



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Read Real Life Stories of Local Heroes Who Will Be Buried at the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO July 7, 2011

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SAMPSON VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

In a few short weeks, a lasting, permanent memorial honoring our Nation's veterans will be established on the site the former Sampson Naval and Air Force Base where over a million sailors and airmen trained in preparation for battle to defend America.

Saturday, July 30th will mark the official opening of the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The cemetery will be a final resting place for veterans who have sacrificed to keep our Nation free.

Heroes don't strive to become heroes. People are called to heroism, and the heroes are those that answer the call. Every one of the 60 veterans who will first be buried at Sampson answered that call, and all served with honor, dignity and valor. In the days leading up to the cemetery opening, I would like to share some of their personal narratives of courageous

service to our Nation. You can read these real life stories on my website, my Facebook page and the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery Facebook page.

The dedication ceremony will take place on Saturday, July 30th at 11:00 a.m. at the Sampson Veterans' Memorial Cemetery, just south of Sampson State Park along Route 96A in Romulus.

In anticipation of the opening of the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery, I present to you the real life stories of three local heroes who are to be laid to rest on this hallowed ground. Many more narratives of those who will be interned at the cemetery will follow in the days and weeks ahead:

James Dean Dockstader

November 27, 1934 to September 10, 2007.

Jim's remarkable career of service to our great Nation began on the very grounds where the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery is now located. Fifty-nine years ago, he enlisted in the United States Air Force and received his basic training at the Sampson Air Force Base. Jim travelled across our Nation during his time in the Air Force, moving from Texas to Mississippi to serve and protect. Upon completing his training in Radio Intercept Operations, he put his intellect and talent to work on a base in Anchorage, Alaska. Truly a man of great aptitude and skill, Jim was honorably discharged in 1958 after four years of loyal and noble service.

Jim used the knowledge and wisdom he gained from the US Air Force for the rest of his life. While working for various companies, including General Electric, General Dynamics, and Xerox, Jim demonstrated his knack for design, development, and management. After retiring, Jim devoted his time and energy to helping and honoring his fellow veterans.

In 1997, he joined the Sampson Air Force Veteran's Association. Within six years, Jim was elected President of the organization, and he became deeply involved with restoring and procuring displays, such as a T-33 and a Flight Simulator, for the Air Force Museum. One of the final projects Jim became involved with was the creation of this cemetery as a lasting, permanent memorial to our veterans at the site where he once trained, and where he will now be laid to rest. Jim played a tremendous role in the early stages of Sampson Veterans Cemetery, and we are all grateful to have known him both as a colleague and a friend.

A beloved father, husband, and friend, Jim passed away on September 10, 2007, at the age of 72. He is survived by his wife, Beatrice, his children, Jeanette and James and his granddaughter, Cierra Rose. He will be remembered by all who knew him as a man who placed the happiness and safety of others above his own, and who took great pride in his family, friends, and Nation.

James R. Steele

April 19, 1927 to January 20th, 2011.

Jim was only 18 years old when he joined the Army and was sent to Italy to help secure the Allied victory in Europe near the end of World War II.

Returning from his brave service defending our Nation overseas, Jim dedicated his life to protecting the safety of his home community as a lifelong member of the Romulus Fire Department. He joined the Fire Department at the age of 18, and remained an active fireman for 64 years, later serving as Fire Chief and Captain of the Romulus Fire Police. He also served in the Seneca Army Depot Fire Department, and was eventually appointed 1st Assistant Fire Chief for his devoted service protecting the munitions at the Depot during the height of the Cold War. He was named the Seneca County Fireman of the Year in 2004.

Jim was a community oriented man and a familiar face to many throughout Seneca County. In addition to being involved with numerous firefighters' organizations, he was also a former Special Deputy with the Seneca County Sheriff's Department, a member of the Waterloo and South Seneca Sportsmen's Clubs and was active in planning the annual Romulus Memorial Day Parade. During warm weather, Jim could often be found sitting in his chair in front of his home, waving to everyone who drove by.

