

Editorial & Opinion

A Veterans' Day memorial to soldiers who didn't return

EDITOR'S NOTE: In honor of Veterans' Day, Friday, Nov. 11, we are pleased to present excerpts from an article honoring soldiers of World War II. The article was written by Gerard Muhl, a history teacher in the Greece School District, who hopes his research on the veterans of St. Mary's Parish, Rochester, will inspire other parishes to study their own histories.

By Gerard Muhl

World War II in Europe began at dawn on September 1, 1939, as units of the German armed forces crossed the Polish border. The war was to last nearly six years, and by its end, much of the civilized world lay in ruins. The magnitude of the drama often dwarfs the role of the individual serviceman. But, the individual, acting in unison with scores of others like him, actually turned the tide of the battle.

In the first six months of World War II, over 6,000 men from Rochester left home to fight. More than 200 physicians had answered the call by June, 1942. By then, 20 priests of the Rochester diocese were serving as chaplains. And over the years, 30,000 or more soldiers were to leave their homes to serve their country — many never to return. From Old St. Mary's parish alone, 234 young people joined the military, and many families sent more than one son or daughter into action.

Two years after the war ended, the parishioners at St. Mary's mounted a small bronze plaque in front of the church to honor 11 parish members who did not return from the war. With the passing years, the memory of those 11 began to dim and the plaque tarnished. Each Sunday fewer and fewer people would look up, asking, "Who were these men?"

The first soldier from St. Mary's to give his life in World War II was 27-year-old Robert L. Mains, a graduate of St. Boniface and Monroe High School, who enlisted in the Army Air Force in April, 1942, to train as a pilot. By April of 1944, he was stationed with the 8th Air Force in England and had flown his B-24 Liberator Bomber on 25 daylight missions deeper and deeper into Germany. On April 4, 1944, he boarded his aircraft just after dawn to prepare for the 800-mile round-trip bombing mission to Hamburg.

Although his crew did not know it at the time, their missions those months were in support of Operation Overlord: the Allied invasion of France. Their goal was to knock out strategic bridges, railroad lines and communication centers, so that when the invasion came two months later, the German forces would have greater difficulty in resupplying their troops.

Three hours into his 28th mission, 1st Lt. Mains' aircraft was struck by concentrated anti-aircraft fire from batteries on the outskirts of Hamburg. Other planes on the mission reported seeing the bomber break in two and fold up before a tremendous explosion and fireball. No parachutes were spotted. Finally, on September 26, 1945, the Department of the Army reported to Mrs. Alice Mains and her infant daughter that her husband was pre-

sumed killed in action.

Private Henry Griffin Jr. enlisted in the Army infantry on January 16, 1941, when he was only 21. Prior to that, he attended St. Francis Xavier School and graduated from Benjamin Franklin High School. His brother Delano was already in the Seabees, and his other brother was stationed in Alaska's Aleutian Islands. Henry Griffin's final training assignment was at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, where he met and married Corrine Murphy.

In May, 1944, he was in the 88th Division of General Mark Clark's 5th Army bogged down just south of Monte Cassino in Italy. The Italian army had already signed an armistice, but German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring had vowed to hold the "Gustov Line" with his crack troops until the rainy season would make fighting in that area almost impossible.

In a move to take pressure off the planned Anzio Landing, General Clark feigned a frontal attack at the German lines. It was during this attack that Private Griffin was listed as missing on May 4, 1944. Ten months later, his body was located and returned for burial in the States.

The tide of war turned against the Japanese in late 1942 and early 1943. They lost the Aleutian Islands, and the north Pacific was quiet. But in a great irregular arc from southern China all the way around to the central Pacific, the battles raged; the skies filled with smoke, the jungle with the rattle and blast of explosions, and the seas with sudden death.

MacArthur, in the central Philippines, needed the southern islands for air bases to support the projected Australian invasion of Borneo. Thus, the American press began reporting battles on the island of Mindanao. Flight Engineer Raymond Schutrum was there.

Schutrum, an East High graduate, enlisted in the Army Air Corps in April 8, 1942, just two months before his 32nd birthday. He quickly rose to the rank of staff sergeant and was sent to Hawaii in July, 1943. On that first "overseas" flight, his plane crashed in the Pacific. Though burned, he swam 50 yards to rescue his unconscious navigator, for which he received the Soldier's Medal.

