

Veterans Day 2021

HSV *life*

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World War II advocate, producer and actor Tom Hanks greets World War II veterans and their families to a National WW2 Museum event.



Clara Nicolosi

Broker / Owner RE/MAX of HSV - CWO2 (BOSN) USCG, ret

"I am from the small fishing Village of Mayport, Florida and I was in and around the shrimping community in many facets growing up. A beach rat of sorts. I joined the U.S. Coast Guard and attended basic training upon graduation from high school. My enlisted specialty was Boatswain's Mate - the true seamanship rating for the Coast Guard. I served aboard Small

Boat Stations, Aids to Navigation Teams, Buoy Tenders and a Construction Tender. I spent the majority of my time in the Coast Guard taking care of the lights and buoys on the water... and Lighthouses too! While up for a promotion to both Senior Chief & Warrant Officer - I decided to pursue the officer ranks as a Warrant Officer. Retiring from the CG after 22 years of service, my husband Michael and I decided to call Hot Springs Village, Arkansas - home!"



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Clara Nicolosi,
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“Nose art” on the WW II B-17 Flying Fortress named Sentimental Journey. That’s Betty Grable. Her back is toward the camera because at the time of the photo, rumor has it, she was pregnant.

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ON THE COVER: Hot Springs Village Veterans Memorial located on DeSoto Blvd. All photos taken by Hot Springs Village Voice correspondent Jeff Meek unless otherwise noted.

What do we owe our veterans for their service?

By JEFF MEEK
Voice correspondent

As we celebrate Veterans Day later this week I think of the hundreds of veterans I interviewed over the years. Many of you read those stories in my veteran column and are well aware of the sacrifices made. These men and women and thousands of others went through a lot. So what in return does our country owe its veterans? James Wright's excellent book, "Those Who Have Borne the Battle," goes into far more detail than I can here, but with the help of that book I want to take you through the ups and downs of veteran treatment throughout our nation's history.

Responses to the question have varied greatly over the years. During Revolutionary War times the Continental Congress agreed there was a need to provide support for what they called "invalids," and also to widows of officers. How to pay for that was left up to the states, which, because that involved 13 different entities, made for an uneven and unreliable system.

As for healthy, uninjured Revolutionary War veterans, there was nothing. The feeling back then was that their reward for service was their being able to live in a new, free nation. Military service during this era was looked at as an obligation – they owed their service when called upon and that no real payment was necessary. The position of Congress at that time was that patriots should not expect special treatment.

Then years later those feelings began to change. Those Revolutionary War vets, now aged, needed help and by the early 1800's political parties felt the need to do something, and not just for officers, but for all who served. As noted in Wright's book, in 1835 Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke to the matter at the bicentennial of Concord saying, among other things, "To you (the veterans) belongs a better badge than stars and ribbons. This prospering country is your ornament and this expanding nation is multiplying your praise with millions of tongues." Wright notes that a feeling was now creeping across the country known as "heroic memory." Monuments and cemeteries began to appear, honoring veterans from the Revolutionary War



Together again.

and the War of 1812. The first true military cemetery came about in Kentucky in 1847.

Some states gave veterans land grants, pensions were expanded to all those who served for 9 months or more during the Revolution and were "in reduced circumstances." Under the 1818 Pension Act, 25,000 veterans filed claims, far more than the government expected. Then in 1832 the Congress extended coverage to all surviving veterans who had served 6 months. In 1836, coverage was extended to widows and with that, the idea of a grateful nation was in place.

In 1871, War of 1812 vets became eligible and later so did veterans from the 1846 Mexican War. In 1902 Congress authorized pensions for survivors of Indian Wars fought before 1858. A national unity of sorts was in full swing. America had developed a desire to help all who served, but then division set upon our country with the start of the Civil War which tore the nation apart.

In July 1862, Congress passed legislation to create what would become Arlington National Cemetery on what was once Robert E. Lee's plantation along the Potomac River.

In Gettysburg, Penn., on Nov. 19, 1863, President Lincoln spoke at the dedication of the Civil War cemetery there

saying, "We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this."

Then in 1868 came Decoration Day, or as we now call it, Memorial Day, a day set aside to honor the "heroic dead" and "resolve to guard their graves with sacred vigilance" so that future generations would know of the price paid. By the way, here in the south Memorial Day was resisted because it was felt it was a Northern celebration. That later changed in the mid-1880s.

Lincoln in his second inaugural address on March 4, 1865, reaffirmed the nation's commitment to veterans, "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

Benefit packages continued to improve and in 1890 President Benjamin Harrison signed a pension bill. "By 1905, 80 percent of living Union vets were receiving federal pensions," writes James Wright and notes the figure of 20% in the south because of reliance on State action.

In 1919, following WW I, President Woodrow Wilson declared Nov. 11 as a day of national remembrance and a new organization was formed called the American Legion. Their purpose was to support veterans and families. In 1938, it became an official holiday. In 1921, Congress authorized the re-internment of an unknown serviceman at a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery and that same year created the federal Veterans Bureau, later changed to the Veterans Administration in 1930. In 1929, Congress agreed to appropriate money for Gold Star Mothers to visit their son's graves in France.

But then the tide of help to veterans took a step backwards during the Coolidge and Hoover administrations and was epitomized in Hoover's statement, "The nation owes no more to the able-bodied veteran than to the able-bodied citizen." However, in 1924 a "Bonus Bill" passed despite a Coolidge veto attempt. It said bonus payments would be made to WW I vets in 1945.

But during the depth of the depression many veterans and their supporters sought payment earlier than 1945. Thus in 1932, vets marched on Washington and became known as the "Bonus Army." Violence broke out and Hoover ordered them physically removed. Anyone know who was told to lead the effort? Wright tells us that Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur, along with General George Patton, "used tanks and infantry with tear gas and bayonets to expel the veterans."

When FDR took office he reduced veteran benefits and said, "No person, because they wear a uniform, must therefore be placed in a special class of beneficiaries." In 1936, he vetoed the bill to provide WW I veteran bonuses, but Congress passed the bill over his veto and by the end of that year 3 million WW I vets received their bonus.

Then came WW II, draft laws and 409,000 dead Americans, but a home front united in the war effort like never before or since. To pay for that war income taxes rose to "provide 13.6% of the revenue in 1940....to 40.7% by the end of the war," Wright says, as taxes rose and deductions disappeared. In 1943, a withholding system was approved. In 1939, less than 4 million Americans paid any

income tax. By 1945, that number rose to 42 million.

On June 22, FDR signed the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944," better known as the GI (Government Issue) Bill of Rights. It provided for medical support, up to 52 weeks of unemployment coverage, and "an interest-free loan program for purchase of homes, farms or businesses....and a generous plan to support education or training for veterans," notes Wright.

Then came the Korean War in June 1950 and another 37,000 dead Americans. Taxes rose again and in 1952 another readjustment act passed, but it restricted somewhat the eligibility requirements. And this war was different – we did not win – there were no throngs of people welcoming home the troops and even some VFW Posts refused membership to some because they were not a veteran of a "war."

Then came Vietnam, a war that turned political and that resulted in another 58,000 dead. When these veterans came home they were unjustifiably treated badly. Some were spit upon, some called baby killers and many felt betrayed by the country they swore to defend. There were no readjustment acts, no welcoming home ceremonies, just protests and ill feelings. I feel that if we learned anything from the Vietnam War it was that you don't take out the dislike of the war on the people who fight it. Today's wars are not popular, yet we continually praise our returning men and women in uniform, as we should, in thanks for risking their future for those of us comfortably back here at home.

All this leads up our more recent wars. Today, thankfully, most people highly respect our troops with ceremonies, wonderful heart-wrenching homecomings and several organizations have formed to help them readjust, like the Wounded Warrior Project.

But at the same time I personally ask myself, is it enough? How connected are we to our brave warriors? Ask yourself, how has the current decades of war affected you personally? I'll bet not much, unless you have a loved one in the fight. Food is plentiful, gasoline is readily available and there are no new taxes to pay for the war. We can get shoes, sugar, coffee, tires, whenever we want. There's no sacrifice on our part.

But that's my point as I close. We are disconnected with today's warriors. The wars entail nothing on our part, we are not invested. As 23 year Army veteran Andrew Bacevich puts it in his book, "Breach of Trust," "They fight, as we watch." He poses ways of fixing that, but I doubt they'd be very popular, but I'll also bet they'd be very effective. What if the draft were again put in place? What if our taxes were raised 15% to pay for our wars? How would that go over with the public? My guess is we'd again see protests. But it would get us connected. We would now be with them, making a contribution, sharing in the sacrifice, and I'll bet much more engaged with Washington when talk of warring in some other country comes up.

My point? In my opinion, America can better serve our veterans if we get involved, in some way, in any way really. The Walter Reed Hospital scandal of a few years ago and the Veterans Administration scandal over year-long waits for doctor appointments for our veterans is an embarrassment to our nation. We must do better. They are there for us, and we must be there for them.

