



VETERANS DAY

Nov. 7, 2018

Poughkeepsie's World War I victory celebration



Thank you to our veterans

It was scheduled for the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" and the year was 1918. That's a hundred years ago.

Thus ended what was known as "The Great War." We didn't call it World War One until we found ourselves in the middle of a second one.

That eleventh of November was first known as "Armistice Day" and, other than celebrating the end of a nightmare, it celebrated the joy of bringing our veterans home with a promise that they would be honored and with a hope that that particular war had truly been "the war to end all wars."

We didn't quite get the last part right and, thus, there have been countless wars in the interim and countless veterans to thank, to heal and to take joy in their return to their families. Over the years, Armistice Day morphed into Veterans Day. As of 1954, that's what it is called to this day. The motivations haven't changed since 1918, but the focus has become more clear.

In 2018, one hundred years since that Armistice went into effect, our country once again takes a step back to honor and also to support those men and women who have offered their all in our collective interest.

Veterans these days range in age from sometimes over a hundred years old for those remaining survivors of World War II to the late teens and early twenties for those currently serving or recently back from the various conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia, that which is called officially the Global War on Terror. Their needs and even their interests are as varied as their ages.

With this year's Veterans Day supplement, we at the Northern Dutchess News, Southern Dutchess News and Beacon Free Press are taking a look around the Hudson Valley at veterans' experiences, activities and at some of their issues. In a very small way it's our attempt at saying "Thank You."



A special
supplement

Southern Dutchess News

NORTHERN
DUTCHESS NEWS
& Creative Living

BEACON FREE PRESS

It was a hundred years ago this week that the "War to End All Wars" came to an end. With the end of the war, Dutchess County's Doughboys came marching home in the above parade in Poughkeepsie. Those veterans are all gone now, but we remember them on the centennial of the Armistice. *Photo courtesy of the Dutchess County Historical Society*



Pine Plains' World War I veteran Lester Whitney experienced most of the events of the American Expeditionary Force's (AEF) sojourn in France. Along the way, he left us a detailed account of that experience, complete with postcards of the villages and towns where he saw action, along with a map of his journey through France. His story is told on pages 6-7 within. The story could not have been written but for the generosity of the Schmidt family of Pine Plains and the assistance of the Dutchess County Historical Society.

Foam & Wash to offer free car wash to veterans Nov. 11-12

Foam & Wash invites all active duty and former members of the military to have their vehicle washed free of charge on Veterans Day – Sunday, Nov. 11 or Monday, Nov. 12, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Veterans may visit any of Foam & Wash's five soft cloth facilities in Poughkeepsie, Wappingers Falls, Fishkill, Newburgh or Vails Gate; and at 15 North Grand Avenue in Poughkeepsie, as well as 20 Merritt Boulevard in Fishkill, to receive a complimentary \$20 Simonize Hot Wax & Shine Car Wash. Just let us know that you are a veteran or active military – no ID required.

Todd Baright said, "My family and I believe that it is very important to appreci-

ate and remember our men and women for the sacrifices they have made in service to our country. We are humbled and pleased to wash their cars for free on Veterans Day. Veterans Day will always be our favorite day of the year at Foam & Wash!"

Foam & Wash is a locally owned family business. Born in 1966 with one of the country's first coin-operated car washes in Vails Gate, it has grown to 12+ properties and 130 fantastic associates. They operate Oil Change Plus facilities, a Mobil gasoline station and convenience store, soft cloth washes, touch-free automatics, self-service car washes, pet washes and a laundromat. Visit www.foamandwash.com for more information.

Return the FAVOR to Dutchess County Veterans

by Bradford H. Kendall
Dutchess County Clerk

Are you or do you know a U.S. veteran who lives in Dutchess County?

Are you or do you know a local business that would like to thank our veterans for their service?

