

The man who won the war

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These days I do a lot of things just because.

So the other day, just because I hadn't been there in some time and a new pavilion had opened, I headed to the National World War II Museum.



Andrew Higgins, founder and owner of the New Orleans-based Higgins Industries, turns out to be a key player in the strategy of World War II. (Illustration by Mark Andresen)

On leisurely days, St. Charles Avenue is my route of choice. That picturesque thoroughfare takes me past avenues named Jefferson, Washington and Jackson and then on to Gen. Lee's Circle, where I take a right and find myself on Andrew Higgins Drive, the gateway to the museum and stories about generals named Eisenhower, Patton and MacArthur.

Even lesser students of U.S. history will recognize most of those names ? save that of Andrew Higgins, who turns out to be a key player in the strategy of the war.

Al Mipro, a museum docent, tells the story almost every day he is on duty, which he has been since two months before the museum opened in 2000. A World War II buff,

Mipro (who received a bachelor of business administration degree from Tulane in 1958) can rattle off facts about Higgins, the founder and owner of the New Orleans-based Higgins Industries who is credited with designing and manufacturing the “Higgins boats” that carried troops from ships to shore most famously at Normandy on D-Day.

On that fateful day, June 6, 1944, 500 ships carrying 150,000 Allied troops crossed the English Channel. They came ashore on thousands of Higgins boats on an invasion front that stretched some 90 kilometers and was arguably the most daring, determined and heroic moment in the history of democracy.

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Angus Lind, a 1966 graduate of Tulane University spent more than three decades as a columnist for The Times-Picayune.