

2017

HOMETOWN

• HEROES •



Westhampton Free Library

Robert Allard
Jay Janoski
Marie Weiss

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Hometown Heroes: Honoring Our Local Veterans

In gratitude for their service and sacrifice, the Library community has recognized local veterans throughout 2017. The Westhampton Free Library is pleased to dedicate this book in honor of the VFW Post 5350 in Westhampton Beach, New York.

Local VFW Post 5350
101 Old Riverhead Road, Westhampton Beach, NY 11978
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VFW POST 5350

The Dayton-Soehlke-Ohlhorst VFW Post 5350 was chartered in 1946 shortly after WWII and named in honor of three local veterans who made the supreme sacrifice in the war. The original Post 5350 building was erected in 1960 on Montauk Highway in Quogue and flourished there for many years. Two years ago, a decision was made to move the post to Westhampton Beach to increase membership and better serve the veteran community. Post 5350 currently boasts 268 members and has proudly adopted the 106th Rescue Wing through its Military Assistance Program. During the past two years, VFW Post 5350 has been awarded the distinction of an "All American" Post for its excellence in many of the core benevolent programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of America.



Forward

Since Westhampton and its surrounding areas were founded, many local men and women have stepped up to serve our country in times of need. Without hesitation, they answered the call of duty, often putting their own lives on hold and leaving loved ones behind. For this, we are grateful and extend a sincere thank-you.

To show appreciation, the Westhampton Free Library, in 2017, kicked off a Hometown Heroes program. Throughout the year, in conjunction with VFW Post 5350, local veterans have been honored monthly.

Veterans recognized include individuals who served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Korea, Vietnam and World War II. After being discharged from the military, they continued to serve by doing good within the local community. They each have a poignant story to tell.

The following pages are a compilation of these narratives. They are a small piece of America's and the community's history, meant to be read and shared so that veterans' stories of sacrifice will never be lost.

The library would also like to express its gratitude to the authors of these pieces, including Robert Allard, Jay Janoski and Marie Weiss. as well as photographer Michael Azzato of Selective Eye Photography.

Peter W. Cuthbert

Korea is known as the "forgotten war." It began on June 25, 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea. The American-led United Nations command came to the aid of South Korea. China and the Soviet Union fought for the North to expand their interests beyond the 38th parallel line established at the end of the Second World War. Nearly 5 million people died, soldiers and civilians, in the "forgotten war" that ended when an armistice was signed on July 27, 1953.

Peter Cuthbert was a young man, a 1951 graduate of Norwich University in Vermont with a major in economics and a minor in history, and newly married, when he received an ROTC commission in the United States Army.

He began his military career as a lieutenant, training at Fort Riley in Kansas and the Armor School at Fort Knox in Kentucky before being deployed to Korea. In his early 20s and the father of a two-week-old baby girl, Lt. Cuthbert was given the command of a tank platoon comprised of 25 soldiers, five tanks and support vehicles. His unit was responsible for supporting infantry regiments on the front lines.

Following the war, he served as a "citizen soldier" commanding National Guard Armor units in Patchogue and Bay Shore, as well as an amphibious truck company in Riverhead. His commitment to service didn't end there. After transferring from the National Guard, Mr. Cuthbert worked in the Pentagon's United States Army Reserve operations office for 13 summers, after which he retired as a colonel after 32 years of service.

While he remained in an active support leadership role with the military, he also raised six children with his wife, Nan, and taught history at the Westhampton Beach High School from 1955 through 1985. Beloved by his students, Mr. Cuthbert coached varsity basketball for six years, junior varsity for one year, and then junior varsity tennis and golf. He was also the principal



Peter W. Cuthbert: Colonel (ret.) Korean War
Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

of the Westhampton Beach Summer High School for many years.

Whether leading his men during the war or instilling a love of history in his high school students, Mr. Cuthbert's commitment to his country and community makes him the ideal candidate for our January Hometown Hero. Read about his experiences during the Korean War in his own words. The library has copies of his book, "Korea (Our War) 1950–1953," in its collection.

The Westhampton Free Library and the Westhampton community sincerely thank Mr. Cuthbert for his service to our nation and community.

Edwin J. Cartoski

Historians continue to debate the origins of the most widespread war in history, debating whether the Second World War began in 1939, when Adolf Hitler invaded Poland. Over a six-year period, the Allied nations of Britain, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics fought the Axis nations of Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and Fascist Italy. More than 50 million lives were lost before the war ended in 1945 with the Allied defeat of Germany and Japan.

Korea is known as the "forgotten war." It began on June 25, 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea. The American-led United Nations command came to the aid of South Korea. China and the Soviet Union fought for the North to expand their interests beyond the 38th parallel line that was established at the end of the Second World War. Nearly 5 million people died, soldiers and civilians, in the "forgotten war" that ended when an armistice was signed on July 27, 1953.

Edwin "Ed" Cartoski grew up in Quiogue and graduated from Westhampton Beach High School in 1942. At the age of 18, he received permission to graduate early so he could join the war effort. He enlisted in the Navy, where he had extensive flight training in the Navy V-5 pilot training program.

After passing the physical and the aptitude tests, Mr. Cartoski received a telegram instructing him to report to Colgate University for civilian pilot training. "We were taught aeronautics, navigation, military terms, aircraft and ship recognition – the rocks and shoals of the Navy," he said. "We were just kids. We needed discipline. It was a very fast-moving, accelerated pace of training because they needed the pilots."

After Colgate, where Mr. Cartoski and his fellow trainees flew Piper Cubs on skis out of Hamilton, New York, for four months, he was sent to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for a higher level of



Edwin J. Cartoski: Colonel (ret.) World War II and Korean War
Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

indoctrination and physical training. There, he learned code, aeronautical terms, advanced identification of enemy aircraft and tactics.

E Base in St. Louis, Missouri, was next for more flight training on the "Yellow Pearl," a N2S or N3N bi-wing. "I soloed, did loops, acrobatics, instrument flying and night flying. It was the next step," said Mr. Cartoski.

The final stage of training took place at the Pensacola Naval Air Station, where he was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. Marine Pilot. Marine pilots were trained as infantry officers first and pilots second. They were intensely trained in every aspect of infantry life. The main purpose was to develop a strong bond in close air support.

While waiting for his orders at the Marine Corps Air Station El Toro in California, "a guy with a lot of gold braid" walked in asking for pilots who

wanted a lot of flight time. Admiral "Bull" Halsey had unwittingly sailed the Third Fleet into the heart of a typhoon in the Philippine Sea on December 17, 1944. He lost two destroyers with all men on board – close to 800 men – and 100 aircraft. Planes were needed, and fast. Mr. Cartoski volunteered for the flight time and found himself on a transport the next day. His mission was to fly F4U Corsairs, Hell Cats, TBMs and more straight off the factory lines from cities across the United States – Bethpage, Bridgeport, Detroit and Mercer – to California. From there they were loaded on carriers and shipped to the war zone. "We tried to fly dawn to dusk to California in one day. We couldn't fly at night because we didn't have any navigational aids. Sometimes we would go down low to look at a water tower to see where we were," said Mr. Cartoski.

New orders came through assigning him to VMF513 and a mission to support the nationalist Chinese. Before they arrived in China, the mission was aborted and he was sent first to the Philippines and then Hawaii, where his squadron supported the Bikini Bomb test. "We had F6F drones that flew into the cloud to read the radiation and collect other data. Our ship was a support ship. We retrieved a Hell Cat that was irradiated. It was isolated, but a lot of guys were in bad shape by the time we got back to Pearl Harbor. We didn't know much about radiation at the time," he explained.

He left the military in 1946 and enrolled at the University of Alabama through the GI Bill. His studies in the field of aeronautical engineering were not to last long. The Korean War started and he was recalled to active duty and served with the Marines in Korea, where he provided air support for the First Marine Division. "The Chinese and North Koreans surrounded us. There were ambushes. We returned to Japan and regrouped before going into Pusan. We were surrounded again; that was a bad one," he said, tears forming at the corners of his eyes.

When he returned home, the Marine Corps sent him to Pensacola to be a flight trainer. He was reassigned to Marine Corp Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, where he lived with his wife and daughter.

In 1955 he decided to leave active duty but remain in the Marine reserves and work for Grumman Aerospace where he could be closer to family. While in the reserves, he graduated from the Naval War College at the Marine Base at Quantico, Virginia.

After decades of service to his country, he retired from the Marine Corps in 1974 with the rank of colonel. Throughout his military career, he received many distinguished decorations and medals: The Distinguished Flying Cross with one gold star, the Air Medal with five gold stars, Presidential Unit Citation for service in Korea, Army Distinguished Citation for service in Korea, Organized Marine Corps Reserve Medal, American Campaign Medal, Victory Medal World War II, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation for service in Korea.

At Grumman, he was a test pilot and flight-tested numerous military aircraft. He also flew the helicopter in "Flight Safety–Air Rescue." Mr. Cartoski retired from Grumman in 1983. Upon his retirement from Grumman, he received the Sikorsky Helicopter Rescue Award for skills and courage when participating in numerous lifesaving missions.

In 1944, Mr. Cartoski married Althea Densieski and they raised five children: Nadine, Bernadette, Ed Jr., Joe and Paul. Throughout his life, he has been involved in community service from his time as the president of United Parents of Mercy (High School) to holding leadership positions in the Riverhead Polish Independent Club and membership in VFW Post 5350, where he works to provide for veterans in need and scholarships to area high school students. In 2013, he was inducted into the Westhampton Beach UFSD Wall of Fame, and now he is the Westhampton Free Library's Hometown Hero for February 2017.

The Westhampton Free Library and your community would like to thank you, Mr. Cartoski, for your service to our country and community.

Sherri L. Huppert-Grassie

Sherri L. Huppert grew up in Shirley, where she graduated from William Floyd High School in 1988. After graduation, in 1989, she was employed as a civilian federal technician, working inventory management, for the Air National Guard at Francis S. Gabreski Airport in Westhampton Beach.