He was also a dedicated family man and devoted husband to his wife of 53 years, Beverly Steele, who passed away several years ago and will be buried alongside him at the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery. He is survived by his daughter, Sandy Travis and his son, Robert Steele, as well as four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Donald C. Kidd

August 25, 1922 to March 22, 2011.

Donald C. Kidd was one of the many brave men who, in our Nation's darkest hour, was called to heroism and answered that call.

Upon his graduation from Waterloo High School, Don enlisted in the United States Army to serve in World War II. Don worked as a medical corpsman, putting his life in danger to save the lives of his friends and brothers in arms. Spending most of his time stationed in France, Don likely saw some of the most grisly battles of our Nation's recent history. After the war, Don returned to Waterloo to jumpstart a successful career with local grocery store chains. He was also a very active member of the First Presbyterian Church of Waterloo, teaching Sunday school and serving as the church sexton for nearly 20 years. Don willingly devoted much of his time and talents to the church and his community, and always went above and beyond to help those in need.

He is remembered by his wife of 64 years, Ina, his daughters, Donna and Carol, and his five grandchildren for his laidback personality and lighthearted sense of humor. Don found great joy in the simplest of life's moments, relaxing and spending time with his loving family.

On the battlefield and off, Don was entirely committed to putting others before himself. It is fitting that Don will be laid to rest in the same community that he knew and loved- close to his neighbors, friends, and family.

Dana L. West

June 17, 1910 – June 28, 2009

As a Navy veteran who served in World War II, and later a coach, educator and mentor for more than 30 years, Dana L. West's dedication to his Country and his community never went unnoticed.

Before he enlisted in the Navy, Dana had a distinguished academic and athletic career at Cortland State Normal School, where he was Captain of the football team two years in a row and president of his senior class. His athleticism and leadership would serve him well in the Navy.

Dana's time as a petty chief officer and trainer at the former Sampson Naval Base, now the site of the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery, had a unique significance in his life. Aside from being the start of his honorable service to our Nation, Dana's son Richard was born during the time he was stationed at Sampson. Richard West would go on to have an outstanding Navy career of his own, serving proudly in Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm and attaining the prestigious rank of Rear Admiral.

As world War II was raging, Dana was sent overseas to fight bravely in liberating the world from tyranny and oppression.

Returning from the war, Dana worked to receive his Master's degree from Syracuse University and went on to devote his life to educating others. For 36 years, he was a coach, teacher, mentor and later, principal to the students of the Port Byron School District.

Dana also served as commander of both the Port Byron and Cayuga County branches of the American Legion, and remained committed to preserving the legacy of the base where he once trained by becoming a member of the Sampson World War II Veterans. In addition, he chaired the Cayuga County United Way and the County's human services board.

Dana's loyalty and commitment to his community earned him great respect from all who knew him. In 1999, after Port Byron had constructed a new high school, the district sent out a survey about naming the school. The feedback from the community overwhelmingly supported naming the building Dana L. West High School.

Dana passed away at the age of 99 on June 28, 2009, surrounded by his immediate family, including Ruth, his wife of 55 years. He is also survived by his five children, 11 grandchildren and four great-grandsons. After his passing, the school which meant so much to him and now bears his name held a celebration of his life and many accomplishments. Now, only a short distance away, he will be laid to rest on the hallowed ground where he once proudly began his military service.

James Vincent Ellis, Jr.

August 13, 1932 to December 9, 2005

James Vincent Ellis, Jr., of Seneca Falls, achieved a degree of distinction unknown to most.

In 1954, after graduating from Niagara University with a Bachelor's Degree, James

enlisted in the United States Army, fully willing to sacrifice his own life to preserve our American freedoms.

For twenty years, James dedicated his life to serving and protecting the citizens of our great Nation, fighting in both the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam War. James was a highly decorated and respected serviceman, earning a total of seven medals, including a Bronze Star Medal and an Army Commendation Medal in recognition of his loyal service.

Because of his hard work, dedication, and exceptional leadership skills, James had a tremendously successful career in the military, eventually attaining the prestigious rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Though James's public reputation was that of a notable and highly respected military man, his family remembers him as simply James, Dad, or "Papa": a man with a kind smile and a big heart. His granddaughter, Morgan, has fond memories of her grandfather assembling her toys and presents every Christmas morning, surrounded by mounds of crumpled wrapping paper and plenty of good company.

