Conference Schedule

VBC Greatest Generation Live World War II Conference

Tampa, Florida | December 2–6, 2026

Wednesday, December 2

Welcome

3:00–5:00 PM — Registration & Check-In
Pick up conference materials, name badge, and program. Meet fellow attendees, speakers, veterans, and conference hosts.

5:00–6:00 PM — Welcome Reception
Cocktails and conversation.

6:00–7:00 PM — Opening Dinner
Buffet dinner.

7:00–8:00 PM — Opening Program & Keynote
Welcome remarks from Todd DePastino and Cliff Moffett of theZephyrhills Museum of Military History.

Keynote Speaker: Michael S. Bell
Executive Director, Jenny Craig Institute for the Study of War and Democracy, National WWII Museum. ***The American Liberators: The U.S. Army and Germany's Concentration Camps.***

Thursday, December 3

7:00–9:00 AM — Breakfast at hotel

8:00–8:55 AM — Coffee, bookstore, sponsor exhibits

Session I: Masters of the Air

The Bloody 100th and the Air War over Europe

9:00 AM–12:00 PM

The strategic bombing campaign over Nazi Germany remains one of the defining stories of World War II. This session explores the courage of the Eighth Air Force crews who flew into heavily defended skies over Europe, the German Luftwaffe that opposed them, and the men whose experiences inspired *Masters of the Air*.

Speakers:
Mike P. Faley, 100th Bomb Group historian
Rebecca Crosby Hutchinson, daughter of 100th Bomb Group navigator and author Harry Crosby
Colin Heaton, Luftwaffe historian, author, and consultant to Apple+ TV's *Masters of the Air*

12:00–1:30 PM — Lunch

Author Book Signings

Veteran Conversation Tables

Sponsor Exhibits Open

Session II: Turning the Tide

Guadalcanal and Buna, New Guinea

1:30–5:00 PM

The Pacific War turned on brutal, grinding campaigns fought across ocean, jungle, and mountain. This session follows the Allied offensive from Guadalcanal to Buna, New Guinea, exploring naval combat, land warfare, and the extraordinary endurance of those who fought in the Pacific.

Speakers:
Jeff Ballard, naval historian and Pacific War author
Dave Holland, Guadalcanal historian, author, and battlefield guide
James Campbell, author of *Ghost Mountain Boys*
Chris Kolakowski, Director of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum

5:00 – 6:00 PM

Happy Hour with Historians

Cash bar and conversation

Dinner on your own

Friday, December 4

7:00–9:00 AM — Breakfast at hotel

8:00–8:55 AM — Coffee, bookstore, sponsor exhibits

Session III: Winning the War

America's High Command

9:00 AM–12:00 PM

Victory in World War II required more than battlefield courage. It demanded commanders who could manage armies, alliances, politics, personalities, and enormous moral pressure. This session explores George Patton, Mark Clark, Dwight Eisenhower, and the leadership challenges that shaped Allied victory.

Speakers:
Helen Patton, granddaughter of General George S. Patton
LTC Roger Cirillo (USA, ret), research-author for American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: World War II series.
Michel Paradis, author of In the Light of Battle

12:00–2:00 PM — Lunch

Author Book Signings

Veteran Conversation Tables

Sponsor Exhibits Open

Session IV: Coming Home

The Hidden Legacies of World War II

2:00–5:00 PM

For many veterans and families, the war did not end in 1945. This session examines what happened after the fighting stopped: the wounds carried home, the families shaped by service, and the long afterlife of World War II in American memory.

Speakers:
David Nasaw, author of *The Wounded Generation*
Carol Schultz Vento, author of *The Hidden Legacy of World War II*
Richard Sherman, Navy veteran, photographer, and author of *Never Home*

Friday Evening: An Evening with the Greatest Generation

5:30–6:00 PM — Film Tribute
A short film honoring the World War II veterans attending the conference.

6:00–7:30 PM — Veterans Dinner
Buffet dinner featuring VBC-style table conversations and interviews with World War II veterans.

Saturday, December 5

7:00–9:00 AM — Breakfast at hotel

Closing Excursion

Pearl Harbor Remembrance at the Zephyrhills Museum of Military History

9:00 AM — Bus Departs for Zephyrhills Museum of Military History

Join museum staff, veterans, speakers, and fellow attendees for Pearl Harbor remembrance activities, guided tours, and a closing luncheon.

1:00 PM — Closing Lunch

Return transportation to the hotel will be provided in the afternoon.

Sunday, December 6

Departure Day

No formal programming. Attendees depart Tampa.