

Rensselaer County

2009 Honor A Veteran Ceremony's



Date of Ceremony

Name of Deceased Veteran

January 12, 2009

(None)

February 9, 2009

(None)

March 9, 2009

(None)

April 13, 2009

Leon E. Wait

May 11, 2009

Zigmund C. Wojton

June 8, 2009

Anthony Chetko

July 13, 2009

Carl D. Sheeley, Sr.

August 10, 2009

Joseph J. VanDerwerken

September 14, 2009

(None)

October 13, 2009

Neil W. Kelleher

November 9, 2009

Salvatore P. Clemente

December 14, 2009

Alfred J. Curley

Leon E. Wait

Leon E. Wait was born in the City of Troy on August 18th, 1925 to proud parents LeGrande and Mary Quell Wait. The Wait's also had two other sons John and Bernard, and a daughter Mary. The Wait Family would later relocate to Wynantskill.

Leon attended elementary school at Sacred Heart and from there on to Averill Park High School. While at Averill Park, Leon played football and indeed was a member of that schools first football team.

While still in high school Leon joined the New York National Guard and upon his graduation in 1943 enlisted in the United States Marine Corp on November 4th of that same year. Leon served in the South Pacific and Asian Theatres during WWII, in both the Marines 3rd and 6th Divisions. Perhaps most significant was his participation in the Invasion of Okinawa which was also known as the Invasion of the Ryukyus. The Ryukyus Island Chain, known to the Japanese as the Nansei Islands, is a group of islands located in the Western Pacific Ocean at the Eastern limit of the East China Sea. The largest of these Japanese Islands is Okinawa.

The taking of Okinawa was part of the Americans mission to take the fight to the Japanese home islands. From Okinawa American Forces would be able to set up air bases within striking distance of the Japanese Mainland just 340 miles away. The invasion began in March of 1945 and Private Wait and his fellow Marines of the 6th Division would be right in the thick of it until its conclusion some 82 days later. Referring to the intensity of the battle the Japanese would refer to it as the "Rain of Steel." The Americans suffered 12,000 casualties while the Japanese defenders would lose over 100,000 troops. The main reason for this action was to prepare for the Invasion of Japan, an invasion which would never take place with the Japanese surrendering after the two atomic bomb attacks.

Leon also saw action on Guam and the Chinese Mainland and would actually take part in the Japanese surrender of their forces at Tsingtao, China in October of 1945.

On the occasion of his discharge in 1946 Corporal Wait would re-enlist that same day in the National Guard along with brothers Bernie and John. Decades later then Brigadier General Wait would retire on August of 1993 after a combined 54 years in the Army and Marines. At that time, Leon was awarded the N.Y. Guard Service Medal Class II Silver, as well as a Class I Bronze,

Certificate of Appreciation, N.Y.S. Military Commendation Medal and Good Conduct Medal.

He had previously been awarded, at the time of his WWII era service the WWII Victory Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and a Good Conduct Medal.

Leon was married to Anne Kolenberg on November 27th, 1947. They settled on Pine Avenue in Wynantskill where they raised their seven children: Edward, Larry, Gerald, Dan, Janet, Joann, and Linda.

Leon worked in a brewery, chopped wood, and did anything else he could to raise his ever growing family, eventually going to work for John Hancock Insurance as a Certified Life Underwriter from where he would retire after 30 years on the job. Leon also served for two years as the Town Clerk in North Greenbush.

He held numerous positions associated with his military service including that as a Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Troy's LaSalle Institute, and Instructor for the War College at Fort Leavenworth and the Carlisle Barracks.

Active in the N.R.A. he was certified as a N.Y.S. Hunting Safety Instructor, a rifle and pistol instructor, as well an Instructor for Home Safety and the Eddie Eagle School Program.

Leon and Anne were married for 52 years until Anne's passing in January of 1999. Leon was married to Elizabeth J. Teeling on April 21st, 2001 and as part of that process became step-father to Elizabeth's two children Deborah and John.

