

# MISSION Accomplished



## D-Day Museum project beats tight deadline


**"You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hope and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere are with you."**

With those words, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower launched "Operation Overlord," the largest air, land and sea invasion of all time. More than 5,000 ships, 10,000 airplanes and 250,000 service men and women descended on the beaches of Normandy, France the morning of June 6, 1944. Before the end of the day nearly 10,000 Allied lives had been lost, yet Operation

Overlord was a turning point in World War II, the decisive battle leading to Allied victory in the European theater.

Today, that historic moment is known to the world as D-Day, and the events of that day have been honored with a new \$21 million National D-Day Museum in New Orleans. As if to reflect Eisenhower's famous line about "liberty-





loving people everywhere," it was a Peruvian immigrant named Rufino Saavedra who helped lead the modern-day troop of contractors who prepared the museum for its own launch 56 years after the Normandy invasion.

To commemorate the anniversary, a grand opening complete with the largest military parade in the U.S. in 40 years and appearances by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks, was set for June 6. Just three months before, not one exhibit was in place and people were starting to wonder if the museum would be completed on time.

"I was supposed to be the last contractor on the project," says Saavedra, President of Rufino's Painting and Contracting, Inc. "Instead I became a cheerleader to get it finished. There were 20 contractors sitting in a meeting wondering aloud if we were going to make it. I said that there was no question – we have to make it."

His enthusiasm and optimism were contagious. The project, projected to draw 70,000 new visitors and \$28 million annually to the Big Easy, was wrapped up two days prior to the June 6 deadline. Hundreds of veterans rode in large military trucks in the parade to the new museum, and Spielberg, whose movie *Saving Private Ryan* helped re-establish D-Day in the public consciousness, spoke to a ceremony capping four days of events celebrating the opening.

It was a proud moment for Saavedra. But the credit, he says, goes to his employees.

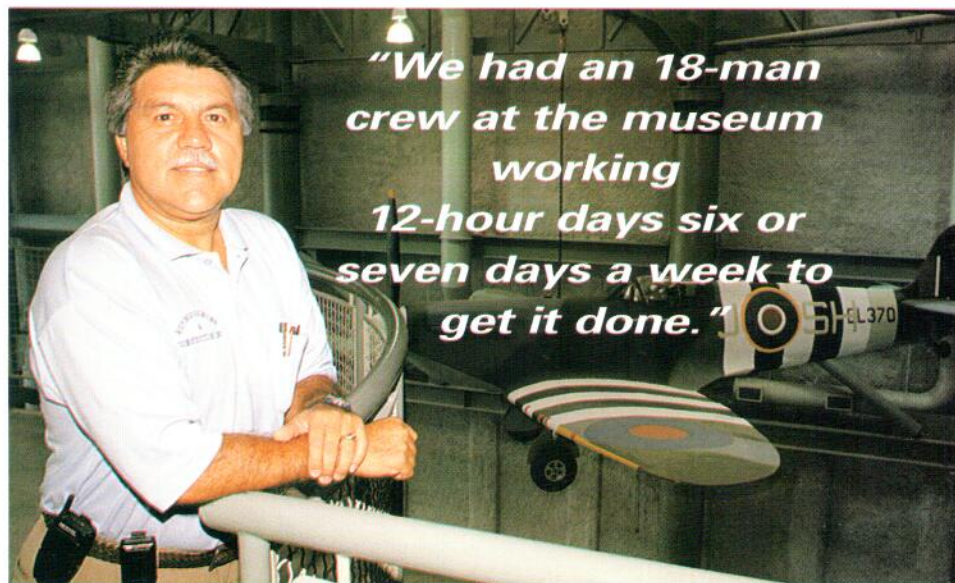
"I had an 18-man crew at the museum and we worked 12-hour days six or seven days a week for the last two months to get it done," he says. In all, the crew spent seven months on the job, using about 2,000 gallons of paint. The variety of surfaces and number of change orders on the project – 48 – required careful planning and plenty of patience.

"There was a lot of pressure, but we rose to the challenge, and we had a lot of fun doing it,"

Saavedra says. "I am very proud of my people and the work they accomplished on this project."

### Choosing the right coatings

Located in the historic Warehouse District of New Orleans, the museum structure is a mix of old and new. The exterior walls are stucco. An 1800s-era brick wall forms one wall of the main room, the Louisiana Memorial Pavilion, which houses two airplanes, three trucks, a tank, a tent and an LCPV (landing craft vehicle, personnel) designed specifically for the Marines' D-Day invasion by New Orleans boat manufacturer Andrew Higgins. The remaining interior walls of the Pavilion are a combination of concrete and sheet rock. Glass windows with steel framing cover the Pavilion's entire front wall. In addition, there were steel beams, trusses and decks, and galvanized ductwork, conduits and a sprinkler system near the 50-foot ceiling of the Pavilion.

