

# Rensselaer County

## 2005 Honor A Veteran Ceremony's



### **Date of Ceremony**

### **Name of Deceased Veteran**

**February 14, 2005**

**Herbert L. Olsen**

**March 14, 2005**

**William H. Bell**

**April 11, 2005**

**Rita A. Hamlin**

**May 9, 2005**

**John J. Muscatello**

**June 13, 2005**

**Angelo Eugenio DiStefano**

**July 11, 2005**

**The Bowen Brothers**

**(George, Thomas, John, William, Donald, James Rodney  
and Edward)**

**August 8, 2005**

**Edward E. Madden, Jr.**

**Septeber 12, 2005**

**Martin G. "Mickey" Mahar**

**October 11, 2005**

**Donald Frederick Kelleher**

**November 14, 2005**

**Richard J. Haldeman**

**December 12, 2005**

**Arthur C. Turner**

## **Herbert Louis Olsen**

**Born in Lansingburgh on October the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1916, Herbert Louis Olsen was one of three children born to Louis and Kristine Olsen. Herbert was educated in Lansingburgh schools along with brothers Arthur and Robert, graduating from Lansingburgh High in 1935. Herb's brother Robert would go on to become a dentist opening a practice on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in Lansingburgh.**

**After his graduation from the 'Burgh, Herb went on to study at the Troy Business College, R.P.I., the University of Kansas, and Union College.**

**In March of 1942, 26 year old Herbert Olsen enlisted in the United States Navy. Just a few months earlier the Japanese attack on the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor had turned the conflict known until that time as the "war in Europe" in to World War II. What had been an interesting distraction and the subject of heated debates, was now a real threat to our country and our American way of life.**

**This compelled Herbert Olsen and thousands of other young American men to take up the call to defend our shores. Most likely as a result of his extensive education, Herb was initially assigned to duty in Washington, D.C., serving in the field of communications as a Yeoman First Class. In his position Herb had access to classified communications which given his future duty would prove a mixed blessing.**

**Following his time in D.C. Herb was assigned to a destroyer tender, the USS Briarius , stationed in the South Pacific. Although not a part of combat maneuvers per se, during wartime ships rarely ever stopped moving , never the less tie - up at a dock, because the only edge a ship maintains is its ability to maneuver, so when in need of repairs the repair ships came to them. These repair vessels, known as "tenders", were huge vessels, and were known to be "targets of choice" for Japanese Suicide Planes, or "Kamikazes".**

**This is where Herb's earlier assignment and it's access to confidential information came in to play. At about the time Yeoman Olsen was joining the USS Briarius in the South Pacific the Japanese were beginning to unleash their newest weapon, the Kamikaze.**

**Taking it's name from a typhoon which destroyed a mongol army about to overrun Japan in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century the Kamikaze, or "Divine Wind" was the brain child of Vice Admiral Takashiro Ohnishi. After witnessing the accidental crash of a fighter plane attempting to land on an aircraft carrier Ohnishi stated**

that “more damage had been done than could be caused by ten aircraft firing machine guns”.

The Americans were taken completely by surprise and couldn't understand the mentality of loading an aircraft with a half a ton of high explosives and just enough fuel for a one way trip and intentionally crashing it into an enemy vessel.

American Navy officials were reporting the Kamikaze's success rate as about 2%. Yeoman Olsen, fresh from his duty transcribing decoded classified messages, knew that number to be more like between 20 and 25%, a fact which must have made him just a little bit uncomfortable as he headed for the South Pacific and the USS Briarius.

On the Briarius, Herb served throughout the South Pacific, and every once and a while news of a “Herb sighting ” would trickle home to loved ones from others serving in those areas. At one point Herb and his brother Bob, also serving in the South Pacific, missed each other at Buckner Bay, on the Japanese Island of Okinawa, by just eight days.

Another time, we think somewhere in the Solomon Islands, Herb bumped into another “Burgh boy”, my dad, Petty Officer Neil W. Kelleher , when his ship, a Spruance Class Destroyer, the USS Dashield, damaged as a result of a Kamikaze direct hit on it's forward gun battery, was tied up next to the Briarius for repairs.

The largest naval conflict in history , the War for the Pacific was waged between the worlds two most powerful navies. From the Arctic conditions of the Aleutians to the sweltering heat of the South Pacific this conflict included every conceivable type of naval activity, carrier based aviation battles, surface battles, amphibious landings, and brutal submarine warfare.

The beginning of the end came on August the 6th, 1945, at 8:15 a.m., when the “Enola Gay” a shiny, aluminum skinned B-29, based on the Island of Tinian, and piloted by Col.Paul Tibbetts, released its single atomic bomb over the Japanese industrial city of Hiroshima. As a result of Japans refusal to surrender, three days later the city of Nagasaki would suffer a similar fate. Five days later, on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945 President Truman announced Japans unconditional surrender.

**Yeoman First Class Herbert Louis Olsen was honorably discharged from the Navy on Halloween 1945 at the Navy's East Coast Separation Center at Lido Beach on Long Island.**

**Having married the former Dorothy Rowland shortly after joining the service on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1942 Herb returned home to his wife and family which soon included a son Peter. Peter would add three grandchildren to the family, Dillon, Christian, and Neil, now deceased.**

**Over the course of his working years Herb was employed at Norton Company, General Electric, and Consolidated Car Heater Company. Herb would eventually start his own contracting business, the Olsen Construction Company.**

**An avid outdoors man Herb loved to hunt, fish ,trap, hike and took part in rifle competitions. He also did a little farming and woodworking, and enjoyed his frequent travels.**

**This love of the outdoors must have run in the family because many an afternoon as a young boy I found myself listening to the “whirl” of the dentist’s drill in Dr. Olsen’s waiting room and trying to distract myself by staring at the huge mounted fish on the wall.**

**Like so many of our vets Herb gave to his community in a number of ways, primarily as a long time member of Tamarac School Board. Herb was also a member of the Troy Industrial Club and the Danish Brotherhood of America.**

**Herbert Louis Olsen left us on September the 26<sup>th</sup>, 1997. We owe Herbert and all our World War II Vets a tremendous amount for the sacrifices they made in defense of our country.**

**My hope here this morning is that we can satisfy just a little bit of that debt as we honor and pay our respects to the life and times of another of our Rensselaer County Heroes, Yeoman First Class Herbert Louis Olsen.**

## **William H. Bell**

**Born in Newburgh, New York on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of January in 1912, William H. Bell was one of four children born to father William and mother Hannah Collins Thompson.**

**Moving to the city of Watervliet as a young boy, William would attend the city's public schools along with sisters Leslie and Emma, and brother Clifton. After completion of his schooling he went to work for General Electric in Schenectady, gaining employment as a truck driver.**

**When the United States first entered World War II many predicted a quick end to the global conflict, seeing the intervention of the Americans as a guaranteed quick end to the Axis Powers, but by the middle of 1943, the allies had yet to invade Hitler's Fortress Europe, and it was becoming clear that the end was still a ways off.**

**On September the 1<sup>st</sup> of 1943, 31 year old William Bell, realizing there was still plenty of fighting to be done, entered the United States Army. Upon completion of basic training Bill was assigned to "B" Company's 37<sup>th</sup> Signal Heavy Construction Battalion, and after additional training and duties stateside, on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1944, shipped out overseas, arriving in Europe some two weeks later on the 19<sup>th</sup>.**

**It was the mission of Heavy Construction Signal Units to install and maintain all the infrastructure required to provide communications.**

**Perhaps an appropriate analogy would be imagining the task of installing and maintaining the phone lines in a neighborhood that was constantly moving, a mission which would seem daunting under the best of conditions. Add to this constant enemy bombardment and horrible weather conditions and you can begin to get a sense of what a Heavy Construction Signal Battalion was all about.**

**Although the dates indicate a period late in the war, William and the men of his unit arrived in the European Theatre of Operations in time to participate in some of the most horrendous and brutal combat operations of WWII.**

**Actively involved in both the Ardennes and the Rhineland Campaigns, William would be a part of the largest and by most considered the greatest battle the Americans would fight in WWII, the Germans desperate last ditch effort known as the "Battle of the Bulge".**

Also called “41 days in hell”, the Battle of the Bulge was fought in the heavily forested regions of Eastern Belgium and Northern Luxembourg. Ten German Divisions, numbering over 600,000 men would take on an allied force comprised of 500,000 American and 55,000 British Troops.

