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Press Release

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WHEN “OVER THERE” WAS HERE

Alaska State Museum Opens WWII in Alaska Exhibit for May First Friday Exhibit Courtesy of National Park Service, Charles Sturt University

JUNEAU – On June 6, 1942, Japanese marines invaded Kiska, in the Aleutian Islands; the next day, they took Attu. Military importance aside, foreign occupation of a U.S. territory dealt an emotional blow to the war effort. And so, the U.S. began a year-long campaign to win back these isolated, frozen islands culminating with the August 15, 1943 liberation of Kiska by nearly 35,000 Allied troops.

Join the Alaska State Museum as it marks the 70th anniversary of the Aleutian Islands Campaign with the new exhibit “When ‘Over There’ Was Here: World War II in Alaska” on the First Friday, May 4th, with an opening reception sponsored by Friends of the Alaska State Museum from 4:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. The exhibit is on loan courtesy of the National Park Service, Sturt University.

Through photos and other artifacts, “When ‘Over There’ Was Here” tells the story of Kiska’s liberation by Allied forces with such colorful names as “Castner’s Cutthroats” and the “Devil’s Brigade,” as well as their battle against Alaska’s remoteness, extreme weather and difficult terrain. The exhibit also juxtaposes photographs taken at the time with more contemporary work by scholar and photographer Dirk Spennemann from Charles Sturt University in Australia.

Uninhabited before and after the war, Kiska still bears the scars of the Aleutian Campaign, known as the “Forgotten Battle,” often overshadowed by the Guadalcanal Campaign and the Battle of Midway. The Japanese occupation site is a National Historic Landmark, strewn with equipment dumps, gun emplacements, tunnels, shipwrecks and other relics. But Kiska Island is also part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, home to remarkably large populations of seabirds as well as a volcano that occasionally emits steam and ash plumes, combining to form a truly unique battlefield landscape.

The exhibit runs through Oct. 13, 2012. Dirk Spenneman comes to the Alaska State Museum to present his lecture “Kiska: A World War II Battlefield Landscape,” on June 10 at 2:00 p.m.

Winter hours at the museum run through May 12 and are 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Discounted winter admission is \$3. Summer hours begin May 13 and are 8:30 to 5:30 daily. Summer admission is \$7. Visitors 18 and under are admitted free of charge. An annual pass that allows unlimited visits to the Alaska State Museum and the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka is available for \$15. Assistance is available for visitors with special needs. Please contact Visitor Services at 465-2901 before the visit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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