Surviving Pearl Harbor

J.W. Childs was aboard U.S.S. West Virginia when attack began



J.W. Childs

By JEFF MEEK
Voice correspondent

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called it “a date which will live in infamy.”

Sunday Dec. 7, 1941 the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor with carrier-based aircraft. The event marked America's official entry into World War II. At Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, over 2,400 Americans were killed, 1,178 wounded, 18 ships sunk or badly damaged and 347 airplanes destroyed or damaged. It was a rude awakening for what was about to be a long and bitter fight.

J.W. Childs was onboard the battleship USS West Virginia at the time of the aerial attack. Childs described the attack and later surviving the sinking of a second ship he was assigned to during occupation efforts in the Aleutian Islands.

Childs grew up in Texas and in June 1941, at age 16, got his parents to sign the necessary paperwork for him to join the Navy. He wanted to go to the Naval Academy.

After boot camp, he skipped leave and reported to the USS West Virginia in Pearl Harbor.

He was to begin schooling on Dec. 8, 1941. As you might expect, school was cancelled.

Childs was assigned to a switchboard-like room on the ship. As the attack began, many men thought it was a drill. It didn't take long to realize this was the real thing – they were under attack by Japanese aircraft. Childs reported to his station and had been there only a short time when the ship was struck and fuel oil started pouring in through



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both past and present, thank you for
your service to this country.
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of you a happy, healthy and safe
Veterans Day**

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vents of the room in which he was working.

The men were unable to cover the vents and the fuel continued to fill the room. "Five of us were standing on a ladder hoping to get out. The fuel oil got up to our noses and about that time somebody opened the hatch," said Childs.

He went topside and saw attacking planes and fire all around. Childs shed much of his fuel-soaked clothing and ran along the fiery deck. Once he reached the armor belt of the huge battleship, he jumped off and into the fiery water surrounding the West Virginia. Childs swam to nearby Ford Island. He had no shoes on and cut himself as he crawled up onto the island. Believe it or not, those cuts were his only injury during the entire "day of infamy."

Soon he volunteered for duty aboard the destroyer USS Worden. The Worden patrolled the area for several days and then joined a fleet of cruisers. They were sent to Wake Island as part of an unsuccessful relief effort.

The ship returned to Hawaii for more patrol duty and in February 1942, Childs and the crew headed for New Caledonia for escort duty. They participated in several invasions, shelling their targets relentlessly. "You could not imagine anyone being alive on the island," said Childs.

During the fighting, Childs worked in ICC – the Inter Communications Center – which coordinated all communications. He also worked as a gyro compass technician.

As time went on and after several battles the ship was sent back to the U.S. for refitting.

Their next assignment was to support the occupation of Amchitka in the Aleutian Islands. Amchitka was closer to Russia than Anchorage, Alaska, Childs said of their location. Near the island, the ship dropped off 13 Alaskan scouts on a brutally cold night. The scouts were to help find a Japanese radio station somewhere nearby.

After dropping the scouts and attempting to pull back, the ship struck a huge rock. At daylight a ship tried to pull them off, but instead, the ship broke in two and the crew abandoned ship. Childs jumped off into the icy waters but as he did, his lifebelt broke and he struggled to stay afloat. When help arrived he needed their assistance to get into the vessel. "We were like frozen fish," he remembered.

After a trip back to Seattle, Childs was assigned to the USS Trathen and headed back to the south Pacific to participate in the shelling at Eniwetok and Kwajalein. Then it was back to the U.S. where Childs' job was shore patrol.



The USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

This time he was assigned to his fourth and final ship – the USS Bland. The Bland was a troop transport vessel headed for Guam where it joined the fleet being prepared for the invasion of Japan. Childs was now in charge of the ICC room and the generation switchboard.

The fleet was at Ulithi when Childs was told to report to officers' training school as part of the V-12 program. He made his way back to the U.S. and was in Farragut, Idaho when word came of the Japanese surrender. Childs was eventually discharged in San Francisco and headed home for Texas. He then went to school on the GI Bill, majoring in Business Administration.

This Navy veteran spent his civilian life with several oil companies. He retired and moved to the Village in 1973. In 1983, his wife Joann died and he moved to Hot Springs, Arkansas. Then in 2006, he returned to the Village and remarried.

As this fascinating oral history concluded, Childs told me that he has thought a lot about Pearl Harbor and America's entry into the war back in 1941. Childs said he was not a big fan of FDR, nor was his family. He's concluded that FDR's decision to enter the war, in the way we did, was either very courageous or most fool-hardy.

You see Childs is of the opinion that FDR provoked the Japanese into attacking Pearl Harbor. He is not alone in his thinking. There are several books on the market that back this controversial theory. He believes FDR realized the American people would not go to war unless they were attacked first. "I think it was one of the bravest, hardest decisions that anyone could have ever made," concluded Childs.



John Christmas

Villager only doing his job on D-Day

John Christmas survives Allied
invasion of Europe

By JEFF MEEK
Voice correspondent

It is still one of the major events in world history – the Allied invasion of Europe on the beaches of Normandy, France on June 6, 1944. Known as D-Day, the landings were the largest amphibious undertaking in history up until that point. John Christmas, a member of the 1st Infantry Division, was in the third attack wave at bloody Omaha Beach as the liberation of Europe began.

He entered the Army in July, 1943, at Camp Grant, Illinois. From there, it was off to Camp Walters, Texas for basic training. John was put into the infantry and learned all about machine guns and 81mm mortars.

In January 1944, he went overseas as an infantry replacement with no idea where he might end up. After landing in Glasgow, Scotland, the men reported to a depot in Wales for more training. It was here that he was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, 26th Infantry Regiment.



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We salute the American veterans and active-duty military whose courage and dedication have preserved our freedom and our way of life. Thank you, veterans, for your sacrifice, selflessness, and bravery.

Happy Veteran's Day

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In New Orleans, The National World War II Museum's "Victory Belles" meet Normandy veteran John Christmas.

Then, on D-Day, he boarded a ship very early that morning and set off for Normandy. Late that morning he became part of the invasion force at Omaha Beach.

As Christmas and the others on his craft approached the beach they came under intense machine gun, artillery and mortar fire. Destroyed equipment and the dead were everywhere. The going was especially tough because he had to drag two 81mm shells behind him as he made his way ashore and across the beach.

Christmas was one of the lucky ones who made it across that zone of death and jumped into a small depression. It was then that he realized that he had not yet loaded his M-1 Garand rifle. Christmas glanced back and saw a beach crowded with more advancing troops. The Germans "couldn't help but hit something", he said.

He finally advanced to the objective of his unit which was one of the draws at Omaha Beach. Around nightfall they advanced on a small French village and found it had already been secured by Allied troops.

Early the next morning "B" Company headed for Coutances, France where they were to stop any German counter-attack made towards the Allied beachheads. Those first days were so intense that it was the third day into the fighting before Christmas discovered he still had saltwater in his boots and had been nicked by an enemy shot.

Eventually the unit made it to Caumont, France where they dug in and held the area for 32 days. They had successfully cut the road between St. Lo and Caumont so the Allies could begin the buildup of men and machines.

He witnessed the carpet bombing of St. Lo, as wave after wave of bombers reduced the city to rubble. Shortly thereafter, his unit moved up to the St. Lo area. "The ground was so pulverized you could not dig a foxhole," Christmas said. "It was like sand".

At about this time, Christmas became ill from some bad

water and was hospitalized. Later he rejoined his unit near Paris where the unit began their advance into Germany. It was during the fighting in the Hurtgen Forest that Christmas was injured again.

The forest was so thick that it was difficult fighting. Their objective was a valley about one mile away. Once the troops reached the valley, they dug in and held while more troops moved up.

A few days later a nearby explosion threw dirt and debris into his eyes and he was taken to Belgium for treatment. For three days his eyes were covered and Christmas found himself in a bed for the first time in six months.

The doctor told him that he was so weak that he would give him a choice. He could rejoin his unit after recovery or become part of a security detail at the medical depot in Paris. Seeing as he was one of only two survivors from his original Company, Christmas decided it might be wise to join the security detail of the 1st General Hospital near Orly Field. It was there, while on duty, he first heard of the German surrender. The war in Europe was over. Christmas had survived.

He continued his security duties at the hospital until being sent home in December of 1945. He was later discharged on January 17, 1946 and returned to his family in Illinois.

He spent his civilian life as a die maker for National Supply Company for over 40 years. He married Marilyn Grieb on June 14, 1952. Together they had two daughters, Judy and Carol. The couple moved to the Village in 1988.

Several years ago when I talked with Christmas about these experiences, he wanted to be sure this story was dedicated to those who did not return from the war. That request is an example of the selflessness of this man and his generation. As they would tell you; they were only doing their job.



Hot Springs Village World War II veterans signal Victory in World War II.