Determined to break through the Allied Line of Defense and encircle and trap the Americans , the Germans fiercely hurled everything they had at the allies, yet after over five weeks of bloody fighting in freezing weather had accomplished little more than putting a dent, or a “bulge” in the American Lines.

Although the German gains were small, the price paid was immense, with over 100,000 casualties suffered by the Germans. The loss of men and equipment was one the Germans would never overcome, and a little over 4 months later, in the spring of 1945, the war in Europe was over.

The fighting may have come to an end, but for Technician 4<sup>th</sup> Grade William H. Bell and the men of the 37<sup>th</sup> Heavy Signal there was plenty of work to be done. Few were better trained and equipped to take on the job of rebuilding Europe’s communications than Bill and his colleagues and it wasn’t until over a year later that they would depart for home, arriving back in the states on May 13<sup>th</sup> of 1946.

Four days later , on May 17<sup>th</sup>, Tech 4 William H. Bell was honorably discharged from the United States Army at the army’s separation center at Ft.Dix, New Jersey. For courageous service to his country Bill was awarded the European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, a Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

Returning home William went back to work for General Electric as a machinist, a position he would hold for over 30 years, retiring in 1975. William was also employed by the law firm of E. Stewart Jones here in Troy.

A member of the Troy Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8758, also known as the Dickerson Post, William was a Collar City Lodge #1015 Mason, and a faithful member of the Fifth Avenue AME Zion Church in Troy.

An avid boater and fisherman, in his spare time Bill pursued his passion for both stamp and coin collecting. He also found time to do a little painting and loved to march in parades.

Predeceased by his wife Helen K. Bell, William passed away on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, of 1997 after a long illness.

**In addition to his special friend Peggy Phillips, he is survived by sons William and Maurice Phillips, and a daughter Mona Phillips. William is also survived by his eight grand children, Tyrell Pryor, and Latoya, Lisa, William, Marquan, Markala, Marquise, and Markion Phillips.**

**I'm especially proud this morning that we honor a veteran who, like many of his fellow African - Americans, had to not only combat the enemy, but too often the prejudice and discrimination of racism as well.**

**The military of WWII, like much of the nation that William fought to defend, was one that still practiced discrimination and segregation, a fact that for some reason failed to deter the two and one half million blacks who registered for the draft in WWII.**

**Since colonial times Black Americans have defended this country, fighting to preserve freedoms they themselves often didn't enjoy.**

**It is with great pleasure, and a sense of long over due honor that I take part in these ceremonies this morning, honoring the life and times, of not a white or a black hero, but an American Hero, William H. Bell.**

## **Rita A. Hamlin**

**Rita A. Hamlin was born in the City of Troy on September the 1<sup>st</sup> of 1921. One of four children born to William Yaiser and the former Mary Powers, Rita was raised in Troy along with her brother William and two sisters Virginia and Eileen. Rita received her elementary and secondary education at St.Mary's Elementary School and Catholic Central High School. A member of the Catholic High's Class of 1939, Rita would go on to attend and graduate from Troy Business College.**

**Shortly after her graduation from college, on January 16<sup>th</sup> of 1943, Rita enrolled in the Womans Army Corps. Until World War II, the only women in uniform were members of the ANC or Army Nurse Corps. Even as the war raged in Europe, a Womans Army Corps would not be given any serious consideration until after the attack on Pearl Harbor.**

**Prior to that, in early 1941, Congresswoman Edith Rogers of Massachusetts had let the army know of her intention to introduce legislation establishing an Army womans corps, separate and distinct from the Army Nurse Corps. Initial opposition from the Army was softened by a public sentiment which increasingly favored a role for woman in the military.**

**Many still remembered the female civilians who volunteered as contract workers in World War I. Although working overseas in various roles including communications and dietary, these women had no official military status, and had to fend for themselves for food and housing. When they returned home they were not entitled to any military benefits such as disability pay or pensions.**

**This was a history Congresswoman Rogers and others were determined to not see repeated.**

**In May of 1942 a compromise was reached between the congresswoman and an Army determined to protect its male Army culture. The Womans Army Auxiliary Corps would work with the Army "for the purpose of making available to the national defense the knowledge, skill, and special training of the women of the nation."**

**When signing the bill into law President Franklin D. Roosevelt set a recruitment goal of 25,000 for the first year, a number that would be topped in the first seven months, at which point Secretary of Defense Henry Stims on authorized WAAC enrollment at 150,000, the ceiling originally established by congress.**



Fort Des Moines, Iowa was selected to be the site of the first WAAC training center and by October of 1942 some 27 WAAC companies were active at AWS stations up and down the eastern seaboard, plotting aircraft and tracing the paths of all aircraft in their assigned area.

Later graduates would be formed into companies and sent to air force units, known then as the Army Air Force, ground units, known as Army Ground Forces, and Service and Supply units.

Initially, most auxiliaries were assigned work as clerks, typists, stenographers, or motor pool drivers, but as the capabilities of Rita and her fellow auxiliaries or “WACS” were realized, it wasn’t long before they began to be assigned as weather forecasters, cryptographers, radio operators, aerial photo analysts, and a host of other specialized assignments.

Eventually, over 150,000 women would serve in the Army during WWII, their success in part due to their role in a larger national effort that required selfless sacrifice from all Americans.

During her time in the WAAC’s Rita would perform numerous jobs, attaining the rank of Junior Leader, comparable to a corporal in the Regular Army. Honorably Discharged on August the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1943 Rita returned to Troy, and a year later, on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1944, was married to Donald Hamlin at the 4<sup>th</sup> Regimental Chapel at Ft. Meade, Maryland. Rita had met Don on a train traveling from Maryland while being stationed at Ft. McKinley.

Rita and Don set up their household in Troy where they raised their two children. Their son Brian, and daughter Susan, would go on to bless them with three grandchildren, Susan’s son Greg Gosh, and Brian’s two children, Brian Jr., and Melissa. Greg Gosh would have two children of his own, Rita and Don’s great-grandchildren, Tori and Alex .While raising her family Rita worked at the family business, Yaiser’s Variety Store, which was located on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Troy.

In 1964 Rita went to work for the Internal Revenue Service, a job she would hold until the time of her retirement in 1988.

A communicant of Sacred Heart Church in Troy, Rita was a long time member of the American Legion and the Wynantskill V.F.W. Post, and is credited as being one of the original founders of Spring Little League. A tireless worker for any good cause, Rita could often be found helping out raising money for her high school Alma Mater, Catholic Central High School.

**When not helping others Rita always stayed busy. In the winter she loved to snow ski and ice skate, and in the warmer weather could be found walking , riding her bike, or taking in a baseball game.**

**Some years after retiring from the Internal Revenue Service, Rita, then in her mid seventies, went to work for the City of Troy as a school crossing guard, a job she held at the time her untimely death in February of 2004, as a result of a horrific traffic accident.**

**An incredible life, lived by an incredible lady. If Rita A. Yaiser Hamlin represented the typical WAAC, our enemies were indeed fortunate that in those days woman weren't allowed in to combat.**

**It is my honor and pleasure to be here this morning as we honor the life, the times, and the service of another of our Rensselaer County Heroes, Womans Army Auxiliary Corps Junior Leader Rita A. Hamlin.**

John J. Muscatello

Born in the City of Troy on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of June in 1931, John Muscatello would grow up on that huge playground south of Ferry Street adults referred to as South Troy.