James's life was anything but ordinary. From the hundreds of men he led during his service in the Army, to his many friends and family members, James made an enormous impact on countless individuals' lives. He will never be forgotten.

James Vincent Ellis, Jr., a devoted father, husband, and honored Korean and Vietnam War veteran, passed away on December 9th, 2005 at the age of 73. James is survived by his wife, Mary, his six children, thirteen grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

It is truly an honor to pay tribute to a man who made the most of life's abundant opportunities: Mr. James Vincent Ellis, Jr. Colonel. Father. Grandfather. Friend.

Charles "Scott" Sampson

February 10, 1939 to 2005

Charles "Scott" Sampson was a man of great intellect, integrity, and honor. A well-rounded and wise individual, Scott was also deeply involved in the community, and is considered by many as local legend and hero.

In 1963, while Scott was working at the Seneca Army Depot, he was drafted into the United States Army. While serving in the Army, he travelled the world to help maintain peace in areas throughout Europe and the Pacific. He rose to the rank of Sergeant E-5 while in Germany, and worked chiefly in radio relay and as a carrier operator. His talents and skill earned him the Good Conduct Medal. In 1965, Scott left active duty and enlisted in the United States Army Reserves, in which he served until 1969 when he was honorably discharged.

Scott returned to Seneca Army Depot and worked as the Education Director until his retirement in 1993. Always one to keep himself busy, he served as a United States Deputy Game Warden for 10 years while at the Depot, a position which, as an avid hunter and fisherman, gave him great satisfaction and fulfillment. He also worked as a State Hunter Safety Instructor for over 45 years.

Scott's legacy is perhaps best defined by his enormous contributions to numerous regional publications like *Field and Stream*, *New York Sportsman*, *Finger Lakes Sportsman*, and the *Finger Lakes Times*. A true scholar, Scott penned his own fishing guide, *Good Fishing in Western New York*.

Greatness seems to run in the Sampson family. Scott was believed to be related Rear Admiral William T. Sampson, the American patriot and hero of the Spanish-American War, for whom the Sampson Naval and Air Force Base and the cemetery where he will now be laid to rest are named. It is truly an honor to recognize his descendent, Scott Sampson, a man whose legacy, both familial and personal, is so deeply ingrained in our region.

Clinton C. "Sonny" Van Gelder

October 13, 1932 to January 22, 2011

Clinton "Sonny" Van Gelder was a dedicated American serviceman who represented his Country with distinction and honor. As a U.S. Air Force Veteran who trained at the Sampson Air Force Base, he will be laid to rest on the very ground where he trained 59 years ago.

Growing up in Geneva as World War II was raging overseas, Sonny learned about patriotism and sacrifice during one of the most difficult times in our country's history. With the start of the Korean War in 1950, the United States once again found itself in an armed conflict, fighting for global freedom and democracy.

Sonny soon heard the call, and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1952. He would be one of more than 250,000 airmen who would be trained at the Sampson Air Force Base. He would always remember his basic training at Sampson, and the base itself as a symbol of his service to our Nation.

Sonny would serve throughout the Korean conflict until 1956, when he was honorably discharged from Loring Air Force Base in Maine. After his discharge from the Air Force, Sonny remained a proud veteran and a life member of the American Legion. He also had a successful 31-year career at the Willard Psychiatric Center, and was a familiar face to students of the South Seneca Schools as a bus driver for the district.

Sonny passed away on January 22, 2010 at the age of 77. He is survived by his wife Eva Van Gelder; step-sons James and Jeffery Matthys; stepdaughters Deborah Watkins, Charyl Whitcomb and Penny Williamson; sister, Norma Litzenberger; eight step-grandchildren; nine step-great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

Gerald H. Rickard

"Integrity First; Service Before Self; Excellence in All We Do." These are the core values of the United States Air Force. First Class Airman Gerald H. Rickard lived by these virtues. Serving and defending our nation for five years during the Korean Conflict, Gerald took great pride and satisfaction in knowing he was giving back to the Nation he

loved and cherished. After his service, he stayed in the Air Force Reserves until 1960. Jerry was born and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota, and moved to New York State in order to serve in the United States Air Force. He trained at Sampson Air Force Base, and later served at Sampson Hospital and as a member of the flight crew at the Base. After his term of service, Jerry chose to stay in the Seneca County region rather than returning to his home in Minnesota. Sampson, the land on which he trained and served, made a lasting impact on Jerry's life.

