

IN REVIEW FEATURE



BOOK REVIEW

Book recounts priests' service

Battlefield Chaplains: Catholic Priests in World War II, by Donald F. Crosby, SJ; University Press of Kansas (1994); 301 pp.; \$27.50.

By Father John S. Hayes
Guest contributor

Military chaplains during World War II could not as clergy be drafted. A priest needed his bishop's approval to volunteer. Former Rochester Bishop James E. Kearney sent 42 secular priests into service during that war - far more than any other diocese the size of Rochester, which boasted 322 priests at the time.

In his recently published book, *Battlefield Chaplains: Catholic Priests in World War II*, Jesuit Father Donald F. Crosby traces the course of the global conflict and the exploits of Catholic chaplains. By concentrating on individual stories - Crosby is a superb storyteller - there is an inevitable kaleidoscopic effect in his book: sort of a sound-bite style. It lacks, by the very nature of his concentration on chaplains, the broad sweep of World War II histories such as Eisenhower's *Crusade in Europe*.

Rochester is represented by no less than seven priests whose stories are told through diaries, letters, memoirs and interviews. The vivid story of Father John Laughlin who sloshed ashore on a tiny atoll in the Pacific to meet his doctor-companion - who had just served Mass aboard ship - only to find his friend killed on the beach is included.

Among the other stories are Father Jack Maloney parachuting into Normandy the night of the D-Day invasion; Bill O'Brien sitting in the winter of the "Italian Campaign," freezing in the Apennines; Father Elmer Heindl, described as "a one-man ambulance," carrying wounded soldiers to safety at Bilibid Prison in Manila; and Father Donald Murphy's description of Gen. George S. Patton urging his tanks forward, written in his memoir "Bringing Up Father." These priests all speak eloquently with their own voices.

Despite the dragnet of questionnaires Father Crosby distributed to chaplains, there were bound to be omissions. Rochester's own Father Edward "Eddie Joe" Waters, who is not mentioned in the book, proved to be a hero at the Battle of the Kasserine Pass in Africa. When all the officers were killed or wounded, Father Waters himself directed the firing of an artillery battery. He also participated in D-Day landings with his famed 1st Division on Omaha Beach.

Another oversight was Father Neil Doyle, a priest of the Hartford archdiocese and a 1935 alumnus of St. Bernard's Seminary. He was killed in action at New Georgia in the Pacific. If war's horror can be said to have some benefit, one could cite the fact that priests were brought into close proximity with a large cross section of our nation's soldiers and sailors by eating, sleeping, living and dying together.

As a result, a true appreciation of a priest's lifestyle was never held more highly in this country than at the end of World War II.

Father Hayes is a retired major in the U.S. Army Reserves.

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- ◆ Clawson's Bed & Breakfast
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Canandaigua, NY 14424
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6124 Rt. 5 & 20
Canandaigua, NY 14425
716-394-1510/716-388-0060

- ◆ Morgan-Samuel's Inn
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(no smoking)
2920 Smith Road
Canandaigua, NY 14424
716-394-9232

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Canandaigua, NY 14424
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716-394-4868

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Giny & Dale Esse
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800-724-4841

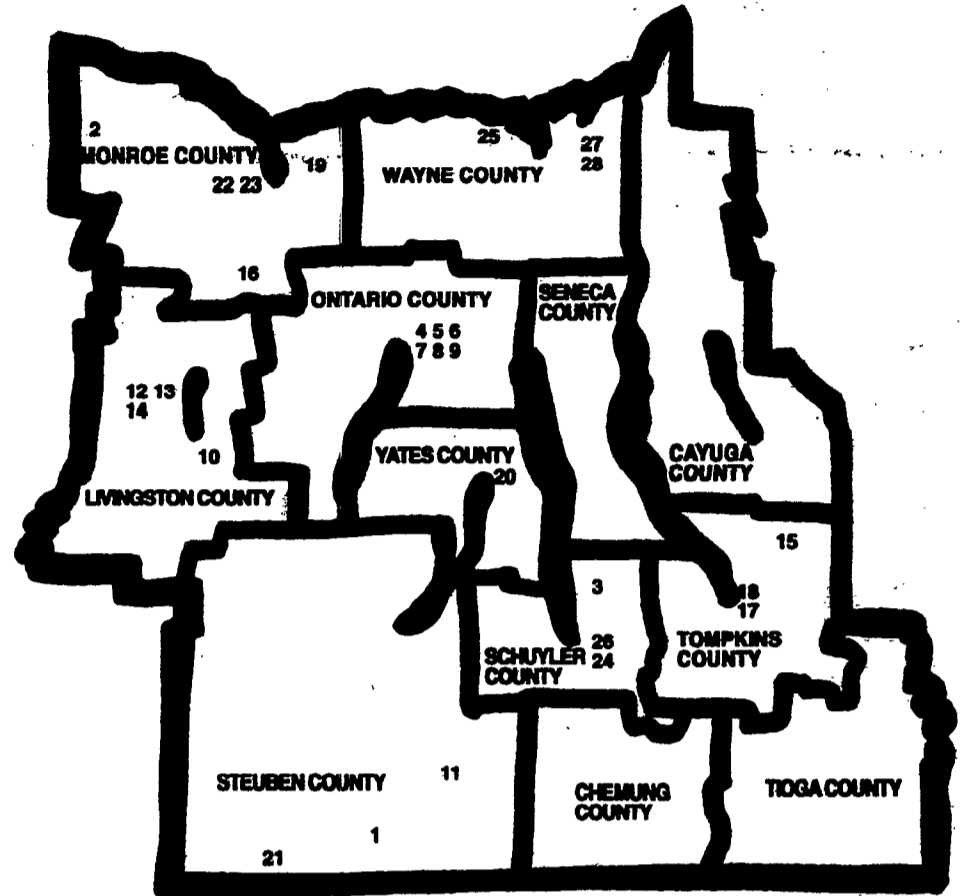
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Geneseo, NY 14454
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Ithaca, NY 14851
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Penn Yan, NY 14527
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Rochester, NY 14607
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Rock Stream, NY 14878
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Watkins Glen, NY 14891
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Wolcott, NY 14590
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