One of six children born to John and Rose Minetti Muscatello, John and his brother Joe, who passed away last month on April the 14<sup>th</sup>, attended St. Mary's Elementary School along with their four sisters, Theresa, Mary, Clem, and Carmella. John also served as an altar boy at St. Mary's Church, of which he was a communicant.

A member of Troy High Schools Class of '48, John had been a standout on the football team, graduating at the age of 17. Less than a month later on July the 12<sup>th</sup>, 1948, John traveled to Albany where he enlisted in the United States Army.

Upon completion of basic training John was assigned to the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment. Although at the time his attachment to the 21<sup>st</sup> seemed routine, it would prove to be anything but, as upon the invasion of South Korea there was only one unit available to delay the onslaught of the North Korean invaders, Pvt. John Muscatello's 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry.

With just over a year remaining of his three year enlistment John was most likely beginning to think about what to do when he got back home. Then came June the 25<sup>th</sup> of 1950 and the outbreak of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula. John and the men of the 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry, already "on station" in Asia as part of the WWII occupation forces, were rushed into the fray.

Although going from garrison duty to combat duty in just a matter of days, John and the men of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division managed to single-handedly delay the North Korean onslaught for over three weeks, encompassing a time period from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, just five days after the north's invasion, to July the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Perhaps never expecting to find themselves in combat, and always outnumbered, Private First Class Muscatello and the men of these infantry units would nevertheless prove to be tenacious fighters.

The first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> flown to Korea, a 540 man composite unit known as Task Force Smith, went into action against the North Koreans on July the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1950 where they successfully executed a delaying action for over seven hours, against an enemy force estimated at 20,000 men!!

Some two weeks later other units of the 24<sup>th</sup> would undertake the first American offensive action, eventually claiming the first American ground victory, when on July 20<sup>th</sup> they attacked and recaptured the vital road junction of Yechon.

By the time an armistice was signed on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1953, the 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment would see some of the fiercest fighting of the Korean War, participating in eight major battle campaigns, receiving two Presidential Unit Citations.

As is often the case in times of conflict John's three year "hitch" was extended for an additional year, and on April the 24<sup>th</sup>, 1952, Pfc. John Muscatello was honorably discharged from the United States Army at Ft. Devens, Massachusetts, three years, nine months, and six days after his enlistment date. John had spent two years and almost eight months of that time overseas.

For service to his country a grateful nation awarded John 1 Overseas Bar, a Distinguished Unit Emblem, the Korean Service Medal w/ three Bronze Service Stars, a Korean Presidential Unit Citation, a Combat Infantry Badge, and the Bronze Star.

Returning home John went to work for Albany International, a position he would retire from in 1989 after 35 years of service. Having taken up residence in Wynantskill in 1965, John was also employed by the Wynantskill School District as a bus driver for over 30 years.

Married to Diane Delaney Muscatello for eighteen years, together they would raise three children, a son Barry, and two daughters, Tracey, and Lisa.

Subsequently divorced, it is said that the best things in life are worth waiting for, and on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1991, at Wynantskill's American Legion Post # 1489 on Main Street, John married Geraldine "Gerry" Kelly DeSapio, a young lady he'd originally met in 1955 and even dated for a brief period of time in the summer of 1958.

As a result of that union John became the proud stepfather of Mrs. Cindy Vroman, and Nick, Tony, and Paul DeSapio, all of the City of Troy.

Active in local politics, John was Co-Chairman of the Wynantskill Conservative Party.

**He was also a member of the American Legion , the Veterans of Wynantskill, the Northeast Chapter of the Korean War Veterans Association, and last but not least, the “Wynantskill McDonald Gang”.**

**A devout lover of the outdoors, John could often be found hunting or fishing. John would also remain close his entire life to his uncle, Pete Menetti, himself a proud and distinguished veteran.**

**Although a combat tested tenacious fighter, John would succumb to his final battle with lung cancer on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at the age of 72.**

**We owe John and all our veterans a tremendous amount, an amount which can never be repaid. The best we can hope for is that by recognizing their life and it’s accompanying accomplishments and sacrifices, we can put just a little dent in that debt, that debt we owe to Pfc. John Muscatello and all our Rensselaer County Heroes.**

## Angelo Eugenio DiStefano

Angelo Eugenio DiStefano was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1929 on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of October. One of three children born to Salvatore and Jennie Trecca Di Stefano, Angelo had a sister Josephine and a brother Alan.

Living in Brooklyn until his early teens, Angelo attended Brooklyn Public Schools, P.S. 215, David Brody Junior High, and Abraham Lincoln High School.

Relocating to the City of Troy shortly after the end of WW II, the DiStefano's took up residence at 2118 Fifth Avenue.

Leaving his studies at Troy High behind, Angelo enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in Albany, N.Y., on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1947. Following basic training Angelo was assigned to the Marine Base at Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California, where he attended Communication School specializing in the Field Telephone, and eventually earning ratings of "Telephone Man", and "Message Center Man".

While stationed at Camp Pendleton Angelo took up boxing and proved to have quite a knack for it , becoming a Silver Gloves Champion, noted by the award of a miniature silver boxing glove which Angelo's brother Alan still has to this day.

Having satisfactorily completed his three year enlistment Pfc. Angelo DiStefano was Honorably Discharged from the United States Marine Corps at the United States Naval Training Center in Great Lakes, Illinois, on March, 26<sup>th</sup>, 1950. The following day, March 27<sup>th</sup>, Angelo enlisted in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. The enlistment was to be for a period of four years, but tragically, Angelo's "hitch" was destined to be much shorter.

Although Angelo's mother and father had moved to Los Angeles, California shortly after his initial enlistment, Angelo nevertheless found time to visit Troy upon his discharge, spending the summer of 1950 visiting and enjoying the company of his numerous friends and relatives still living in the "Collar City".

Recalled to active duty in September of 1950, Angelo joined the Marines 1<sup>st</sup> Division, landing in Hungnam, Korea on or about December 11<sup>th</sup>.

As part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Divisions 11<sup>th</sup> Marines Angelo and his fellow "Leathernecks" soon found themselves on daily patrols in around the Masdan, Pohan, Songdong, and Andogn Regions. Their mission was to round up Guerilla

infiltrators, members of the communists North Korean People Army, who had been sent south to go behind friendly lines where they would attempt to disrupt lines of communication and supply.

By the end of January 1951 the men of the Marines 1<sup>st</sup> Division were beginning to think they were making a difference, with the enemy pressure easing up as the Marines forced them to abandon their guerilla activities and withdraw to the north. For Pfc. Angelo DiStefano it would be a short lived victory.

In a letter home to his mother dated February the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1951, Angelo, describing the horrors of war and speaking of his fellow Marines, wrote “these guys think they are always on a hunting trip. I can see where, by the time we get home, all the Marines will be kill crazy. They have killed so many men that a few more don’t matter. I haven’t got to that stage and have tried to stop from getting that way.” Angelo closes the same letter by saying, “mom, for goodness sake “don’t worry” please. Neither of us can do anything about this, so there is no use in even thinking about me out here.”

Unfortunately, at the time Angelo’s mom read those words, there was little else she could think about. A few hours earlier she had been notified that Angelo had been killed in action on February the 4<sup>th</sup>, three days after penning those words home.

