aggies Go to War

Introduction

The “Texas Aggies Go to War” project is the fruit of the ties between Wallonia and the State of Texas, and has involved various partners, including Texas A&M University System, the city of Bryan, the city of College Station, Research Valley, and for the Belgian side the municipality of Bastogne, IDELUX, the Province of Luxembourg, the Walloon Export Agency, and Wallonia-Brussels International.

Tempora, a Belgian company specialising in the design, production, promotion and management of events and cultural facilities has been commissioned as part of the activities of the Bastogne War Museum, which it manages, to produce the “Texas Aggies Go to War” project in consultation with the partners listed above.

The project

The aim is to commemorate the American soldiers’ participation in the Second World War, and more specifically the Battle of the Bulge, which has its 70th anniversary this year. The project pays tribute to and follows part of the lives of five students from the Texas A&M University (Texas Aggies) who took part in the Second World War and the Battle of the Bulge.

Following the commemorative show that took place on 16 May 2014, the “From Texas to Bastogne, Texas Aggies Go to War” exhibition opens on 14 December 2014 in Bastogne.

The exhibition traces the journey of these five students, from their university days in the 1930s to the Ardennes in December 1944, through a varied, immersive set design punctuated by illustrations, original interactive devices and objects not seen before in Belgium.
This is a different way of looking at the story, by focusing on the lives of these American citizens, students, soldiers and friends, whose destiny changed from one day to the next and became entwined with our own.

SUMMARY OF THE EXHIBITION

PART 1: WHO ARE THE AGGIES?
BASTOGNE AND THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Room 1

We are invited to pass through an entrance door showing the faces of the five American soldiers. We then enter an audiovisual room.

Bastogne and the Mardasson memorial will forever be remembered in the history of Europe and the world. They evoke the courage of thousands of American soldiers who came to fight here during the Second World War, more specifically at the Battle of the Bulge.

This name has particular significance at Texas A&M University whose Aggies, as agriculture, science and technology students, but also students at the military academy, heroically fought in the Second World War and its key battle 70 years ago, their lives changing dramatically from one day to the next.

THE 5 AGGIES
Room 2

We discover the names and faces of the five soldiers and their true stories, which are the guiding theme for the exhibition.

Turney Leonard, the friendly, brilliant agriculture student, from Rio Grande,

Joe Eugène Routt, a sportsman passionate about boxing, football and horses,

James Earl Rudder, West Texas leader and member of the cadet corps,

James Francis Hollingsworth, hyperactive, courageous and determined,

William Merriweather Peña, from Southern Texas, a young, generous, creative man who dreamed of becoming an architect.

LIFE AT UNIVERSITY AND THE RISE OF NAZISM IN GERMANY
Rooms 3 and 4

In the recreated atmosphere of the University library, we ‘meet’ the five soldiers during their studies. We find out about their lives as students, what they learnt, their passions, the university traditions, and life in the 1930s in Texas.

In parallel, through the University newspaper, we find out what’s happening in Europe.

In October 1929, the Stock Market crash marked the end of an era, causing the Great Depression, which began in the United States and destabilised the world.

Trouble was brewing, with the Night of Broken Glass in Berlin, book-burning... all warning signs of what was to come.
MILITARY INVOLVEMENT
Rooms 5, 6 and 7

In the wreck of a destroyed ship, visitors learn about the shock of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and the USA’s subsequent military involvement.

The Pearl Harbor naval base in the Pacific Ocean was the subject of a surprise attack by the Japanese army at 7.49am on 7 December 1941. Two hours later, the operation was over. Eight battleships were sunk, 188 aeroplanes destroyed, and 2,335 sailors and soldiers killed. The USA, in shock, joined the war, and global conflict ensued.

These five students had never imagined they would soon be joining the battlefields of Europe.

We then enter the recruiting office to follow the careers of the five soldiers, from the university training camps of Texas until the eve of D-Day.

EMBARKATION IN NORMANDY
Rooms 8, 9 and 10

Firstly, we follow our five Aggies to Britain, on the eve of D-Day.

6 June 1944. Embarkation in Normandy. James Earl Rudder and his men scaled the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc under the deadly fire of the German machine guns.

