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### This Memorial Day, The Harley Museum Honors "One American Hero"

"Museum exhibit tells the emotional story of a fallen hero and his family's quest to preserve his memory MILWAUKEE (May 22, 2009) – Beginning Memorial Day, the Harley-Davidson Museum will host a special exhibit sharing the emotional story of WWII Staff Sergeant Wallace Van Sandt, his Harley-Davidson motorcycle, and his family's journey to honor his memory. The Museum's "One American Hero" exhibit opens May 22 and runs through August 10. A special presentation by members of Wallace's family will take place June 5 at the Museum, followed by an EAA presentation about the B-17 Flying Fortress in which Wallace met his fate. It began as a high school graduation present in late 1940, a shiny new Flight Red 1941 WLD Sport Solo Harley-Davidson motorcycle. It was a gift to Wallace Van Sandt of Birmingham, Ala. from his father. Logging just over 19,000 miles on the motorcycle before he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942, Wallace became a tail gunner aboard a B-17 and was shot down over Yugoslavia. Wallace never made it home, first listed as Missing in Action and – one year later – declared Killed in Action with his remains returning to Alabama in 1949.

"Wallace's story is one that touches all of us in so many ways," said Jim Fricke, Curatorial Director of the Harley-Davidson Museum. "He was a war hero – a decorated veteran – and at the same time he was just an American kid from Alabama who had a sweetheart waiting for him back home and who loved riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle."

A memorial is built

Wallace's mother built a memorial house out of mountain stone near her home to honor her son's memory. In it she placed his personal belongings – his uniforms, flight suit, medals, letters to and from his sweetheart, and his beloved Harley-Davidson motorcycle. The items remained untouched until the 1960s when Wallace's ailing mother gave the collection to her grandson and Wallace's nephew, Cleve Porter. Cleve spent the next 40 years meticulously researching what had happened to his uncle that fateful day in 1944. Along the way he amassed reams of research, photographs and other information, even tracking down and interviewing members of the crew that survived the plane crash, along with contacting the civilians in Yugoslavia who found and buried his uncle. Wallace's Harley-Davidson motorcycle comes home to Milwaukee

In late 2006, the Harley-Davidson Archives received a call from Cleve Porter expressing his desire to see his uncle's bike return home, to the place it was manufactured nearly 70 years earlier. Cleve's desire was for the collection to remain whole, and wanted the bike and personal possessions to stay together so that his uncle's memory could live on as it did with the family.

### Experience the journey now through August 10

Now visitors to the Museum can see "One American Hero" beginning May 22 through August 10. Along with his motorcycle, Wallace's personal items will be on display including his Purple Heart medal, the telegram his family received with the tragic news that he was missing in action, his hand-written letters and his childhood mementos.

For more information on the Harley-Davidson Museum, visit [www.h-dmuseum.com](http://www.h-dmuseum.com).

Harley-Davidson Motor Company, the only major U.S.-based motorcycle manufacturer, produces heavyweight motorcycles and a complete line of motorcycle parts, accessories and general merchandise. For more information, visit Harley-Davidson's web site at [www.harley-davidson.com](http://www.harley-davidson.com).



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**Aug 16** - Woodstock, IL  
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