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Ernie Smith: Just part of the team

Invading Iwo Jima
took the lives
of one-third of
Marines killed in
WW II

By JEFF MEEK
Voice correspondent

Iwo Jima, Mt. Suribachi, the famous flag raising; 75 years later, these words still represent the brutality of war in the Pacific during World war II and the resolve of our Armed Forces to defeat Japan.

Iwo Jima claimed the lives of one-third of all Marines killed in World War II. There were more Medal of Honor winners at Iwo than any other battle. It included a flag-raising that would be caught on film and become the most reproduced war photo in history.

America needed this island and its airfields to help with the bombing of Japan. It would also provide an emergency landing field for over 2,000 crippled B-29 bombers that could not return to their original base. Villager Ernie Smith was one of the few who can say he endured the entire 36 day campaign at Iwo Jima and came away without a scratch.

Although born in Monroe, Louisiana in 1922, Smith grew up in Somerset, Kentucky. He later attended Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. Shortly thereafter, he enlisted in the Navy and was soon placed in a medical division. In San Diego, California, he worked at a naval hospital and became qualified as an Operating Room Technician.

Next, he was assigned to the Fifth Marine Division as a Navy Corpsman, more commonly known as a medic. The



Ernie Smith

Division was sent off to Hawaii. "You feel like you were going into the unknown. You don't know what you're going to do", Smith told me.

The Division made a stop at Guam for a mock invasion and then it was off to fight the Japanese at Iwo Jima.

The island was bombed for weeks before the February 19, 1945 invasion began. Some thought that the fighting would be brief and that no one could have survived all that lengthy, heavy bombardment. No one could have imagined the ferocity of the fight to come.

On the eve of the battle, Smith and 70,000 other Marines got up at 4:00 a.m. and had a good breakfast. Then the men boarded their landing craft and began circling around as the invasion force waves formed up.

He was part of Wave 13. Smith thought, "How unlucky can you be to get Wave 13". As it turned out, there was a lull in the fighting when his group hit the beach.

Going across the black sand beach was difficult. "Like walking through marbles", is how he remembers it. He had a rifle in one hand and in the other a rope attached to a bag filled with medical supplies. Throughout this push inland, our men still could not see the enemy fighters. Un-



beknownst to our forces, the Japanese had spent months tunneling and building underground fortifications and networks.

Smith remembers seeing a fellow Marine who was working as a flamethrower. He was running and his back was on fire. He recalls thinking, "The poor guy, he's gone".

On February 23rd, D+4, the famous flag-raising took place and Smith saw it flying atop Mt. Suribachi. Iwo Jima veterans clearly remember seeing that flag. It was an emotional moment. Ships blew their horns. Men fired their rifles. Cheers went up. An Iwo veteran I interviewed several years ago got a tear in his eye when he recalled the event to me. Upon seeing it, Smith thought, "We must have the island. We won't be here very long". It was wishful thinking and many weeks of fierce combat still lay ahead.

One day, while just standing around with a few other men, their "mailman" arrived from back at the beach area with letters for the front line men. Suddenly, a sniper fired and the letter carrier was dead. "I thought, nobody is safe on this island. You never know when it's going to be you or somebody else", Smith recalled.

During the nights, the Japanese would try to infiltrate the American lines to steal food and water. The enemy was

running out of both. All water had to be shipped in and the Japanese knew they were surrounded and no supplies of any kind would be coming to them.

The island itself was very warm. In fact, the men would bury their rations and canteens in the sand and the next morning they would have warm rations and coffee. It was a small nicety in a world filled with death.

In the final push to secure the island, Smith was at the front. He prayed he would not hear a call for help from an injured Marine. No call came and he was relieved the next morning.

As the hostilities were ending, Smith decided to visit the Fifth Marine Division Cemetery that had been put together there on Iwo. "It was a nostalgic feeling. Thank God I'm alive and going home," he remembered.

Back in Hawaii, he heard that FDR had died and wondered what would be next. Soon they were in training for the invasion of Japan, but the atomic bombs were dropped and the duty became occupation instead of invasion.

Smith's outfit was one of the first in Japan. He was on a march to his assigned Naval Base when, on the way, he heard a little Japanese girl singing "Jesus Loves Me". He could also see the Japanese people peek from behind their windows to see the American soldiers march by. The men were under strict orders not to fire a shot without permission, or they would be court-martialed.

A few months later Smith was sent home. Readers may be interested in finding a copy of the 1984 book, "Surgeon on Iwo: Up Front With the 27th Marines," by James S. Velder. Ernie Smith is mentioned a few times in that book.

He finished college and graduated from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kentucky. He served in churches in Mississippi, Kentucky, and Arkansas. He was the first installed pastor of the Presbyterian Kirk in the Pines Church here in the Village from 1982 until retirement in 1987. He and his wife Betty Jean had two children, David and Carol.

Ernie Smith describes his service in World War II as being part of a team. I know that is true, but the way he says it, with such humility, was really touching.

Veterans Day is approaching as this magazine comes out to you. It's a time to remember all the members of our Armed Forces, for their courage and dedication to duty. As the reader can see from Ernie Smith's story, many of these men saw hell first hand and survived. Remember them on November 11 each year.

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Bob Smith

By **JEFF MEEK**
Voice Coorespondent

The U.S. Army's 37th Infantry Division was activated on October 15, 1940 and arrived in the Solomon Islands in May 1942. The division saw an incredible 592 days of combat.

Fighting along with the 37th was Hot Springs Village resident Bob Smith who served in a reconnaissance unit in the Solomon's and Philippines. How he survived it all is beyond explanation.

On Dec. 7, 1941, he was playing soccer on a cold and rainy day. "We were interrupted by a car blowing its horn," Smith said as he began his incredible story. It was then he learned of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. Later that month Smith was drafted into the Army and was soon assigned to the 37th Division.

After completing his basic training he was ordered to San Francisco to wait for a troopship to the South Pacific. The ship sailed off and eventually arrived in Auckland, New Zealand. From there Smith went with a convoy to the Fiji Islands.

In November 1942, he was ordered to Guadalcanal and went in at Lunga Point near Henderson Field. Although the island was considered secure, each night the Japanese bombed the area as Smith and his men patrolled the island.

From Guadalcanal the unit went to New Georgia. During the invasion he went in on an LST into a lagoon as six Japanese fighters staffed them. Six were killed. Smith was unharmed.

At New Georgia his recon patrol was sent out to find the enemy. Smith said the patrols were scary and it was kill or be killed. Heavy rains turned the terrain into mud. Smith said it rained every day and the men stayed wet all night. As if that wasn't bad enough, land crabs, by the 1,000s crawled among them. Many, including Smith, got jungle rot and had to have their boots cut off and their feet soaked in a purple solution.



Proud to be part of the fighting 37th

**Bob Smith spent World War II
island hopping across the Pacific**

The Japanese would manage to infiltrate the U.S. lines almost every night. Barbed wire and rope with cans attached were set up to tip off any enemy advance. Smith said wild pigs would also rattle the cans and many were shot being mistaken for Japanese troops.

Two men would pair up in a foxhole, one on watch, the other asleep, as scorpions and other bugs crawled over them.

Smith eventually ended up in the hospital and received a visit from Eleanor Roosevelt. She stopped by his cot, spoke with him, then gave him an orange and a kiss on the cheek.

After the island was secured the 37th returned to Guadalcanal for additional training.

From Guadalcanal Smith went in on the invasion of Bougainville as the Navy shells passed overhead and U.S. planes bombed and

strafed the island.

Bougainville's jungle was even thicker than Guadalcanal. "You could see maybe 20 yards and that's why I used a sawed-off shotgun and a Thompson submachine gun," said this decorated warrior.

Smith took recon patrols out seeking enemy positions and movements. One patrol involved locating a Japanese patrol working along a river. He was informed the enemy was approaching, spread out his men and lie in wait.

He wanted to capture the Japanese to get information. However as one of the Japanese was relieving himself he spotted one of Smith's men. "We got all of them except one," said Smith of the firefight that erupted.

After completing patrols, Smith and his men would return to a camp. One time the camp was almost overrun by a large Japanese attack which was repulsed.

Following the battle, he was told to reconnoiter the area. The dead lie all around and the smell was quite evident. Smith said, "You could tell the difference between dead Japanese and a dead American by the smell. I think it was their diet and our diet."

Body parts were everywhere and as Smith walked through the area his feet would tangle in them. "It took me about 15 years to wash that memory out of my thoughts and dreams. The odor lingered on for years," Smith added.

That night, back at their camp, he was awoken around 3 a.m. and told to go out on a patrol. He got three squads together, went out and got them into position.

Smith was soon told one of the squads was in trouble. Several were wounded and needed evacuation. With the help of a half-track Smith got his men out. While doing so he was shot in the chest. He later woke up in a hospital. A month later he was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart. It was U.S. Sixth Army Lt. Gen. Walter Kreuger that pinned the medals on his chest.