A little over a month later, on March the 13<sup>th</sup>, 1951, Mrs. Giovannina DiStefano would receive the following;

*Dear Mrs. DiStefano:*

*The untimely and tragic loss of your son, Angelo, who met his death on the field of battle in Korea, has shocked all of us deeply. Some measure of comfort may be derived from the knowledge that he died in the service of his country and in the defense of a peace-loving people.*

*I am confident that his devotion to duty, at the cost of all he held dear, will hasten the day when ruthless aggression shall disappear from the face of the earth and free men everywhere will live together in peace and harmony.*

*Our faith enables us to withstand the shock and grief of death. It is my earnest prayer that Almighty God will sustain and strengthen you in this hour of trial. While the loss of your beloved one will be a hardship, we know that no life is really lost for those who have faith in God.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Douglas MacArthur*

**This letter was followed a short time later by a certificate signed by President Harry Truman.**

**Although I'm sure these official notices signed by "great men" of the day provided some measure of solace to Angelo's mom , I can't help but think of the pain she must have felt when recognizing the irony of Angelo having served a complete three year enlistment without ever leaving the United States, only to be killed less than six months after his activation as a member of the reserves.**

**A casualty of a conflict destined to be known as the "Forgotten War", I am honored to be here this morning to recognize the contribution and sacrifice of Pfc. Angelo DiStefano, a warrior whose efforts on our behalf will NEVER be forgotten.**



## **The Bowen Brothers**

(George, Thomas, John, William, Donald, James Rodney and Edward)

**This morning we take a little departure as we honor not one veteran, but seven, the seven Bowen brothers of North Troy.**

**The Bowen siblings, Mary, George, Thomas, John, William, Donald, James Rodney, and Edward, would be tragically orphaned at an early age due to the untimely passing of their mother, Helen “Nellie” Bowen, the former Helen O’Brien, followed just a few years later by the death of their father, Edward J. Bowen.**

**Although long considered a “Burgh Family”, the Bowen’s were actually all born in Cohoes, where the older boys, Thomas, George, John, and William, would grow up and attend school. Their sister, Mary, was the victim of a fatal auto accident at the age of 17.**

**Following the death of their parents, the eldest son, Thomas, along with his wife, Ann Burns Bowen, would raise younger brothers Donald, James Rodney, and Edward at 40 ½ 119<sup>th</sup> Street in the Lansingburgh section of North Troy, a row house which stood until just recently when it was destroyed by fire. During that time the boys would attend St. Augustine’s School and J. Rodney would go on to attend La Salle Institute.**

**First into the fray that would come to be known as World War II was the second born brother George J., who in March of 1942 enlisted in the United States Army.**

**Private George J. Bowen’s war service was destined to be both short and tragic, as on November the 8<sup>th</sup> 1942, just eight months after enlisting, he was killed in action. Young Private Bowen was assigned to the naval vessel “Walney”, which along with the vessel “Hartland” was attempting to land U.S. Army Rangers in Algeria, as part of the invasion of North Africa known as Operation Torch.**

**The two ships came under intense fire from shore and naval batteries and were both sunk in the Harbor at Oran, Algeria. Private George J. Bowen was posthumously awarded a Purple Heart and a Presidential Accolade.**

**Just a month after his brother George, in April of 1942, 22 year-old John E. Bowen enlisted in the United States Navy at the Naval Recruiting Office in**

Albany, N.Y. John would serve on a few different landing craft, known as LCI's, attaining the rank of Gunners Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class. Serving just shy of 3 years ,nine months, 16 months of which was spent in the South Pacific, GM 1<sup>st</sup> John E. Bowen was honorably discharged at the Navy 's Lido Beach , Long Island Separation Center on December 26<sup>th</sup> of 1945.

For service to his country John was awarded the Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, The Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal w/ Two Stars , and the World War II Victory Medal.

Returning home John married Lucy Mazzola on November the 3rd of 1946. They would have one child, a daughter Margaret Ann.

John worked for Golden Construction and would spend a number of years working on the construction of the Adirondack Northway. He would eventually spend over 20 years working for Arcy Plastics in Cohoes as well.

John loved hunting as well as fishing in front his home on the Mohawk River. When not in the garden he could often be found doting on his beloved dogs. He was pleased to have passed along his love of animals to his daughter Margaret.

Passing too young in January of 1982 John is also survived by his two grand children, Daniel and Kevin.

Born on June 13<sup>th</sup> of 1904, 38 year-old Thomas, the oldest of the "Brother's Bowen" would be the third to enter the armed forces, enlisting in the then somewhat new Naval Construction Battalion, known as the "Seabees", on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, 1942 in the City of Albany.

As we've learned from previous Honor-A-Vet Ceremonies, the only difference between being a Seabee and being a combatant, was that as a Seabee you often lacked the equipment to properly defend yourself. During their early years they would prove themselves as courageous and tenacious as any front line battle-hardened veteran, and their casualty rate ran well in to the tens of thousands.

Chief Carpenter's Mate Bowen served eighteen months in the South Pacific , and was honorably discharged in June of 1945 at the Navy's Casco Bay Receiving Station in Portland, Maine with the rank of Chief Ship Fitter.

**He was awarded the American Campaign Medal, The Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal w/ Two Stars, as well as the World War II Victory Medal.**

**Thomas had married his wife Ann on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1928, and although childless themselves, had taken in and raised Tom's three youngest brother's, Don, J. Rodney, and an Ed, following the death of their parents.**

**A self-employed mason during his working years, Thomas also served as the City of Troy's Deputy Commissioner of Public Works. As stated previously Tom and his wife Ann resided on 119<sup>th</sup> Street in Lansingburgh.**

**A member of numerous community organizations including the V.F.W, the D.A.V, the American Legion, and the Holy Name Society to mention a few, Thomas, a member of St. Augustine's Parish, passed at the age of 60 on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of December in 1964.**

**Donald E. Bowen, born on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1923 enlisted in the in the United States Army in January of 1943. Donald would spend his time overseas in England.**

**Upon his honorable discharge Corporal Bowen was awarded the European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal along with the WW II Victory Medal.**

**Donald married the former Julia Saroka, after which they moved to the City of Cohoes. Don would work for many years at the Cluett Facility in Waterford. Like his brother John, Don was an avid outdoorsman, and loved camping and fishing.**

**Don passed away on August the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1971, at the age of 67.**

**James R. Bowen, known by many as J. Rodney, was born on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1924. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943, the 18 year-old became the fifth Bowen brother to serve his country, enlisting in the United States Navy. Serving in the Caribbean, Radio Operator 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Bowen was assigned to Headquarters All Forces on the Island of Aruba.**

**J. Rodney was honorably discharged at the Navy's Lido Beach, Long Island Separation Center on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1946. For service to his country he was awarded the American Campaign Medal, and the WW II Victory Medal.**

Returning home J. Rodney married the former Lois Dooley on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947. Lois and James Rodney would raise their five children, Michael, Cathleen, James Jr., Judy, and Lynn in Lansingburgh.

James would retire from his position as a shipping supervisor at the Norton Company in Watervliet, and remained active in their Organization of Retirees.

An avid baseball fan, James loved to bowl, and shared his brothers love for the outdoors, rarely passing up an opportunity to go camping. Also active in the Veterans of Lansingburgh, James passed away on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1991 and is today survived in addition to those mentioned by ten grand children and four great grand children.

Born in 1926, on July 19<sup>th</sup>, Edward V. Bowen enlisted in the United States Navy on the day following his eighteenth birthday, July the 20<sup>th</sup>, 1944.

About a week before leaving for boot camp at the Sampson, New York, Naval Training Center, Edward told the Troy Times Record, “I can’t wait to get into that uniform.” “I had one brother killed in action and I am anxious to get in there to take his place.”

Following his basic training Seaman Bowen was assigned to the USS Topeka, a light cruiser bearing the designation of CL67. Commissioned at the Boston Navy Yard on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1944, the Topeka, now under the command of Captain Thomas Wattles, had been launched four months earlier at Bethlehem Steel’s Shipyard located at Quincy, Massachusetts.

