

Recognition of Their Service

by Lynne Belluscio

A couple of weeks ago, someone mentioned to me that Sherm Booten had received a very special recognition for his service in World War II. A good friend of the Bootens, Mary Jefferson had learned that it was possible to get a flag that had flown over the Capitol in Washington D.C. and she planned a special surprise. Unfortunately the flag didn't arrive in time for the presentation, so a "substitute" flag was used. The day I stopped by to see Sherm, the real flag had arrived and he was in the garage unpacking it. We went inside, and I asked him and his wife Elaine to pose with the flag. Elaine brought out an old newspaper clipping from 1942 with his photograph on the day he and his contingent left for training at Fort Niagara. He was in the 31st Selective Service contingent. First row was George A. Burrell; Lewis Henry from Perry; David E. Thomas; Joseph D. Majors; Everett W. Johnson of Elba. In the second row as William F. Thomas; Sherman H. Booten; William C. Burell; William Beswick; Charles Cououlos of Berge; and Charles J Forjone of Elba.

The Thomases were brothers and the Burrells were cousins. They were given a send off by the members of the Second Baptist Church.

Sherm served with the Army 54th Troop Carriers, which at that time was attached to the Air Force because all their supplies were brought in and out by plane. This also included loading wounded soldiers and those who had lost their lives. He served in the Philippines, British New Guinea, and the Dutch East Indies, and was stationed in Okinawa. His unit was training for a land invasion of Japan with the Navy Seals when the Atomic bomb was dropped. His unit was sent to Japan after their surrender. He said, that considering all of what the Japanese people had gone through, they were very nice and friendly.

I found in our files, a letter that Sherm had written to

the LeRoy Gazette while he was stationed in the Philippines:

Again I find myself writing you. As before, this is to let you know of my change of address and appreciation of the Gazette. Letting you know this will help speed up the delivery of the hometown paper, which I am very anxious to receive. I am now stationed in the Philippine Islands and I find it much different than the other places and have been in the Southwest Pacific. With civilization and a few small towns it really helps a lot. The Filipino people possess the same characteristics as the Americans. They are very energetic, friendly, kind, polite and honest. These people underwent many hardships at the hands of the Japanese due to the fact that the Japanese took all of their food and clothing and abused the people as well. The Filipinos really welcome the American troops. The troops have given them food and clothing so their living conditions have improved very much. Thinking of the people of LeRoy and you again for the paper. Sherman M.Booten

I had just returned from talking with Sherm, when I received a phone call from Jeff Caccamise in Florida. He wanted to tell me that he was able to finally secure a marker for his uncle Louis Caccamise who died in World War II. Jeff has always been told that he looked like his uncle, but he had never met him because Louis had died while serving in the Navy aboard a merchant ship in the Pacific. He is listed in the Genesee County World War II Gold Star Book. Lewis was born on June 22, 1921 and was the youngest son of Joseph and Sarah Caccamise. He had five brothers, Roxie, Samuel, Charles, Ross and Anthony and two sisters, Genevieve and Pauline. Louis attended LeRoy High School and was involved with the gym team and school athletics and attended St. Joseph's Church on Lake Street. He enlisted in the Navy on October 23, 1942 and trained at Sampson Naval Training Cen-



ter, in Norfolk, Virginia and in Rhode Island. Louis was a Seaman First Class and had been awarded the Purple Heart for wounds suffered in combat. He was serving on board a merchant ship in the Pacific in 1944. But on March 31, 1944, his family received a notice from Vice Admiral Randolph Jacobs that Louis was listed as missing in action. A year later he was declared legally dead. On May 16, 1945, a Mass was held for him but the family never had a memorial marker placed at the cemetery. His name is inscribed on the "Wall of the Missing" in the American military cemetery in Manila. Jeff Caccamise said that he couldn't stop thinking about his uncle. Jeff's father, Anthony spoke of his brother often and always remarked how much Jeff resembled the uncle he had never met.

Jeff decided that he wanted to make sure his uncle had a memorial marker at St. Francis Cemetery in LeRoy, so he began the process of work-



ing with the Veterans Office to obtain a military marker. The process usually takes several months, but Jeff was elated that the process only took weeks. On October 28, a service for Louis Caccamise was held at St. Francis Cemetery. A new military marker was placed in the family plot near Louis' parents Joseph and Sarah Caccamise. Jeff wants to thank Louis' niece Audrey Caccamise Pavone and her husband Robert and Father Justin from St. Peter's Church and the American Legion honor guard and all the people who helped to honor the service of his uncle, Louis Caccamise.