On September 1, 1944, the 33rd Bomb Squadron took off from Davao Island in support of U.S. troops fighting in the jungles of Mindanao. En route to their target, they encountered exceptionally heavy enemy fire. Staff Sgt. Schutrum's Marauder bomber was destroyed. He was listed as missing in action — a designation later changed to killed in action, though no body was ever returned.

Upon graduation from Monroe High School, George E. Gamble Jr. entered a career as a professional baseball player. He played first for Sydney, Nova Scotia, then for teams in Rome and Geneva, New York. He entered the Army Air Force in 1942. He trained as a Mustang fighter pilot at Napin Field, Alabama, and then was sent to French Indo-China in May, 1944.

General Chennault's 14th Air Force was dominating the sky over southern and central

China and striking Japanese targets on Formosa. The Japanese responded to this pressure with operation ICHI-GO between April, 1944 and April, 1945. More than half of the U.S. bomber bases were put out of commission in this campaign.

Second Lt. Gamble flew 28 missions in his fighter plane, protecting American bombers and driving off Japanese invaders. On his 28th mission, December 4, 1944, his plane crashed, and he was listed as killed in action. He was awarded the Air Medal posthumously.

John A. Doty was a graduate of Monroe High School and an employee of Fashion Park until he enlisted in the Army in March, 1943. Five months later, he was in Europe as a squad leader in General Mark Clark's "Red Ball" Division. By the time he was 20 years old in 1945, he already had received two Purple Hearts for action in Anzio Beach and in Rome. Perhaps because his brother Willis was a prisoner of war in Germany, he felt a special need to drive the Nazis out of northern Italy and thus enable the 5th Army to enter Germany.

On April 6, 1945, Staff Sgt. John A. Doty was hit and killed by a German sniper just three days before General Clark's massive assault, which destroyed the German army in Italy 20 days later. Less than one month after Sgt. Doty's death, Hitler shot himself, and the war in Europe was over.

The last name on St. Mary's bronze plaque is that of Major Robert T. Dwyer, who actually died one year and a half after VJ day and the official end of World War II. But the war and its aftermath were direct causes of his death.

Born in 1905, Robert Dwyer graduated from Aquinas, Holy Cross College and Harvard Law School. At Holy Cross, he was a swimmer and a boxer. To earn money for law school, he worked briefly as a reporter for the *Rochester Journal* and taught debate at Nazareth College. In 1931, he was admitted to the bar and

practiced law with his father Eugene.

In 1934, at the height of the New Deal, he was defeated as Republican Party candidate for Fourth District State Assemblyman. He served as president of the Sagamore Hotel Corp. from 1939 to 1942 when he enlisted in the Army as a private. Because of his educational background, the Army sent him to the judge advocate general school in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he graduated in 1946 as a first lieutenant.

One of his first assignments was that of prosecutor in the Shanghai trial of Japanese accused of the murder of the General Doolittle flyers captured after the first U.S. raid on Tokyo in 1942. He next prosecuted 28 Germans in China who refused to surrender after the Japanese defeat and who continued subversive military activities.

In February, 1947, now promoted to major, Robert Dwyer was given an assignment to report directly to General MacArthur in Japan. He was to be in charge of the project to reorganize Japanese war-torn industries and to dissolve the remaining Japanese industrial and business monopolies. But before he could leave for Japan, he was admitted into the U.S. Army hospital in Shanghai, China, where he was diagnosed as suffering from acute uremia. Long days of work, little sleep, and the general stress of the military situation had weakened him to the point at which his body could not fight off the disease. He died quietly on March 19, 1947, and on May 30, he was buried with full military honors in Rochester's Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

So ended a chapter in the history of our country and in the history of one parish. The grieving has ended, the names are like a shadow from the past. But the small bronze plaque — now re-hung in a place of honor in the restored St. Mary's Church — remains as a reminder of those men from St. Mary's and Rochester who gave their all for that country in which they believed.

Letters

Catholics shouldn't mix with separated brethren

To the editor:

I am concerned. I received a copy of your August 25 edition of the *Courier-Journal* and, after reading the articles about the Billy Graham crusade, I had to write to ask, "Why?"

Why must we, Roman Catholics, refer ourselves to a "non-denominational," pseudo-Protestant, non-ordained minister to "renew" the Catholic faith?

