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Ghost Army: The Combat Con Artists of World War II
Special Exhibition from the National WWII Museum

*How the US Army created fake forces through illusion and deception to help secure Allied victory
opens at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art*

July 10, 2025 (Fort Wayne, IN) – The Fort Wayne Museum of Art and Bill Blass Legacy, Inc, are pleased to present **“Ghost Army: The Combat Con Artists of World War II” August 2 through October 26, 2025** in the Museum’s galleries at 311 E. Main Street. The exhibition tells the story of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops which is a top-secret WWII unit that used deceptions and illusions to mislead the enemy. Fort Wayne’s hometown hero, Bill Blass, will be featured in the exhibition as an official member of the 603rd Camouflage Battalion.

Organized by The National WWII Museum in New Orleans, the exhibition tells the story of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops — the first mobile, multimedia, tactical deception unit in US Army history. The unit waged war with inflatable tanks and vehicles, fake radio traffic, sound effects and even phony generals, using imagination and illusion to trick the enemy while saving thousands of lives. Along with the 3133rd Signal Service Company in Italy, the unit helped liberate Europe from the grip of Nazi tyranny.

The unique and top-secret “Ghost Army” unit — comprised of 82 officers and 1,023 men — was the brainchild of Colonel Billy Harris and Major Ralph Ingersoll. Activated on January 20, 1944, under the command of Army veteran Colonel Harry L. Reeder, the group was capable of simulating two whole divisions (approximately 30,000 troops) by using visual, sonic and radio deception to fool German forces during the final year of World War II. Armed with nothing heavier than .50-caliber machine guns, the 23rd took part in 22 large-scale deceptions in Europe from Normandy to the Rhine River, the bulk of the unit arriving in England in May 1944, shortly before D-Day.

“Ghost Army explores the bravery, heroics and tactical brilliance of a first-of-its kind military unit,” said Erin Clancey, Associate Vice President of Collections and Exhibits at The National WWII Museum. “Although their efforts were classified for over 50 years, the deceptive and groundbreaking strategies used on the battlefield saved lives and played a significant role in Allied victory. The National WWII Museum is proud to highlight their vital contributions that went unrecognized following the war.”

Ghost Army features inflatable military pieces, historical narrative text panels detailing unit operations, profiles of unit officers, archival photography, sketches, artifacts and uniforms from unit officers. The exhibit presents exclusive, original content from The National WWII Museum archives along with a historical artifact collection curated and donated to the Museum by Ghost Army Legacy Project President and Exhibit Consultant Rick Beyer.

In tandem with the exhibition, the Museum will also host author and filmmaker Rick Beyer, whose book *The Ghost Army of World War II: How One Top-Secret Unit Deceived the Enemy with Inflatable Tanks, Sound Effects*

and Other Audacious Fakery offers detailed insight into the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and their creative deceptions on the battlefields of Europe that would earn them Congressional Gold Medals. Mr. Beyer's talk will include the story of the recent award of The Congressional Gold Medal, which was an extensive effort. **Visitors can enjoy free admission and lecture with Mr. Beyer at 5:30pm on Thursday October 2 along with a book signing immediately following.** Younger readers can also participate in a book signing with author **Rebecca Siegel**, to celebrate the release of her new book, *How the Ghost Army Hoodwinked Hitler: The Story of American Artistry and Deception in World War II*, on Thursday, October 2 along with Mr. Beyer. Check our events calendar for upcoming programs.

This exhibition and programs are supported by **Bill Blass Legacy, Inc. and Phillips Financial**. The exhibition was curated at FWMoA by Technical Director Brian Williamson and organized by The National WWII Museum.

Veterans, active military personnel, their spouse and children 17 and under in the same household receive free admission. General admission to see this exhibition at the museum is free for FWMoA members, \$10 adults, \$8 for children 2-17, college students with valid ID, and seniors 65+. Children under 2 are free. General admission is free the 2nd Thursday of the month. FWMoA gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday 10-6pm, Thursdays 10-8pm, and Sundays 12-5pm.

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About the Fort Wayne Museum of Art: Beginning with art classes in 1888 given by J. Ottis Adams and later William Forsyth, the Fort Wayne Museum of Art has evolved into the primary resource for the visual arts in Northeast Indiana. Regularly exhibiting regional and nationally acclaimed artists, the FWMoA also boasts an extensive permanent collection of American Art, including the Steven Sorman Archives and more than 350 pieces of glass sculpture. The Museum is committed to the collection, preservation, presentation and interpretation of American and related art to engage broad and diverse audiences throughout the community and region and add value to their lives. The Fort Wayne Museum of Art is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. This activity is made possible, in part, with support from the Indiana Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

About Bill Blass Legacy, Inc.: Bill Blass Legacy, Inc. is dedicated to the life and legacy of William R. Blass (1922-2002). Created in 2022 by a group of creative Indiana people, the initial purpose was to educate the community and celebrate what would have been Blass's 100th birthday. With the help of local supporters, they continue to digitally archive and physically display items that document Blass's early years in Fort Wayne, Indiana, as a student at South Side High School. In addition, Blass's heroism in WWII in the Ghost Army and significant success as a fashion entrepreneur are a focus. [Bill Blass Archive](#) [Bill Blass Legacy Website](#) [Bill Blass100 Days Facebook](#)

The National WWII Museum tells the story of the American experience in the war that changed the world—why it was fought, how it was won, and what it means today—so that all generations will understand the price of freedom and be inspired by what they learn. Dedicated in 2000 as The National D-Day Museum and now designated by Congress as America's National WWII Museum, the institution celebrates the American spirit, teamwork, optimism, courage and sacrifices of the men and women who fought on the battlefield and served on the Home Front. For more information on TripAdvisor's #1 New Orleans attraction, call 877-813-3329 or 504-528-1944 or visit nationalww2museum.org.

For more information, visit www.fwmoa.org.