Her future husband, Eugene Grassie, was a full-time federal employee in inventory management for the Air National Guard who encouraged her to join the military. Her father also worked for the Air National Guard at Gabreski as the maintenance unit training manager. In June 1992, she began her military career by enlisting in the New York Air National Guard.

After six weeks of basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, she was assigned to the 106 Logistics Squadron at Gabreski. "Our daughter, Olivia, was almost three at the time I went through training. I knew going in that I would be assigned to the same career field and base," she explained. Unlike active duty, where members of the military can be sent anywhere in the world, enlisting with the Air National Guard enabled her to return to Gabreski.

In 1998, following her marriage at Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church, it was a family affair, with her husband, father, and three in-laws all working on the base. Then, in March 1999, the family of three moved to Westhampton and has remained there to the present day.

Father Patrick Murray, of Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church, married the couple, and Mrs. Huppert-Grassie, with strong influences within the church, served as a Eucharistic minister for more than five years.

Throughout the years, she has held over 10 positions within the supply/logistics field, many at the supervisory level. In 2010, she was promoted to the rank of Chief Master Sergeant. Upon Chief Huppert-Grassie's promotion,



Sherri L. Huppert-Grassie:
Chief Master Sergeant, 106th Rescue Wing, Iraq and Afghanistan
Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

she became the Squadron Superintendent and has been responsible for all facets in supporting the Wing for state and federal mission requirements.

Chief Huppert-Grassie was deployed on four occasions prior to her promotion. Her tours to Turkey in support of Operation Northern Watch 2000, Operation Enduring Freedom 2001 in Kuwait, Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003, and Operation Enduring Freedom 2009 in Afghanistan, were necessary to provide maintenance support for the aircraft in the deployed locations.

Chief Huppert-Grassie has received numerous awards and decorations, including the Air Force Commendation Medal with four oak leaf clusters, Air Force Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with four oak leaf clusters, Coast Guard Unit Commendation with O device, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with campaign star, Iraqi Campaign Medal with campaign star,

Humanitarian Service Medal, Air Force Expeditionary Service Ribbon with gold border and the Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon with bronze star.

On base, Chief Huppert-Grassie has supported the Family Readiness Group, through her volunteer work, for the past 18 years. She was one of only two female New York State recruiters for the VFW on the state level and she maintains active membership in VFW Post 5350, Westhampton Beach. Since joining in 2005, she held the quarter master position for four years and for the past two years, she has served as chaplain. "It was Arma Andon who really got me involved in the VFW and believed in me," said Chief Huppert-Grassie, referring to the recently deceased Westhampton Beach icon. "I enjoy being in that room full of veterans, it is an honor and a privilege. Commander William Hughes is bringing the post to a new age."

One of Chief Huppert-Grassie's most meaningful volunteer activities is the annual "Soldier Box Night" event hosted by local brownie and junior Girl Scouts. The troop members earn their merits toward the project by packing boxes of much-needed items that are shipped to airmen in deployed locations. "We pack the cookie boxes and write letters to the members of the unit. The evening is so filled with excitement, and who doesn't love to color!" said the chief.

Since 1998, she has provided a service as a New York State notary public to all assigned service members to the Wing, mostly by word-of-mouth, and continues to maintain her notary public registration; this service is valuable to members who are continually working day-to-day operations and may not have the opportunity to have their documents notarized from an outside agency or service.

Today, the military is still a family affair for Chief Huppert-Grassie. Her husband, SMSgt Eugene Grassie, Jr., Material Management Flight Superintendent, works down the hall from her, and their daughter works for the Department of Defense as an analyst. "Olivia earned her master's in

Global Security Studies at John Hopkins through a post 9-11 GI Bill," she explains. Each time she was deployed, education credits were earned that could be transferred to her dependent husband or daughter.

Joining the military was a career direction she never would have imagined during her early years. "I never thought I would be in the military and now I have the honor of developing and mentoring the next generation. Our squadron has 100 plus airmen assigned and I know every one of them. I'm very proud of who they are and who they will become," she said.

The Westhampton Free Library and your community thank you, Chief Master Sergeant Sherri Huppert-Grassie, for your service to our country and community.

Paul Haines

Marine Sergeant Paul Haines, a Vietnam veteran, was born and raised in East Moriches. He comes from a military family. His grandfather fought in World War I, two uncles served in World War II, two of his brothers served in Vietnam and a third brother served shipboard in the Navy.

Marine Sgt. Haines enlisted in the Marines in March 1965, after his June high school graduation. He turned 18 on the first day of boot camp at Paris Island.

During his 13 months of service with the 1st Eight Inch Howitzer Battery, he earned a number of medals and citations, including the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Navy Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Unit Commendation, Army Valorous Unit Citation Award, the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Presidential Unit Citation and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

Postservice, Marine Sgt. Haines opened East Moriches Fuel and has owned and operated it since 1998. He has been active with Boy Scout Troop 24 in East Moriches for the past 50 years as a scout leader and committee chairman. His other community service activities include his membership in the Rotary, the American Legion and the Westhampton Branch of the VFW.

Marine Sgt. Paul Haines, the Westhampton Free Library and the Westhampton community thank you for your service to our country and community.



Mr. Paul Haines: Vietnam War
Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

Hometown Heroes Remembered

As part of its Hometown Heroes initiative, the Westhampton Free Library paid tribute to four veterans at a ceremony at VFW Post 5350.

During the posthumous ceremony, the service and sacrifices of Arma "Ham" Andon, William "Bud" Kavan, Benedict "Ben" Larson and Frank Matthes were recognized. Their family members were presented with an American flag that had been flown over the library during the month of May 2017.



Pictured left to right:

John Larson, Ben Larson's son; Danielle Waskiewicz, Westhampton Free Library Director; Sally Kavan, William "Bud" Kavan's daughter; Jay Janoski, Westhampton Free Library Head of Reference; Holly Hubbard, daughter of Benedict "Ben" Larson; Mary Anne Yutes, Westhampton Free Library trustee; Benita Matthes, wife of Frank Matthes; William Hughes, VFW Post 5350 commander; and Sundy Schermeyer, granddaughter of Arma "Ham" Andon.

Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

Arma E. "Ham" Andon

There was a day in March 1945 when Arma "Ham" Andon thought he would never again get to visit the tranquil shores of Westhampton Beach.

The then 26-year-old was huddled in a foxhole in Serrig, Germany, with the rest of his comrades, all members of the U.S. Army's 2nd Battalion H Company of the 26th Infantry Division, seeking cover from the relentless bombs and bullets being fired by the Nazis during what turned out to be near the end of World War II.

While trees exploded around him and bullets whizzed by the top of his foxhole, Mr. Andon, the acting company commander, eventually accepted the fact that he would most likely become one of the many casualties of that fierce battle—an experience that he would later describe as the worst day of his life.

It turns out that he did eventually make it home, though with a shattered leg and the remnants of shrapnel still lodged in his abdomen—injuries that he would carry with him for the rest of his life.

But, just as he always did, Mr. Andon would take that pain, as well as his long road to recovery, in stride—signature qualities of a man who would spend the next seven-plus decades of his life assisting other East End veterans and working to improve his hometown of Westhampton Beach Village.

Mr. Andon, a highly decorated World War II veteran, former village mayor and longtime commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5350—and a friend to countless individuals fortunate enough to cross paths with him—died peacefully Thursday, December 8, at his Westhampton Beach home, one month shy of what would have been his 98th birthday, according to Southampton Town Clerk Sundy Schermeyer, his granddaughter.

Mr. Andon made the most of his time in Westhampton Beach after returning home from World War II, during which he earned many military accolades, including two Purple Hearts with Cluster, a Bronze Star with Cluster, a Presidential Unit Citation, the Austrian Medal of Honor and the French



**Mr. Arma E. "Ham" Andon: Major (ret.) World War II
and Former Mayor of Westhampton Beach
Photograph provided by Sundy Schermeyer, granddaughter**

President's Legion of Honor Medal. Though his accomplishments on the battlefield were many, those who knew Mr. Andon the best said his greatest source of pride came from the accomplishments of his many family members and friends.

That is not to say that Mr. Andon did not build an impressive resume himself. He was village mayor from 1986 until 1994, served as president of the Westhampton Beach School Board in the 1960s, was commander of the Veterans of Foreign War Post 5350 for 19 years and also served as commissioner of the Westhampton Beach Fire District for a decade. He was also a founding member of Southampton Town's Anti-Bias Task Force, an active Westhampton Rotarian for 40-plus years and a member of the Westhampton Yacht Squadron for 80 years.

"He made a difference wherever he went," said Bill Hughes, the current commander of the VFW Post 5350, after learning about Mr. Andon's death. "He was one of those guys who made a difference for the better and he was generous beyond what the average person might know about because he did things quietly. He was just a great example of how a human being should live, a fantastic example."

Westhampton Beach Fire Commissioner Chairman Fred Overton, a longtime friend of Mr. Andon's, explained that they first met 65 years earlier when Mr. Andon owned Suffolk Floors and Blinds in Riverhead. Mr. Overton said one of the things he will always remember is the way Mr. Andon always commanded a room, explaining that his presence was always noticed even though he rarely spoke up. "When he spoke, people usually listened," Mr. Overton said with a chuckle. "He had a great sense of humor. I guess you can say it is the end of an era in Westhampton Beach."

In addition to volunteering with the Westhampton Beach Fire Department for half a century, both as a firefighter and, more recently, as a member of the fire police, Mr. Andon was one of the first people appointed commissioner when the fire district was established in 2002. He served in that position for more than a decade and, during his tenure, was a huge advocate for the new Sunset Avenue firehouse that opened its doors earlier this year. In fact, he was given the honor of cutting the ribbon to mark the occasion. "His presence will be missed," Mr. Overton said of Mr. Andon, who was recognized as "Fireman of

the Year" in 2000.

"Every day is a gift," Ms. Schermeyer said. "That is what he always said. What is most comforting now is that I realize that my grandfather's legacy not only lives on in our family, but in all of the people whose lives he has touched in some way. He had a huge heart and loved his family, the men from the troops he served with in World War II, the Village of Westhampton Beach, and his many friends from the endless list of organizations he was involved in."