Smith's next campaign was Luzon in the Philippines. As they approached the area kamikazes attacked daily. A nearby cruiser was hit as Smith made his way down the net of his ship into an awaiting Higgins boat. While the Navy ships blazed away, Smith and the others hit the beach and found no resistance.

He took a squad down a nearby road. The Japanese let them by then struck as the main body of troops came by. By nightfall they reached Tarlac. Later in Manila, they came upon the civilian interment camp Santo Tomas.

The 37th then set up a headquarters at a race track, moved out and engaged the enemy. Smith's men set up a road block and fired on the enemy as they came through the area.

On another occasion Smith's unit came upon some Japanese holed up in a shelter. They threw in hand grenades, but the enemy would not come out. Then they cut a hole in the ceiling to pour in gasoline. Just then a Japanese officer displayed a white flag. The officer later

presented his sword to Smith.

By now Smith had enough points to come home. In mid-1945, he boarded a Liberty Ship which proceeded through a terrible storm as it made its way to Seattle. On the way, he got six months back pay. From Seattle, Smith went to Fort Dix, N.J. for discharge.

During our interview Smith also talked about General Douglas MacArthur. "I liked him," Smith said and told of the times he saw the General. "I ran into him on the Philippine Islands. We were trying to get across a river. He sent me down river and said, 'Son, you get your patrol across.' I saw him a couple of times in Manila too," Smith recalled.

Smith saw a lot of combat and talked about putting those memories behind him. "It was damn tough. It took me at least 20 years to really clean up my mind so I could go to bed and have a good night's sleep. There were a lot of things I couldn't eat. The smell would come back to me; the smell of death."

Then he added, "I want to tell you something else. I could almost tell who was going to get wounded, who I was going to lose. It would come to me that something is going to happen (to them)."

In civilian life Smith worked in hotel and country club management near Chicago. He retired in 1988 and, with his wife Betty, moved to the Village that same year. The couple has two children: Edward and Susan.



To the men, women and families in our community and around the country who have sacrificed to protect our freedom, we thank you greatly for your service.

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Villager part of elite infantry unit

Merrill Clark fought in the mountains of Italy

By JEFF MEEK
Voice Coorespondent

It was an elite light infantry unit specializing in fighting in harsh conditions and in tough terrain. It developed with the assistance of the National Alpine Club and National Ski Patrol and it took part in rugged combat in mountainous areas of Italy in 1945. Hot Springs Village resident Merrill Clark was a part of the 10th Mountain Division, 85th Regiment, 'K' Company and was wounded in action as he participated in the spring offensive in April 1945.

Clark, born in Chicago, was hunting with his father when he heard of the attack on our fleet at Pearl Harbor. At school the next day the talk was how America would quickly defeat the Japanese. As we know now that was not to be the case.

In June 1943, Clark was inducted into the service in Chicago. With many others he reported to Camp Grant in Illinois and from there it was off to Camp Chaffee in Arkansas for his basic training.

In October, Clark boarded a train having no idea where he was going. The train finally stopped somewhere in the Rocky Moun-

tains during a snowstorm. He then learned that he was going to be a part of the 10th Mountain. He was assigned to a rifle company as part of a weapons platoon.

Above 9,000 feet sat Camp Hale. It was here that the men learned their craft.

It was cold, snowy and difficult training. The men seldom used tents, ate 'C' rations and slept in double down-filled sleeping bags. The air was so thin that most matches would not even light when struck.

The riflemen wore skis and the others with heavier equipment wore snowshoes. They learned to carry their gear on a pack frame made of canvas and wood. The Army tried toboggans to haul things around, but they and the pack frames proved impractical. It was obvious to Clark that the officers and men were learning on the fly as the Division became more and more prepared for the duty ahead.

The organization of the Division changed and Clark ended up as a platoon runner due to a 50 percent reduction in machine gun squads. His job was to stick close to the platoon leader and run messages from him to wherever he was told. He carried an M-1 carbine, learned to ski, rock climb and rappel. The training was really tough. Some men suffered from frostbite, others from snow blindness and all were miserably cold.



Merrill Clark

In June 1944, they were all sent to Camp Swift in Texas. At this camp, heavy weapons units were added and more combat training followed. The Division's next stop was Camp Patrick Henry in Virginia for embarkation. The Division now totaled 15,000 men and was ready to take on the German forces.

On Jan. 4, 1945, they headed for Italy. Nine days later they landed in Naples. The harbor was full of sunken ships. It became clear they were in a war zone. "It was an overwhelming experience. You were heading into the unknown," Clark remembers.

On LCIs they were taken, at night, up the Italian coast to a staging area at Leghorn. They still had no idea where they would end up. They just followed orders and did what they were told.

Soon trucks arrived and took them off to the front. On the way he saw the leaning tower in Pisa. Clark remembers seeing many needy young children. The troops would eat breakfast with them as their parents were no where to be found.

Arriving at the front he was put on outpost duty near a small village not far from the German lines. Their job was to watch for any enemy movement. They next moved to an inactive front where patrols were sent out, but no enemy contact was made.

Their next move brought them to Mount Belvedere and his first taste of combat. It was the key to the German line of defense in that area. Two previous Allied assaults by other units had been driven back. The German artillery fire had been devastating.

On Feb. 20, 1945, at 0230, the entire division began their attack. In the dark of night Clark and the others moved up the mountain. German artillery was coming in overhead as casualties were being brought down from the fighting up ahead. Small arms fire was all around them.

Then a mine field was located and they were in it. Clark thought "The next step I take may be my last. I don't want to take another step." The group successfully made it though and up to the summit. Once there they dug in.

Suddenly there was an explosion and a body slid down from above and into Clark's position where he was entrenched. "Then I knew this was the real thing," said Clark.

They next moved to Mount Gorgolesco. The German artillery had been heavy there and troops had suffered many casualties. "The bodies were everywhere," Clark remembers. That campaign later came to a close, the areas were secured and the units were pulled back for a break. Better food and showers highlighted the rest period.

In April, the Allies began the big "Spring Offensive" in this area of Italy. It was scheduled for April 12, but was delayed due to the death of President Roosevelt.

On April 14, 1945, his unit moved out. 'K' company was to take Hill 913. During the assault the men were under artillery and small arms fire. Clark was told to go back down the hill and get the commander's radio operator. He did so without incident.

Next, as the unit prepared to move up, Clark was told to stay in place and then bring up the rear.

Troops began moving past him when suddenly mortar rounds struck close by. He dove to the ground, but could tell he was hit. The man next to him took the brunt of the shrapnel and was killed. Clark and four others were wounded. It was also on this same day that another 10th Mountain man, future Senator Bob Dole, was also wounded on this same hill.

Clark waited for several hours before he was evacuated to the rear for treatment. A sequence of hospital stays and surgery followed. During one of those stays Clark learned the Germans had surrendered. He was eventually taken to Winter General Hospital in Kansas to fully recover. He received his medical discharge on Oct. 15, 1945.

Clark used the GI Bill to go to school, worked a few different jobs, and developed a love of learning and teaching. He became a teacher of biology and eventually earned a Masters Degree at Northwestern University.

Clark was a part of one of our Armed Forces most elite units and he was wounded in action as a result of his service. Thinking of him and the many others who died and were injured in the war, one sometimes thinks of the words of Winston Churchill when he talked about the RAF defending England in the air war against Germany. Churchill said, "Never was so much owed by so many to so few."

**We will remember
you always...**

As another Veterans Day approaches we want you Hot Springs Village veterans to know that although we no longer live in the Village, a part of us will always be with you. We were very fortunate to come to know so many of you during the 14 years we lived there. I am sincerely grateful to the nearly 400 of you that had a willingness to share your story with me, the Hot Springs Village Voice and the Veterans History Project in Washington, D.C. Jeanne and I have the utmost respect for the courage you displayed during your time in uniform and will keep you in our hearts forever. God Bless you with health and happiness in the coming years.

~Jeff & Jeanne Meek

MacDonald earns Bronze Star for Valor

Saw combat in Korea - 'The Forgotten War'

By JEFF MEEK
Voice Coorespondent

It is sometimes called "the forgotten war." Korea, in the early 1950's, became America's next battleground. The communist backed forces of North Korea crossed the 38th parallel into South Korea on June 25, 1950. In only two days the capital of Seoul fell. America rushed in troops to help the South Koreans just in time. In another week or two the entire peninsula would have been taken over by the enemy.

Early actions by American and other United Nations forces were not encouraging. In time however, those forces gained a foothold and pushed the enemy back. Eventually, the United Kingdom, Canada, Turkey, Greece, Australia, Belgium, and several other countries joined the U.N. coalition.

Once the Chinese Army joined with North Korea in the fight, the U.N. forces had their hands full. It was a scary few years. Would we use nuclear weapons if needed? Would America lose a war for the first time? In the end, an armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. Sixty-eight years later, technically speaking, the war has not concluded. It claimed the lives of more than 36,000 American and 58,000 South Korean forces. And to date, nothing has been officially settled.