The Dutchess County Clerk's Office and the county Division of Veterans' Services is pleased to offer the Return the FAVOR (Find and Assist a Veteran of Record) program. This joint venture between the business community and county government is intended to provide veterans with assistance in obtaining the benefits they deserve. Today, more than 230 businesses have enrolled to participate by providing discounted programs and services to almost 3,900 Dutchess County veterans.

Return the FAVOR is a county-wide and year-round program. Any honorably discharged veteran residing in Dutchess County may obtain their FAVOR card by bringing his or her Military Separation Papers i.e. DD-214, WDO-AGO 53-55, etc., indicating their Full-Time Active Duty service to the Division of Veterans Services Office, at 85 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 105, in Poughkeepsie.

After processing, veterans obtain their official card from the County Clerk's Office, 22 Market St. in Poughkeepsie. There is no cost to sign up for the card. The card also entitles you to one hour of free parking in the lot adjacent to the County Office Building at 22 Market St.

Participating businesses honor the card by providing a discount on purchases, serv-



Brad Kendall. File photo

ices or special offers. Each business uniquely decides on the discount they wish to offer. From auto repairs to meals, haircuts to pet supplies, these are just a few examples of the offers provided.

A list of Return the FAVOR merchants and discounts offered can be found by visiting our website. Businesses are also provided with a Return the FAVOR decal they can post designating them as a program participant. Businesses and merchants interested in participating can download an application by visiting www.dutchessny.gov/countyclerk.

Currently, 20,000 U.S. veterans call Dutchess County home; and with Veterans Day around the corner, please consider joining the Return the FAVOR program as either a recipient or participant. As County Clerk, I am pleased to assist in the initiative that honors our brave men and women of Dutchess County who have made the greatest sacrifice defending our freedoms and liberties. Join me in showing our gratitude for their service.

VETERANS DAY

a special section to

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Veterans, Thank You for Your Service....

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FREE VETERANS DAY CONCERT SET AT WEED ORCHARDS

A "Salute to Veterans" concert featuring The Fred Zeppelin Band will take place on Saturday, Nov. 10, from 6 to 11 p.m., at Weed Orchards, 43 Mt. Zion Road, Marlboro.

This concert is free and open to the public, and especially to veterans from Dutchess, Ulster and Orange counties. Enjoy a night of rock & roll, oldies and more.

Parking is free. Beer, wine and food will be available for purchase.

The event will be held rain or shine. Visit www.weedorchards.com

Celebrate our 'everyday heroes' on Veterans Day

by Tom Zurhellen

What's your favorite holiday?

I know when I was a boy, nothing compared to Christmas in my young mind - decorating the tree with my mom, leaving cookies and carrots for Santa and his trusty reindeer, and of course, receiving all those sparkly gifts. When I got a little older, maybe during my college years, Thanksgiving replaced Christmas as my favorite holiday; as I was old enough to appreciate the importance of spending time with family and of course, enjoying all that amazing food (as I type this, I still can't stop thinking of a certain sweet potato pie).

But now that I'm almost 50 and have more road behind me than road ahead, I know my priorities have shifted a lot since those younger days. I still can't get enough sweet potato pie, of course, but if you're like me, as we get older we find that our life experiences - all those unique successes and bitter failures over the years - have changed the way we see the world.

That's why today I can say without any hesitation: Veterans Day is my favorite holiday, hands down.

I'll give you a few moments to roll your eyes or let out a sarcastic laugh. Veterans Day? Are you sure, Tom? Isn't that just an extra Memorial Day they put on the calendar? How can a day with no fabulous tree, no sparkly gifts, and no Mrs. Smalley's famous sweet potato pie possibly be your all-time favorite day?

It's simple, really. I have always been a fan of the underdog (try being a Mets fan while growing up in the Bronx) and if there was ever a holiday that celebrates the

underdogs in our society, it's Nov. 11.

Veterans Day is my favorite day because it's one day we celebrate the everyday heroes all around us, those women and men who willingly put their lives on the line for our freedom. These are the real heroes in our world that deserve a holiday more than anyone and yet, it's no secret we don't do enough to celebrate our veterans, even on Veterans Day.