**The above text is an excerpt from a Southampton Press article by Erin McKinley.*

Thank you, Major Andon, for your years of dedication and service to your country and community. The Westhampton Free Library and the Westhampton Beach community are very grateful for all you have done.

William "Bud" Kavan

William "Bud" Kavan had an active community life after his return from Europe and the Second World War. Not only did he help his wife, Ruth, raise their four children, he returned to work as a master carpenter and home builder. He had a decades-long association with the Westhampton Fire Department. He worked for the Village of Westhampton Beach as the building inspector and for many years following with the zoning board and the architectural review board. He was also very active in his church.

While Mr. Kavan was stationed in Belgium, he was befriended by a local family. That friendship endured a lifetime. When the Belgium-based town built a World War II museum, the family contacted Mr. Kavan for a donation. He sent his uniform, medals and all of his military information. When the museum opened, he was invited along with other veterans for the grand opening and served as a guest along with the other Americans in attendance. There was also a party provided by the townspeople.

Mr. Kavan's uniform will be preserved for viewing in that museum for generations to come. One cannot imagine a better tribute.

The Westhampton Library and Westhampton community thank Mr. Kavan for his dedication and service to his country and community.



Mr. William "Bud" Kavan: World War II
Photograph provided by William Hughes, Commander of VFW Post 5350

Benedict "Ben" Larson

When Benedict "Ben" Larson passed away last March, he was eight days shy of his 91st birthday. These were years well-lived.

In March 1925, Mr. Larson was born in Westhampton Beach and graduated from Westhampton Beach High School in 1942, at age 17. He spent World War II serving in the Navy from 1943 through 1946. Much of his service was in Hilo, Hawaii, as a member of the Seabees.

Following his military service, he attended Farmingdale State College and graduated with a degree in landscaping and horticulture. This led to Mr. Larson opening a landscape contracting business that operated in the Westhampton area for over 50 years. He was often consulted for landscaping projects in the Village of Westhampton Beach and he was a strong advocate for many improvements in the area. He was especially involved in the creation of the sidewalks along South Road and along the road to Rogers Beach.

Mr. Larson also served the village in the Ambulance Corps, Kiwanis and the Westhampton Fire Department. Mr. Larson was an active member of the VFW Post 5350. As one of the main coordinators of the annual golf outing, Mr. Larson was responsible for generating many sponsors for the outing. Tens of thousands of dollars in scholarships have been donated to local high schools due to the hard work and dedication of Mr. Larson and his comrades in Post 5350.

On a personal note, Mr. Larson was a well-known character around town. Everyone knew his truck and more noticeably his air horn. Mr. Larson was known to "light people up" with his horn. If Mr. Larson blasted his horn at you, it was a sign of affection.

The Westhampton Free Library and Westhampton community thank Mr. Larson, and his family, for his dedication and service to his country and community.



Mr. Benedict "Ben" Larson: World War II
Photograph provided by Holly Hubbard, daughter

Frank Matthes

Major Frank Matthes had a long and storied career. He was not only a fighter pilot and a test pilot, he was also a sheriff, things little boys dream of becoming one day.

Moving from a radio operator in the Navy to the Air Force to train as a fighter pilot, Major Frank Matthes later went on to fly the F-4, F-86 and 101 Voodoo, among others. He oversaw flight tests at the Suffolk County Air Force Base, where he tested all the 101 Voodoos after repairs and before they were released to be flown. He was also the first pilot to fly Mach 2 out of the Suffolk County Air Force Base.

It was on one of those supersonic flights that Major Matthes flew over the South Shore Mall on a Sunday afternoon which caused the windows in Macy's to shatter, a story corroborated by a friend who was installing an air conditioner there at the time.

After he retired from the Air Force at Fort Lee, Virginia, he worked as a deputy sheriff in Colonial Heights. Major Matthes later moved back to Long Island and worked at Grumman as a requirements planner. He continued to fly his Grumman Tiger every chance he could.

Of the decorations he received while in service, the one he treasured above all others was his "command pilot wings," his wife, Benita recalled. He told her, "I was born to fly."

The Westhampton Free Library and Westhampton Beach community thank Mr. Matthes for his dedication and service to both his country and community.



Frank Matthes: Major (ret.) Vietnam War
Photograph provided by Benita Matthes, wife

Dominic Lodato

When Dominic Lodato first served on the bench, he was assigned the David Berkowitz, aka Son of Sam, case. Mr. Berkowitz told his lawyer he was going to put a curse on him. Judge Lodato was presiding over the civil case in which the victims were suing Mr. Berkowitz. "He was one nasty fellow," Judge Lodato said.

This was not the first time in his long, rich life that Judge Lodato confronted evil. His generation was called to fight in the Second World War, and he joined in this effort.

Judge Lodato's father had served in the Navy in World War I. So, following in his father's footsteps, Judge Lodato enlisted in the Navy as soon as he graduated from Boy's High School in Brooklyn in 1943. He was only 17 and had to get his parents' permission.

He was sent to Newport, Rhode Island, for basic training. After basic, most of his classmates shipped out on the aircraft carrier USS Wasp, but Judge Lodato was accepted into Quartermaster School at the Newport Naval Base, where he studied navigation, signaling and map reading.

The PT boats going past the base appealed to him, so he volunteered to serve with the Motor Torpedo Boats and was accepted into the program. "After training, I was assigned to Squadron 34, and they shipped me overseas to pick up the squadron in England," Judge Lodato recounted.

He spent nine days on a large troop ship zigzagging across the ocean for fear of U-boat attacks. He was one of a handful of sailors among 4,000 soldiers. In rough weather and choppy seas, the soldiers would get sick, but "the sailors knew what to do in bad weather," Judge Lodato said. A group of destroyers would form a ring around the troop ships, creating a line of defense against any German U-boats in the area.



Judge, Dominic Lodato: World War II
Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

Judge Lodato was assigned to PT Boat 507, part of Squadron 34, which consisted of 12 PT boats. "We would go out, six at a time, on patrols only at night as it was too risky for PTs to be on patrols during daylight," Judge Lodato said. "We patrolled the Normandy beachhead in France, going all the way from La Havre down to the Channel Islands."

Judge Lodato arrived in Normandy after D-Day in July 1944. The area was still buzzing with activity, with freighters and troop ships constantly arriving at the beachhead. The job of the PT boats was to keep the German E-boats away from those ships and keep the port open. The squadron was constantly chasing off E-boats that would then be pursued by U.S. destroyers.

Equipped with three Packard marine engines, each running at over 1,500 horsepower, the PT boats were faster than anyone on the water. "The British

boats couldn't handle the German E-boats," Judge Lodato said. "Our skipper Lt. Buel Taylor Hemingway was probably the best in the squadron at handling our PT boat. We were probably the fastest boat. We felt very safe with him while on patrol."

As quartermaster, Judge Lodato was third in command, but because of the stability of Hemingway, he never was at the wheel while on patrol.

"The Germans would engage us, harass us," Judge Lodato said. There were flyovers by a plane they christened "Captain Midnight" that was up there taking photographs, doing recon. Another was called "Washing Machine Charlie", probably for a distinctive engine. The first time it happened, they opened fire at "Captain Midnight," but were told, "Don't waste your fire. You can't hit them."

"The Germans were very smart," Judge Lodato said. "The shore batteries would fire at us, but they tried not to hit us. PT boats have a big wake and they would fire at the wake."

Hemingway's reasoning was that if any PT boat was hit, the Air Force would go in and bomb them. "The Germans were pretty safe on the Channel Islands, so they didn't want to make waves," Judge Lodato reflected.

It was a dicey business. One time, the radar station saw something too big for them on its screen. They were told not to engage. Hemingway and the crew never picked up the target, a mystery floating by, on or under the waves. "We had four depth charges, but never used them. Four depth charges were not sufficient to take on a sub," Judge Lodato said.

One time, they made contact with a German ship but the weather was so bad, they couldn't fire a torpedo and had to let it go. "It is very hard to fire a torpedo in that kind of weather," said Judge Lodato. "Our torpedoes were not very accurate."

The torpedoes were a piece of work. The crew more or less had to roll the torpedoes off a rack while dodging the spinning propellers and hope they went in the right direction. The torpedo would sink and then resurface, and then it would have to go 300 yards to arm itself. If they didn't have enough distance, the crucial 300 yards, the torpedo wouldn't explode.

"We only had 10 boats left out of the 12 after Normandy," Judge Lodato said. "PT Boat 509 was sunk after a battle with a German gun ship. All hands were lost, but for the radioman who was wounded and captured by the Germans."

Judge Lodato explained, "After the Army had really gone through the countryside in France and Germany," that they set sail and left France in December 1944. The Motor Torpedo Boat fleet was on the way to Scotland where they would turn the boats over to Russia. Judge Lodato was handling the charts and told the skipper they were heading in the wrong direction. "We're heading for Ireland!" he said. They were getting hit by wakes coming at them from boats in front. The lead boat was off course and taking the squadron to Ireland. Judge Lodato corrected the situation, adjusting the coordinates and plotting a new course, saving the day for Squadron 34. He was 19 years old.

"On our trip to Scotland, our starboard engine separated from its moorings. I charted Wales as our safest port to enter and seek repairs," Judge Lodato said. "At first we were refused entry, but an English skipper who was going to enter the harbor told our skipper to follow him close off his stern and he will get us through the antisubmarine nets across the harbor."

After repairing the engine in Wales, they made their way to Scotland and got the boats ready to turn over to the Russians. The Russian men were fighting on the front, so Russian women manned the freighters and loaded the PT boats. Hemingway advised the Russian officers and taught them the intricacies of the boats. "Ours was one of the last PT boats to be put on the Russian freighter," Judge Lodato said.

Motor Torpedo Boat 507 was headed for the Russian seaport of Murmansk, and that was the last Judge Lodato ever saw of it.