Following a shakedown cruise, the Topeka transited the Panama Canal on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 1945, and along with the Oklahoma City, also a light cruiser, reported for duty with the Pacific Fleet the next day, on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Following gunnery exercises off the Hawaiian Islands and a stop over at “Pearl” Seaman Bowen and his shipmates steamed for Leyte and duty with Task Force 38. TF 38's mission was a six week sweep of the Japanese Home Islands in preparation for the Invasion of Japan, an invasion which would never happen, thanks to the Atomic Bomb.

On June 10<sup>th</sup> Ed Bowen and the men of the USS Topeka would see their first action as the Topeka moved in and took Japanese Airfields under fire. Located on the Japanese Islands of Kyushu, these air stations were considered the home of Japanese Naval Aviation.

From then until the end of hostilities the Topeka took part in numerous raids in and around the entrances to Tokyo Harbor, one in particular would be credited with destroying a squadron of suicide planes which were about to launch against the American B-29 Base on the Island of Tinian. A successful raid on Tinian could have delayed the Atomic Raids, and added months, as well as thousands of American casualties to the war.

Seaman Second Bowen and the Topeka would take part in Japanese Occupation Duties following the Japanese surrender.

Honorably discharged at Lido Beach on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1946, Ed would receive the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal w/ Two Stars, and the WW II Victory Medal.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1948, Edward married Enid Fraser, and together they would raise four children, a son Edward, and three daughters, Corinne, Christine, and Colleen. They would make their home in Lansingburgh.

Before entering the service Ed had worked for Norton Company in Watervliet, a job he returned to upon his discharge, and one he would retire from some 39 years later.

Along with sharing the “Bowen love for camping and fishing”, Ed also enjoyed bowling and shooting darts.

Ed passed away on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1994 and left a family and legacy many would envy. In addition to his children Ed is survived by eight grand children and one great grand child.

The seventh and final brother to serve was William B. Bowen, enlisting in the United States Army on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945. Born on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1922, the now 23 year-old William, or Bill, was stationed overseas , taking part in the occupation of Japan.

William was subsequently discharged on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1946 at Fort Sheridan in Illinois.

For service to his country Bill was awarded the Army Occupational Medal and the WW II Victory Medal.

William returned home to his wife, the former Pauline Pelesz, who he had married about a year prior to his enlistment, on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1944. They would

have five children, a son William Jr., and four daughters, Mary, Janice, Patty, and Paula. They would later have eight grand children and ten great grand children as well.

William worked at Arcy Plastics in Cohoes along with his brother John, a job he would hold until the time of his retirement.

A member of the Bowen Family he naturally enjoyed hunting, fishing, and camping.

An active member of the Marconi Social Club, William passed away April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1983, at the age of 61.

That, Ladies and Gentleman, completes the story of the Bowen Brother's, members of a family which gave more than any family ever should, and did it not just without complaint, but indeed did it gladly.

Seven brothers, heroes all, whose service ran from being killed in action, to being part of an occupation force after combat had ceased.

Seven different men, serving in different branches in varying locales, but all shared one thing in common, they served without question, and without regard for their personal safety, and in doing so distinguished themselves without question, as true Rensselaer County Heroes.

## **Edward E. Madden, Jr.**

**One of three children born to Edward and Anna Donnelly Madden, Edward E. Madden Jr. was born on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1931 at St. Joseph's Hospital in South Troy. The Madden's also had a daughter Patricia and a son John.**

**Raised in South Troy Ed attended St. Joseph's Grammar School ,Troy High, and La Salle Institute. Immediately upon leaving school Ed went to work driving a truck for Williams Press in Albany. During his time at Williams Press Ed made the acquaintance of a co-worker, Lucy Rosamilia, a young lady who would one day be his bride.**

**Ed's first foray into the military would come in 1947 when he enlisted in the New York State National Guard. About four years later at the age of 20 Ed decided to go full time military and on September the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1951 enlisted in the United States Air Force in Albany, New York.**

**Private Edward Madden would receive specialized training in aircraft engine maintenance and also attend leadership school. Although his training initially pertained to aircraft in general, Private Madden would soon become a specialist in aircraft engines, and not just any aircraft, but the first and only one to ever wage atomic warfare, the Boeing Superfortress, better known as the B-29. During Ed's time the B-29 was in the process of destroying every strategic target in Communist North Korea.**

**Private Madden's training would take him from Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois to Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas, eventually landing him at Biggs Air Force Base also in Texas. While at Biggs now Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Madden was part of the renowned 1<sup>st</sup> Tow Target Squadron which was attached to both the Tactical Air Command, as well as the Strategic Air Command better known as SAC.**

**In this the height of both the Korean and "Cold Wars", the Strategic Air Command's mission was to maintain a nuclear deterrent capable of delivering a nuclear payload anywhere on the planet. This was to be accomplished via a fleet of B-29 Bombers, a number of which were serviced and repaired by our own Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Edward E. Madden, Jr.**

**On February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1953 with over half his enlistment left to serve, an eager Airman Ed Madden, Jr., married his former Williams Press friend, Lucy Rosamilia, at St. Patrick's Church on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Troy.**

**On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, 1955 Airman First Class Madden was honorably discharged from the United States Air Force at Biggs Air Force Base in Texas. For his honorable service he was awarded the National Defense Service Medal.**

**Upon his return home Ed went to work for the Watervliet Arsenal, and later would become a mechanic for Montgomery Ward, the job he would retire from in 1996. Ed also owned and operated an Esso Gas Station located in the City of Troy.**

**Ed and Lucy made their home in South Troy, and there they would raise three children, a son Mark, and two daughters, Mary and Therese. They would further be blessed with two grandchildren, Katelyn and Shane “Edward” Waters.**

**Ed gave back to his community through his long standing association with St. Joseph’s, where he volunteered his services as a handyman, as well as helping out at bingo, and any other church functions where he thought he could lend a hand.**

**A member and past treasurer of the St. Joseph’s Holy Name Society, Ed was an avid golfer, a game he could play year “year round” thanks to his beloved winters in Florida.**

**Edward Madden, Jr. left us much too soon on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1998.**

**In retrospect I almost wish we had for the first time taken this ceremony off premises and celebrated Ed’s life at St. Joseph’s in South Troy, because except for deferring to Lucy and being married at St. Patrick’s which is her parish, Ed’s life kept coming back to St. Joseph’s.**

**Born at the St. Joseph’s Hospital, he and his children all baptized at the church, he attended St. Joseph’s Grammar School, volunteered for any and almost all church events, Ed’s life would be celebrated there at his funeral mass, just prior to his internment in St. Joseph’s Cemetery. Actually, we could have held the event in the Edward E. Madden, Jr. Room named appropriately enough in honor of Ed in recognition of all his contributions to St. Joseph’s over the years.**

**Well although we couldn’t move this ceremony to St. Joseph’s, it certainly doesn’t in any way diminish my honor and pleasure in taking part in this mornings recognition of the life , service, and sacrifice of one of Rensselaer County’s true American heroes, Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Edward E. Madden, Jr.**



## Martin G. "Mickey" Mahar

I'm honored to be here today to remember Mickey Mahar, who was a close and special friend to so many of us. Each month, the Honor a Deceased Veteran ceremony remembers a veteran who has served our country and made an important contribution in keeping our country free.

Mickey Mahar is one of those who answered the call to duty. Mickey enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1969, and following training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, was deployed to Germany, serving with Company C, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> AIT BDF. He served as a border guard during a crucial period of continued tensions between the United States and the forces of communism.

Mickey served with the U.S. Army from December, 1969 to September, 1975. His service was recognized with the award of the National Defense Service Medal.