Jerry contributed enormously to Ontario County and surrounding communities. He worked as an Ontario County Highway foreman up until his retirement in 1991. Education was something that meant a lot to Jerry—he was instrumental in setting up a scholarship for Ontario County BOCES students for college. This fund, named the “Gerald H. Rickard Memorial Scholarship”, is still awarded today, 11 years after its formation.

Jerry was a man who loved to give back, not only to our Nation, but to the community he came to love and treasure. It is an honor to show gratitude and respect for Gerald H. Rickard, a man whose selflessness and virtue serves as an inspiration to us all.

Leonardo A. Visco

December 4, 1920 to June 18, 2011, Age 90

To serve our Nation during a time of war is to put your life on the line for a greater cause. A man or woman who joins the military understands the dangers. They understand the obstacles and the tremendous strain, but they go forth anyway, knowing the risk is worthwhile. To serve in a war is to value our Nation's safety and freedoms more than your own.

Leonardo Visco proved his dedication to our Nation in not one, but two times of war, serving in the United States Army during both World War II and the Korean Conflict. Time and time again, Leo repeatedly risked his life to defend and uphold our freedoms as American citizens.

Leo was a highly decorated soldier. Among the medals he was awarded are the Bronze Arrowhead and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, signifying his dedicated service to our Nation during the Korean Conflict. Leo also received four Bronze Star Medals throughout the span of his military career. A rank above the Purple Heart, these medals are awarded to men who have demonstrated incredible bravery and heroism while engaged in combat against enemy forces. That Leo earned four of these prestigious medals in his lifetime is truly a testament to his heroism and courage.

Words cannot express the amount of debt owed to the brave men and women who sacrifice their lives each and every day for our safety. Leonardo A. Visco was a true American patriot and hero who risked everything, not once, but twice. We honor him today for his tremendous acts of bravery and loyalty to our Nation.

Leroy Harrison Ace

On June 6th, 1944, a few miles off the coast of France, Leroy Harrison Ace and his fellow soldiers waited aboard a giant Naval vessel. They were only moments from fighting in one of the defining battles of World War II.

The D-Day invasion of Normandy was the largest air, land, sea and military operation the world has ever known. The landing included over 5,000 ships, 11,000 airplanes, and over 150,000 service men. When it was over, the Allied Forces had suffered nearly 10,000 casualties; more than 4,000 were dead. This tremendous show of courage and sacrifice represents one of the most significant moments in our Nation's history. As mankind faced one of its darkest hours, the men who fought on D-Day turned the tide of World War II and helped preserve liberty for future generations across the globe.

Leroy Harrison Ace was one of those men. When Leroy disembarked from a port in Maryland in 1943, only a short time after he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, he did not know what was in store for him. He was sent to the beaches of Normandy, serving in what was one of the war's most important battles.

When the war ended, Leroy was officially discharged from service and returned home to Seneca County. Leroy is remembered for being a very easy-going man, who had a kind smile and a big heart. Leroy had two great loves in his life: music and his church. He would often play duets on the violin with his brother, Robert. Occasionally, Robert's wife, Ruth, would join them on piano, and together they would play for the church on Sundays. It is a true privilege to have the opportunity to recognize and honor a man who bravely fought in one of the most momentous battles of all time. Without heroes like Leroy Harrison Ace, our great Nation would not be what it is today.

Robert Douglas Page

May 6, 1948 to December 2, 2007

Sixty-three years ago, a young man named Robert Douglas Page enlisted in the United States Army, looking to give back to his Country and make a positive impact, both on his life and the lives of his fellow community members and American citizens. For two years, Robert served our Nation with pride, dignity, and honor, to support American forces in the Vietnam War.