31 July 1944. The breakthrough at Avranches finally opened the route into Brittany and started the enemy retreat. Everything moved very quickly.

Room 11

Through reconstructed ruins, we follow the route of the five Texan soldiers from Normandy to Belgium. Archive images projected onto the ruins show the US army’s advance, and the liberation of France and Belgium.

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE
Rooms 12 and 13

After celebration came horror. Following the German counter-offensive on 16 December 1944, the Battle of the Bulge, one of the bloodiest battles for the Americans, began.

Despite being racked with cold and hunger, the Allies and the local population valiantly resisted the German encirclement.

A film shown in an immersive, symbolic setting pays tribute to the soldiers who lost their lives during this terrible battle.

Including the Aggies. Commander Joe Routt counter-attacked with his troops, William Peña, the architectural student, exploded the bridges and James Hollingsworth prevented the Germans from getting to the Meuse, enabling Patton to stop the enemy advance.

On 16 January 1945, the Battle of the Bulge came to an end, not without its share of suffering.
REMEMBRANCE

Rooms 14 and 15

We are invited to sit down in comfortable armchairs, as if we were in a university lounge. Here, through the stories of the soldiers themselves or their families, we learn what happened to them. The infantry lieutenant Turney Leonard died at the start of the battle, after fighting heroically. He was 23. He was honoured with the Silver Star and many other decorations, and his body rests in the United States. Captain Joe Eugène Routt, a boxer who had never lost a match, fought his final battle at the Bulge. He was 30. His body rests in Brenham cemetery in the USA.

James F. Hollingsworth survived the Battle of the Bulge. He continued his military career, serving in both Korea and Vietnam. He became a General, and was the most decorated officer in the history of Texas. He retired from the army in 1976 and remained in the United States until his death.

The fate of Earl Rudder, the hero of Pointe du Hoc, is even more astonishing. This intellectual with an athlete’s physique was promoted to General, and after the war became President of Texas A&M University. He had a brilliant career and continually promoted the University worldwide. He died in the United States at the age of 60.

William Peña was seriously injured. He lost a leg, but survived. He continued his studies and fulfilled his dream of becoming a famous architect. He is now 95 and the sole survivor.

The final room tells the story of the high human cost of the Second World War at Texas A&M University.

CONCLUSION OF THE EXHIBITION

At the end of the exhibition, there is an area highlighting the long-lasting relationships forged between Texas A&M and Wallonia.

The war arose out of the folly of men but the courage of these heroes triumphed in the end.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

• Opening hours
  - Open daily except on Monday (Please note that the exhibition is open on Monday during school holidays and public holidays falling on Monday)

  10 am to 6 pm
  - from Tuesday until Sunday and public holidays outside school holidays
  - from Monday until Sunday and public holidays during school holidays

  10 am to 7 pm in July-August (every day)
  - from Monday until Sunday and public holidays

Closed exceptionally on January 1st and December 25th

Reservation compulsory for schools and groups. Booking service is accessible from Monday to Friday from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm to 5 pm by telephone at +32 61 21 02 20 or by e-mail at info@fromtexastobastogne.com
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<th>RATES</th>
<th>EXPO TEXAS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Full rate</td>
<td>8,00 €</td>
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SOUND AND LIGHT SHOW IN HONOUR OF THE TEXAS AGGIES

TEXAS AGGIES GO TO WAR

MARDASSON - BASTOGNE

Friday December 12, 2014 at 7:30 pm
Saturday December 13, 2014 at 5:30 pm and 8:30 pm

The sound and light show that took place in May during the Memorial Day attracted more than 5,000 people! Given the success, three new shows are organised in the frame of the commemorations of the 70th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge.

This live show will consist of a projection on the Mardasson Monument and will be presented in the form of subject-based and historical tableaux that will recount the lives of 5 « Texas A&M Aggies » and the key moments in the Second World War and the Battle of the Bulge.

FREE show organised by the Bastogne War Museum. Tempora has joined forces with the Luc Petit CREATION Company to develop a joint production which has been staged by Luc Petit.

During the whole weekend there will be snacks, animation and historical re-enactments on the site of the Mardasson in a convivial atmosphere.