After leaving the Army, Mickey continued his journey through life. He worked for Amtrak as a chef, traveling from Chicago to Washington State. He managed some popular restaurants in the Midwest and right here at home, including the Barnside, Real Seafood Company, Lexington Grill and Pip's.

And in 1998, Mickey joined the staff of the County Legislature. Here, he began working to organize these ceremonies.

Mickey served our country during the Cold War, and helped protect free nations. In the Legislature, he continued to serve, by ensuring the memory of our veterans and their contributions to our country are preserved forever.

Each month, we gather here to remember our veterans. And each month, the spirit of Mickey Mahar is felt here.

Mickey was a generous and caring person, a true friend, and one who touched the hearts of many. We are proud to remember Mickey and even proud to recognize that his contribution to our county continues.

Neil Kelleher was a lifelong friend of Mickey's. Unfortunately, Neil is out of town and not able to attend today's ceremony. But he has invited my fellow Legislator, Nancy McHugh to read a letter about Mickey.

Nancy.....

September, 2005

Aware of the short time available when dealing with a thirty minute format, I can't thank Bob Reiter enough for granting time to my colleague, the Honorable Nancy McHugh, who has graciously agreed to pass along a few of my thoughts on this mornings program.

As I'm sure some of you possibly know my absence here this morning constitutes I believe only the second time I've missed an Honor-A-Vet Ceremony since they began.

Furthermore, if given the opportunity to pick which two I'd miss over this past decade, today, obviously, would have ranked last.

After all, Mickey and I weren't friends, we were brothers. Brothers who just happened to not share the same DNA.

Although I'm not here this morning, I'm sure that Mickey is, which proves that those like Mickey who have moved on, can be in at least two places at once, because Mickey, I know, is also with me. As a matter of fact Mickey is always with me.

Sometimes he's that warm morning sun that instantly warms my face when I first walk outside on a bright sunny morning.

Other times, he's the soft breeze that gently caresses my cheek seemingly running from nowhere on an otherwise calm and windless day.

I remember when Mick and I first talked about his coming to work with us in the legislature. Some cautioned me by saying "Mickey coming on board would be viewed as Kelleher placing a friend in a political job."

I'll say now what I said then, allowing Mickey the opportunity to work in and around the city and one he so loved, was a great deal for us in the county, and at the same time provided a gentleman with a lot talent a second chance, a second chance we all deserve, friend or not.

That decision the legislature made to hire Mickey started what the late Jerry Garcia would have termed, "A long strange trip," one which culminated in Mickey's sister, Troy City Council President Marjorie DerGurahian, being overwhelmingly elected to the City Council.

**That, I have to believe, has to be the first time in the history of politics that a candidate who has never held elected office, and didn't even manage to survive to election day, had coattails long enough to carry in an entire state of candidates.**

**NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COAT TAILS!!!!**

**In closing, and on a more serious note, I want to thank our committee for selecting Mickey as our September Honoree, my fellow elected officials who I know will do their usual great job as they do every month, and special thanks to my friend, mentor, confident, and our Majority Leader, Bob Mirch, for agreeing to fill in for me this morning.**

**There is no one I trust more to help memorize Mickey and our fond memories of him, than Bob Mirch.**

**Finally, thanks to God who granted Mickey his last and perhaps greatest wish to die a sober person. I thank you again for the opportunity to pass along some thoughts and I look forward to being with you all next month. Congrats to the Mahars and may God Bless you all.**

**Sincerely,**

**Neil J. Kelleher  
Chairman of the Legislature**

**Donald Frederick Kelleher**

Born on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1925, Donald Frederick Kelleher and his two older brothers, Cornelius W. or Neil, and William, known as Ned, would lose their mother, the former Helen Fleming less than one month later due to complications arising from Don's birth.

Seeing a family in need, a group of nurses at Leonard Hospital, where Don was born, banded together and made a pact to care for the now motherless infant, and subsequently Don would spend the first year of his life as a guest at the hospital.

Don would grow up on the streets and alley's of "the Burgh" and his father Neil J. would eventually remarry and start a family with the former Margaret (Peg) Kennedy resulting in Don's being joined by his step-brother's Robert and Daniel and step-sister's Sheila and Joan.

As a youngster Don and his two older brothers Ned, and Neil, sang in a barbershop quartet along with their father known as the "Singing Kelleher's". Well known in the capital district the "Singing Kelleher's" achieved a significant level of success, appearing more than once with the famous Mill's Brother's, including an appearance with the famous brother's at Albany's Palace Theater. They also frequently traveled to New York City appearing in spots in and around Times Square as well as other well known venues including Radio City Music Hall.

Legend has it that one night when they were appearing on the same bill as the Mill's Brother's at a restaurant location in New York City, the Kelleher's were invited to and began singing with the famous group. The impromptu collaboration proved so entertaining that the manager of the establishment had to ask them to stop because they couldn't get anybody to leave their tables and waiting customers were starting to stack up at the door.

Another time after auditioning for and appearing on Fred Allen's Radio Show at the Pennsylvania Hotel the boys were noticed by a talent agent who arranged for them to be screen tested for a movie role at Twentieth -Century Fox Studios in Manhattan.

Unfortunately, just prior to the test the oldest brother, Ned, began to experience what all early teen boys eventually do, and as his once melodious tenor voice began to crack and waver, the career of the "Singing Kelleher's" came to an abrupt end.

Don attended what was known then as St. Augustine's Academy and Lansingburg High School, but was destined not to finish due to a burning desire to join his older brother Neil who had joined the Navy soon after the outbreak of WW II and was serving aboard a destroyer in the South Pacific. Eventually all the Kelleher boys would join the Navy with the three oldest, William, Neil, and Don, seeing action in WW II.

The younger brothers, Robert and Daniel, would not come of age until after the war had ended but nevertheless brother Bob would spend three years in the Navy serving aboard an aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Bennington. Daniel's Navy career was destined to be somewhat different and a good deal shorter when he developed a habit considered not advantageous for a shipboard sailor..... he was found to be a sleepwalker!!

Still a month shy of his eighteenth birthday Don joined the Navy in the City of Albany on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1943. Sent to the Navy's Newport Naval Training Center at Newport, Rhode Island for his basic training he would go on to receive additional schooling at the Naval Amphibious Training School in Virginia.

Upon completion of his advanced training Don was shipped overseas to England and assigned to a landing craft designated LCI 537. Although not immediately aware of what they were training for Don and his shipmates began rigorous if sometime tedious drilling for what would be the largest amphibious invasion the world had ever seen, code named "Operation Overlord."

Since 1942 rumors had been circulating about an imminent allied invasion of Western Europe. Now, in 1944, after two years of planning the allies are finally in a position to mount an assault on Hitler's Atlantic Wall. Since the first of the year the Americans have been attacking through Italy and just recently had liberated Rome.

Although not aware of their mission until the last minute American, British, and Canadian Forces were about to open a second European Front. In the early morning of June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944 over 150,000 men are poised to come ashore on five beaches on the Normandy Coast of France. One of those beaches is Omaha, one of two beaches assigned to American Landing Craft.

Among the first wave of landing craft that morning is one designated LCI 537 carrying 24 men whose mission it was to safely land a Regimental Combat Team on Omaha Beach.

The bad news for the men of LCI 537 was that things would not go as planned on Omaha Beach, indeed at one point the commanding general, Omar Bradley, considered abandoning it altogether and bringing subsequent waves ashore at beaches assigned to British and Canadian Forces. Most German Defenses remained untouched and many men were being killed before they ever got to the beach.

The good news for the men on board LCI 537 was Boatswain Second Donald F. Kelleher. We are fortunate to have eye witness testimony of some of Don's actions that morning not only in writing but indeed in the person of Howard Clark who joins us here this morning. With Mr. Clark's permission I'll let his remembrances as recounted to the Troy Record in his letter to the editor tell the tale from this point on.