When the Germans surrendered, Judge Lodato was sent back to the base in Melville. He was then shipped to Charleston, Massachusetts, where he trained Merchant Marine seamen to read charts and identify the locations of minefields. He never used his navigational and map reading skills again. Instead of boating, he took up golf.

After the war, he came home and furthered his education. He went first to Siena College in upstate New York and graduated in 1950 with a B.A. degree in sociology, a pre-law degree.

He graduated from Brooklyn Law School in 1953 and set out to practice law. He was a trial lawyer for 19 years. He specialized in cases involving personal injury, real estate and contracts, and represented some of the big insurance companies. For 12 years, he was a partner in the firm of Hauptman, Mangano and Lodato.

He went on the bench in 1975, appointed to the Criminal Court as a judge by Mayor Abe Beame. "I was nominated and ran for the Supreme Court in 1977," Judge Lodato said. "I was elected and sworn in January 1978, for a 14-year term."

Judge Lodato served as a no-nonsense, tough judge for 14 years. In the Son of Sam civil case, he took away Mr. Berkowitz's social security benefits, refused to let him change his name and denied him the right to come to the courthouse. That earned the judge the curse of Berkowitz.

He handled the case of the infamous Long Island garbage barge, a barge loaded with paper and debris that was turned away from every port. It journeyed 6,000 miles along the eastern seaboard and around the Gulf of Mexico before returning to New York. "It came back to New York and was anchored off the Verrazano Bridge," Judge Lodato said. "Word came down from Governor Cuomo: Get rid of it. We don't care how you do it. But get rid

of it." So Judge Lodato ordered the Brooklyn borough president to stand down, and the contents of the barge were incinerated in Brooklyn. The ashes were finally laid to rest in the Islip Town landfill.

Judge Lodato also served on the board of the Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn. Around 1990, he was asked to develop and run a Legal Affairs group. "When I put the whole department together," Judge Lodato said, "I was saving Lutheran Medical over two million a year."

In 1999, after the president resigned, he served as interim president for six months. That stretched into three years. Judge Lodato finally resigned in 2002.

In the last few years, he's been a trustee administering a \$90 million trust formed for payment of outstanding malpractice law suits against LI College Hospital in Brooklyn. "We started with over 200 cases and we are now down to about 60," Judge Lodato said. He is still doing that today.

In his spare time, Judge Lodato likes to read the paper and go on trips through the Hampton Bays Library.

The Westhampton Free Library and Westhampton community would like to thank Mr. Lodato for his service to his country and his community.

James Fogarty

James Fogarty's first time being wounded came in an incident when his point man, Bobby G. Swanson, caught a Viet Cong bullet and later bled to death.

Mr. Fogarty was grazed across the forehead and received a facial wound. In his year of leading sweeps and ambushes across the Vietnam countryside, this was his only casualty, and to this day he still holds himself responsible. Therefore, he did not have paperwork filled for a Purple Heart for this wound.

This sense of honor and personal responsibility should come as no surprise.

Mr. Fogarty's father was a naval officer during World War II and encouraged him to consider a career as a military officer.

During four years at the University of Scranton, Mr. Fogarty completed Army ROTC training, and upon graduating signed on for a five-year contract with the Army as an officer.

Had he not enlisted, he certainly would have been drafted. In October 1968, with the war heating up, he received his orders for Fort Benning Army Infantry School.

"Twenty-eight of us were commissioned as Army second lieutenants and were assigned to the infantry," Mr. Fogarty said.

It was a 12-month cram course at ROTC Officers Training School, with much of the training done by ex-Vietnam infantry sergeants and officers. In addition to his required training, he volunteered for Jungle Warfare School, Heavy Mortars School and Airborne School, in which Mr. Fogarty parachuted out of C-130s five times, once at night.

In addition to map reading ("The only map I knew how to read was a subway



Mr. James Fogarty: Vietnam War
Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

map," Mr. Fogarty said), he learned battlefield tactics, a kill-or-be-killed readiness, and most importantly, he was taught to lead.

The war was eating up second lieutenants. Recruits right out of high school needed leadership on the battlefield. At 23, Mr. Fogarty found himself in a steamy Asian warzone commanding a platoon of teenagers.

As Mr. Fogarty says, "In Vietnam the life expectancy of a rifle platoon leader was 27 minutes to two weeks."

He was under constant pressure. The 25 men under him depended on his vigilance. He had to know their position at all times and if everyone was accounted for. He had to make sure they were all carrying proper weaponry, grenades, extra ammo and a machete for hacking through the jungle.

He had to keep them off trails and out of tunnels. He had to keep them clean and make sure they washed. There were no sick days for rashes or infections.

At the slightest noise or provocation, he had to get everybody down and out of harm's way, then ascertain the threat.

"The key to survival was the men first and the mission second," Mr. Fogarty said. "I adapted missions to make sure my men were protected. This was my justification to insure that we all got home alive. This is the time I started to really understand fear."

"Early missions were from our fire support base and onto Navy riverboats to sweep the area along the river," Mr. Fogarty said.

Once they were taking small arms fire from a hedgerow of trees and Mr. Fogarty checked his map and realized the trees were only 50 feet deep and behind them was a large, open field. He had his men outflank the Viet Cong and forced five of them back out into the field. They disappeared into a sea of five-foot-high elephant grass. He had a napalm strike called in.

"Within five minutes the field was smoking and barren except for some areas that continued to burn," Mr. Fogarty said. "These areas looked like trees burning until we realized that they were the bodies of the Viet Cong. This event redefined my mission."

The tactics were brutal but necessary. Not one man in the platoon was lost. Mr. Fogarty had solved the problem of insurgents and successfully protected his men.

And he proved he could read a map. "was very well trained," Mr. Fogarty said. "I had wonderful commanders. I was with an infantry division that knew what they were doing, the 25th Infantry, the famous Tropic Lightening, 4th Brigade of the 9th Infantry, the Manchus. They are very well respected, even when you read about them now."

They mostly stayed at Chu Chi, one of the fire support bases, in the south, in the Mekong Delta, but once they did do an insertion into Cambodia and run missions. There were never civilians around. To Mr. Fogarty, the Cambodian landscape untouched by war seemed idyllic and dreamlike.

"We began to work at night and sleep during the day at the fire support base. We were being taken to where the enemy was by helicopter," Mr. Fogarty said. "When we weren't getting enough body count, the missions became more challenging, more risky."

Mr. Fogarty would stage ambushes with three squads and eight-man teams at night on trail junctions several hundred yards from each other. The kill zones could not face each other and the artillery grids had to be plotted carefully.

Then Mr. Fogarty had to make sure the squad leaders were coordinated so all the teams would operate seamlessly in the dark.

One ambush was set off "when one guy thought he saw movement" and opened up on the mirage. The troops were eager to inspect the kill. Mr. Fogarty had all he could do to make them wait until morning.

At first light, they found one lone Viet Cong corpse with his tattered cap beside him on the ground and a picture of his family inside the cap.

These night missions continued and "for months we never found anything." Night after night, anxiety and dread, with no adrenaline rush of combat. A recipe for long-lasting traumatic stress.

After six months leading a standard rifle platoon, Mr. Fogarty thought he caught a break. He was assigned to the recon group the Lancer Rifles of the First Brigade 25th Infantry. It relieved him from being a platoon leader.

Their mission was to develop target situations for other platoons and companies to respond to. They buried sensors to detect Viet Cong foot traffic.

It was on such a mission that Bobby G. Swanson was fatally wounded. A Duffle Bag Alert Device was seeing a lot of activity, "almost as if someone had been camping on it," Mr. Fogarty said, and they were sent out to check on it.

They landed and their Vietnamese scout Ngu heard talking from Viet Cong hiding in a hole. Their platoon sergeant was on R & R, so it was up to Mr. Fogarty to instruct Ngu to tell them to surrender.

"He called out in Vietnamese," Mr. Fogarty said, "And they opened fire on us. Bobby turned and was shot in the buttock, Ngu was shot in the foot, and I was grazed in the face. My radioman fell to the ground and pulled the wire out of the handset while I was still holding it."

Now they had no radio and were cut off from contact with the chopper. They also had no medic. They never had a medic, however every infantry person was instructed in basic first aid. Mr. Fogarty crept forward and dragged Bobby back to safety.

"We carried Bobby 50 yards to the landing zone. I told the two rifle men to strip off his clothes. I popped purple smoke to signal the helicopter. We stood on the LZ holding him up naked."

He sent Bobby on a chopper back to the support base. When Mr. Fogarty arrived there, he discovered Bobby had bled to death. He was emotionally wrung out. Guilt haunted him.

He was debriefed and "there were more questions than usual" from intelligence. His men were also interrogated. But the fact remained- there was no medic, and no NCO. "And weeks later I got a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for Valor," Mr. Fogarty said. "We continued our challenging missions with lots of time off."

Each night Ta Ning was either mortared or rocketed. Mr. Fogarty earned his official Purple Heart when his barracks was hit by a mortar.

"Suddenly we heard a crash as the round came through the roof and flattened the barracks. Shrapnel tore through my underarm."

Without Mr. Fogarty knowing, each time he was wounded the Red Cross delivered a telegram to his parents, telling them the news.

The arm was not healing due to the heat, so he was shipped home a month early.

He came through the airport in Oakland and there were people screaming at him. He was in uniform, wearing his jump boots and medals, his arm in a sling, and several loudly shouting the epithet "baby killer" at him. One actually spit at him. "I never put my uniform on again," said Mr. Fogarty.

"A civilian came up to me and took my arm, a businessman. He said, 'Lieutenant, the war is very unpopular. Come with me and I'll show you where your gate is'," Mr. Fogarty said.

And that was his reception home. This was a guy who put his life on the line and was decorated for valor with two Bronze Stars, two Air Medals, two Purple Hearts, and New York State's highest award, the Conspicuous Service Cross with four silver clusters. He is most proud of this last award because it represents the ideal of a citizen army.