In the two years that he served, Robert achieved many impressive accomplishments. He was awarded numerous medals and badges, including the Combat Infantryman's Badge and the Parachutist Badge. He also attained the rank of Specialist while in service, and served briefly in Fort Bragg, North Carolina before being transferred to St. Louis, Missouri.

Robert was one of the first members of the Vietnam Veterans Group of the Canandaigua VA. He encouraged many of his friends and fellow veterans to join the organization and receive its many benefits. Robert was also an avid fisherman and hunter, and greatly enjoyed the natural beauty of our region's fields, lakes, and forests.

Of all of the places Robert travelled, trained, and served, the hallowed ground of Sampson Air Force Base held a special place in his heart. While we cannot thank heroes like Robert Page enough for their sacrifices, this sacred ground will forever stand as a tribute to their service to our Nation.

Alfonso E. Zona

On July 21st, 1944, the United States launched an invasion to liberate the island Guam, which had been captured by the Empire of Japan shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. After nearly a month of fighting, U.S. forces regained control of the island. The capture of Guam would prove pivotal in the Pacific Campaign during World War II, as the island became a major Naval and Air base used to launch operations on other islands, such as the Philippines and Taiwan. Even today, the Battle of Guam is still recognized, as residents of the island celebrate Liberation Day every July 21st.

Alfonso Zona was one of many Navy servicemen who was stationed in Guam after answering the call of duty during World War II. He served on the island as a Seaman Second Class working with heavy machinery. Alfonso helped build bases, roads, airstrips and hospitals, and played a critical role in rebuilding the infrastructure of the island after its recapture by the United States.

After his service, Alfonso became a truck driver for Zonalite Corp, retiring at the age of 62. Later, he decided to go back to work for the Town of Waterloo up until his death at the age of 80. He is remembered as an extremely hard working, passionate and caring individual by all who knew him.

Alfonso remained a proud Navy veteran and was an active member of the American Legion and the VFW. It is fitting that this deeply patriotic serviceman began and ended his life in Waterloo, New York, the Nationally recognized birthplace of Memorial Day. Now, only a short distance away, he will be laid to rest at the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery, a lasting memorial honoring his contributions to his Country, family and community.

Donald M. Ash

Members of the United States Navy live by a certain code. “Non sibi sed patriae”, or “Not self but service”, has long been the motto for the brave men and women who serve in the US Navy. This saying exemplifies each and every soldier’s willingness to sacrifice their lives to ensure our American freedoms are entirely protected.

Donald Ash was a World War II Navy veteran, who served our Nation with dignity and pride. He lived by the Navy’s motto, risking his own life and safety to defend our American values. Upon Donald’s discharge, he began working at Carrier Corp. of Syracuse. He stayed with the company until 1976, at which point he retired.

Donald remained involved in his community and his fellow veterans. He was appointed as Commander of the Hastings-Paris VFW Post #8823. He was also a member of the American Legion of Central Square, and the Parish American Legion. His time in the

Navy and service during World War II was one of Donald's proudest achievements, and he took great satisfaction in knowing he was able to give back to the Nation he cherished so much.

A soldier's sacrifice must never be forgotten. Through his service, Donald Ash certainly made a tremendous impact on our great Nation. Our community will forever remember his life, accomplishments, and heroism.

David L. "Stoney" Darling

November 6, 1949 to November 20, 2009, Age 60

David L. Darling, known as "Stoney" to many of his friends, was a kind, outgoing, and down-to-earth man. People loved to be in Stoney's company. He was known for his sharp sense of humor—he could light up a room with his smile and always knew how to make people laugh.

In addition to his generous spirit, Stoney showed great bravery and heroism throughout his life.

At the United States was entering the Vietnam War, Stoney enlisted in the United States Marine Corps alongside one of his close friends. During the war, Stoney saw a great deal of combat and fought in several battles. Despite this great danger, he was always sure to write home to his concerned mother, Estella, to update her on his experiences and assure her of his safety. In the midst of one battle, Stoney was wounded and received a debilitating injury. He was honorably discharged from the US Marines and awarded a Purple Heart for his courageous sacrifice.