When I was in the Navy, I don't think I appreciated the importance of Veterans Day, either; and in the years right after I was discharged from the service, I probably still didn't care much. I was too busy going to school and trying to hold down a job - heck, two jobs. Truth be told, back then I probably could not have told you the difference between Veterans Day, Memorial Day and Armed Forces Day - I mean, aren't they kind of all the same?

Of course, now that I'm older and (hopefully) a bit wiser, I can tell you that they are not the same. Memorial Day is the day we honor those who have perished in combat. Armed Forces Day is the day we honor those women and men currently serving in the Armed Forces. And Veterans Day, of course, is the day we celebrate those underdogs all around us, the living heroes who willingly put their lives on the line for our freedom and yet, can be invisible as we go about our daily lives.

Still skeptical? Ask yourself why your favorite holiday - whether it's Christmas, Hanukkah, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Easter, or what have you - is actually your favorite. What is the real reason it's the one day you look forward to all year? Hopefully the reason is more than just the thought of

getting glittering gifts or delicious food.

For me, I can say Veterans Day is my favorite holiday not because of anything I receive, but rather because of the excitement I get when I think of all the ways I can give back to our veterans. That's what makes Veterans Day fun and worthwhile!

How fun? Well, I still can remember that feeling I got as that small boy when I woke up on Christmas morning and crept down the stairs to see all those presents under the tree. Today, I can honestly say I get the same exact feeling each and every Veterans Day as I think up new ways to let our local veterans know they are appreciated.

For example, this year the VFW and Mahoney's Irish Pub & Restaurant in Poughkeepsie have teamed up to co-sponsor the Veterans Day Awards on Sunday, Nov. 11, from 2 to 5 p.m. Our goal is simple: to give all our area veterans the chance to have a great meal, enjoy the camaraderie of fellow veterans, and let our veterans know they're special.

If you know a local veteran who would be interested in attending the inaugural Veterans Day Awards at Mahoney's on Veterans Day, you can call VFW Post 170 at (845) 452-5407 for tickets.

Well, at the very least I hope I've con-

vinced you how special Veterans Day is to me, and perhaps I have even convinced you it should be near the top of your list of great holidays, too.

You might still adore the Christmas holidays the most, but maybe you can recognize there's plenty of room to add another holiday truly worth celebrating. Heck, we can even make sweet potato pie the official dish of Veterans Day, if that helps.

Happy Veterans Day to all our Hudson Valley heroes, and the people who love them!

Thanks for listening! See you next time!

Tom Zurhellen is the commander at Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 170 in Poughkeepsie. A Navy veteran, he served aboard the cruisers USS Truxtun and USS California during the Persian Gulf War. He currently serves as assistant professor of English at Marist College, where he has taught Creative Writing courses for the last 15 years.



Check the Northern & Southern Dutchess News for a comprehensive listing of Veterans Day events in the county.

HVVA builds support networks for veterans

by Kristine Coulter

Hudson Valley Veterans Alliance (HVVA) advocates for and supports veterans and families in the local area. They are veterans, and civilians, wanting to help other veterans.

Anthony Kavouras is the chairman for HVVA.

"When I got out of the military, I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do," said Kavouras. He spent more than 34 years in military service. He was in the U.S. Air Force and National Guard, most of the time serving with the 105th Security Forces squadron. He was deployed with the 755th Expeditionary Security Forces "Reaper 7."

After his time in the military, he went to school to study Human Services.

After some time of meeting other people and veterans, Kavouras said, "There were a few of us that got together and created HVVA." The non-profit organization has 30 members now.

Melissa Taveras, U.S. Marine Corps veteran, is 3rd Vice Chairman, Secretary and handles social media for HVVA.

"We are real people - everyday people. We just want to see veterans rebound from tough situations and find success in life. But we are few, and we do need as much community support as possible - gas cards, gift certificates, donations are all necessary to keep us ready and able to deal with housing issues, especially as the cold season approaches," she said.