Many of the quotes attributed to Mr. Fogarty in this article are in fact from a Vietnam memoir he wrote 10 years ago. He was experiencing vivid dreams and memories, and the memoir was suggested as therapy, a chance to reconnect with the trauma of the battlefield. At times it is reminiscent of Tim O'Brien's eloquent depictions of war in books such as "The Things They Carried" and "If I Die in a Combat Zone."

Mr. Fogarty credits his therapist Larry Keating with helping the healing process and easing his nightmares. Mr. Keating is a licensed clinical social worker and the owner of Transitions Counseling Service in Smithtown, a private practice that assists those in need of social services, including

veterans. The VFW in Westhampton also provides comprehensive support for active-duty service professionals and veterans.

In an effort to give Vietnam veterans their long-due recognition, Mr. Fogarty also spearheaded the VFW's effort to build a Vietnam Memorial at the Westhampton Cemetery. Mr. Fogarty was charged with making contact with local veterans interested in having their names included on the memorial. He was wildly successful.

The rose-colored granite memorial, featuring the names of over 125 Vietnam veterans, was unveiled on Memorial Day, May 29, 2006.

Almost 50 years after Bobby G. Swanson's death, Mr. Fogarty is making plans to visit his sister and perform a memorial service at his grave in Texas. And if you drive out to the cemetery in Westhampton to see the Vietnam Memorial, there in the middle ranks you'll find the name—Bobby G. Swanson. He'll be remembered. His second lieutenant made sure of that.

The Westhampton Free Library and Westhampton community thank Mr. Fogarty for his service to his country and community.



Creighton Berry

Let's be clear. When Creighton Berry was drafted out of Pratt Institute in his junior year, it was a different world.

It was 1943. There was a black army and there was a white army, and Mr. Berry eventually ended up in the black army. But, first he had an adventure.

"I was drafted into the Army Air Corps and assigned directly to a combat engineer company at Fort Dix," Mr. Berry wrote in his memoir. Because of his artistic talent, the Army assigned him to a camouflage unit out at Mitchel Field on Long Island.

"The Army assumed I was a white student. I was the only black member of the unit," Mr. Berry said recently.

It was at Mitchel Field that he was busted for the crime of walking around being black. He had been in the service only three weeks.

The base commander spotted him on the exercise field and called out the dogs. "The base commander had me taken out of the unit at Mitchel at three in the morning," Mr. Berry said. "He was a prejudiced Southern colonel and had the MPs pick me up in the middle of the night."

He was a 19-year-old kid from the Bronx and he was headed south for the first time. They transferred him to an African-American unit at Langley Field, in Virginia. He was placed in an Army Air Corps Signal Corps battalion.

The base commander found out he was an artist and asked him to paint a mural.

"I did my research and took Polaroid pictures," Mr. Berry said. "And I painted the whole mural in sections illustrating the entire Signal Corps company's



Mr. Creighton Berry: World War II
Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

activities on the field of battle. It filled the entire top wall of the officer's club." He depicted the unit constructing telephone poles and stringing wire for communication while under fire, and in the center of the painting he put the colonel in charge.

"It was so successful," Mr. Berry said, "The Colonel made me a Special Services specialist, with the classification number 442." On his discharge papers, it says he was an Entertainment Specialist 442. "That classification would follow me wherever I went in the Army Air Corps," Mr. Berry said.

"At Langley, we were in charge of morale, well-being and entertainment of the troops," Mr. Berry wrote. "The unit was made up of musicians and singers and clerks to run the enlisted men's service clubs."

One day in late 1943, they were able to get the heavyweight champion Joe

Louis to box in an exhibition fight with Sugar Ray Robinson. All the military personnel in the area were clamoring to attend.

What a trip. Mr. Berry was able to meet Joe Louis personally. His baseball team in the Bronx called themselves "the Brown Bombers" in honor "of the one and only Joe Louis." And now here he was in the flesh.

The 442 designation was Mr. Berry's ticket to an interesting ride through the war years. He was able to perform a lot of varied activities to help his fellow enlisted men.

As Mr. Berry points out in his memoir, "Of course, in this time of segregation, all of our enlisted men were African-American and 95 percent of our officers were white. Our company commander was African American, but my Special Services Unit officer was a white male from Connecticut."

He did intelligence work, like training G.I. ground personal to recognize enemy aircraft and differentiate them from Allied planes. As the non-commissioned officer in charge (a sergeant), he did public relations work for the Army, acting as a liaison to the towns and communities surrounding the various bases he was assigned to.

After Langley, he was stationed briefly at Selfridge Field, outside Detroit. "There was already a painter there," Mr. Berry wrote, "so I let him keep the job." He describes the time and the base in Michigan as "lovely."

"When our unit was transferred from Michigan to an Army Air Base in Walterboro, South Carolina, all the sad and horrible experiences of the world came into my life," Mr. Berry wrote.

In 1944, Walterboro was reassigned to First Air Force and became an advanced combat training base for individual fighters.

Over 500 of the famed Tuskegee airmen blew through Walterboro Army

Airfield, when Mr. Berry was there, from April 1944 to October 1945, and "others from an elite Black Bombers squadron assigned to our base." It also hosted a 250 person prisoner of war camp.

"When I was at Walterboro," Mr. Berry said, "what was originally the African-American Tuskegee 99th Pursuit Squadron came through the base on their way back from overseas for rehab work. We tried to make contact with their families back home. We did contact work for them to help them relocate because they were going to be transferred to different parts of the country."

"Some wanted to leave the Army and some wanted to stay in. We worked with them on their future plans," he said.

Let's be clear just who Mr. Berry was dealing with. This was one of the most successful flying squadrons in American military history.

According to the New York Times, May 27, 1997: The 1,000 black pilots of the Tuskegee Airmen flew 1,575 missions and more than 15,000 sorties over northern Africa and Europe during World War II. They destroyed more than 250 enemy aircraft on the ground and 150 in the air and fiercely protected the American bombers they escorted.

"Sixty-six of them were killed in action and 32 were taken prisoner, but they never lost an aircraft they escorted over hostile territory. Despite the racism of the time, white bomber crews began requesting the black pilots as escorts."

However, when they got home, attitudes were different, or more precisely, attitudes were still the same.

"The town of Walterboro was an old, segregated, racist town still behaving like it was in a Confederate state," Mr. Berry wrote. "When the elite black fliers came back from overseas, they had forgotten the prejudice of the southern culture."

"When these officers tried to go to town to eat or buy things, they were treated very harshly and insulted," Mr. Berry wrote. "Special Services tried to restrict access to the town due to conflicts between the locals and the black airmen and soldiers."

To make matters worse, the prisoners of war held at the base received better treatment.

"German and Italian prisoners of war held at the Walterboro base were treated better than we were," said Col. Hiram Mann, of Titusville, Florida, a Tuskegee pilot, the New York Times reported. "On the weekend the chamber of commerce and fraternal organizations would take the German and Italian prisoners into town to the movies and for recreation in places the black military could not go. That was very unsettling," Col. Mann said.

"They were shocked," Mr. Berry said. "A couple of them wanted to get into their planes and strafe the town."

The last straw came when the black fliers saw that the POWs were allowed to eat on the white side of the dining room.

"We got sent to a base at Walterboro, South Carolina, and we saw German POWs do things on that base that we couldn't do," Lt. Col. Dryden, a Tuskegee pilot, recalled in an article in the Chicago Tribune, March 19, 2007. "I was seething."

"The fliers were so upset after returning from the Italian war zone that they were ready to bomb little Walterboro to bits," Mr. Berry wrote in his memoir.

The New York Times article reported that "one Tuskegee airman got so frustrated that he flew mock strafing runs over the city with his P-38 fighter and was drummed out of the service." It is Mr. Berry's recollection, however, that none of the strafers were ever identified.

"As a result, the tensions grew very nasty there," Mr. Berry said recently at

his home. "The Army had to bring in the only African-American general of the time, Gen. Benjamin O. Davis. He came in to talk to the officers to try to calm them down. He transferred them to a base in the northern part of the country."

And Gen. Davis had to make a speech on the base to calm the town down. Mr. Berry wrote, "The Army pledged to work with the businesspeople in the town and an effort was made to come to some understanding. But remember, this was the South in 1945."

Although Mr. Berry stayed in the states and kept his assignments in country, once he found himself stranded behind enemy lines.

"As a Special Services noncom, I was a sergeant in charge of following up on soldiers when they went home on furlough. I'd leave the base when they got in trouble and see if I could get them back to where they belonged."

He was riding with military police to Columbia, South Carolina, and managed to get a young soldier back to his base. Then, the MPs had an emergency call and left him on his own in Columbia. They gave him a bus ticket.

"I got on the bus, transferred at a stop between Orangeburg and Walterboro, and rode until the bus stopped at a diner in the back woods," Mr. Berry said. He ate in the segregated area and then waited outside at the bus stop. It was there he had a runin with the junior varsity of the local Ku Klux Klan. He had parachuted into a war zone.

"I was waiting for the bus and three kids in their early 20s started harassing me. This white farmer came out of the woods with a shotgun and told them to leave me alone. He stood there with me at the bus stop with a shot gun. His son was in the service in the Pacific. 'He's wearing the same uniform you're wearing'," he said. "'I'll wait with you until the next bus comes along.'" And he did. Mr. Berry was able to get on his bus and make it back to the base in one piece.

Perhaps it is at this point on the lonely ride back through the fields of South Carolina that the title of Mr. Berry's book first occurred to him: "Is This My Country 'tis of Thee, Sweet Land of Diversity?"

So, Mr. Berry experienced the war years in a menacing land where hostilities rumbled constantly beneath the surface. In many ways, his Special Services outfit was on the frontlines of history, negotiating the racial divide on the angry streets of Walterboro.

A native New Yorker, Mr. Berry grew up in Manhattan and the South Bronx. His father, Otis, was a postal worker who survived a mustard gas attack while serving in the Army during the First World War.