Leon somehow found time for other interests and was a Life Member of VFW Post #729 in Watervliet, a 30 year member of the North Greenbush Ambulance Association, as well a member of the following organizations: The Marine Corp League, Karner Rod and Gun Club, N.R.A., Hendrick Hudson Fish and Game Club, Burlington Flats Rifle and Pistol Club, Retired Officer Club, Retiree Service Office of the Watervliet Arsenal, 4th Degree K of C in Rensselaer, K of C St. Jude's in Troy, and last but certainly not least , the Troy Seniors.

It is certainly no wonder that in 2005 the N.Y.S. Assembly most appropriately proclaimed Leon the "North Greenbush Man of the Year". Where he found time I can't imagine but Leon loved to camp, hunt, fish, and took great pride in

having visited every state in the union as well as 30 foreign countries! He managed to get to Alaska 14 times.

Leon passed away just a few months ago on New Years Day 2009. Certainly a hero in so many ways it is my honor to take part in this morning's ceremony as we recognize and celebrate the amazingly full life of a prestigious Rensselaer County Veteran, Brigadier General Leon E. Wait.

Zigmund C. Wojton

Zigmund C. Wojton was born on the 26th day of June, 1923 in Ford City Pennsylvania, a small Armstrong County city located about forty miles northeast of Pittsburgh.

One of six children born to Walenty and Frances Kornasiewicz Wojton, Zigmund had a sister Rozalia, and four brothers Gehert, Leo, Leonard, and Valentine.

Zigmund attended public school in Ford City and not unlike many others of that era, left school before graduating to answer the nations “call to arms” which followed the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Enlisting in the United States Army in Pittsburgh on January 3, 1941, Zigmund was assigned to the 414th Infantry which was assigned to the 104th Division known as the “Timberwolves”. Ziggy would see action in England, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany.

Famous for their night fighting skills the 104th Division’s WWII campaigns included Northern France, Rhineland, and Central Europe. Some of the more notable actions by the 104th included the liberation of the Mittelbau Dora Concentration Camp at Nordhausen, Germany, and a few days later the discovery of a huge underground complex which had been manufacturing the V-1 and V-2 Bombs. Although called bombs these were actually the first guided missiles, especially the more advanced V-2. They would prove to be of little military value, but these radio controlled pilotless aircraft, each carrying a high explosive warhead, were very effective in terrorizing the residents of London, 40,000 of whom would end up as casualties of Hitler’s “Secret Weapon.”

Some 60,000 prisoners toiled at this secret facility with one third dying of starvation, fatigue, and execution.

Private First Class Wojton’s 414th Infantry, following the liberation of Mittelbau Dora, crossed the Saale River and after a fierce five day fight captured the German Town of Halle. Ten days later after hooking up with Red Army Patrols the 104th halted operations and headed for home. Private First Class Wojton officially separated from the U.S. Army on June 22nd.

For his service to his country Private First Class Wojton was awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge, the European-African-Middle Eastern Service

Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, and the American Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star Cluster for Valiancy and courage.

While in the service Ziggy worked with and became close friends with Bill Walsh, a young soldier from Troy, New York. Envious of Bill's constant letters from home Ziggy began corresponding with Bill's sister Elizabeth, and upon leaving the service journeyed to Troy to meet his "pen pal". Suffice it to say that it must have gone well!

On August 1st, 1945 Ziggy was married to Elizabeth Walsh at St. Mary's Church in Troy. Ziggy and his new bride would remain in the City of Troy where they raised their son Charles, today known as Reverend Chuck, and a daughter Rosemary. They would be further blessed with seven grand children: Elizabeth, Christopher, Scott, Dean, Charles Jr., Anthony, and Lauren and seven great-grand children: Nick, Evan, Justin, Meghan Elizabeth, Allison, Jordan, and Meghan.

On New Years Day in 1972 following the death of his wife Elizabeth Ziggy was married to Marion Legenbauer.

In 1948 Ziggy had gone to work for Williams Press in Menands from where he retired thirty years later. At that time he went to work for the Rensselaer County Motor Vehicle Office retiring from there after fifteen years of service.

Extremely involved in community and veteran organizations he was the one time vice-president as well as financial secretary for the Polish American Club in South Troy. Ziggy was also a life time member of the Polish Falcon Nest 159 in Ford City, American Legion Post 1489 in Wynantskill, and V.F.W. Post 4843 also located in his home town of Ford City.

