

# Moving tribute to state military vets

**Frankenmuth, Michigan—** Memories must be fed. Without nourishment, they wither and fade into a vague, uncelebrated, unappreciated thing we call The Past.

Certain memories are particularly deserving of continued feeding and appreciation. Foremost among them are those of the men and women whom fate thrust into armed struggle on our behalf.

Michigan's Own Military and Space Museum exists to nurture the memories of people from Michigan farms, offices and factories who heeded the summons to military service during America's five foreign wars, from the Spanish-American War to the Vietnam conflict.

Michigan's Own is unique: it is the only repository in the country devoted to the wartime experiences of one state's people.

It is not, however, a museum of war: not an archives dedicated to the strategies or the killing machinery of battle. It is instead, a shrine to ordinary lives caught up in—sometimes ended by—the extraordinary experience of war. It is also an eloquent statement about the passing of time, and the debt later generations owe to those that preceded them and helped preserve our freedom.

The museum, located in Frankenmuth, holds more than 300 exhibits, each devoted to a Michigan-bred soldier, sailor, or airman. Youthful faces peer at a visitor from photographs on the walls and in the display cases. Some are accompanied by pictures of the frail old men the young soldiers became. Some of the faces—of those who fell—are frozen exclusively and forever in young manhood.

A powerful sensation of bygone times, distant places and desperate struggles clings to the fabric of the old uniforms on display. The garments, the sundry accessories of brass and leather the soldiers used, the battle souvenirs and citations they received—all of these leave a visitor pondering the men and women more than the wars.

The artifacts communicate a sense that he is connected to their users, that his present freedom and well-being are in no small way attributable to those men and women. They make him wonder if the soldiers were ultimately able to do what they did because somewhere in their souls they understood they were doing it for him.

The displays at Michigan's Own reflect American military adventures, crusades and tragedies of the last century through the personal histories of people who, in the inexorable press of day-to-day life, might otherwise be forgotten.

Michigan's Own focuses not just on the past or on combat, however. It honors also the peacetime bravery of Michigan astronauts, including Commander Roger Chaffee of Grand

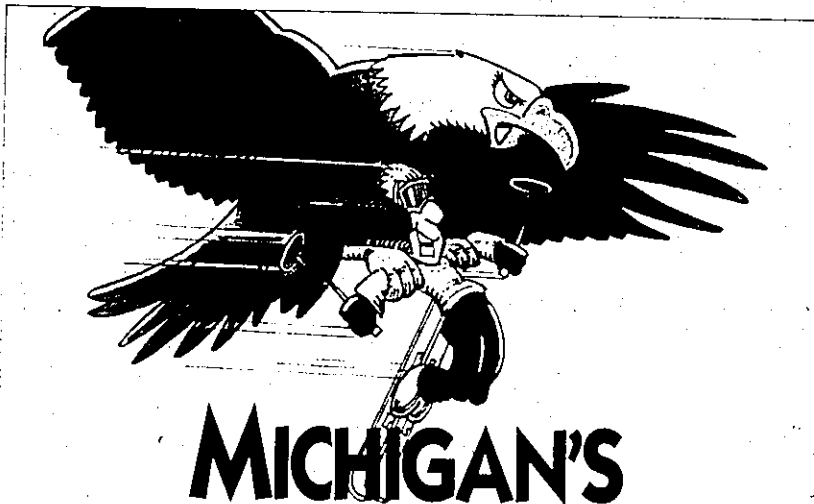
Rapids, who died in the Apollo 1 launchpad fire of January 1967. His words could stand as a motto for Michigan's Own.

Michigan's Own Military and Space Museum is located at 1250 S. Weiss St., near Bronner's. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and noon to 6 p.m. on Sunday. A nominal admission fee is charged.

Call 517-652-8005 for more information.



**CHERISHED FAMILY MEMORIES—** Mr. and Mrs. Don L. Chaffee view the exhibit honoring the service of their son, Lt. Commander Roger B. Chaffee, who died in the Apollo 1 fire Jan. 27, 1967. (Photo taken in 1983)



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