Mr. Berry attended James Monroe High School and later graduated from Brooklyn's Pratt Institute. His advanced work includes studies at New York's School of Visual Arts. He knew from childhood that he wanted to be an artist. He followed his own bliss long before Joseph Campbell dreamed up the concept.

His first break came when he was hired as an illustrator by a Pratt alumnus who was aggressively looking for a Pratt graduate. Color was not an issue. It was the quality of his degree.

In the all-white world of Manhattan advertising, he made a life for himself in the visual arts as an art director and commercial illustrator, working 10 to 12 hour days. He worked for many of the major stores in New York.

During Mr. Berry's groundbreaking career in advertising, he served as executive art director of the former Gimbel's (New York) department store for many years. As someone once said of the Tuskegee Airmen, Mr. Berry fought stereotypes, overcame them and prevailed.

A nationally recognized artist, Mr. Berry's work over the past 70 years includes mixed media collages, watercolor, acrylic and oil paintings.

A longtime volunteer in the Presbyterian church, today he creates artwork at his studio in Quiogue, New York.

The Westhampton Free Library would like to thank Jeanette Smith of Westhampton Beach for bringing Mr. Berry to our attention. We would also like to thank Mr. Berry for his service to his country, his spiritual presence in our community and his luminous artwork.

Charles Ramirez

Those who find their direction in life can often point to one influential figure that provided the inspiration for their success. Charles Ramirez, a veteran of nine deployments to date, found his inspiration through his fourth-grade teacher.

"He was a fighter pilot during Vietnam and he continued to serve in the reserves," explained Mr. Ramirez, who was a student at Saddle Rock Elementary School in Great Neck at the time. The teacher, Mr. Allen, had piloted the newly introduced McDonnell Douglas F15 fighter jets. "Our core curriculum in the fourth grade was aerodynamics and geography. We were learning basic engineering because of this teacher and it stuck with me."

Mr. Ramirez enlisted in the Marine Corps before he graduated from South Side High School in Rockville Centre. His plan was to fly for the Marine Corps and then get his commission through them. He was 17 years old when he was sent to Parris Island, South Carolina, for training.

Giving his all, Mr. Ramirez pushed the limits and sustained an injury to his leg that was so severe he opted for a medical discharge in 1984, the same year he enlisted in the Corps.

Undeterred by the setback to his career path, he enrolled at Dowling College. While pursuing an aeronautics degree at The School of Aviation, his friend told him about "this unit in Westhampton." One sunny afternoon in July of 1986, the two friends drove out to the Air National Guard 106th Rescue Wing. "My friend enlisted and I reenlisted," said Mr. Ramirez, who noted that it took one and a half years for him to obtain a medical clearance.

"My goal was always to get an aeronautics degree and fly for the military," he said. "My first job with the Air Force was as an aircraft mechanic." As it turned out, he was beyond the age to become an Air Force pilot when he graduated from Dowling College in January of 1993 with a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautics.



Charles Ramirez:
Senior Master Sergeant, 106th Rescue Wing, Iraq and Afghanistan
Photograph provided by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

An opportunity arose for Mr. Ramirez to transfer to the 102nd Rescue Squadron just prior to his commencement from Dowling. He was hired and began training. "I fell in love with the career," he said, explaining that he is an Airborne Mission Systems Specialist.

Then, as now, he handled all of the tactical communications, command and control, and worked specialized equipment when searching for survivors. Being the communications hub of rescue efforts at such a young age was amazing to him. But he was working part-time for the 102nd and needed to supplement his income.

"I became a district manager for a ski shop," he said. With an office in Hicksville and stores spread out between White Plains and Sayville, he juggled both careers until a full-time position opened up on base. "The family-owned business wanted me to leave the military. The commitment to

being aircrew was over 100 days a year; it was hard on the family business," he said.

The Deployments

Operation Desert Storm followed Operation Desert Shield and occurred in response to Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's army crossing the border into the tiny, oil-rich country of Kuwait.

Although Mr. Ramirez doesn't consider it his first deployment due to the location and short duration of the mission, 10 days, he was sent to Iceland to provide rescue coverage over the north Atlantic during Operation Desert Storm. "'t was my first experience flying international. We worked our tails off on the HC130s," he said.

Operation Northern Watch was headquartered at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey. The United States, along with coalition partners – United Kingdom and Turkey – formed a combined task force that was charged with enforcing the no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel in Iraq and monitoring Iraqi compliance with several UN Security Council resolutions.

"We were rescue coverage for fighters who were patrolling the northern no-fly zone in Iraq," Mr. Ramirez said of his 1999 deployment. But during a stop at Aviano Air Base in Italy, he witnessed two F-117s take off for operations in Kosovo. "One of those pilots was shot down and recovered before we got to Incirlik."

From Incirlik, they were sent to Kuwait. Just three days before they thought they were going home, a presidential recall redirected their unit to Operation Southern Watch in Kuwait. "I spent an additional month there before new crews were sent there. It was a great deployment," he said.

Witnessing the awe-inspiring power of F-117s accelerating off the runway during his first Operation Northern Watch deployment was eclipsed by the turn of events prior to his second deployment to Turkey in 2002. "We had to cancel our full wedding plans due to the deployment," Mr. Ramirez said, smiling and shaking his head. The happy couple exchanged vows in the

brand- new Southampton Court House on January 25, 2002, instead. It may be a fitting start to married life when one partner is active military. "In some respect, I think it is easier on me when I deploy, I'm always working so it's easy for me to focus. My wife has to deal with all the home and family issues alone."

After his second Operation Northern Watch deployment, he had two weeks at home before being sent to the Dominican Republic for joint training. It was only 10 days, but he was still a newlywed and on his return he received orders to return to Kuwait for a new mission, Operation Southern Watch. "I had just seven days to pack and figure out a way to tell Cindy," he said.

Operation Southern Watch established a no-fly zone over southern Iraq to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 688. This resolution primarily directed the protection of Shiite Muslims from attack by Saddam Hussein's military forces.

The desert landscape felt like being on the moon, according to Mr. Ramirez, who provided rescue coverage for fighters in the southern no-fly zone during two deployments in 1999 and 2001. "It's a little surreal when in the Middle East because outside the city there are plastic bags and garbage all over the place, while the city is spotless," he recalled. The sand storms also left an impression. "You see it like a thunder storm in Florida – a wall of rain moving toward you. It's like a cloud and then you're in it and it's completely different from anything you've experienced."

Operation Iraqi Freedom was authorized to rid Iraq of Dictator Saddam Hussein and eliminate his ability to develop weapons of mass destruction.

While providing rescue coverage for all fighters in Iraq, Mr. Ramirez had an adventure that he never wants to experience again. "We were restricted to base, except we went out the perimeter to this makeshift market early one morning," he said, explaining that they saw young Army guys in the dining hall and invited them to see the planes. "These kids were amazing. It was their job to be in the element where bullets are flying. I was on a midnight and we took them out to the airplane, showed them the equipment, and they asked if

we wanted to go outside and see the market."

Mr. Ramirez got off duty at 6:00 a.m. and three Army guys in a Humvee with a turret-mounted machine gun picked him up at 7:00 a.m. They had told Mr. Ramirez and his friend to bring their armored vests and helmets, but they didn't think to check out weapons. Fortunately the Army guys brought extra weapons. To get off the base, there were three checkpoints: the first was to make sure no one was under duress, the second was a weapons check point where one of the Army guys got up to man the machine gun, and at the third, it was lock and load.

"Right outside, a quarter-mile off base, they were selling Iraqi money, uniforms from the Republican Guard and rotisserie chicken. The thing that sticks in my mind is the guys we were with knew the merchant of this store. We figured we would buy money from him. The merchant was living close to the city during the invasion and he lost his arm in a coalition bombing," he said. He looked right at Mr. Ramirez and told him he was so grateful for them being there. "The injured were medevaced out to Germany and they just appreciated it. The store merchant interpreted this as his price for freedom."

The group made it back to base without incident but seeing the armed coalition vehicles and realizing the danger just a short distance off base kept him from venturing beyond the perimeter again. As a way to thank the young Army guys, Mr. Ramirez gave them a roll of duct tape and a bag of tent lines. "It was like giving them gold," he said in amazement. "The guy couldn't believe I was giving them a whole roll of duct tape."

Operation Enduring Freedom – Horn of Africa was the military operation authorized to combat militant Islamism and piracy in the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Ramirez was deployed in 2007, 2009 and 2015 to provide rescue coverage for joint forces in Djibouti and the surrounding area. "The Navy runs the base and the base started to look more like a ship as the years passed," he said. They lived in real tents during the first deployment, the tents turned into shipping containers during the second, and then stacks of shipping containers were there when he returned in 2015. That year, he had a

penthouse suite at the very top of a stack with a nice view of the runway. "I was always on night duty. At eight in the morning I would be woken up by the French Foreign Legion fighters taking off on the runway."

Hometown Rescue

Despite nine deployments to date, Mr. Ramirez's most intricate rescue effort occurred out of the Westhampton Beach base. "I just came in to fly a night training line. I got a call from my boss and he said we have a rescue going on. 'Could you be on it?' 'Absolutely,'" he said.

They took off at nine o'clock at night to go into the middle of the ocean. Once on scene, it was around one o'clock in the morning. The captain of a 55-foot sailboat had recently had surgery and his kidneys were shutting down. Three pararescuemen, a boat and medical supplies were deployed. Mr. Ramirez coordinated the pickup with a tanker that was in the area. Fortunately, it was an English-speaking crew, out of Australia, but they almost got killed getting on the tanker. "We saved his life but none of that makes news. There is something about being the anonymous guy that I like. I learned that from senior folks that were around me early in my career, especially Don Cannet," Mr. Ramirez said, speaking of VFW Post 5350 member and employee.

A Future Deployment

Charles is currently planning for his 10th deployment. As with his previous nine deployments, he can't talk about specific engagements or locations of missions. It is enough to know that his training and experience help to provide a safer world for his fellow airmen and those of us who enjoy the freedoms they defend.

The Westhampton Free Library and the Westhampton Beach community thank Mr. Ramirez for his dedication and service to his nation and community.