The mission of HVVA is to help provide assistance, information, and build support networks for veterans, by veterans, throughout the Hudson Valley.

There is the board of directors and then the five advisory board members. All members of the board of directors are veterans. The advisory board members are split between veterans and civilians, explained Kavouras.

The vision of HVVA, according to its

website www.hudsonvalleyveteransalliance.org, is "to provide all veterans in the Hudson Valley with the information, resources, and assistance they need in order to thrive in both personal and professional endeavors!" The vision continues, "Whether you were a machinist mate on the bottom of the USS Esseks, sailing around the pacific, or a radio operator in a European command; if you raised your right hand to serve this nation, we at The Alliance honor that code, and we are more than honored to assist you during these challenging times."

The group does not have a specific location; they do not want to waste the money on rent. They have a cell phone that is passed between board members at different times.

The meetings are mostly held in the Pleasant Valley Town Hall monthly.

"We get calls so much now," said Kavouras. He said they assist veterans who are behind on such things as paying bills, cannot get medical appointments or need a ride to a medical appointment.

"There aren't a lot of homeless shelters in some areas. And often veterans' services will not pay for temporary accommodations. But we will! We will pay for a hotel stay for veterans and their immediate family members. And we work with other agencies to get the veteran housed permanently. That's the goal. But we won't leave them on the streets while they find a place to live. They deserve better," explained Taveras.

"Being in as long as I was (34 years), I got out and needed a mission. I still needed to serve," explained Kavouras. "It helps me to help others. It might be a little selfish."

"Civilians or veterans, we are working hard together to keep us funded and operating quickly and efficiently on behalf of fellow veterans," said Taveras.

To contact HVVA, e-mail, admin@hudsonvalleyveteransalliance.org.

All Sport to host annual 'Salute to Our Veterans'

by Kristine Coulter

All Sport Health & Fitness, 17 Old Main St., Fishkill will host its annual "Salute to Our Veterans" ceremony on Monday, Nov. 12. The ceremony will take place at 11 a.m., with lunch following at the Fuel Café in All Sport. Veterans and the public are invited.

The health and fitness club has been flying American flags since Nov. 1 to honor veterans' sacrifices.

As 2018 is the "Year of the Veteran," All Sport is hoping to make this year's fundraising efforts its best one so far. Each tribute sponsorship flag will have a yellow Dedication ribbon attached to it. The various sponsorship levels follow:

\$20 T-shirt: Show support with the "Salute to Our Veterans" T-shirt.

\$25 Stars and Stripes Sponsorship: This sponsorship includes 1 tribute flag.

\$125 Bronze Star Sponsorship: This sponsorship includes 6 tribute flags.

\$250 Silver Star Sponsorship: This sponsorship includes 15 tribute flags. If a company, the name will be displayed at All Sport as a sponsor on its in-club signage and in pre- post-event e-mails.

\$375 Defense Distinguished Medal Sponsorship: This sponsorship includes 15 tribute flags, 1 large flag and 1 T-shirt. If a company, the name will be displayed at All Sport as a sponsor on our in-club signage and in pre- and post-event e-mails.

Donations can be made in person at All Sport Health and Fitness or online at <https://squ.re/2yepK3t>

One-hundred percent of the proceeds go to the Valley Veterans Alliance (HVVA). To learn more about the wonderful things HVVA does, visit: <https://www.hudsonvalleyveteransalliance.org/home.html>. The ceremony will highlight this being "The Year of the Veteran."

Tim Winters, who is on the committee organizing the event, said, "I'm a veteran and a lot of my friends here in the club are veterans." He said in the military camaraderie is developed. The organizing committee also has camaraderie.

Mark Cuatt, managing partner with All Sport Health and Fitness, is on the committee. He said the magnitude of giving back and to "understand how important each veteran is," is why All Sport hosts the annual event.