He was a member of the U.S. Army 104th Timberwolves and was an active participant at St. Joseph's Parish in South Troy.

Ziggy loved the outdoors, whether it be fishing or in his garden.

He also volunteered for numerous efforts involving those less fortunate as well as visiting residents at Van Rensselaer Manor.

Ziggy passed away on October 1, 2007 and is buried in Troy's St. Joseph Cemetery.

It is my honor to be here this morning as we recognize the remarkable, selfless, legacy of a Distinguished Veteran Private First Class Zigmund Charles Wojton.

Anthony Chetko

Anthony Chetko was born in Johnson City, New York on September 21, 1946 to proud parents Anthony and Anne Haddad Chetko. The Chetko's also had a daughter Penny, who today is married to the Hon. George Ceresia, a New York State Supreme Court Justice.

Tony grew up in Endicott, New York where he attended Union Endicott High School and from there on to the University of Buffalo receiving his Bachelor of Science Degree in 1969. Tony would go on to complete his graduate work at the State University of Binghamton from where he would receive his Master of Science Degree in 1973.

A short time after completing his undergraduate work on September 18, 1969 Tony enlisted in the United States Army in Endicott, New York.

Tony served in Vietnam with the 25th Infantry's 5th Infantry. Company C, 1st Battalion the unit to which Tony was assigned served gallantly in Vietnam for a total of 1,716 days. During that period the 25th Infantry was credited with eleven Vietnam campaigns and was twice awarded the Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

On July 28, 1970 while Tony's unit was in the process of establishing their night defensive positions, elements of the unit came under intense attack from a large enemy force. I am now paraphrasing from official army documents. "With complete disregard for his own safety Private Chetko exposed himself to a hail of enemy fire as he immediately began to counter attack with suppressive machine gun fire. Running low on ammunition Private Chetko unhesitatingly moved to secure more ammunition so as to continue his counter attack on the enemy insurgents." For his actions Tony was awarded the Bronze Star w/ "V" Device.

During a three month period Tony and other members of the 25th, known as Tropic Lightning, participated in allied thrusts deep into enemy sanctuaries located in Cambodia. During those operations thousands of tons of communist supplies, ammunition, and weapons were confiscated severely crippling Cambodian efforts against American units.

An interesting "sidebar" while in Cambodia Tony was interviewed by a news team which was reporting for the famous NBC Huntley-Brinkley Report. Tony's mom was able to get a copy of that news clip and it is still a part of the Chetko Family Archive today.

Leaving Vietnam in the spring of 1971 Tony was honorably discharged a short time later on April the 12th. In addition to the Bronze Star Private 1st Class Chetko received a Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge 1st Award, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon w/1960 Device, and the Sharpshooter Badge with Auto Rifle Bar.

When in junior high Tony had a girlfriend named Josephine Putrino. On June 21, 1969 “Joe” became Mrs. Anthony Chetko at the St. Anthony of Padula Church. Tony and Joe moved to East Greenbush upon Tony’s completion of his Masters Degree.

Tony went to work for New York State accepting an internship with the Division of Budget. That internship would turn out to be the beginning of a thirty year career in state government. During that time and following his internship with the Budget Division Tony worked on the Assembly’s Ways and Means Committee, as a Program Associate in the Executive Chamber under Governor Hugh Carey, and then on to the Senate Finance Committee where he served for nineteen years until his retirement in 2002.

When not working and following his retirement Tony enjoyed traveling with family, and in addition to his annual Atlantic City Vacation, visited California, Aruba, and loved to take family “jaunts” to the Mohegan Sun.

A self taught handy-man, Tony was proud of the deck he built around his pool, the bathroom he built, and various other home improvement projects.

What Tony loved most though was spending time with family and friends.

Tony passed away on August 5, 2007 and is buried in the Calvary Cemetery in Johnson City.

It is an extreme honor for me to be here this morning as we remember and memorialize a True American Hero, Private First Class Anthony F. Chetko, Jr.

Carl D. Sheeley, Sr.