Hot Springs Villager Malcolm MacDonald earned the Bronze Star for Valor while fighting there. The fact that he survived to share his story with me years ago is hard to believe. The book, *The Coldest Winter*, by David Halberstam, mentions MacDonald in several places. Some say it's the best book ever written on the Korean War.

MacDonald entered West Point as a cadet on July 1, 1943. World War II was raging and cadets were now in a three year graduation mode. The men took 30 credit hours per semester in courses like math, science and engineering. "I held on by my fingernails," MacDonald said. He graduated with a degree in Military Science and Engineering in June 1946 as a 2nd Lieutenant for the infantry. He was sent to Infantry Officer School at Fort Benning, Ga. One year later he was with the 7th Infantry Division in Korea. He became the commanding officer for the 31st Infantry Regiment, E Company, in Chuncheon, South Korea, 50 miles from the capital of Seoul. His unit would go out on patrols along the 38th parallel. Russian troops were on the northern side, U.S. on the southern side. The terrain was tough, mountainous and 3,000 feet above sea level. In winter, the average temperature was 34 degrees below zero.

In 1949, MacDonald was assigned to the 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, Wash.

He was now a platoon leader, participating in infantry training with things such as patrols, weaponry, and survival training. After approximately a year of this, he became an Intelligence Officer, known as an S-2, for the 2nd Infantry Division, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion, as a 1st Lieutenant.

Then, on June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded

South Korea. General Douglas MacArthur ordered the 2nd Division into the fight. MacDonald flew to Japan as a part of an advance team. The rest of the 23,000 man division arrived by sea and landed at Pusan.

Communist forces were within 60 miles of over-running the entire peninsula, including the port at Pusan. The "Pusan Perimeter" as it was known, was hanging on by a thread.

At the end of August, U.S. and South Korean troops engaged the enemy in the first major battle of the war at the Naktong River. The line was held.

After General MacArthur's successful landings at Inchon, well behind enemy lines, a sustained U.S. counterattack began pushing back the communist forces over 200 miles.

China had warned the U.S. if they crossed the 38th parallel, Chinese forces would join the fight.

On Sept 9, 1950, U.N. forces crossed anyway. General MacArthur felt the fighting would be over by Thanksgiving. On October 9, the North Korean capital of Pyongyang fell and the Chinese were already on their way.

Headquarters was now reporting Chinese forces moving into Korea along the border at the Yalu River. In time, we learned the Chinese had three Army Groups, over one million men, coming into the fight.

The enemy made their first contact with U.S. forces at Unsan, North Korea. Defensive lines were set up to repel the attack. Orders arrived instructing our commanders to push them back to the Yalu.

MacDonald's 2nd Infantry Division was in the attack and got as far as Kujang-Dong when word was received there was a break in the 9th Infantry Regiment's line. He and others went to inspect the area and came upon troops in full retreat. Small arms fire was all around them. They got the line re-stabilized and went on to another area of the 23rd Regiment. They, too, were under attack by the Chinese.

MacDonald took cover and noticed a man had been hit. He crawled to the man and saw he'd been shot through both legs. MacDonald patched him up and saw to it he was evacuated to the rear. For these actions, he was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor on Nov. 27, 1950.

Chinese attacks eventually pushed U.S. forces out of North Korea and into the South until they came to Kunu-ri. "The communists were hot on our rear," MacDonald said. In fact, they were so close their division command post was attacked. The Chinese were driven back. The next morning, MacDonald and others inspected the area. He found a Lieutenant lying there shot through the head by the Chinese.

Shortly thereafter, Chinese snipers shot the enlisted man standing shoulder to shoulder with MacDonald.

The entire outfit headed farther south on Nov. 30, 1950. Almost immediately they came under Chinese small arms and mortar fire. The Chinese had surrounded them the night before. They had set up an ambush with 3,000 men along each side of the road. MacDonald was in a jeep when the attack began. He and the other men got into a ditch and he returned fire with his M-1 carbine. About 20 minutes later the firing stopped. The men got back in their

vehicles and continued down the road.

Once again, the Chinese opened up on them. This on again, off again tactic occurred three or four more times. Casualties were heavy and the retreat was now held up by several burning vehicles at the head of the column.

MacDonald and others spent an hour clearing the way while under constant enemy fire.

MacDonald was walking down the road when he came upon a medical Lieutenant working on the badly injured foot of a South Korean soldier. Together they amputated the foot, stopped the bleeding and saved his life.

Farther down the road, he ran into Major Barberis of the 9th Infantry, 2nd Battalion. He was crying and said to MacDonald, "I've lost my entire battalion." It was an example of their losses. A battalion consists of 850 men.

Continuing on, MacDonald eventually reached a pass in the mountains. He joined others holed up there and returned fire on the enemy. At 4:00p.m., a call went out for volunteers to drive out any vehicles still working properly. MacDonald got a jeep, loaded it with wounded and other men and drove off.

About five miles down the road they had to cross a stream which was under heavy Chinese machine gun fire. MacDonald got shot through a pants pocket, but was unhurt.

Fortunately for the men, a B-26 came through the area on a napalm run and destroyed the enemy position.

Eventually they made it to relative safety at Suncheon. They unloaded the wounded at a 1st Cavalry medical facility, took the able-bodied to their units and then MacDonald reported in at division headquarters.

The division continued the retreat to Seoul for re-supply. The 8th Army, 2nd Infantry Division had been mauled. In July they started with 23,000 troops. They were now down to 4,000.

In the ensuing months, U.S. forces moved up and down the peninsula several times until May 1951. It was then, at the "No Name Line" the Chinese Army was finally stopped and repulsed.

The 2nd Infantry Division received a Presidential Unit Citation for their gallant actions.

In early July 1951, MacDonald rotated back to the U.S. and Camp Roberts, CA, but his military career doesn't end there.

In 1953, he witnessed an atomic explosion at Camp Desert Rock in Nevada. Their only instructions were to hug the front side of the trench, wear the dark goggles, when you get to the trucks on the other side, get swept off with a broom and when you get back to camp, you must take a shower. In a trench, 2,000 yards away from ground zero, he watched as a 20 kiloton bomb detonated from a 200 foot tall tower. Immediately he and other witnesses



Malcolm MacDonald

were order to get out of the trench and walk toward ground zero. He walked right past the concrete footings which held the tower. About a mile on the other side of the site, he and the others were loaded into trucks and taken back to their camp.

In 1963 and 1965, MacDonald was an advisor in Vietnam. Heavy fighting had not yet started and North Vietnamese forces were not yet engaged. However, even at this early stage, he sensed trouble. "Even in 1963 it was obvious we had dark days ahead of us," he told me.

The Ho Chi Min trail was being built and improved about the time MacDonald was in country. In June 1966, he retired from the military as a staff officer with the Army Chief of Staff office at the Pentagon.

Asked how he feels about Korea being the forgotten war, MacDonald said, "It's because it's between World War II and Vietnam."

He moved to the Village in 1983. With wife Patty, they have three children, Kathryn, Nancy and Paul.

★★

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Don Van Scotter treated wounded at the front during Korean War

By JEFF MEEK
Voice Coorespondent

Medical care of the wounded during the Korean War was much improved over that of World War II. Statistics show 28 percent of all WW II wounded died from their wounds. In Korean that number dropped to 22 percent.

Much of this can be attributed to the use of peripheral vascular surgery and the use of helicopters and other aircraft in transporting the wounded to facilities equipped to handle the wounds. In Jan. 1951, the U.S. Army began their own air ambulance service. With one of those medical units was former Hot Springs Village resident Don Van Scotter.

Van Scotter grew up in Wisconsin. In school he played basketball, baseball and was a kicker on the football team. He also remembers a time back in those days when youngsters collected money to aid the war effort during WW II. Van Scotter said they ended up with enough money to purchase two jeeps for use by U.S. military services.

After high school graduation he went to work for a year, then decided to attend college in Milwaukee. A year later he enrolled briefly in pharmacy school at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. But he ran out of money so he decided to join the Army in Jan. 1951, which was approximately seven months after the Korean War began.

He was sent to Fort McCoy in Wisconsin where it was 45 degrees below zero when he and others arrived. "I was put in an artillery group from Iowa. That's who gave me my basic training," said Van Scotter. While in boot camp he also attended a radio school and became radio operator for the commanding officer at McCoy. Still later, he was transferred to a medical battalion in summer 1951.

During that time he also applied for Officer Candidate School (OCS), passed the tests, but was put to work at the battalion's headquarters.

Thereafter he got word he'd been accepted into OCS and for Van Scotter that meant a trip to Fort Riley in Kansas. This lead to him being placed with the Medical Service Corps as a Second Lieutenant in July 1952.