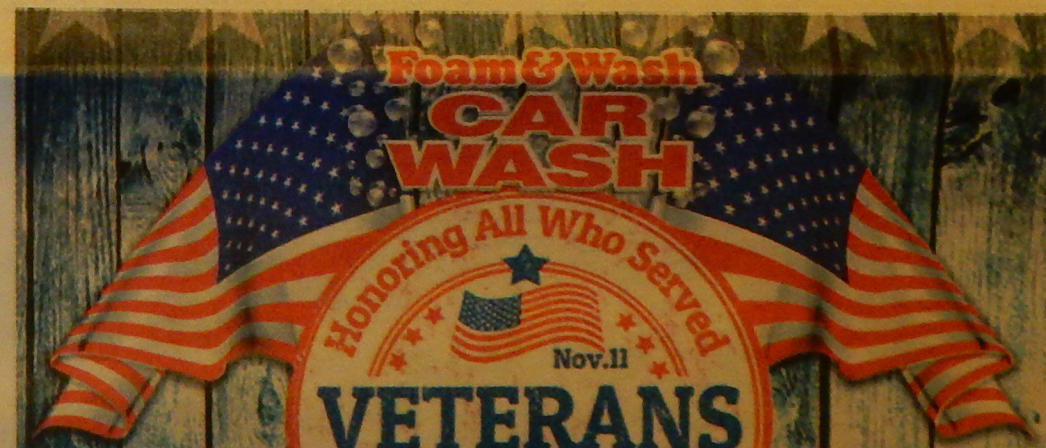
Gail Buckle said All Sport gets the word out about the event. She said veterans are an underserved part of the population.

"They (the veterans) feel special. It's a good, positive thing that gets passed," said Buckle about the ceremony.

Dan Daly, a club member and local resident, who was a captain for the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) on 9/11, will be speaking at the event. He will tell how 9/11 changed him and how his recalling of that day has brought him around the world.

There will be the presentation of colors and the retiring of colors during the ceremony.

David Rocco, co-author of the book "The Indestructible Man," will talk about two plane crashes that occurred on Mount Beacon. One happened on Veterans Day in 1945 and involved Dixie Kiefer, a Commodore in the Navy. He fought in both World War I and World War II. Five other men were with him from New Jersey to Rhode Island. In 1935, a plane carrying two servicemen crashed.





by Jim Donick

This page, clockwise from left: Lester Whitney in uniform. The harbor at Brest that greeted his arrival in France. American soldiers encamped in France. American soldiers getting better acquainted with their French Allies. Photos courtesy Dutchess County Historical Society

World War One's Meuse-Argonne Offensive was a hundred years ago this month, stretching from the 26th of September until the very minute of that "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" that ended the war. It was the largest battle in American military history to that point, costing the lives of 26,277 Americans and 28,000 Germans.

That epic battle and the entire experience of going to France was the defining adventure of a lifetime for Pine Plains' Lester Whitney. Born and reared in Brooklyn, Whitney settled in Pine Plains after the war and lived out his life there as an honored veteran, managing a game farm and serving as a Justice of the Peace.

The story of Lester's experience is probably like that of many of his contemporaries, except that he documented nearly every step, collected postcards along the way, and then kept his memories and mementos until the day he died in 1978.

For Lester, the adventure started in 1917 when he enlisted in the Army's Coastal Artillery Command. His regiment, the 59th, came from Brooklyn. Shortly after war was declared, the 59th was being brought up to strength and training in earnest at Fort Hamilton in their home borough.

The war in Europe was raging and the Doughboys were desperately needed. Thus, on March 28th, 1918, Lester and his regiment set sail from Fort Hamilton, bound for Europe. Their transport ship was not one of the normal rough and crude troop ships. The 59th Coastal Artillery Regiment sailed out in virtual luxury on the RMS Olympic, then the "pride of the White Star line." Lester had expected difficult quarters, but was astounded to find himself sharing a



LES AMERICAINS EN FRANCE. — AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN FRANCE
Photos Française fraternelle. — French and American soldiers making friends

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Pine Plains' Lester Whitney in World War One: The Defining Adventure of a Lifetime



8 horses or 40 men. In plain English, it was a boxcar."