Carl D. Sheeley, Sr. was born in the City of Troy on June 16, 1930 to proud parents David and Lena (Lausen) Sheeley. Carl was raised in the Speigeltown area of the Town of Schaghticoke and attended Lansingburgh Schools.

Money was tight in the Sheeley household and Carl made the decision to leave school and go to work so he could help out with household finances. His father helped him obtain a job working construction at the site of the new G.E. Plant in Waterford. While I'm sure Carl's dad appreciated his efforts his real motive in getting Carl a construction job was to persuade him to go back to school. The plan backfired and Carl would eventually spend sixty years in the construction industry.

On March 12th, 1951, just a few months shy of his 21st birthday Carl enlisted in the United States Army. This was at the height of the Korean Conflict and Carl, upon completing basic training, was shipped overseas as a member of the 191st Field Artillery Battalion.

The 191st was best known for it's WWII exploits when as part of Patton's Third Army they participated in the Landing at Utah Beach, the Breakout at Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, and the Crossing of the Rhine River.

Pfc. Sheeley would spend 11 months and 15 days overseas as a member of the 191st. Honorably Discharged on December 11th, 1952 he was awarded the Korean Service Medal w/ 3 Bronze Stars, and the United Nations Service Medal with 2 Overseas (OS) Bars.

Carl returned home, was married and began raising his family which would eventually grow to include four children: Carl Jr., Anthony, Francis, Barbara, and four grandchildren: Melissa, Austin, Linda, and Sandra.

"Careerwise" Carl picked up where he left off, returning to the construction industry, and retired from Callanan Industries after a sixty year membership in the Construction and General Laborers Union Local 190 in Glenmont.

Although known to be a quiet and gentle man Carl had a great sense of humor and loved "pushing people's buttons" in a teasing way. He had a reputation as a guy who would give you the "shirt off his back" and was the first to offer help to someone in need.

Carl enjoyed collecting coins and was a dedicated “model railroader”. He was immensely proud of the fact that he had helped design and build his parents home.

It is both an honor and a pleasure to be here this morning and take part in this celebration of the life of another of our Rensselaer County Distinguished Veterans, Pfc. Carl D. Sheeley, Sr.

Joseph J. Vanderwerken

Joseph J. Vanderwerken was born in Schenectady on August 2nd, 1946. Joe's mother, the former Mary Cunningham, and father Paul Vanderwerken had two other sons, Paul and James, as well as a daughter Mary.

A graduate of Bishop Gibbons High School Joe would go on to graduate from Niagara University, Hudson Valley, and Siena College.

On June 26th, 1967 after working at the New York State Tax Department for about a year, Joe enlisted in the United States Navy.

Joe, who would attain the rank of Petty Officer 2nd Class, attended Language School in Monterey California and was then stationed at a United States Communication Facility on Galeta Island, which is located on the Atlantic side of the Republic of Panama.

The Galeta Island Facility operated from the 1930's through 2002 when it was turned over to the Republic of Panama. The island was shared with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute which still operates there today.

The facility was part of the Naval Security Group and was charged with the mission of protecting secure U.S. Military Cryptology while trying to decode enemy communications.

While Joe was stationed there and as a result of the Navy's growing role in the hostilities in South East Asia the Navy provided major impetus to the expansion of Naval Signals exploitation and security.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Vanderwerken was honorably discharged on January 12th, 1970.

Upon returning to civilian life Joe went back to work for the State of New York from where he would retire after 37 years with the State Health Department as a Computer Security Analyst.

Joe relocated to the Lansingburgh section of Troy in 1986 where a short time later, on July 18th, 1987 he was married to Derinda McCulley.

A Viet Nam Era veteran, following his retirement Joe performed a wide variety of duties at the Lansingburgh Vets Club. In addition to the Burgh Vets

Joe was a member of the Troy Boat Club, the Lansingburgh Historical Society, and the Lansingburgh 1st and 2nd Avenue Association.

When not spending time with family and friends, or out on the river boating Joe could often be found researching local history.

An animal lover he also volunteered his time taking part in numerous Dog Rescue Missions.

On the 24th day of July in 2005 Rensselaer County lost another of its accomplished citizens and distinguished veterans.

