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“General Patton” played by Danny Hair, center, discusses war plans with members of the 502nd Able Company and Broderick Davis, a Huntsville Police officer, at the WWII Living History Display at the HEARTS Museum grounds on Saturday afternoon. **Joshua Yates**



Two local children look on as a member of Able Company 502 explains the finer points of telegraphs and wartime communications at the “World War II Living History Display” at the HEARTS Veterans Museum grounds on Saturday afternoon. **Joshua Yates**



A family learns the ins and outs of “KP” or kitchen patrol from members of the 502nd Able Company at the HEARTS Veterans Museum on Saturday afternoon. Able Company was on hand all weekend both to entertain and inform the crowds as part of the “WWII



Living History Display.” **Joshua Yates**

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World War II Living History Display: Reliving history

Soldiers accomplish mission during World War II re-enactment

By Winston Spencer Jr.
Staff Reporter

HUNTSVILLE — The date is March 22, 1944, and Able Company of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment World War II has just landed. The situation is well in hand. Re-enactment soldiers were out in full, authentic circa 1944 gear, complete with equipment, on a mission to educate, uplift and remind the Huntsville community of the service of all veterans. Scores of visitors were treated Saturday to a living history walk through time. Adults and children were permitted to ask questions and touch these historic, and in many cases personal items. The unit's self-contained bivouacked site came with all the familiar sights, sounds and smells of this golden era. Reveille sounded at "oh dark thirty hours," and soldiers ate their morning "chow" with a choice of eggs bacon and chopped potatoes or, a soldier's favorite, "S.O.S." Later, in the mess hall, soldiers were busy cleaning up, shaving and performing KP duty (cleaning the field kitchen equipment). All the while the camp's perimeter was secured with "armed" guards ever vigilant, in case of "enemy attack." "The main reason that we do re-enacting first of all is to honor all veterans from every war and to educate the public," said Ron Shell, a re-enactment soldier. "Many vets have a lot of difficulty speaking about their experience, but they come and something in the camp sparks their memory and they just start to rattle off stories about their experience," he said. "Families would say that they never heard them talk about things like this, so we want to help them (veterans) help others remember what they did and honor their service to our country" he said. "Plus, we are losing a lot of World War II veterans every day, and when they are gone, that history goes with them," said re-enactment soldier Rick Shell, Ron's twin brother. "We must keep this alive, because there is a generation that does not know anything about World War II, because they just don't teach that in school," Rick said. Huntsville resident and re-enactment visitor Don Heinsohn explained upon entering the camp, "I think about the commitment of these troops and the service they provide to defend all of us, so we can live the lives that we do. I just think it's under appreciated, I really do." "Freedom comes at a price and it's not free." Belinda Orkand added, "I think this is really cool, we brought our grandson so he could experience this. He is visiting from Houston and his grandfather was a lieutenant colonel and he wanted him to see the camp. My heart just goes out to all our troops." Adding to the spirit of the times were the big band sounds of Glenn Miller. Baseball fans of the 1944 Brooklyn Dodgers, St. Louis Browns and St. Louis Cardinals each claimed this was going to be the year their team would win the pennant. There was even talk of Yankees great Joe DiMaggio being traded to Boston for Ted Williams when the war ended. Among Saturday's main attractions was Denny Hair's portrayal of General George S. Patton, complete with Patton's trademark humor and colorful language. Scores of visitors were treated to live fire demonstrations of all era weapons. The 502nd will break camp at dawn today, after fulfilling its education mission,

and also providing fun that will not soon be forgotten.