Van Scotter then took leave, went home and on July 20,



Don Van Scotter

married Jean, his high school sweetheart. The couple then traveled to Fort Sam Houston, Texas where he received more medical training at a medical field service school. That training included learning how to manage a medical unit which entailed field work, deskwork and office work, all of which Van Scotter found interesting.

In Oct. 1952 he reported to Camp Cooke in California where he joined the 44th Medical Battalion, 44th Infantry Division. A few weeks later the base closed and the 44th was transferred to Fort Lewis in Washington State. It was soon thereafter he received his orders. Van Scotter was being sent to Korea.

On a ship he went from San Francisco to Okinawa to Yokohama, Japan. After filling out some paperwork he boarded another ship and sailed off to Inchon Harbor in Korea.

Van Scotter talked about Inchon as he saw it in late 1952. "That was quite an experience. There wasn't much left of the city. It had been retaken and retaken and retaken a number of times so it was devastated," he said.

Van Scotter was sent to the 121st Evaluation Hospital for a short time, then ordered to the 25th Infantry Division up north near the frontlines. He got a ride to the base in

a jeep and was assigned to Headquarters Company as an operations officer.

During the first few weeks the unit was sent out to replace the First Marine Division on the frontline. Van Scotter was given a hand drawn map and told to lead a convoy up to the front. In the dark, Van Scotter began the journey using only blackout lights on the vehicles. On the way the convoy came to a fork in the road and Van Scotter wasn't sure where they were on the map. He then noticed some lights up ahead so he went off to see what was there. He found an Australian unit, showed them the map he

had been given and asked if the Aussies could help. No sir, they had no idea where on the map they were now located. So, around 1 a.m., Van Scotter choose a fork in the road and got the convey moving again. About 4 a.m. they reached the correct location. It had been a slow, uncertain trip for all.

After arrival his medical unit began setting up their facilities. "They were expecting casualties by noon, which we did receive," Van Scotter said. Their facility was close enough to the front the men could hear the exchange of gunfire.

Van Scotter was put in charge of all the enlisted men working in the unit. He added that they were very much like a MASH unit, but did not have nurses like the television show "MASH." "We took care of the wounded we could handle," said Van Scotter. If his unit wasn't able to treat as necessary, the men would be taken by helicopter or ambulance to the 121st Hospital.

"We saw a lot of casualties and we also got cases of hemorrhagic fever," Van Scotter said. In an effort to find out why the men were getting the fever a sanitation unit was brought in. Some thought it may be coming from the rats running around the area that were carrying an organism that was spreading the disease. Van Scotter said he only saw two rats while there, but after the sanitation unit set out traps and poison he was amazed at what was learned. "There were thousands of them," Van Scotter said. Just 24 hours after arriving, the sanitation unit left with a truckload of dead rats.

Van Scotter stayed with this unit until the armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. He took an opportunity to travel with a friend to Panmunjom where the armistice had just been signed. While there they got to see the building where the peace talks had taken place and, maybe even more important, got to have a nice steak dinner while there. This day was also special in another way for Van Scotter. It was the day he was promoted to First Lieutenant.

Although the fighting stopped, the casualties kept coming in. Once the wounded were stabilized they were moved to hospitals in Japan. Van Scotter said there were times when the outfit was short on doctors, so he'd help as needed giving shots, administering anesthesia and whatever else he could do to be helpful. All this work heightened his interest in medicine.



Don Van Scotter stands by an ambulance hit by enemy rounds. (Photo courtesy of Don Van Scotter)

In late 1953, he took a 19 day ride on a ship back to San Francisco, then traveled by train to Fort Sheridan, Ill. where he was discharged on Dec. 10, 1953. He then joined a Reserve unit and was eventually made a Captain in the U.S. Army Dental Corps, Reserves.

As a civilian Van Scotter went into dental medicine, first at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, then at Marquette University for his D.D.S. degree. In June 1958, he worked for the U.S. Public Health Services Hospital in Boston, Mass. He then did a residency in periodontics at Wood Veteran Administration Center in Milwaukee.

In July 1959 he attended graduate school at Marquette where he earned a M.S. degree in periodontics. Van Scotter also taught dentistry for many years and retired in 1988. In 1993 he and wife Jean moved to the Village from Elkhorn, Wisc. They have four children: Donald, Peggy, Linda and Laura.

Reflecting back on his Army days Van Scotter said he was surprised that so many people back home had no idea what was going on in Korea. "They had no idea how serious it was in Korea," Van Scotter said. Of his experiences he added, "It was the greatest experience I ever had. Just going through leadership training, the command training and the workload I had, which aged me a little bit, I learned so much. Everything I've done in life, in some way or another, had some bearing on (serving) in the military."

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From Incheon to the Yalu

David McClure survives Chinese, frostbite in Korea

By JEFF MEEK
Voice Correspondent

Organized in October 1917 on the World War I battlefields of France, the U.S. Army's Second Infantry Division fought in six campaigns in World War I and another six in World War II. In July 1950 the division sailed for Korea to help defend against the onslaught of Communist forces invading the South.

Fighting at Kunu-ri, Hongchon, the Hwachon Reservoir, and elsewhere, the division earned a U.S. Presidential Unit Citation and two Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citations.

Eighteen members of the division earned the Congressional Medal of Honor as the division suffered approximately 25,000 casualties including 7,094 killed.

Part of the Second Infantry Division included former Hot Springs Village resident David McClure who fought with the division's 9th Regiment, "E" Company.

After his 1947 high school graduation McClure decided to enlist in the Army. His basic training took place at Fort Jackson, S.C. McClure loved playing in the band in school and continued his playing by attending Army Band School. He was then assigned to the 62nd Army Band at Fort Bliss, Texas. A year later he was discharged at the end of his 18 month enlistment.

In January 1949, he re-enlisted and was put with an Army-Navy band in Hot Springs, Ark. About a year later McClure requested and was chosen to play with a band in Japan.

In June 1950, he was in Seattle awaiting the trip to Japan when the Korean War broke out. He and 5,000 others were sent to Fort Lewis to prepare for duty in Korea. Instead of being a band member, McClure was now a rifleman with the Army's Second Infantry Division and headed for war.

On July 17, 1950, he sailed for Korea aboard the USNS M.M. Patrick. Their destination was Pusan. On the Patrick the men were taught marksmanship and other infantry-related skills. On July 31 the men arrived at Pusan. McClure said the first night was spent at a rat infested wharf. The

next morning a train took them inland. For six days the division continued to arrive and amass their forces.

Trucks then took them to the Nakdong River along the frontlines. "The first thing we saw after we got off the trucks and were lined up on each side of the road was a big Army truck loaded with dead soldiers," said McClure.

He and the others were placed in the nearby mountains overlooking the river. The next day they attacked an enemy position along a ridge, took the ridge and held it.

His company was chosen to cross the river, but instead was put in reserve. The company was then reinforced with additional medics, mortars and machine guns.

On September 1, they returned to the river. McClure was made a squad leader and told to be ready to cross the next morning.

That night a huge enemy bombardment occurred along the river and the crossing was called off. Platoons were split up. McClure's group went to the right. The men that went to the left found themselves surrounded the next morning.

His unit moved on and joined up with other elements of the division. From the ridgeline he and others went out on patrols to keep the area secure.

On September 15, Operation Chromite, the surprise amphibious invasion of Incheon on Korea's west coast, took place. Designed by Army General Douglas MacArthur it ranks as one of the most daring military moves in history. The attack took place in the rear of the advancing enemy forces and caused them to immediately pull back.

This allowed the Second to move forward. Within 10 days resistance stopped in McClure's area along the Nakdong.

The division moved forward through Seoul and eventually to the North Korean capital. Along the way there was little resistance. McClure and others thought the war may soon be over. It was not to be.

In mid October Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) secretly began to infiltrate large units into North

Korea. By the end of the month several hundred thousand CCF fighters crossed the Yalu River and confronted the Eighth U.S. Army.

U.S. forces were overrun and pulled back. In November, McClure's unit was hit by the Chinese. The morning of the attack saw heavy losses in his unit. They pulled back several miles and re-grouped.

The weather conditions were brutally cold. Temperatures dropped to far below zero and McClure, and many others, got a case of frostbite. On November 28, he was taken to an aid station and then driven nine hours south to a hospital near Kunu-ri. All along the way the road was filled with retreating U.S. forces.

McClure described the frostbite. "All of the flesh on the bottom of the soles of my feet was totally off. I could see



David McClure



An MP stands watch near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). (Photo courtesy of Dennis Horvath)

raw meat. I could not walk. We had not been able to change our socks or clean our feet for several days as we had moved," said McClure.

In December, in Japan, he received treatment, medication and rehabilitation. In February 1951, he was sent back to Korea and rejoined his unit.

A week later Operation Killer was launched. The operation was an Allied counteroffensive to drive CCF and the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) out of the south. Each day McClure and the other men attacked the enemy and patrolled.