After the war, Stoney returned home to the community that he loved. He worked for several years at Goulds Pumps, and also at the Seneca Army Depot. Stoney kept himself busy, and in his spare time, raised cows on his private farm.

Stoney's legacy is that of a generous man who was always willing to put others before himself. David L. "Stoney" Darling will forever be remembered for his great demonstrations of heroism, but also for his big heart.

Ira "Bud" Williamson Jr.

May 24, 1927 to April 5, 2011

Always quick to help anyone in need, Ira "Bud" Williamson was a true American Hero who put others before himself and exemplified personal sacrifice for his country and fellow servicemen.

After growing up on his family farm in Ovid, New York, Bud entered into the US Army in 1949 and remained in the Reserves after his discharge. With the start of the Korean Conflict in 1950, Bud was soon recalled to active duty and was sent across the globe to aid in the fight for democracy overseas. He served as an ambulance driver with the 343 General Hospital Unit in Japan, where he transported wounded soldiers from the local airstrip to the 343 General Hospital. In recognition of the life-saving services he provided

for his fellow servicemen and civilians during the Korean War, he was awarded the Korean Service Medal.

Those who served with Bud remember a deeply humble man who formed lasting friendships wherever he went. A devoted veteran, Bud remained close with many of his fellow servicemen and was a life member of the Ovid VFW Post 6200 and Ovid American Legion Post #463.

After his honorable discharge from the service, Bud married Joyce Whitney and raised six children in Ovid. While employed at the Willard Psychiatric Center, Bud also worked as a school bus driver for South Seneca Central Schools, and delivered Milk for Tarr's Dairy.

Bud passed away on April 5, 2011 at the age of 83. He is survived by his wife Joyce; and their children Lola Caskey, Jim Williamson, Robin Kane, Stephen Wayne, Rebecca Anne Williamson and Tim Williamson; their 12 grandchildren; and 9 great grand children.

It is a tremendous honor to pay tribute to a man who was truly humble and caring man who was loved so much by those around him: Ira "Bud" Williamson. Husband. Father.

Veteran. Friend.

Alfonso F. "Al" Twentyfive

June 1, 1924 to December 15, 2010

On a tiny mountainous island in the Pacific Ocean, one of World War II's most brutal and pivotal battles erupted after two arduous months of air bombings and stealth attacks. For 35 days throughout February and March of 1945, over 70,000 U.S. troops launched a massive invasion of the Island of Iwo Jima, a critical stronghold for the Empire of Japan. When it was over, nearly 7,000 were killed and more than 19,000 were wounded capturing the island. This tremendous show of courage and sacrifice represents one of the most defining moments in World War II and set the tone for the rest of the war, restoring hope in to the heart of each American citizen.

One cannot fathom the tremendous amount of strength and bravery it took those heroic men to take those first fateful steps onto the beaches of Iwo Jima back on February 19, 1945.

Alfonso F. Twentyfive of Wolcott, New York, was one of those men. On that historic day, Al was one of the many U.S. Marines who risked his life to turn the tide of the war in one of mankind's darkest hours. Words cannot express the amount of gratitude and appreciation owed to Alfonso F. Twentyfive and his fellow soldiers.

After the war, Al returned home to Wolcott, where he raised two daughters with his loving wife of 58 years, Barbara, while working as an operating engineer. He continued to give back to his community as a member of the Wolcott Elks Lodge.

The personal trials and tribulations of each veteran who fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima may never be fully known. However, we have the distinct privilege of recognizing and appreciating one of the many men who risked everything for our freedoms. It is with great respect and admiration that we recognize and memorialize the life of a true National hero, Corporal Alfonso F. Twentyfive.

Eska “Eskie” Shaff

June 26, 1932 to June 10, 2010

It is often said that a true hero is not defined by his actions, but his intentions. When a man enlists into the military, he does not know what may become of him. He does not know if he will see his family again, or his friends, or his hometown. There are so many dangers involved that most men do not take that risk, no matter how badly their country needs them. Few people are willing to risk their lives for a greater good.