Mr. Clark's letter appeared under the title: "Kelleher A Hero Who Put His Life On The Line"

When I returned from a trip to the beaches of Normandy my wife immediately called my attention to the obituary of Donald F. Kelleher, which appeared in the Record on June 10<sup>th</sup>.

On June 6, following the ceremonies addressed by presidents Bush and Chirac, I walked to the edge of the bluff overlooking Easy Red Sector of Omaha Beach and recalled to mind the names of each of the 24- member crew of LCI 537.

Sixteen of those 24 crewmen were already deceased. I had thought that Don Kelleher still lived in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Don's death on May 29<sup>th</sup> has given me pause to again recall those early morning hours of June 6, 1944.

Our landing craft approached the beach carrying a Regimental Combat Team in the First Infantry Division. The wind and surf were detrimental to finding a way through the mined beach obstacles. The landing craft grounded on a shallow sand shoal several yards short of the beach. The debarking ramps were lowered and the troops rushed down the ramps. For the first few feet, the water was only knee deep. Then the bottom dropped away and the heavily laden troops began to founder and go under. Under machine gun and artillery fire from the enemy-held bluffs, the debarkation was halted.

Bosun's Mate Kelleher and Executive Officer Mel Duncan of Grand Forks, N.D., quickly volunteered to swim two lines ashore and secure them to a beach obstacle.

The troops were able to use the lines to quickly guide them to shore. Though the area was still under machine gun and artillery fire from the bluffs, both Kelleher and Duncan remained on the beach until all troops were safely ashore and then they assisted wounded back to the landing craft for delivery to hospital ships offshore.

There is no doubt in my mind that the heroic actions of Don Kelleher and Mel Duncan saved the lives of many of the troops that fateful morning. In later years, I learned that similar actions on other landing craft were recognized by the award of Silver Stars. In the heat of the battle the actions of Kelleher and Duncan went unrecognized.

At the time Don Kelleher was 19 years old. Don Kelleher was my shipmate and my friend. Through this letter I wish his friends and Family in Troy to know that Donald F. Kelleher was also a hero who put his life on the line for the benefit of his fellow man.

Well  
Howard  
Center Brunswick

done,

bosun!  
Clark

Subsequent accounts from other sources added that Don went back into the water to rescue several British troops whose landing craft had taken a direct hit , throwing them into the water, many most likely unconscious.

The Normandy Invasion of course went on to be a success. A success in the fact that it hastened the end of the war, which ended about ten months later, in April of 1945. It didn't come without a heavy price, the combined allied casualties being estimated at over 6,000 for June 6<sup>th</sup> alone.

Don would spend almost thirteen years in the Navy and actually ended up seeing combat in the Korean Conflict. Upon being discharged he immediately re-enlisted in the United States Army Reserve, where he would serve an additional seven years, attaining the rank of Master Sergeant, eventually retiring from the military with over twenty years service to his country.

In 1945 following the end of WW II Don returned to Virginia Beach, an area he had fallen in love with while going through training prior to being shipped overseas. It was there that Don was introduced to a pretty young dental assistant who worked down the hall from Don's doctors' office.

Set up for a blind date by his doctor's receptionist, Don was smitten by a southern belle named Marilyn Edwards. Married a short time later, Don and Marilyn were still together at the time of his death, 48 years later, on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

They raised two children Edward and Carolyn and would greatly love and enjoy their two grandsons Christopher and Clay.

Don was employed in the automobile business, not unusual for a Kelleher, whose two older brothers had both at one time or another owned an operated new car dealerships , and Don retired after 21 years as Manager of the Credit Department for Tidewater Auto Sales in Virginia Beach.

A law and order Republican , Don was especially proud of his work on the local crime commission and his efforts organizing neighborhood watch groups in Virginia Beach.

Beyond the fact that the British Government awarded him the highest honor afforded a non-British citizen, we have no information on what medals or awards Don received, but assume he received those customarily given to troops who served in combat during WW II.

Also, its not that his heroics at Normandy were overlooked by his own that I personally find interesting, but that it never seemed to bother Don at all. As a matter of fact, like so many of our WW II vets that I've had the honor to meet Don never talked about his experiences during the war at all.

I guess a real hero doesn't need to talk about his experiences, after all, he lived them.

In closing I want to thank the committee for honoring Don and Mr. Clark for his letter to the Record.

Before reading Mr. Clark's letter I remembered Don as my uncle who lived out of town and I never really got to know except via the internet which he enjoyed under the tutelage of his grandson Christopher.

Now in addition to remembering Don for his Irish quick wit and patriotic insight, I can also remember him as my Uncle Don, a walking talking, real deal, war hero!



## **Richard J. Haldeman**

**Born in 1917 on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of June in Allentown Pennsylvania, Richard J. Haldeman was one of seven children born to Earl and Lucy Roth Haldeman. The Haldemans' home remained in Allentown until Richard was a young boy, a home he shared with his brother's Kenneth, Earl Jr. and Byron, and sisters Gladys, Marion, and Mary Alice. Richard's mom, Lucy Mae, would pass away shortly after having her seventh child, and his dad would eventually remarry his second wife Mary and together they would have three children, Richard's two half sister's Carol and Neada, and his half brother James.**

**While still in grammar school Richard and his family moved to upstate New York , first to the Town of Poestenkill, eventually settling in northern Rensselaer County in the hamlet of Melrose, located in the Town of Schaghticoke. Richard and his siblings attended public schools in Rensselaer County with Richard graduating from Troy's Lansingburgh High School in the Class of 1937. Following graduation Richard, whose family was in the jewelry business, was schooled in watch repair at the Bulova School of Watch Making.**

**In September of 1940, amid rumors and rumblings of the United States' eminent entry into World War II, 23 year old Richard J. Haldeman enlisted in the United States Army National Guard at the Armory located on 15<sup>th</sup> Street in Troy. Richard's National Guard Service was destined to be brief, for less than a month later, on October 15<sup>th</sup> of the same year, his unit was federalized as part of our country's preparation for war.**

**Although certainly a significant date in Richard's life, believe it or not it would only rank 2<sup>nd</sup> for that week, for three days later on October the 18<sup>th</sup> Richard was wed to his sweetheart Ms. Mary Mae Stevens, with whom he would spend exactly the next 63 years, until the time of his death on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003.**

**Upon completion of basic training in the state of Alabama, Richard was off to Ft. Benning, Georgia for specialized training at the Infantry Communication School, where he was trained in high speed radio operations. From there it was off to Hawaii and after completion of additional training Pvt. Richard J. Haldeman, formerly of the 105<sup>th</sup> Infantry, was assigned to the 511<sup>th</sup> Signal Company of the just formed 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division.**

**The 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne was activated on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1943 under the command of Major General Joseph M. Swing. The "Angels", as they were known, were**

made up primarily of glider troops and a few veteran airborne troops. Immediately upon activation the mission was to get all the glider troops jump qualified. Unfortunately, for many of the glider troops, jump school consisted of a one way ride in an airplane, but most came through in great shape, and within a year the division was ready for overseas deployment.

Early in 1944, now Master Sergeant Haldeman and the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> were moved to San Francisco, California, and told to prepare for embarkation. Four months later they were in New Guinea in the South Pacific where they began intensive jungle warfare training.

Following five months of hot, back breaking maneuvers in the jungles and mountains of New Guinea, Richard and his comrades were ready, and on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1944 they landed at Leyte Beach in the Philippines.

Their mission was to clear the mountain pass to Ormoc of all Japanese defenders, and after three months of sometimes practically hand to hand fighting, and after killing some six thousand Japanese, Richard and the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> accomplished that mission.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of January, 1945, the 11<sup>th</sup> was back in action after no more than a few days rest. Landing at Luzon they cleared the main highways of enemy opposition and hooked up with allied forces moving on the capital city of Manila, some seventy miles away.

