



Everything New Orleans

Grand opening of new WWII Museum pavilion gives visitors a sneak peek

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By **Kari Dequine, Times Picayune**

No sooner had the ribbon been cut Saturday morning on the **John E. Kushner Restoration Pavilion** at the **National World War II Museum** were visitors able to view its first major undertaking.



Eliot Kamenitz, The Times-Picayune

A grand opening and dedication ceremony was held on Saturday, June 4 for the National World War II Museum's latest expansion, the John E. Kushner Restoration Pavilion.

PT 305, a 78-foot motor torpedo boat built by Higgins Industries in New Orleans in 1943, will be completely restored to its wartime condition inside the pavilion.

It is restoration projects like this for which the pavilion was created, museum officials said during a ceremony and ribbon-cutting for the museum's newest attraction.

The pavilion, wrapping its towering storm-resistant and removable glass wall around the intersection of Magazine Street and Andrew Higgins Drive, represents what

museum board member Herschel Abbott, Jr. called the latest trend in museums: "participatory restoration."

"It's like an auto mechanic shop combined with a museum," said curator Eric Rivet, giving visitors a "behind-the-scenes look" at the conservation and restoration techniques used to return artifacts to their original condition and ensure long-term preservation.

The family of the impressive new building's namesake was also in attendance to honor the man described as "larger than life" by his son, Brian Kushner. John Kushner, a New Orleans commercial real estate broker who died in 2005 at the age of 56, was lauded during the ceremony for his passion for history and his relentless quest for the museum's expansion.

"The World War II Museum was Johnny's passion," said his widow, Barbara Kushner. "He understood the value of restoration and would be so proud to have his name associated with the museum and the city he loved."

PT 305, which played a combat role against the Germans in the Mediterranean Sea, spent 41 years as a tour boat in New York City before transforming again into an oyster boat working in the Chesapeake Bay until 2001. Purchased by the museum in 2006, the boat returned its place of origin in 2007.

Though it will likely take several years, the boat will be completely restored to its wartime condition, and is anticipated to have "one more run" on Lake Pontchartrain before becoming a permanent exhibit.



This PT 305 is being restored at the Kushner Restoration Pavilion at the National World War II Museum complex.

Beginning in July, visitors will be able to tour the John E. Kushner Pavilion in all its facets, including a wood shop, paint room, tool room, and a welding shop. Until then, they can peer through the window to get an idea of the immensity and complexity of the restoration process.

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