Eska Shaff, known as “Eskie” to his friends and family, was one of the men who was willing to take that risk. In 1952, as our Nation was becoming more and more entangled in the Korean Conflict, Eskie packed his things, said goodbye to his mother and father, and left to serve in the United States Army. After completing his basic training and serving on a base in Breckenridge, Kentucky, he was flown to Alaska, where he departed on a ship for Korea.

Eskie often spoke fondly of his service, and was honored to have an opportunity to protect and preserve our American freedoms. In June of 2000, the 50th anniversary of the start of the conflict, he was awarded the Korean War Service Medal. In May of 2011, after Eskie had passed away, his wife Charlotte received a certificate signed by the President of the United States honoring his memory and service to our Nation.

People who knew Eskie knew him as a man who could juggle multiple titles and tasks at once. He was truly a jack-of-all-trades, fixing cars and refurbishing the family home when he wasn’t working as a therapy aide at Willard Psychiatric Center. Eskie also loved spending time with his wife and three children. The family took many vacations together, traveling across the U.S. and Canada to visit relatives or go camping. After Eskie retired, he and Charlotte continued to travel, seeing as much of the Country as they could.

Everywhere he went, Eskie was generous and helpful, always willing to lend a hand.

In addition to all of these roles, Eskie was also a great American patriot. His willingness to put our Nation’s needs before his own exemplifies heroism. A man is not a hero for what he does, but for what he would do. When our country needed him, Eska Shaff was there.

Manley Edward House

April 19, 1924 to February 15, 1981

“Service above self.” This is the code the Manley House lived by. Each and every day, he was sure to make the most of his life and devoted himself to bettering both our Nation and community.

The House family has a history of service in our community. For over 200 years, the Houses have lived in Central New York and contributed a legacy of service and involvement to our region. It is believed that a distant relative even served our Nation as far back as the French and Indian War.

Corporal Manley Edward House served in the United States Merchant Marines in both World War II and the Korean Conflict. Manley placed his life in danger not for one war,

but two, all to protect and preserve our American freedoms. Many of his medals and awards have been lost to time. It is certain, however, that Manley made great use of the skills he learned in the military after his service.

After serving overseas with great honor and pride, Manley became very involved with his community. Utilizing his talents, he was instrumental in building schools, campuses, roads, libraries, and many other buildings throughout Central New York. His projects include Cornell University, Ithaca College, Wells College, Route 31, Route 224, and Route 17 in Corning. Nearly everyone in our region has probably used a building or road that Manley House helped create.

Manley will be laid to rest at the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery alongside his wife Esca House, who also contributed immensely to our region. She was the driving force behind the Spencer-Van Etten Central School system merger, as well as the creation of a new Junior/Senior High School building.

Both Manley and Esca committed themselves to turning Central New York into the wonderful place to live that we know today. We are all truly fortunate to have had the House family as neighbors for so many years. Their impact on our lives will never be forgotten.

William Frederick Lowery, Jr.

March 17, 1937 to December 22, 2009

In 1958, just as our Nation entered the conflict that would escalate into the Vietnam War, William Frederick Lowery, Jr. enlisted in the United States Air Force, willingly sacrificing life as he knew it to protect and serve the American people.

While in the Air Force, William served in a number of different positions to support American efforts in Vietnam. He travelled throughout the country, serving in California for a several years as an Administrative Supervisor and Vocational Advisor.

William was later deployed to Wiesbaden, Germany, where he attained the rank of Staff Sergeant, overseeing several men and ensuring all operations ran smoothly and efficiently. For the men stationed in Germany during the Cold War, the threat of a Soviet attack loomed large. The preparedness and bravery of men like William were crucial in keeping our country safe and secure during this difficult time. In 1970, William was honorably discharged after over 11 years of faithful and diligent service to our Nation.

On May 16, 1958, at the age of 19, William Frederick Lowery, Jr. made a choice. A choice to leave behind his friends and family. A choice to put the safety of our Nation and the lives of others above his own. When William enlisted, he did not know where he would go, or what he would do, or what would happen to him. In many ways, a man is not a hero for what he knows or does, but for what he is willing to risk for a greater good. A hero overcomes his own personal apprehensions to preserve ideals and values larger than himself.

Today, we honor the life of William Frederick Lowery, Jr., a true American hero.