

# WW II camp set up at museum

By JACQUELINE PERRY  
Journal Ishpeming Bureau

NEGAUNEE — History buffs of all ages learned Saturday the vital contributions the Upper Peninsula made to winning World War II.

The gathering was at the Michigan Iron Industry Museum in Negaunee, and the event was a WWII encampment.

The first-ever WWII encampment at the museum, entitled "Shield of Steel: Iron Ore and the Arsenal of Democracy," highlighted the role Michigan iron ore and Upper Peninsula residents played in helping to win the war, said Thomas Friggens, regional manager of the Michigan Historical Center.

The title of the encampment evolves from the reputation Michigan gained during WWII as the arsenal of democracy, he said.

"Automobile assembly plants in Michigan converted to wartime use and produced war vehicles. Ninety percent of our nation's iron ore supply used during the war effort was mined from Lake Superior mines in Michigan and Minnesota, converted to steel and made into tanks, artillery pieces and other equipment for the war," Friggens said. "People in the U.P. played a large role in helping the U.S. win the war and preserve democracy."

The two-day encampment features reenactments by interpreters in period dress about army camp life, original field gear, weapons and the roles of the common soldier and "Rosie the Riveter" during WWII.

Harry and Rose Burgess of Port Huron, along with their son Andrew and his wife Joni of Wyandotte, traveled to Negaunee to portray various war roles.

"We're all teachers, but this is a hobby for us," said Rose, who portrays a medical officer dealing with men suffering from stress syndrome caused by the war. "It's exciting to re-enact WWII because you can still find original equipment used in the war and talk to people who lived it."

Harry, affectionately nicknamed "Father History" by his family, is re-enacting the role of an Army major.

"Participating in re-enactments gives me the opportunity to share my knowledge with other people participating and with the public who is interested in

# WW II

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WWII," Harry said. "Most people don't care about how many rounds a machine gun holds. These people do. People who attend re-enactments already know the basics of the subject so you can spend time discussing



**JASON GRAVEDONI**

more obscure details."

Ethan Barnett of Grand Haven is spending the weekend acting as a combat engineer for the Army.

"I do this to honor the WWII veterans," Barnett said. "They built America when they came home from the war. Everything I know has been taught to me by WWII veterans. It's my turn to pay them back by



**VINCENT GRAVEDONI**

sharing my knowledge of this era."

Joni Burgess portrays Rosie the Riveter, a character created in 1943 by Norman Rockwell to encourage women to fill positions considered as "man's work" during WWII.

"We wouldn't have won the war if the 20 million women hadn't answered the call to work," she said, dressed to fit the part in den-



**THOMAS FRIGGENS**

im overalls and a scarf tied in her red hair. "People don't always think of that aspect of the war."

As she spoke, Joni carefully sketched a pin-up girl on the back of her husband's field jacket.

"The soldiers painted pictures of pin-up girls on the back of their field jackets and wrote the name of the girl they left back home below it," she said. "I told him to pick any pin-up girl he wants, but she'd better be a redhead."

Visitors to the encampment came away with a better understanding of the role the area played in the war.

Ishpeming resident Lisa Gravedoni said she is glad she took her sons — Jason, 13, and Vincent, 9, — to the museum Saturday.



**JONI BURGESS**



**ROSE BURGESS**



**HARRY BURGESS**



Joni Burgess of Wyandotte, dressed as Rosie the Riveter, sketches a pin-up girl on the back of her husband's World War II field jacket during a WW II encampment Saturday at the Iron Industry Museum in Negaunee. Burgess explained that WWII soldiers painted the pictures on the back of their jackets and painted their wife's or girlfriend's name below the picture. (Journal photo by Jacqueline Perry)

"We had been here several year ago, but it was time for us to see the new additions to the museum and to refresh our memories," Gravedoni said. "It's a great educational experience for my sons. We really enjoyed the WWII encampment."

The encampment continues

from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. today at the museum, 73 Forge Road in Negaunee. Presentations, panel discussions and swing dance performances are also scheduled for today. Admission is free.

For more information, call the Michigan Iron Industry Museum at 475-7857.



From left, Sean Dobbs of Farmington Hills, Andrew Burgess of Wyandotte, and Ethan Barnett of Grand Haven are spending the weekend portraying U.S. Army soldiers as part of the Michigan Iron Industry Museum's World War II encampment. The free event continues from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. today. (Journal photo by Jacqueline Perry)