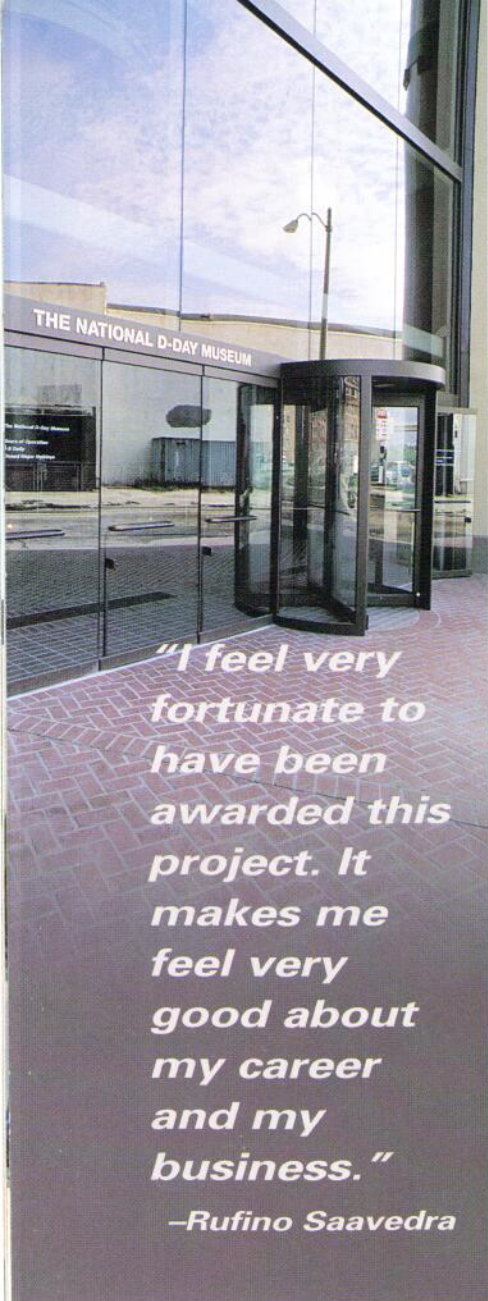


Saavedra chose a Sherwin-Williams coating for each of these different surfaces. On the sheet rock, he used a primer coat of ProBlock Interior Latex Primer with ProMar 200 Interior Latex Eg-Shel to finish. For the interior masonry surfaces, he used the Loxon Masonry Primer and Coating System, spraying on the primer coat and brushing and rolling the topcoats. Loxon was also used to prime the exterior concrete, with a topcoat of Elastomeric Coating.

"It's important to choose the right paint to match the climate," Saavedra says. "Elastomeric has proven to be a reliable paint for New Orleans

**The many substrates at the National D-Day Museum required careful coatings selection. Rufino Saavedra, above, chose a variety of Sherwin-Williams products: Loxon and Elastomeric for masonry walls, ProMar 200 for sheet rock and DTM on metal surfaces.**





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*—Rufino Saavedra*

weather. With this humid environment, it offers excellent waterproof coverage."

For the metal surfaces, he used DTM products from Sherwin-Williams – Galvide Primer on the galvanized metal, Rust Inhibitor Primer on the steel, and DTM Acrylic Coating for the topcoat on both. "I am very confident using DTM on any metal surface," Saavedra says. "It is an excellent latex paint with good body and great coverage."

Saavedra is no stranger to big commercial jobs – he is painting contractor for the Port of New Orleans, New Orleans International Airport, and the New Orleans Parish School Board and Sewerage and Water Board – but this high-profile project, he says, has "opened very big doors for future projects." It has also given him the kind of visibility that money can't buy.

### **Humble beginnings**

The completion of the D-Day Museum is just one in a long string of success stories for Saavedra. Born in Peru, he emigrated to the U.S. in 1983. Trained in Peru and Venezuela as a quality control engineer, he worked odd jobs and took classes in English, then landed a quality control engineer job in 1985. After he was laid off in 1989, he took a job painting for a friend of his family. He learned the business quickly, and within three months started his own firm. From humble beginnings – a \$27 initial investment for brushes and rollers to paint a small apartment building – his company has grown to 35 employees working five to six mostly commercial projects at any one time. Saavedra's dedication to "quality, responsibility and honesty" – the motto printed on his business cards – has earned the respect of local business and community leaders. He served as president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana and chairman of New Orleans Mayor Marc Morial's Advisory Committee on Hispanic and Latin American Affairs, and was named Role Model 2000 Entrepreneur of the Year by the New Orleans Young Leadership Council.

"He's done tremendous work here, even when it was a rush job," says Kerwin Byrd, director of support services at New Orleans General Hospital.

"Since he has come along, I don't even look for other proposals."

Spurred by the success of the National D-Day Museum project, Saavedra has landed another high-profile job – half of the painting and finishing of a renovation of the 150-year-old American Can Company plant into a 268-unit apartment complex. The job, bid with Sherwin-Williams paint, will keep a crew busy well into 2001.

### **Big dreams in the Big Easy**

Music, food and climate originally drew Saavedra to New Orleans, but it was the city's diversity and welcoming nature that encouraged him to stay. "The way these people open their arms to you – it is inspiring," he says. "When I came here 17 years ago, I had no English skills, no money – but I was full of hopes and dreams."

Though his home is full of artifacts of his native Peru and he returns there with his New Orleans-born wife Wynonne on a regular basis, it was in the U.S. where he could realize his ambitions. "I could only dream of doing something like this in my home country," he says. "The economy would never allow a small business to grow this quickly. This only happens in America, and I would say that I'm fulfilling my American dream."

The very kind of dream, appropriately enough, that the soldiers who landed in 1944 on the shores of Normandy were fighting to protect. The kind of dream that D-Day, and the National D-Day Museum, are all about.

"I feel very fortunate to have been awarded this project," Saavedra says. "It makes me feel very good about my career and my business." **PPC**



*An American flag provides a splash of color among the muted Armed Services-inspired greens, grays and tans that dominate the scheme in the Louisiana Pavilion at the National D-Day Museum. The museum was located in New Orleans in honor of Andrew Higgins, whose company built the boats that landed at Normandy.*