

Invasion: St Louis's WWII Weekend Apr 25-27, 2009

By **Nick Howes**

A reenactment honoring the incredible sacrifices of the Greatest Generation during World War Two will be held at Jefferson Barracks Park in south St Louis April 25-26, 2009. Like the wartime years it portrays, it will be held rain or shine.

More than 5,000 visitors will witness the sacrifices of an earlier generation that inspired movies like Saving Private Ryan, The Longest Day, and the television miniseries, Band of Brothers. The St Louis reenactment, in fact, will focus on the same European Theater of Operations portrayed in these films and teleplays.

More than 350 reenactors, collectors, and historians will participate along in three planned battle reenactments, portraying American GIs as well as British, Canadian, Russian, and German soldiers. They will be equipped with authentic uniforms, gear, weapons, and vintage military vehicles. The reenactors represent such units as the US Rangers, US Airborne, US Armored Forces, US Infantry, Russian Infantry, British Airborne, Canadian YMCA, Canadian RCME, Italian Infantry, German Heer, German SS, German Paratroopers, and German SS Panzer forces.

Hosts

Hosting the 32d annual event is the 2d Ranger Battalion of St Louis which honors the soldiers of the wartime era. Co-sponsoring are the St Louis County Parks and Recreation and the Friends of Jefferson Barracks. The event is one of the oldest WWII reenactments in the country, held the last weekend of April.

Hours

Hours are 1 pm to 5 pm on Friday, 9 am to 4 pm on Saturday and 9 am to 3 pm on Sunday. A Big Band dance is scheduled Saturday night.

The three battle re-enactments are planned for 11 am and 2 pm Saturday and at noon on Sunday.

Battlefield

The main areas of interest are the battlefield and, a half mile away, the encampment.

The battlefield will feature prepared tank obstacles and wall sections and is located in the large field across from Grant's Pavilion on the east side of Gregg Road. Spectators are allowed onto the battlefield after combat is ended to see where the enemy was defeated.

The spectator area is marked off with a sheltered area with some chairs reserved for veterans.

An announcer will narrate the battles and the weapons demonstrations. Hearing protection is recommended.

Encampment

A large educational encampment displays the reenactors' equipment and is located at the north end of Jefferson Barracks County Park across from the visitor's center. Called "the Square," it is bordered by Gark, CCC, and Bagby roads and by the footpath. Within the Square only WWII equipment is permitted between Friday afternoon and Sunday 3pm.

Weapons and other equipment demonstrations will be held in the camp throughout the weekend.

Dance

A Saturday night Live Big Band dance is planned at the Grant shelter, free admission to uniformed reenactors

Contacts

Individuals and groups are welcome. To arrange group tours, contact President Kevin Owens at 314-960-1611.