They would be there near Limoges for three months working up to full capabilities under the watchful aid of experienced French artillery men. The 59th would be using mostly French 155 mm field pieces and British howitzers. They needed some time to develop competence.

stateroom with three other soldiers.

"I was assigned to a rather luxurious stateroom with three other fellows," he wrote a friend. "It was equipped with electric light, running water, a wardrobe of large capacity with a splendid mirror. The room was finished in white enamel with silver-plated trimmings. The bunks and wardrobe were of oak." He then added even "the cats were fine."

The crossing was relatively uneventful, though Lester tells of coming on deck once to the sound of gunfire. The ship's six-inch gun team were having some target practice. The American regiment, all artillery men themselves, spoke approvingly of the competence of the gun crew.

The Olympic was originally headed for Southampton in England, but that plan changed. On the 4th of April, she dropped anchor in the French harbor of Brest at the western tip of Brittany. The European part of Lester's adventure began in earnest.

Spring comes earlier in Brittany than it does in Brooklyn. The country the boys had departed was still pretty gray. Early April in Brittany would have been brighter and full of spring flowers. Lester noted the difference and wrote "I think France has much more pretty scenery than the States." He wasn't the first to notice, nor would he be the last.

It appears that he quickly bought himself a map of France and then used it for the rest of the trip to note the regiment's path to battle.

After a couple of days, the regiment was sent to south central France, to Aix-sur-Vienne near Limoges, for training prior to combat.

Lester sardonically described part of the trip in a letter home: "We then took a train ride for a few days in one of France's railroads in the wonderful cars entitled 'chevaux 8 - hommes 40.' Meaning it would accommodate

After three months of training, they entrained for the front in northeastern France.

Their first engagement came quickly in support of the battle at the St. Mihiel salient. The effort lasted from September 12th-15th, with the Americans fighting alongside 110,000 French troops. This was the first major offensive for the green American troops. Some military historians argue that it may have been too easy as there was much worse to follow on the Marne. At the St. Mihiel offensive, the Americans took 15,000 German prisoners.

Behind the lines, the artillery men were billeted in small villages around their base. They developed warm relations with the locals they had come to defend. It seems that Lester had also quickly developed some facility in French, using a phrase book that each soldier was issued upon arrival.

According to a contemporary report, the French villagers loved their American allies, though they looked at them initially with a fair bit of curiosity. Brushing teeth so often was not as common. Watching the Americans washing regularly at an outside hydrant was fascinating for some. Still, the relationships grew warm and the Americans were made most welcome. Lester made sure he picked up a few postcards in any of the villages where he found himself.

After the St. Mihiel battle Lester's regiment moved northward and were thrown into supporting the last major push of the war, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. It was



just over a week since the St. Mihiel offensive had wound down and the gunners of the 59th regiment took part in the opening salvos of the final offensive of the war. It would prove to be the bloodiest battle in American military history. The Great War Society notes that "The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the greatest American battle of the First World War. In six weeks, the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) lost 26,277 killed and 95,786 wounded."

During the offensive, Lester's regiment was constantly on the move, providing support one day for American troops, then another day for the French and sometimes the British. They went where they were needed, and they sometimes had to drag their big guns with horses or even brute strength when the terrain wouldn't allow the use of trucks. It was characterized in a regimental history as "six weeks of shelling and being shelled." Meuse-Argonne was Hell.

Through it all, Lester and his fellows manned the guns and kept detailed notes of targeting and the specifics of every shelling episode they executed.

The offensive in the American sector ground on almost to the minute of that fateful "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" when the armistice took effect. It's reported that some of the front line troops didn't hear about it until nearly noon. But, with that, it came to a conclusion.