It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning as we honor, remember, and recognize the contributions of Petty Officer 2nd Joseph J. Vanderwerken.

Neil W. Kelleher

Neil W. Kelleher was born in the City of Troy on May 9th, 1923 to parents Cornelius William and Helen Fleming Kelleher. Neil had an older brother William (Ned) and a younger brother Don. Their mother died due to complications while giving birth to their brother Don when Neil was just two years old. The boys moved in with their grandmother who ran a grocery store on 114th Street in Lansingburgh, today the site of The Snowman.

Thanks to their grandmother and a lot of help from relatives including Mary and Owen Cartwright and Marge and Frank Beaudoin the family was able to stay together allowing their dad to go to work every day as a typesetter for the Troy Record Newspapers.

While growing up in Lansingburgh where he attended St. Augustine's School, Neil, along with his father and brothers began performing as the Kelleher Quartet, a Barbershop Ballad Quartet. They sang all around the region on what was known then as the Vaudeville Circuit including performances at some of the big New York City hotels which in those days hosted many live radio broadcast's.

The Kelleher's sang on many of the well known radio shows including the Fred Allen Variety Hour, probably the most popular of that era. They also performed on the Major Bowes Amateur Hour a predecessor to today's American Idol. They got so good that they were hired by Twentieth-Century Fox to perform in a scene for an upcoming movie. They traveled to New York City where they would sing for the movie people and then on to an estate on Long Island where the scene was going to be filmed. Unfortunately when they started to sing at the theatre in New York the oldest brother "Ned" evidently began going through what all 13 or 14 year old boys go through, and his voice was cracking so bad they couldn't continue. So ended the career of the Kelleher Quartet.

A few years later Neil's father was married to Margaret "Peg" Kennedy a South Troy native who although his step mother, Neil always said was as much a mom as anybody could ever wish for, and as an added bonus Neil's family grew to include brothers Robert and Daniel, and sisters Sheila and Joan.

Neil attended Lansingburgh High School until in his senior year, on December the 7th, 1941, Neil and every other American's life would change forever.

Like young men and woman across the country the bombing of Pearl Harbor was all the catalyst Neil needed, and shortly thereafter, on January 20th, 1942, he quit school and joined the Navy.

After basic training and a brief stint at Annapolis, Maryland while waiting for orders Neil was directed to join the crew of the U.S.S. Dashiell. Launched on February 6th, 1943, the Dashiell, a Fletcher Class Destroyer, was undergoing sea trials off the east coast of the United States.

On July 24th, 1943, after transiting the Panama Canal and taking part in training exercises off the California Coast, Neil and the Dashiell entered Pearl Harbor. Neil used to talk about the destruction still evident at Pearl Harbor even then a year and half after the attack.

During his three years on the Dashiell, Neil took part in many of those South Pacific Invasions whose names have become a part of history.

Marcus Island, Tarawa, Wake Island, New Hebrides, Guadalcanal, the Solomon's, DD# 659 (the Dashiell) was there.

Once the Japanese were "on the run" the Dashiell and her sister ships of Destroyer Squadron 25 took part in the dash to the Home Islands. Transporting troops and supplies while at the same time providing shore bombardment the Dashiell also had to repel numerous Kamikaze attacks. The worst of these was at Leyte Gulf in the Philippines when the Dashiell was credited with downing at least 3 suicide planes.

Neil and the Dashiell also took part in the Marianas, Okinawa, New Guinea, and Phillipines Campaigns as well as the Third Fleet Victory Strikes launched against the Japanese Home Islands. During that time the Dashiell was recognized as making the deepest surface penetration into Tokyo Harbor during wartime, being close enough at one point to be credited with successfully bombing a troop train. It was about this time that the Dashiell was officially enrolled on Emperor Hirohito's Blacklist. Part of Neil's duties as a Boatswain's Mate Second Class was operating the crash boat whose mission it was to rescue downed allied pilots. He loved to show off his scar which he received courtesy a shark during one such rescue. He often said that up until that time he didn't think it possible to jump from water a mile deep into a boat, but some how that day he did it!! He also talked of the strange coloring of the sunrises and sunsets following the dropping of the two Atomic Bombs.