In April, McClure was chosen to join the X Corps Honor Guard. He moved back to Corps headquarters in South Korea. For several months he served on guard duty at the headquarters.

In June he was notified he'd be going home and arrived in Seattle on July 4, 1951.

McClure was then placed with the First Armored Division band and served with them for about a year. In June 1952 he was discharged.

Looking back on his combat experiences in Korea McClure remembers the devastating losses. He said of the 182 men in his company only 39 returned without a scratch. "For some reason I survived. I know I was very fortunate to survive," said McClure.

He is also haunted by an experience in which a close friend was wounded three times. "All three times I was within a hundred yards of him. Why him and not me," McClure wondered.

As a civilian McClure earned a law degree in 1959. He worked as a real estate manager for Mobile Corporation obtaining service station locations.

He retired in 1986 and with his wife Nancy moved to the Village from Fairfax, Va. in 1989. He had two children: David and Laura.

VETERANS DAY

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Hot Springs Village **Voice**

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Bill Baker

In the skies of Vietnam

Bill Baker flies more than 270 missions during war

By JEFF MEEK
Voice Correspondent

The North American F-100 Super Sabre jet fighter was used by the U.S. Air Force from 1954 to 1971, then with the Air National Guard for another eight years. It could reach speeds of 850 miles per hour and fly as high as 50,000 feet. Later it was adapted into being used as a fighter-bomber and was used extensively as air support during the Vietnam War.

The F-111 Aardvark was a medium range tactical strike aircraft filling many USAF roles. The 111 could fly up to 1,165 miles an hour and climb nearly 26,000 feet per minute.

Piloting these aircraft over the skies of Vietnam was Hot Springs Village resident Bill Baker.

Baker grew up in Louisiana and with his brother loved watching airplanes coming in and out of Barksdale AFB, dreaming of the day he could become a pilot.

At Louisiana Tech he entered the ROTC program, got a pilot's license and entered the USAF in March 1969 for pilot training at Reese AFB, Texas. Baker graduated at the top of the class and was able to pick the aircraft of his choice. "That was the fighter F-100," said Baker.

His next stop was to Luke AFB, for gunnery training. "That's when you really start putting together your aviation skills of flying the airplane and putting it in place as a weapon and you have to be able to bring the weapon to bear against another airplane or ground target," said Baker.

At the school he shot the jet's 20mm cannon, practiced air to ground shooting, releasing weapons, learned dive angles and correct air speeds.

In Dec. 1969 he went to Bien Hoa Air Base near Saigon, South Vietnam and was put with the 531st Tactical Fighter Squadron. The missions were mostly as support for Army actions on the ground. "The Army would call in air support when they would run into a tactical situation they didn't have artillery for and we would use weapons off the airplane and the 20mm to support them on the ground," Baker said and noted it took about 15 minutes from receiving an air support call to "wheels in the well," as Baker put it.

Asked how many total missions he flew, Baker said approximately 270 during his first Vietnam tour of duty. "You could fly up to three (missions) per day," he said.

With each landing the pilots would walk around the airplane looking for battle damage.

In April 1970, Baker would have more than just damage, he would be shot down.

He was flying over the III Corps of Vietnam when hit by .50 caliber rounds which took out his hydraulics. The plane was going down so Baker had to eject.

Of that experience he said, "Back in those days we called it the bang seat. In later aircraft we ended up with a rocket seat. The ejection seat on the F-100 was literally sitting on a 105 Howitzer shell and it blows you out of the airplane. It's a pretty catastrophic event and that's where I got damage to my neck because you accelerate on the end of a howitzer shell," Baker recalled.

"When you get clear of the tail (of the plane) the chute, with what we called a zero delay lanyard that's hooked up, immediately deploys the chute. It waits until the seat ejects you and then the chute opens," Baker said of ejecting at

approximately 8,000 feet.

Floating to earth he saw he was headed for some trees, but was able to steer himself toward an open field where he landed. Later he was picked up by an Army helicopter.

Due to Vietnamization, an F-100 Wing was brought home which included Baker who came to England AFB-Louisiana where he flew training flights to stay current with the F-100.

A year later the F-111 came into play and Baker was put with the 366th Fighter Wing at Mt. Home, Idaho where they worked to put together three F-111 squadrons, which took about one year.

The F-111 fighter-bomber was a very effective platform Baker said. During his time there he served such positions as Squadron Weapons Commander and Instructor Pilot.

About this time Operation Linebacker was in place which was a reaction to a North Vietnamese offensive which began in March 1972. During the operation an estimated 41,000 U.S. sorties were flown from bases in Vietnam, Thailand and off of Navy carriers in the South China Sea.

Linebacker II was launched in Dec. 1972 and included an intensive 11 day air campaign with approximately 1,000 fighter-bomber sorties. During this time the U.S. lost 26 aircraft, mostly by enemy surface-to-air missiles (SAM's). In America protestors called the operation "the Christmas bombing."

In the end, Linebacker II caused the North Vietnamese to return to the negotiating table and a month later to signing of the Paris Accords.

Baker was with the 474th Tactical Fighter Wing in Takhali, near Bangkok, Thailand. The 474th flew combat missions in North Vietnam and Cambodia.

The F-111 now had an electronic countermeasure system called the ALQ94. This system could take an enemy radar contact off the jet, but the enemy could still use the system against the aircraft by using barrage fire as Baker and others would fly through valleys and other attack areas. In time the F-111 pilots would turn off the ALQ94 so as not to broadcast their location. However, Baker said, the system was very useful against Soviet aircraft.

The combat missions in North Vietnam were at night and were directed at specific targets. Other high level missions were flown over Cambodia and Laos.

Interestingly, with all the new technology on the F-111 the planes still dropped World War II-era bombs. Because of this the pilots had to slow down on their bombing runs so they won't tear the fins off the bombs and blow themselves to pieces.

Six months later Baker was back at Mt. Home until he was picked, in Jan. 1976, to go to Australia for a two year stint with the F-111 to represent the USAF as an exchange pilot with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), number six squadron located in Queensland. There he flew operational flights throughout Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia in support of the Five Power Defense Agreement.

In 1978, he was sent to Langley AFB, Virginia to work with the Headquarters Tactical Air Command in the Tactical Plans Division. He worked with the Army to develop future air-land battle 2000 plans.

Three years later Baker went to the Armed Forces Staff College learning necessary staff paperwork and earning a higher rank.

Next for Baker was time with the Defense Intelligence

Agency (DIA) as an Air Force attaché to the U.S. Embassy in Canberra, Australia. In that role he coordinated combined ops between the USAF and RAAF under the international ANZUS Treaty.

He also went to Navy Postgraduate School where he got his Master's degree in national security affairs.

Baker also was Operations Officer for the Embassy C-12 King Air supporting DIA operations in Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

After an 18 month extension Baker retired in 1988 after approximately 5,000 hours of seat time in fighter aircraft and nearly 7,000 total hours during his 20 year military career.

As a civilian Baker took an F-111 project engineer position with General Dynamics in Fort Worth, Texas.

A year later he went to work for Northwest Airlines (NWA) flying the B-727, DC-9, DC-10 and B-747. At this time he also worked as a substitute teacher at Aledo High School in Aledo, Texas and served for several years as an elected City Council member in Annetta, Texas.

Baker moved to the Village with wife Sharon from Honolulu, Hawaii, the location of his final NWA assignment, in Sept. 2013. They have three children: Kelly, Todd and Shannon.

Of his 20 years in uniform Baker said the thing that truly stands out in his mind are the people. "You meet some of the finest people in the world. They are a special breed of people. They're dedicated to their country and do a superb job in what they're trained to do," Baker said. "I consider it a privilege to have served in the United States Air Force."



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Marine trained for jungle warfare

Steve Rittenmeyer drove an amtrac in Vietnam

By JEFF MEEK
Voice Coorespondent

The Third Marine Division has a proud history dating back to World War II invasions at places like Guam and Iwo Jima. Later, in March 1965, the division was chosen to land the first combat troops in Vietnam where they were assigned the job of protecting the Da Nang airfield. Hot Springs Village resident Steve Rittenmeyer later served with the Third Division in 1966-1967.

Shortly after graduating from high school in Iowa, Rittenmeyer was drafted into the Marine Corps in January 1966. Training at MCRD and Camp Pendleton included learning tactics, strategies and how to handle numerous weapons. Following this he was assigned the job of Armor Crewman which meant he would be put with tanks, amtracs or ontos.

After a 30 day leave he reported in and was asked one question. Can you swim? The answer was yes so he was put in an amtrac unit. The resulting training took place in the summer of 1966 in Del Mar, Calif. The vehicle was a 36 ton armored amphibious craft designed for ship to shore movement and could also continue on as an infantry support vehicle.