Thomas Quinn

Tom Quinn enlisted in the Air National Guard, Westhampton Beach, in 1979. He was close to a decade out of high school and had been pursuing a degree in physics at Stony Brook University before leaving due to the ideology prevalent at the school.

"I was in the doldrums and ended up working different jobs after I left Stony Brook," he said. "At one point, I was working with a couple friends, and Greg Scott, a mechanic at the base who was working on C130s was one of them. We got talking and he sold me on the idea of joining the unit out here. I wanted some connection with the military."

Despite his brother's, a former Air Force B52 mechanic, and cousin's, a former Army infantryman, exhortations to stay clear of the military or they would "break both his legs" due to the anti-war and anti-establishment sentiment at the time, Mr. Quinn was motivated by a military lineage that began with both grandfathers.

He worked part-time on the weekends and participated in active-duty training throughout the year. "Ever since I was a kid, I liked aircraft," he said. "I scored very well on all the tests, so I had a choice of career fields." He selected avionics and began learning about electronics on the aircraft. A full-time offer to work for the Air National Guard came in 1981.

It was unusual for aircraft mechanics to work more than one airframe, yet Mr. Quinn worked on both the C130s and the H3 helicopters. As a member of the Air Rescue and Recovery Group, he began traveling to stateside exercises at Air National Guard training sites and Air Force bases – Plattsburg, New York; Gulfport, Mississippi; Alpena, Michigan; and Las Vegas, Nevada were a few.

The travel appealed to him and when an opportunity to work as a scanner on



Thomas Quinn: Master Sergeant (ret.) Iraq and Afghanistan
Photo provided by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

rescue missions was offered, he accepted. Sitting in front of the large window on an HC130, he would scan the water for a capsized boat or man overboard. There were formulas they used involving water and wind currents that helped to facilitate the rescues. "It's very scientific how they go about looking for someone in the water," he said. "We would fly a couple hundred feet above the water and employ the creeping leg or expanding rectangle." Once a target was located, they would launch the PJs from the aircraft and vector in a helicopter to pick up the men.

Afterward, Mr. Quinn signed on to the aircraft maintenance program. He flew with the aircraft on training missions wherever they went in the country. "We would land at an Air Force base or another guard base," he explained. "Because we had the H130s, we usually would locate another 130 base to get parts if needed."

Mr. Quinn was drawn to the National Guard as opposed to active duty primarily because he could choose to participate in a variety of work commitments. "When I enlisted, we didn't have a full- time fire department at the base. It was volunteer. I joined that and got to be a fireman while working the aircraft as an avionics guy and occasionally working as a scanner. In the winter when it snowed, we could join up to plow," he said. "When I was a little kid, I played with little trucks and little planes and when I grew up, I played with big trucks and big planes.

"After the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster in 1986, NASA decided to create a rescue program for future flights. A lot of the units in the 106th were involved with developing this in conjunction with the space agency. My section, Avionics, was tasked with the installation and testing of the Personnel Locator System, PLS. We installed a unit called a transponder on the aircraft that was capable of tracking up to nine complimentary radios that were part of the astronauts' survival gear. If they had to egress the shuttle in case of any emergency, these radios automatically turned on. The aircraft could then track each one, getting bearing and distance information for each unit, individually. Along with the initial installation, I was involved with the operational test and evaluation of the system. After the successful completion of this, I was then involved in creating the technical orders for the installation, use and maintenance of the system. This system showed enough promise that it was adopted for aircrew and PJ rescue operations. Through our work, it became a standard piece of equipment on Air Force and Air Guard aircraft. This work eventually led to my being detailed as the Avionics Quality Assurance Specialist," Mr. Quinn explained.

"The scanning program was fading, the fire department was fading because they finally brought on a full-time fire department, so we were being phased out. It was perfect timing," he said. "I really put myself wholeheartedly into the avionics. It ingrained me more into the rescue mission. I attended a lot of conferences."

In the late 1980s going into the 1990s, the C130s were scheduled for modifications to modernize their systems. Around the same time, they were

changing from the H3 helicopters to the H60. There were conferences in Georgia, New Mexico and the Sikorsky facility in Connecticut. Aircrew members and the engineers that were involved in design and development of the aircraft provided their analyses. "Occasionally, I got to give input from the maintenance point of view. Tech orders were also developed during conferences, which are step-by-step instructions to perform a task on the aircraft," he said. "I was involved in the development of the tech orders and occasionally, the testing and evaluation of the new systems that were being installed on the C130s and H60 aircraft. I found myself also involved in the installation and modification of new systems in the H60 upgrade program. Some of these modifications made our aircraft valuable to assist the DEA in some of their missions."

Going from day-to-day working on an aircraft to being part of the development of the aircraft and using the sum total of all the knowledge he gained through the years was a rewarding experience.

When the upgrades had been completed, the next big challenge was passing an operational readiness inspection to obtain their C-rating (combat rating). "Passing that inspection was the big focus, and we passed with flying colors. We had achieved that in time for deployments that coincided with the Persian Gulf War. That started a lot of my overseas tours in combat zones," he said.

The first was Operation Southern Watch in Kuwait. "We had a big one come about when one of the other units had failed their Operational Readiness Inspection and we had to cover their deployment at the last minute," he said. "We had to put together a whole deployment package for Kuwait in less than 48 hours. Usually, they have 72 hours to put a package together." The Department of Defense was impressed with their efficiency since no unit had ever done that before, especially a Guard unit.

"Along with everything else for these deployments, I had been working with the Air Combat Command and the Joint Service Rescue Center to obtain an important piece of mission operation equipment, SATCOM, for our aircraft. Prior to this time, we were 'borrowing' these radios from other commands.

The meeting with the JSRC in Kuwait was a success and led to funding and further modifications that saw SATCOM installed on our C130 and H60 aircraft as standard equipment, enhancing our mission capability," he explained.

There was a unit deployed to Operation Northern Watch in Turkey that was reassigned to Kuwait to start the deployment for Tom and his unit. "We followed up right behind them with the package we put together. I got on the first rotation going to Kuwait to relieve the unit that was there from Turkey," he said. "We set up the deployment package for the rest of it. It was a 90-day rotation for that one." He was still doing avionics systems on the HC130s. "We were pulling what was called alert duty. We were on standby for any combat contingency that came up. We assisted other aircraft and their maintenance during downtime when the HC130s and H60s didn't require maintenance."

While based in Kuwait, Mr. Quinn would meet up with friends and take a military van into the city. He enjoyed meeting the Kuwaitis and learning about people from different cultures, especially in Bahrain, which was a tourist mecca in the Arabian Gulf where a melting pot of Middle Eastern, Russian and Eastern European visitors mingled in the bazaar and bars.

Mr. Quinn's fourth and last deployment to Operation Southern Watch in Kuwait took place in 1999. Then, after 9/11 he was on his way to Afghanistan when a cardiac episode caused him to be taken off deployment status. "I was in my 50s at the time," he said.

He changed career fields and took over the maintenance training section at the base. "It's a whole separate career field. We worked Maintenance Operation Flight," he said, and explained, "that was a nondeployment position so I didn't hold up anyone moving up to my spot. I did like the training slot because I got to utilize all the things I learned over the years. There was a lot more ancillary training. We were fighting with Air Force headquarters to work with us to develop the training programs in a way that was beneficial to everybody. It became difficult for traditional guardsmen who only were on base one

weekend a month to complete all the ancillary training and still apply themselves to their career field." He worked the MOF training for close to five years before retiring at the age of 58 in 2010.

As a member of VFW Post 5350 since 2000, he helps fellow veterans navigate the VA system of benefits and assistance. Mr. Quinn is also an inspector for the Board of Elections, where he has been assisting voters at the Westhampton Beach Fire House for the past five years.

The Westhampton Free Library and Westhampton Beach community thank Mr. Quinn for his dedication to his country and community.

Jeffrey C. McArthur

Cpl. Jeffrey McArthur's tour of duty in the I Corps Area of South Vietnam, the most northern area at the Demilitarized Zone, was approximately from April 1968 to October 1969. He was given many diverse duties during this time. He was assigned to Marine Air Group 39, Quang Tri, 22 statute miles south of the DMZ. His primary duty was that of Combat Heavy Truck Driver, although many other duties were assigned him.

The first of these duties was that of assistant to the paymaster. The Paymaster and Cpl. McArthur were sent to Army helicopter landing zones to pay the Marines assigned to these outfits. They included U.S. Army Landing Zones Carol, Nancy, Sharon and USMC base at Khe Sahn. Cpl. McArthur had all his combat gear blown from his body by the concussion of North Vietnamese army artillery at Khe Sahn.

As the water truck driver to refill the Marine Air Station's water towers at Quang Tri, Cpl. McArthur witnessed a daylight rocket attack that blew up the Marine ammunition dump at Dong Ha. The explosions were incredible to helplessly observe. Unbelievably, no deaths were sustained.

Cpl. McArthur was then assigned convoy duty driving two-and-a-half-ton supply trucks from DaNang to Quang Tri. The convoys survived numerous road mine explosions, a blown-up bridge with accompanying enemy sniper fire, as well as motor vehicle accidents.

After convoy duty, Cpl. McArthur broke the lower enlisted man's primary rule and volunteered to be a .50 caliber machine gun operator on USMC twin engine medium lift helicopters. He flew with HMM 161 and HMM 262 (HMM 262 had lost two-thirds of its helicopters and aircrews during the Siege of Khe Sahn). In 15 days on flight status, Cpl. McArthur had experienced that the North Vietnamese Army had captured U.S. military radios and munitions. They used these captured assets wisely to lure U.S. air



Mr. Jeffrey C. McArthur: Vietnam War
Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

resources into well-planned and executed ambushes. The air crews Cpl. McArthur worked with learned to survive these well-calculated assaults very quickly.

Cpl. McArthur was with an aircrew that flew into the jungle canopy to pick up a Marine unit with two North Vietnamese Army prisoners. The pilots backed the large twin engine helicopter out of the jungle, under moderate enemy fire, by up and down motions in reverse!