Why do 150 to 250 Roman Catholics "come forward" and "declare for Christ" each night? Do they not realize that by being Catholic they have already *ipso facto* declared for Christ? Were they not confirmed? I don't believe that liturgical reform has gone so far as to expect, or even sanction, non-Catholic reconfirmation — does such a thing exist? — for confirmed Catholics, which is what "coming forward" is. If Catholics have fallen away, their recourse to be reaccepted into the Church is the sacrament of penance. Either they are Catholic and understand the meaning of being Catholic and its sacramentality, or they are Catholic in name only and accept any "good-sounding" mumbo-jumbo of a certainly diluted "Christianity?"

Why is Thomas Kirchoff, the parish crusade coordinator — a Catholic title? — allowed to say that Billy Graham's crusade is "the Lord's

work, and He won't let it fail? Does (Kirchoff) have diocesan authority to so teach? In my opinion, he is saying that the Catholic Church, vivified by the Holy Spirit, can't with its own power evangelize to its own community by itself, let alone to the world. Have we failed Christ's mandate to proclaim the word of God to our own and the world? Why need we go to separated brethren?

Why does Father Muhl say that the local representatives of Billy Graham have "become good examples for (the diocesan) members"? Aren't his superiors good enough examples? The pope? Perhaps if he goes to the local representatives of Islam or Buddhism or Mormonism, they, I'm sure, will also be good examples for his to follow, but they are not a very Catholic example to follow. Must we always denigrate our own to accept outsiders? We may not condemn any, as the Lord stated, for using His name as long as they were not against us, but must we — YOU! — allow everyone's faith to intrude and usurp the one, holy catholic and apostolic church and let it become the "many, pseudo-holy, non-apostolic, semi-universal, fraternity/sorority of humankind?" Is that what Father Muhl is after?

I most adamantly curse the claim that the Vatican/magisterium is supportive of Protestant evangelization of Catholics. Stating that the Vatican supports evangelization is one thing — it does, Catholic evangelization — but to use that support out of context to seemingly and without guile imply that the Vatican supports Protestant evangelization of Catholics

is maximally absurd! Perhaps next you'll print that His Holiness Himself wishes to canonize Billy Graham — after his death, of course, of course.

I am concerned. After walking in the limelight with Billy Graham, you adroitly place a critique of Father McBrien on page 13. Father McBrien does have his problems and Father Paul J. Cuddy does a wonderful job of pointing these out to us. So why does the paper know that Father McBrien is wrong — which he is — and at the same time allow the theo-

logically uncertain Billy Graham so much newspaper space?

Does His Excellency Matthew H. Clark, Bishop of Rochester, concur with me, disagree with me, or is he still on sabbatical while his flock flounders without their shepherd?

Hooray for those parishes and parishioners who will not tolerate any fraternization with Billy Graham on a sacerdotal level!!!

John Vincent Waters
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Camp Hill, Pa.

Pastor grateful for TGA funding of sabbatical

To the editor:

As I write this letter, I am at Notre Dame University, Indiana. This is the beginning of my second month of a four-month sabbatical program, "Formation in Ministry?"

Each year, our diocese, through the blessing of Bishop Clark, allows a certain number of priests who make the request to have time away from their regular ministry. The purpose is to be renewed, both spiritually and educationally.

The program at Notre Dame is very well-respected throughout the United States. There are 46 priests currently enrolled in this full-time program. It began August 15 and ends December 10. So far, it has been both challenging and uplifting. I am very grateful that I have this opportunity.

The only way I could consider a sabbatical was through the financial support the diocese gives to one who is engaged in a sabbatical.

The diocese is able to give the support only through the Thanks Giving Appeal. My tuition and board are covered. As I am pastor of a small parish (St. Mary's, Honeoye), I could not have burdened (parishioners) financially, so I could not even consider a sabbatical if it wasn't for the support of the diocese. There are other priests like myself who could never have taken a sabbatical if it wasn't for the TGA. This is only one small part of the many supports in other ministries given through the TGA.

I know the appeal is going on now in the diocese. Even though I am some 550 miles removed, I'm still very much a part of what is taking place. My purpose in writing this article is to say, "Thanks," to all who give to the TGA, as you are a big help in my life.

Father Mike Hogan
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