Neil was honorably discharged from the Navy on November 9th, 1945.

For his service to his country Neil received two Navy Service Medals, two Campaign Ribbons, nine Battle Stars, the World War II Victory Medal, A Good conduct Medal , Philippine Liberation Medal, and although it took some sixty years to catch up to him, the Purple Heart.

Upon his return home, on June 9th 1946, Neil was married to June Elizabeth Frank of Hoosick Falls. In those days you couldn't get married in the church unless Catholic so Neil and June, a non-Catholic, were married in the St. Augustine Parrish Priest House.

They would have two sons, Timothy and Neil, and a daughter Tracey. They would later add grandchildren C.W., Kara, Shelby, Madelyn, Gwendolyn, and Griffin, as well as a great grandchild Alan.

Neil went to work for Cartwright Ford, a North Troy dealership owned and operated by Owen Cartwright Sr., who was married to Neil's aunt, Mary Kelleher.

While working as a mechanic trainee Neil obtained his high school G.E.D., attended various Ford training schools in New Jersey and Michigan, eventually becoming the General Sales Manager. Following the death of Mr. Cartwright, Neil, along with a few others including a young man named Jack Byrne, purchased the agency and operated it until the mid sixties.

But the career that most people would come to identify him with would be Neil's political career.

Appointed to fill a vacancy on the Troy Council, known then as Alderman, Neil was re-elected to that seat before running for mayor in 1959, a race which although a huge "under-dog" he won by less than two hundred votes.

In 1966, following a hard fought primary against the endorsed Republican Candidate, Neil was elected to the New York State Assembly, a post he would hold for the next twenty-six years.

Neil, of course, didn't know the meaning of retirement, and following his own went on to complete a term as Chairman of the Troy Housing Authority as well as spending ten years as a New York State Election Commissioner.

Neil's interests were many and varied from boating, to skiing, deep sea fishing, to piloting small private aircraft. He played softball as a young man and

whether following sports, watch collecting, or refinishing furniture, Neil always found something to do.

In his later years he became an avid fan of local high school sports and was often seen stalking the sidelines at Lansingburgh High Football games, offering his opinion to the officials on controversial calls.

Neil was a member of many organizations but among his favorites were the Disabled American Veterans, Campfire Girls, and the New York State Theatre Institute. He especially looked forward to his role as the main speaker at the Annual Friends of 112th Street Dinner of which he was a founding member.

Neil passed away on September the 4th, 2008, and a few days later, on the same day Lansingburgh hosts the Uncle Sam Day Celebration, thousands of Neil's friends, neighbors, and some who just knew him by reputation, stood in line for hours to pay their respects.

We are proud this morning to be a part of recognizing the exemplary career and accomplishments of a Rensselaer County Veteran who never stopped giving and so embodied the definition of the term "Public Servant", our good friend Boatswain's Mate Second Class Neil W. Kelleher.

Salvatore P. Clemente

Salvatore P. Clemente was born in the City of Troy on April 13th, 1931 to parents Michael and Jenny Zirpolo Clemente.

One of ten children Sal had six brothers, John, Anthony, Nicholas, Rocco, Michael, and Felix, as well as three sisters, Philomena, Mary, and Ursula.

Sal moved to Troy from Watervliet as a youngster where he attended Troy Public Schools.

With ten children to provide for Sal's dad was working day in and day out and needed all the help he could get, so upon completing 6th Grade Sal left school to help his dad in the family construction business.

On February 4th, 1954 in the City of Albany Sal enlisted in the United States Army.

After completing basic training and Signal School Pvt. First Class Clemente was assigned to the 14th Armored Cavalry Regiment as a radio operator.

The 14th was formed February 2nd, 1901 at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas and is perhaps best known for its service during the Cold War when it was responsible for patrolling some of the more sensitive areas of the East-West Border.

Corporal Clemente separated from active duty on January 7th, 1954 at which time he transferred to the Army Reserve.

In recognition of his service Cpl. Clemente was awarded the Army of Occupation Medal w/German Clasp, National Defense Medal, and the Korean Service Medal.

Sal returned home and got back in to the construction business joining Local 190, Construction Workers and Laborers Union.