Next Rittenmeyer was prepped for jungle warfare in Vietnam. In August he flew to Okinawa, then on to Da Nang. "When I walked off the plane the first thing that hit me was the smell. It wasn't particularly pleasing. Smell and fear. I thought I might get shot at any moment," said Rittenmeyer.

After checking in he was put on a truck and taken to a nameless base camp for tanks and amtracs. Rittenmeyer was now with the First Platoon, "B" Company, First Amtrac Battalion, Third Marine Division.

Upon arriving he noticed the camp was practically empty. The units stationed there were out on a mission. "I spent my first week basically alone," said Rittenmeyer, who ate, slept and moved about as he pleased.

He met another Marine named Martinez who was there for a court marshal for shooting another Marine. "He was my only friend and he befriended me," Rittenmeyer said of their relationship which grew closer when their camp was hit and overrun.

Both were watching an old Elvis Presley movie when ene-

my sniper rounds smashed through the movie screen. The men went to their tents and Rittenmeyer fell asleep.

Soon he was awoken by Martinez and the sounds of explosions and gunfire. The two ran through the darkness and jumped into a drainage ditch.

With chaos all around them Martinez told him to stay put, then left. "I spent the rest of that night sitting in that ditch because I had no orders, didn't know where anything was or where to go," recalls Rittenmeyer.

The next morning he crawled out and wondered about the camp amongst dead enemy bodies dressed only in a loin cloth. Later he found out Martinez had hooked up with a patrol that went outside the wire to rescue a pinned down Marine patrol. His actions helped him later at his court marshal where he received a shorter sentence.

During his 13 months in Nam, Rittenmeyer's unit did long range security patrols for Da Nang air base and provided infantry support and ran supplies. During this time Rittenmeyer had one mission he's not likely to forget.

He was driving an amtrac with infantrymen on top along with a second amtrac as they made their way back from a village where they had picked up some enemy prisoners. As they rumbled down the road toward their camp Rittenmeyer drove over a mine which exploded and blew the other amtrac crew member out of the vehicle. Rittenmeyer received minor injuries but was okay. "It was a remotely detonated box mine made of materials that were undetectable," he said of the experience. Their amtrac had their track laid out and some armor peeled back, but was able to limp the thing back to camp.

Months later, PFC Rittenmeyer and his unit moved to another base where he soon learned they were putting together a battalion landing team – BLT 1/9 (First Battalion/9th Marine Regiment). At Okinawa they prepared, sailed to the Philippines for practice landings, then, in January 1967, made an amphibious landing in the Mekong Delta as part of Operation Deck House Five. "We were told it was the largest amphibious landing since Chosin Reservoir," said Rittenmeyer.

After days of shore bombardment, Rittenmeyer drove his amtrac off the LST at 4 a.m. and headed for the beach with 35 infantrymen on board. They had been told there was the possibility of concertina wire up ahead near the beach. If so, it could foul the tracks of the craft and stop them dead in the water.

Rittenmeyer managed to get across the beach and move inland about 200 yards before the infantrymen were deployed from the vehicle. After this the job was to move supplies where they were needed.

Next the outfit moved north of Fu Bi where they provided security for a fuel dump, then it was off to Cua Viet where Rittenmeyer's job changed. Besides driving an amtrac he would also be called upon as a regular infantryman on an as needed basis doing mechanized infantry patrols on a main line of defense.

The patrols did not encounter many small unit contacts but did come under heavy artillery and mortar fire at times. Many of the unit's vehicles were destroyed.



blown apart and horrendous, unspeakable things go on that go on in every war and America didn't like it," said Rittenmeyer.

He concluded by saying the Marine Corps was, at that point in his life, the best thing that could have happened to him. He learned about himself, to be confident and it gave him the courage to go forward in life.

Steve Rittenmeyer

One big gun in particular was causing a lot of damage and was proving to be difficult to locate. Even a B-52 air strike could not knock the troublesome gun out of commission.

Eventually the gun was spotted and taken out by a recon unit.

Rittenmeyer finished his Vietnam service there near Cua Viet and rotated home in October 1967.

Because he had signed on for three years of duty back in boot camp, Rittenmeyer's service continued on for another 18 months. First he was put with an artillery unit for fire direction control training, then in February 1968 ordered back to amtracs until his discharge in February 1969.

In civilian life he became a police officer in Iowa City, then earned degrees in political science and sociology, and then attended law school in Seattle. After graduation he became an assistant professor at Western Illinois University and at the same time opened a law practice until retirement in 2006.

He and wife Mary Ann moved to the Village in 2005 and have a son Tyson.

Reflecting on his Marine Corps service Rittenmeyer said our military didn't learn much from their involvement in Vietnam except for not letting the press have such complete access to the battlefield. "The American press brought the reality of (the Vietnam) war to America and put it on television while everybody's having supper. Americans saw war was for what it is, not the John Wayne variety where people get shot and got a little hole and they sort of fold up and issue some profound statement before their eyes close and people shed a few tears. This is war where people get



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In Vietnam, an enemy attack blows up an ammunition dump. (Photo courtesy of Bill Behan)

PTSI: The war that comes home

By JEFF MEEK
Voice Coorespondent

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), now more recently noted as post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI), has been around for centuries. Decades ago it was called such things as Nostalgia, Survivor's Guilt, Combat Stress, Shell Shock, Combat Fatigue and around 1980, PTSD. It mostly affects our military men and women, but can also be experienced by doctors, teachers, police officers, firefighters and those in other professions. Close to or living with a person with PTSI can lead to a spouse or loved one experiencing "secondary PTSI," which can easily impair a relationship.

So what is PTSI? Generally speaking it is a condition in which a person has difficulty recovering after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event. Symptoms can include physical pain, nightmares, flashbacks, depression, anxiety, withdrawal or avoidance. Those with PTSI can also be hyper-protective of a spouse or loved one and are more likely to commit suicide. It is said that 33 percent of returning service members experience it as opposed to 8 percent in civilians. Several things can trigger it like a certain

smell or sound.

I recently had the opportunity to attend a presentation by retired Army Major John Padgett. He has treated PTSI patients during his 40 years of practice as a clinical PA and also during his tenure as an associate professor at Touro University in Nevada as Clinical Coordinator for the School of Physician Assistant (PA) Studies. He has lectured nationally on PTSI to the American Academy of Physician Assistants and elsewhere including being invited to the White House for a roundtable discussion on PTSD in 2012.

Padgett, a combat veteran himself, recognizes/admits he has some of these difficulties. "I still do not sit in a restaurant or other place with my back to the door. Shortly after I came home I heard a loud bang and almost hit the deck."

He shared with attendees some of the treatments used to deal with PTSI. They include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) plus medication, Sertraline (Zoloft) and Paroxetine (Paxil), plus group therapy. Newer studies show MDMA (Ecstasy), Ketamine and Riluzole as being helpful. Animal – assisted therapy is also used.

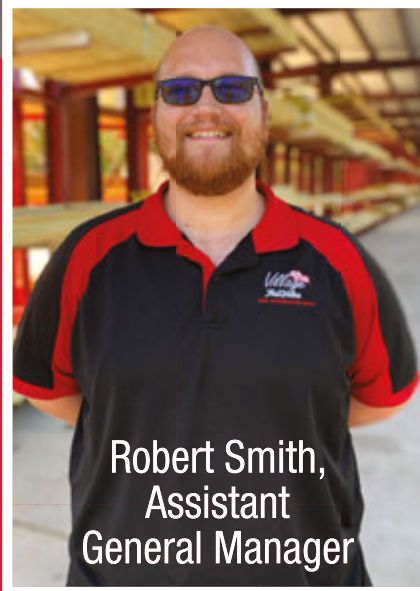
As Padgett said, PTSI is the war that comes home and does not go away. Veterans with PTSI should seek help, perhaps by talking to a fellow veteran or veteran advocate.



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Veterans in pictures



In Vietnam, at left, U.S. Marine Steve Rittenmeyer perched atop a 36 ton USMC Amtrac. (Photo courtesy of Steve Rittenmeyer)



Hot Springs Village Vietnam War veterans, from left: Ron Fritz (Army), Tom Johnson (Army), Boyd Burkholder (Army), Doug Beed (Army), George Hollingsworth (Army) and Tom Laginja (Navy).



The Pacific Theater of War section of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., above. Arkansas veterans at the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., below.



Hot Springs Village World War II veterans signal Victory in World War II.





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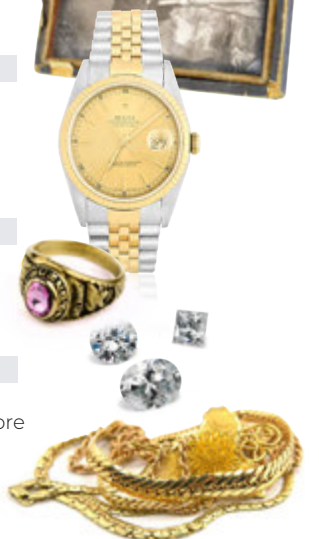
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