The 59th had been pulled back to its headquarters and rest area a few days earlier. The regimental history tells the story of their return there and to the little villages around the camp that had housed them.

"...the Regiment was soon ordered back to Camp Dubieville and from there to its old billets in the little villages on the Marne.



"Those 'elderly people' were ready for them. Word came that the Americans were coming back. In two hours every house in the four towns had a hot meal for their friends the soldiers. The men found their old billets. Their hosts took them in, welcomed them excitedly, and then wouldn't hear of their being moved. The adjutant, Captain H.H. Slicer, was recognized by an old French newspaper man, and it took him three and a half hours to go two blocks. It was a glass of wine here, and a long chat there, and an acknowledgment of friends next door, and nothing was too good for 'Monsieur le Capitaine.'"

On the 12th of December, the regiment was boarding trains for the return to Brest. They sailed for home on the 8th of January aboard the USS Louisiana and the USS New Hampshire. Neither was as luxurious as the grand liner that had brought them to France. Upon arrival in New York, the regiment was taken by train to Camp Upton on Long Island. Most were quickly transformed back into civilians.

Lester Whitney and his fellows of the 59th went back down the Long Island Railroad to their homes in Brooklyn.

Some time after the war, Lester left Brooklyn and moved upstate - first to Gallatin and later to Pine Plains. He managed Green Hill Farm, raising pheasants



This page, clockwise from right: The title box of the map that Lester Whitney carried across France, which shows the route of his journey (also shown in background on these pages). Florent in the Argonne, one of the villages that hosted the Americans. Britain's Field Marshall Douglas Haig thanking his American allies. Lester later in life, an honored citizen of Pine Plains. Photos courtesy of Dutchess County Historical Society



and other game, was elected Justice of the Peace, became involved in the Pine Plains American Legion Post, and was past Master of the Stissing Lodge No. 615 F & AM (Free & Accepted Masons). His was a full life. Whitney lived on Maple Avenue in the house he and his wife, Marie, had built. He died in 1978. The two of them are interred there in Evergreen Cemetery.



A reminder of love in the horror of war

Among the postcards Lester Whitney collected during his sojourn on the Marne was a picture of a statue in a square in the town of Chaumont-sur-Marne. The statue, by Bouchardon, is simply called "L'Amour," which is Love. It depicts the classical tale of Eros (Cupid) making a bow from the club of Hercules - a tool of love being fashioned from a weapon of war. The whole area of the Marne was being devastated by the war, but the statue still stood; and it must have caught Lester Whitney's eye when he was traveling through Chaumont. He brought the picture home.

The fact that statue, itself, survived the war, maybe a silent testimony to the ideal it represents.

War revisited the area in the early 1940s. The statue stood there through that one, too.

To this day "L'Amour de Bouchardon" can be seen in the same square, a hundred years after it promised some future to countless Doughboys and to a particular one, who finished his days in Pine Plains, New York.

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The Six Griffins: Tivoli's Own 'Band of Brothers' in WWII

by Christopher Klose,
Historic Red Hook

"Mrs. Helen Griffin, widow of Michael Griffin, Tivoli, enjoys the distinction of having six sons now serving in the Armed Services of the United States..." So opens a matter-of-fact 1945 newspaper profile of "Six Members of the Griffin Family Serving Uncle Sam."

But for "Stories of Service," a collaborative oral history project of Red Hook Post 7765 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Bard College Experimental Humanities Program and Historic Red Hook, this account of Tivoli's "Band of Brothers" would have remained safely tucked away in a family "keepsake" album - lost to the world.

Fortunately, on a rainy day in early April, I had the privilege of interviewing Vincent H. ("Jerry") Griffin about his World War II service. Slowed by arthritis but still sharp as a tack at 91, he was the youngest Griffin to serve and was the sole surviving sibling until his death on Saturday, Oct. 20, one week shy of his 92nd birthday. Like most members of the Greatest Generation, he was modest, reluctant to talk about his Navy years other than to say, "I was too young, so didn't see any action like the others."