It was around this time, during the month of February, that Master Sergeant Richard J. Haldeman distinguished himself on the field of battle. On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of that month Sergeant Haldeman was in charge of a Signal Detachment moving forward to establish a Forward Division Command Post. When the vehicles under his command came under fire from a hidden pillbox Sergeant Haldeman continued deploying his vehicles to ensure completion of his mission. During this entire period Sergeant Haldeman was constantly exposed to enemy machine gun fire and yet continued to maintain uninterrupted communication with 11<sup>th</sup> Division Headquarters.

As a result of his actions, immediately after the war had ended Sergeant Haldeman would receive a combat appointment, also known as a ‘battlefield promotion’ to the rank of Second Lieutenant.

The first Japanese stronghold to fall to the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division was Fort McKinley, then Clark and Nichols Fields, following which the 11<sup>th</sup> launched their assault on Manila joining with the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry and the

**37<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions. Upon liberating the Capital, units of the 11<sup>th</sup> launched a daring rescue mission behind enemy lines freeing over two thousand Allied prisoners from the internment camp at Los Banos.**

**After successful completion of the rescue mission at Los Banos Sergeant Haldeman and the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> spent the next month or so “mopping up” pockets of resistance south of Manila.**

**For the men of the 11<sup>th</sup>, although they didn’t know it, the war was over. Following their clean-up duties in and around Manila, they were scheduled to begin preparations for Operation Olympic, the invasion of the Japanese Home Islands, an operation which would be canceled after the Japanese surrendered in August of 1945.**

**Second Lieutenant Haldeman would spend a few months in Japan as part of the Allied Occupation Forces before returning home in November, officially separating from the U.S. Armed Forces on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945 at Ft. Momouth in New Jersey.**

**For his distinguished service Second Lieutenant Haldeman was authorized to wear: The American Defense Service Medal, The American Campaign Medal, The Asiatic- Pacific Campaign Medal with three Bronze Battle Stars and Silver Star Attachment with Arrowhead, The WW II Victory Medal, The Philippine Liberation Ribbon with Two Bronze Battle Stars, The Honorable Service Lapel Button WW II, and a Good Conduct Ribbon.**

**Returning to civilian life Rich went to work in the family business, Haldeman’s Jewelry Store, which was located at the Corner of Fulton Street and Fifth Avenue here in the City of Troy, where he stayed for approximately the next fifteen years. Around 1960, Rich, most likely as a result of his training in watch repair, or working on minute mechanical devices, traveled to Cocoa Beach, Florida, where he went to work for Honeywell Corporation, who at that time were in the process of designing guidance systems for this country’s growing arsenal of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles, or ICBM’s.**

**Although obviously interesting work, Richard, at the urging of his wife May who was reluctant to uproot their family, returned home to the capital region, where after brief stints with Ross Valve in Troy and Behr- Manning in Watervliet, went to work for the New York State Thruway Authority, retiring in 1981. Richard never lost interest in watch repair, working out of his home as well as repairing watches part-time for Montgomery Ward in Menands.**

**Rich and his wife Mary May would have two children, a daughter Susan, today Susan Bishop, and a son Richard J., Jr. He is further survived today by ten grand-children, Kristin, Kaaren, Richard, Lauren, Katrin, Elizabeth, Edward, James, David, and Johanna, as well as seven great grand-children, Gavin, Jack, Max, Egan, Annelise, Jameson and Charlotte.**

**For Rich, like so many of our veterans, putting their lives on the line wasn't enough, and he continued to support his community through his involvement with the Poestenkill Seniors, the Troy Church League, and as a life member of the North Greenbush American Legion. A communicant of Sacred Heart Church, he was also a member of the Wagar Bowling League, as well as the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division Reunion Group.**

**Rich enjoyed winters in the Florida sun, as well as camping and playing horseshoes, but if he was known to have a passion it had to have been for fishing.**

**A true Rensselaer County Hero, Second Lieutenant Richard J. Haldeman, Jr. died on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 and was interned in hallowed ground reserved for heroes at the Saratoga National Cemetery.**

**As mentioned earlier Rich was appropriately awarded a chest full of medals that probably would have been almost too heavy to wear all at once. While I'm sure he was justifiably proud of those honors I think I know of an accolade which would have pleased him even more.**

**When I spoke to his son Richard on the phone yesterday I asked him if there was anything he wanted me to add to my remarks. He hesitated for a just a second and then said, "Just tell everybody that he was a great dad."**

**Rich, consider it said!**

## Arthur C. Turner

Born in the City of Troy on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1920, Arthur C. Turner was one of two children born to father Steven and his wife, the former Miriam Crouse. Arthur would be joined by a sister Lora.

Growing up in Speigletown Arthur most likely attended the one room school house which in those days acted as the local elementary school, remember these were the days prior to that portion of the town becoming part of the Lansingburgh School District, although Arthur probably went on to attend junior high in Lansingburgh. The family would subsequently move to North Troy where they owned and operated the family business, Turners Pheasant Farm.

Amid rumblings of war the 20 year old Arthur enlisted in the United States Army on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1940. Eventually shipped overseas to the Central Pacific on March 17<sup>th</sup>, of 1942, Arthur became a member of the HQ CO 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 105<sup>th</sup> assigned as a heavy truck operator. In 1942 First Class Turner was in the Central Pacific as part of the newly reorganized 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division getting ready to participate in the Ryukus Invasion in the Western Theater of Operations.

By now the allies were approaching the Japanese Home Islands on two fronts. One found them heading directly to the west from Hawaii, the other moving southwest in the direction that had recently allowed them to capture New Guinea.

What was to become known as the Ryukyus Campaign, or Operation Bunkhouse, began on March 26, 1945.

The term Ryukyus referred to a chain of some 160 islands broken into five major groups, Osumi, Torkara, Amami, Okinawa, and Sakishima.

The first landings were in the Kerama Islands, some fifteen minutes west of Okinawa. The mission was to attempt to secure a seaplane base to aid in the final invasion. So successful were these operations that it wasn't until almost 30 years later that Japan was granted return of the big Island of Okinawa, in 1972.

Initial landings on Ryukyus were on three Kerama Islands, fifteen miles west of Okinawa. The boldly conceived plan to invade these islands six days prior to the landing on Okinawa was designed to secure a seaplane base and a fleet anchorage supporting the main invasion force.

**Unfortunately, it was during this time, in 1945, that PFC Turner was shot in the leg while serving on Saipan.**

**As a result of his injuries Private First Class Turner was transported home from overseas on September 10<sup>th</sup> 1945, and honorably discharged from the United States Army on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1945 at the United States Army's Ft. Dix, New Jersey Army Separation Center.**

**For courageous service to his country PFC Turner was awarded the American Defense Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Service Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, and a Purple Heart.**

**Working as a welder his entire working life at the Arsenal in Watervliet, Arthur would retire after many years of service.**

**Married to the former Florence Lemieux Turner, she and Arthur would raise four children, Robert, Richard, Gail, and Susan.**

**They would be further blessed with eight grand-children, Elliot, Lindsey, Lacey, Michele, Sherry, Sheena, Kenny, and Brad.**

**Active in his community Arthur was dedicated to working with the local Boy Scout Chapters, and was active in the American Legion as well.**

**Arthur left us on May the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1981 leaving behind a legacy of whom any would be proud. Although this narrative was a little scarce on details other vets have confided in me that the places and battles PFC Arthur Turner found himself involved in were second to none in their ferocity and bloodletting.**

**Let us join this morning in praying that those horrific memories have faded and that for PFC Turner his thoughts and recollections are dominated by his friends, family, children, and grand-children.**