

JOSEPH EDWARD VIGEANT II
1926- 1992

FAMILY HISTORY:

Joseph Edward Vigeant, II (Big Ed) was born on September 7, 1926 in Hudson, New York. Ed was the only child of the late Clarence H. Vigeant and Marie (O'Grady) (Vigeant) McDermott. Ed was the step-son to the late Leo J. McDermott.

EDUCATION:

Ed attended St. Peter's, Hillside School, Troy High School and Neon School in New York City.

HISTORY:

Ed was a World War II Veteran of the U.S. Naval Air Corps. enlisting on September 7, 1942. Seaman Vigeant began his Naval career at the Naval Training Station in Great Lakes, Illinois.

During fall of 1944, ARM3/c Joseph E. Vigeant, Gunner, was one of a ten man crew "DAMNYANKEE" on a PB4Y-A Liberator. This crew was to be assigned to a Squadron of Fleet Air Wing – 7 of the United States Navy Twelfth Fleet. The FAW-7 Squadrons operated out of the village of Dunkeswell in Devon, England which was the eventual destination for this crew leaving Norfolk, Virginia in their brand new aircraft on September 6, 1944. They landed in Grenier Field, New Hampshire the same day where crew briefing continued until departure on September 10, 1944 when they headed to Goose Bay, Labrador, northeast of the United States. Further flight briefing was given and life saving equipment was checked for the long flight over water to Europe and it was decided that life jackets would be worn during this leg of the flight to Meeks Field in Iceland. Prior to departure the crew had little sleep and few meals of any significance. Upon departure there was difficulty in running up engine number one and approximately 100 gallons of fuel used in the subsequent run-ups of other engines necessary to run the generators left 2900 gallons of fuel on board at take off. The weather system south of Greenland was responsible for the first problems for the crew on this flight. The point of no return on this flight was about four and a half hours when two position fixes were obtained. At this point the situation was getting

serious and the radio beam from the Prince Christian radio range could not be located due to static interference. The aircraft was beginning to suffer from heavy ice formation on the wings and the de-icing equipment was only partially functional. In the teeth of these very poor flying conditions the crew were in a difficult situation and a shortage of fuel meant that reaching Iceland was no longer possible. The moment of decision was coming ever closer. The pilot's options were to fly toward the Irish Coastline and attempt a hazardous crash landing on land or make a controlled ditching on the water which every pilot and crew know you have "just one chance to get it right".

Vigeant said that he looked through the upper hatch when the aircraft was five feet off the water. Another crew member braced himself on the floor between Vigeant's legs. The aircraft was now about ten feet off the water and air speed was down to 82 knots as the pilot pulled the throttles back and dragged the PB4Y-1 into a nose up attitude just prior to impact. The aircraft hit the top of a wave tail first, twice and then the main fuselage and nose of the aircraft hit the water with a thundering ear splitting crash. The pilot described the landing as "like riding an egg shell into a concrete wall". After twelve hours in the air since departure they are at last down. Survival was now their only priority with wind speed estimated at 25-30 knots and the waves were about 20 feet high with a continuous flying spray and spume. The windscreen of the aircraft caved in and sea water flooded the cabin. The crew struggled fervently and four crew members were tragically lost.

The life raft became home to the crew for the next 33 hours battling cold and stormy conditions. One life was lost during this time and the five remaining members hit the Irish Shoreline on September 16th, 1944.

Ed was honorably discharged on August 22, 1946 but remained in the Naval Reserves National Guard for forty years retiring in 1986. For his brave and dedicated service to his Country, Aviation Ordnanceman First Class Joseph Vigeant was awarded the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, American Area Medal, European African 1 Star Medal, WWII Victor Medal and Good Conduct Medal.

PERSONAL: Ed married Dorothy (Aspland) Vigeant on November 27, 1949 at St. Patrick's Church in Troy, New York and together they had four

children: Babette Vigeant Corona, Joseph Edward Vigeant III (Ed), Judith VanAuken and William Spencer Vigeant. They are the proud grandparents Jennifer, Allison, J. Edward (Vigeant IV), Amy, William, Dana, Hailey, Kate and Lauren and great grandparents of Nikala, Meara, Mason, Avery and Jace.

WORK EXPERIENCE: Ed was the founded Troy Neon Sign Company in 1947 and was President of the company until his retirement in 1988.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS:

Ed was a member of the Sea Squatters Club, Fleet Reserves of Brandenton, Fla, American ex-POW's of Brandenton, Troy Elks Lodge, Ancient Order of Hibernians, Florida Homeowners Association of Bradenton, Flying Knights, Tory County Banjo Band, American Legion Post #1489, a life member of the Emerald Athletic Club and Troy Boys Club Hall of Fame. He was also a member of the Reformed Church of Wynantskill.

Sadly J. Edward Vigeant II passed away on April 30, 1992 and his buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Troy, New York.