More than 70 years after World War II, it is virtually incomprehensible to convey the pride - and profound anxiety - the Griffins and families like them across the country must have felt with their sons and brothers, fathers, cousins and uncles off to war. Red Hook was a close-knit farming community of some 3,400 people, of whom 650 lived in the Village of Tivoli. Not only did everyone know everyone else, they knew each other's dogs' names, too. And everyone kept a watchful eye on the children.

Large families were not unusual. There were 10 Griffins: the six servicemen, plus

oldest brother, Joe, 36, another brother, 34-year-old Charles, and sisters Elizabeth and Evelyn. Also, it wasn't out of the norm to have two or more family members serve at the same time.

But six? That was rare. Rarer still was to have so many serve - and return safely - to long, productive lives raising families and contributing to their communities in so many ways. Growing up in Red Hook in the 1950s, I particularly recall Daniel ("Danny") Griffin, who with his business partner, Jim Maher, owned and operated the Red Hook Drug Store for many years. Quiet, patient, with a friendly smile and twinkle in his eye, he was always helpful.

"Danny was in the Battle of the Bulge," Jerry told me, "machine-gunned with five bullets in his stomach." And of his brother, Jimmy, "he was stringing communications wire behind enemy lines to help the Army cross over one of the last intact bridges on the Rhine during the invasion of Germany."

Who knew?! Herewith, meet the Griffin brothers as they appeared in uniform and were described in the 1945 news article.



"Sgt. Churchill Griffin, 25, enlisted in the United States Marine Corps June 1942.

He received his basic training at Parris Island, N.C. and Jacksonville, Fla., went overseas in December, 1943 and returned to the States in November, 1944 after seeing action in the Battle of the Marianas and Saipan. He is now stationed at Eagle Mountain Lake, Texas. He is a graduate of Tivoli High School and was employed at the Albany City Hospital and in the shops of the New York Central system, West Albany, before enlisting."



"The youngest of the brothers, Vincent H., is a Seaman 2nd Class, now stationed at Norman, Okla. Aged 18, he left for service with the Navy in December of the past year, after graduation from Tivoli High School. He trained at the Naval Air Technical Training Center, Memphis, Tenn. and Norman, Okla., where he is stationed."

France and Germany and was wounded in Germany in December of the past year. Pfc. Griffin is now stationed at Lowell General Hospital, Fort Devens, Mass. A graduate of Tivoli High School, he was employed in a war plant in New Britain, Conn., before leaving for service."



"Pfc. James S. Griffin, 27, joined the Army of the United States (then one of the four branches of the Army) in October, 1942. He is a member of the 79th Division and trained in camps in Tennessee, California, Arizona and Kansas. He has seen action at Cherbourg and in Germany and Belgium. He attended Tivoli High School and was employed as a signalman with the New York Central system in Albany."



"Pfc. Francis W. Griffin, 22, enlisted in the Army January 1943 and received his basic training at Camp Claiborne, La. and the Columbus Supply Base, Columbus, Ohio, before going overseas in September, 1943. He is now serving in New Caledonia. He, too, worked for the bridge department of the New York Central after graduating from Tivoli High School."



"T/4 (Technician 4th Grade; equivalent to sergeant) Michael Griffin, 30, entered the Army December, 1943 and was assigned to the 65th Division. He trained at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and has seen action in Northern France and Germany. He is a graduate of Tivoli High School and received a scholarship from the school to attend Albany State Teachers College. He is a graduate of Albany State Teachers College and taught at Lake Lucerne High School for two years before coming to Red Hook Central School as commercial teacher previous to entering the service. His wife, Florence, is at present residing in Miami, Florida."



"Pfc. Daniel P. Griffin, 23, entered the Army March, 1943, and trained at Camp Croft, S.C., Fort Meade, Md., and Camp Rucker. He is a member of the 5th Division, 2nd Infantry. He saw action in Northern

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