The only night operation experienced was the extraction of a South Vietnamese Army infantry company. This was on the plains below the infamous "Rock Pile." They were ambushed by a sizeable North Vietnamese Army force. This whole combat action was one surreal visual event with unbelievably positive results for the Marines and South Vietnamese Army.

The next task assigned to Cpl. McArthur was to "pass the word" to the 3rd Marine Division Marines and Fleet Marines stationed at Quang Tri, Dong Ha and the Demilitarized Zone. Cpl. McArthur and another Marine gave lectures on the safe usage of the Neil Robertson Emergency Stretcher. This stretcher was used to transport severely wounded troops up to a hovering medical evacuation helicopter. This duty was unique for Cpl. McArthur because he had never been in the jungle with the "grunt"infantry troops. This was Cpl. McArthur's first up close "enemy" sighting.

The remainder of Cpl. McArthur's Vietnam tour of duty was better than the other duties. He was promoted to corporal and assigned to the Marine Air Group Medical Evacuation Helicopter Unit. He met one of his best friends there, Navy Corpsman W.J. Hutton (Wubba J). WJ was one of the many U.S. Navy Corpsmen who attended to Cpl. McArthur's burns from an enemy 122-millimeter rocket explosion. Cpl. McArthur now believes these men are the real heroes.

Unfortunately, W.J. Hutton did not return from a medical evacuation mission. Cpl. McArthur, as well as other U.S. Navy and Marine personnel, will never forget this man and the aircrew he served with.

Prior to Cpl. McArthur's rotation back to the U.S., the 3rd Marine Division advised that they had uncovered a complex of an underground enemy tunnel system just north of the 3rd Marine/MAG 39 base. Cpl. McArthur finally got to observe an actual North Vietnamese Army tunnel system. It was complete with cooking, dining, hospital, recovery, barracks, and recreation areas, and it was paneled and dry. The enemy was a good improviser.

Cpl. McArthur, USMC, was awarded the National Defense Service Medal; Vietnam Service Medal with four clusters; Vietnam Campaign Medal with 1960 device; Combat Action Award Ribbon and Good Conduct Medal (1st award).

Community Service

Cpl. Jeff McArthur and his wife, Libby, raised six children and live in Quiogue. They organized fundraisers for the Moose Lodge in Riverhead for about 12 years. He was also a Boy Scout Troop 62 leader for two and a half years. He and his wife now volunteer for VFW Post 5350.

As president of the Grumman Employees Corporation Pilots Club, he is currently mentoring as a certified flight instructor two 106th members who are studying to become commercial pilots.

The Westhampton Free Library and Westhampton community would like to thank Cpl. Jeffrey McArthur for his commitment to his country and community.

James Dougherty

Technical Sergeant James Dougherty of the 106th Rescue Wing just turned 30 this year, yet he has been a pararescuemen (PJ) for eight years and served overseas five times in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa.

His father, Chief Master Sergeant Dougherty, was a pararescuemen for the 106th and served alongside his son for a little more than a year. "He was a part-time guardsman for his entire career. He had civilian jobs as well," said the younger Dougherty. "I always heard stories about what they were doing through my father and the extended family of the 106th."

James began his training as soon as he graduated from high school. One year later he enlisted and soon became a full-time pararescuemen. "The pararescue pipeline is about two and a half years long," he explained. It is one of the longest special operations training courses in the world, according to the United States Air Force pararescue website. "We start at boot camp – basic training – at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. From there we go to the pararescue indoctrination course, a 10-week selection course. It's 10 weeks of calisthenics, swimming, running and water confidence."

"Water confidence is really drowning practice," he laughed. Each week the level of difficulty increases from a 25-meter breath-hold, underwater swim in the pool to 40 and then 50 meters. Each end-to-end swim must decrease in time from two minutes and 30 seconds to one minute and 15 seconds. "That's usually around the time everything starts going dark."

When the pararescue trainees take on snorkel training, it's more 007 than Caribbean holiday. "You have to share a snorkel with someone else underwater, and an instructor tries to prevent you from breathing with the snorkel. It's two minutes underwater; sometimes you breathe and sometimes you don't."



James Dougherty: Technical Sergeant, 106th Rescue Wing, Iraq and Afghanistan
Photographed by Michael Azzato, Selective Eye Photography

The next training consisted of open-and-closed-circuit scuba diving. "The Air Force created its own combat diving course," said James. "The equipment is public safety diving equipment. It" meant for working while under water, not looking at coral and fish."

After mastering the principles of diving, James was sent to Airborne School at Ft. Benning, Georgia, for basic paratrooper training. Military free-fall parachutist school in San Diego, California, was next. "Being in the Guard, the allotted slots for each course aren't the same for active duty. On the Guard side you bounce around to where there is an opening," he explained. Of the 120 pararescue hopefuls who started the selection, only 22 graduated. Then of those 22, James graduated, at the very end, with only six of them.

The Air Force Pararescue EMT course at Kirtland Air Force Base in New

Mexico provided James with a working knowledge of emergency medical technical procedures. After completing the two-phase training, he was sent to Tucson, Arizona, for hands-on medical training for six months. Upon completion of the course, he was awarded the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians-Paramedic certification.

The final phase of training, Air Force Pararescue Recovery Specialist Course, took place back at Kirtland Air Force Base. "They take all the training done at that point and put it all together – jump out of plane at a jump zone, navigate to the patient, stabilize and package for transport, move to a jump site and a helicopter, boat or car for pickup," he said. Completion of the final phase qualifies airmen as Pararescue Recovery Specialists for assignment to any Pararescue unit worldwide, and they are presented with the maroon beret, according to the United States Air Force Pararescue website.

James graduated in June of 2009. He came back to the 106th for 10 months and then was sent to Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn) for five months. "I flew with Navy medevac for two months, and the second two and half months I provided personnel recovery capabilities for the theater," he said.

He returned home to continue training – ice climbing in Colorado, New Hampshire, and the Gunks (Shawangunk Ridge); technical rope rescue; search and recovery dive training; backcountry skiing; and high surf training in Hawaii for a week to practice driving boats and jet skis in giant waves. The watercraft can be dropped out of the back of an aircraft followed by paratroopers who jump into the open ocean.

In the fall of 2011 he deployed to Afghanistan–Operation Enduring Freedom. "That was a really busy deployment in Helmand Province. We were providing TACEVAC. We would do a lot of the same stuff as medevac but more due to our advanced training," he explained. While Red Cross helicopters would have to wait for an armed escort, their helicopters and the pararescuemen were armed. "We would fly three to four missions per day doing those rescues. There was a lot of bad stuff, a lot of amputations – very traumatic

injuries from pressure plate IEDs." Being with pararescuemen he had trained with through the years helped James deal with the intensity of the mission. "We worked together as a team to give the best treatment possible. Everyone around us having the same experiences helped us to cope. We did a lot of good work there – very advanced medical treatment for paramedic-level providers."

In the fall of 2012 James was deployed to Afghanistan again – Operation Enduring Freedom. "Everything we did there was a little more significant. The year prior we picked people up for below-the-knee amputation. The following year I wouldn't consider that a severe injury. We would put on a tourniquet," he said. "This year there were more severe injuries like real bad blast injuries. Resources were a little further away. When something happened it was far more critical."

He was going on four years living out of a bag and that didn't stop until about three years ago. In the midst of his deployments and training, James married fellow 106th Staff Sergeant Lauryn Armusewicz. The Hampton Bays couple has two boys: James, 3 1/2, and Sean, 1 1/4 according to their proud father.

Two more deployments followed the marriage, both to the Horn of Africa and both for 60 days, to provide personnel recovery capabilities.

While in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, practicing rescuing people out of fast-moving water, swift-water rescue training, he got a call from the acting 103rd commander. He was told to have his guys dry their stuff out, pack their bags and meet up in Texas the next day. Hurricane Harvey's record rainfall and catastrophic flooding required immediate action. They flew to Texas and had to drive across the state to Fort Hood, which is where the rest of the 106th was deployed. The day after arriving, they went out at first light to survey the damage around the suburbs of Houston in HH-60 Pavehawk helicopters. "We had three helicopters flying with two pararescuemen on each one and flew around looking for people who were stranded in floodwater. On my helicopter we did 19 rescues the first day, all by hoist. The victims were on their roofs and hanging out of second-story windows," he said.

They were flying over areas that were more heavily flooded looking for people. Sometimes they would get a call and sometimes they would find the victims by chance. "We saw a guy waving and pointing across the street. They were fine but they were trying to direct our attention to something else, an elderly woman in the second story of her home. We had to hoist down because there were trees and power lines all over. We hoisted down to an SUV because the floodwater was moving swiftly. Once there we were able to see there was someone in the second story of the house." James told his partner to swim over and threw him a rope to hold onto. He climbed on top of the roof, broke the window and recovered the elderly woman. "It's really tough because you don't always have the answers and know that person's situation. We reassure them that we are going to do everything in their best interest," he explained.

The rest of the week he was with fellow pararescuemen Chad Evans in zodiac boats driving around flooded suburban towns looking for people and pets. They were getting information from the Texas Task Force 1, an urban search and rescue task force. "They were getting reports and we packed up, loaded trucks and went out searching for two to three days," he said. The 106th rescue wing rescued more than 500 people trapped in floodwaters in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey.

In December 2013, then Staff Sergeant James Dougherty received the fourth-highest award that the United States can bestow on a soldier: the Bronze Star for Valor. A year earlier James and five other members of the Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing had faced heavy machine gun fire from Taliban forces in Afghanistan as they raced from their helicopters to rescue four critically injured soldiers 50 yards away. James and his fellow Guardsmen were honored for their bravery and selfless commitment to service during the rescue mission.

Sergeant James Dougherty is the Junior Vice Commander at VFW Post 5350 in Westhampton Beach. The Westhampton Free Library and Westhampton community thanks Sergeant James Dougherty for his dedication and service to his country and community.