Almost immediately upon getting home Sal was introduced to Grace Carello and after dating for about six months they were married in the City of Troy on July 11th, 1954.

Sal and Grace would have three children, a son Michael, and two daughters Patricia, and Donna. They would be further blessed with six grandchildren,

Nicole, Seann, Bryan, Michael, Tara, and Megan and two great grandchildren, Kaitlyn, and McKenzie.

Sal worked in the construction business for eighteen years, first as a laborer and then a foreman retiring in 1977 following a series of heart attacks and after undergoing open heart surgery.

Although retired Sal always enjoyed construction and working with his hands. In 1971 he had built his own home and was always available if someone needed help with a home repair problem.

He also liked “tinkering” with electrical appliances, working on puzzles, and was a big fan of gangster and western movies, especially if they starred John Wayne!

What Sal most enjoyed was being with family and whether fixing a problem on one of his kids houses or helping out with their daycare needs he was always quick to point out that what was important was indeed staying together as a family.

Sal stayed in touch with community and fellow veterans as a member of both the American Legion and Troy Elks.

Following a long illness Sal passed away on March 10th, 2009 and was interned in the Gerald B. H. Solomon National Cemetery in Schuylerville, N.Y.

It is with great pride and honor that I gather here with Sal’s friends, family, fellow veterans, and honored guests to recognize and honor the service of a distinguished Rensselaer County Veteran, Cpl. Salvatore P. Clemente.

Alfred J. Curley

Alfred J. Curley was born in the City of Troy on the 3rd day of June in 1919. One of nine children born to Thomas and Margaret McMahan Curley Alfred had three sisters, Agnes, Stella, and Jennie as well as five brothers, Edmond, Joey, Harold, Francis, and William. Alfred attended Troy Public Schools from where he would get his GED.

On August 29, 1940 Alfred enlisted in the United States Army and after boot camp was assigned to the New York State National Guard's 27th Division. Now Tech 4 Curley was a member of the 27th's 105th Infantry which was the first Infantry Division to "ship out" to Hawaii following the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

On November 20, 1942, the 27th Infantry Division embarked on its first combat mission, the capture of the small coral atoll Makin. By the end of 1944 the 27th would also occupy the Majuro Atoll and successfully assault the Island of Eniwetok.

In June of 1944 the 27th landed on Saipan and after a few months rest at Espirto Santo took part in the Invasion of Okinawa on April 12, 1945. Following a few months garrison duty, in now occupied Japan, the 27th mustered out in December 1945.

Technician 4th Class Curley was awarded for his service the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre Ribbon w/2 Bronze Battle Stars, the American Defense Service Ribbon, a Combat Infantry Badge, and although it took a few years on April 6, 1948 by order of the President of the United States was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for "exemplary conduct in ground combat" during the Western Pacific Campaign.

On August 1, 1948 Al was married to Emma F. Cody at St. Peter's Church in Troy. Emma and Al raised three children Thomas, Marie, and Barbara. Their family would eventually grow to include eight grandchildren, Christina, Scott, Kimberly, Frederick, Ryan, Robert , Thomas, Brandon, four great-grandchildren, Jasmine, Thomas Gordon, Courtney and Makayla, and one great-great grandchild, Ava.

Al worked as a truck driver for Standard Furniture for 35 years and immediately upon his retirement began a new job, destined to last for the next 15

years, as a driver for the Rensselaer County Meals on Wheels Program. Al drove for the county until he was 81 years old and then only stopped due to illness.

Al was a Troy Elk and also a member of the American Legion. He enjoyed tinkering with automobiles when not “glued to the tube” watching his Yankee’s.

Evidenced by his Meals on Wheels Career, Al especially enjoyed his work with Senior Citizens, and was immensely proud of a “National Employ the Older Worker Certificate” awarded to him by Rensselaer County’s Unified Family Services Department Office for the Aging.

Al passed away on June 23, 2006 and is buried in the Oakwood Cemetery here in Troy.

It has been my great pleasure to take part in this morning’s ceremony as we recognize the honorable and selfless service of a Rensselaer County Veteran who was just as much a hero at home as well as at war, Technician 4th Class Alfred J. Curley.