

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Military Order of the Purple Heart
7180 Highland Drive 118-VH
Building 1, Room 6023W
Pittsburgh, PA 15206



MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART
CHAPTER 455

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PURPLE HEART NEWSLETTER

EDITOR – JAMES LANG
COMMANDER – LOUIS LaCIVITA

ASST. EDITOR – DAN WILHELM
CHIEF OF STAFF - HARRY CLARK

Dan Wilhelm Chapter 455 Chaplain presents a \$1000 check from our student scholarship fund to a very deserving student Katie Maser with her mother Ann Roch Connors. Katie was sponsored by her grandfather John T. Conner who received his Purple Heart in the Army in Korea.

MEMORIAL DAY

MAY 30, 2011



Bomb Sniffing Dog Finds Home With Fallen Marine's Family



SAN ANTONIO—When a sniper's bullet struck PFC. Colton Rusk, the first to reach his body was his best friend Eli—a bomb sniffing, black Labrador so loyal he snapped at other Marines who rushed to his fallen handler.

“Eli bit one of them,” said Rusk's father, Darrell, recalling the story told to him by other Marines.

After Rusk died Dec. 6, 2010, his parents decided they wanted to adopt his dog. They picked Eli up at Lackland Air Force base to take him back to their home in rural South Texas. It was only the second time that a U. S. military dog has been adopted by the family of handler killed in combat.

Eli wagged his tail furiously when he was brought into a small room inside the 37th Training Wing to meet his new owners. A Marine staff sergeant tried to get the dog to sit obediently while he read a letter of thanks to the family, but he relented after Eli kept lunging forward to sniff Rusk's mother, Kathy.

When the leash was finally handed to Darrell Rusk, his wife and two sons each crouched down to hug and pet Eli, who lifted his front right paw to invite their hands toward his belly. All were crying.

“Every time he called home, it was always about Eli,” Kathy Rusk said of her son. “It gave me some comfort knowing that Colton wasn't alone over there.”

Military dogs often adopted after their service is over or if they don't make it through training. But in the case of Eli, who was serving his second stint in Afghanistan when Rusk was shot, it wasn't just a simple matter of Rusk's family asking for him.

Eli wasn't injured in the attack that killed Rusk and was still considered “operational,” meaning he could have been transferred to another handler. The Defense Department invests thousands of dollars in training each military dog, all of which come through Lackland. When the Rusks asked about adopting Eli, pulling the dog out of service required permission from the Secretary of the Navy, said Doug Miller, who manages the Defense Department's military working dog program.

Knowing there had only been one other adoption like Eli's, Kathy Rusk said she didn't want to get her hopes up.

On Father's Day June 19, 2011, roses are left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in tribute to those who have served and sacrificed: red for those killed in action in Vietnam, yellow for those who were wounded, and white for those who have died during the War on Terror.

HAVE YOU HEARD?

On March 1, 2013, VA will stop issuing paper checks to comply with a Department of Treasury policy. Veterans and other beneficiaries who do not have electronic payments for their Federal benefits by that time will receive their funds via a pre-paid debit card. Called *Direct Express card*, it is issued by Commercial Bank as the financial agent of the U.S. Treasury. As a prelude to converting to totally paperless payments, those receiving VA compensation or pensions benefits for the first time after May 1, 2011 will automatically receive the benefits electronically. Anyone already receiving Federal benefit payments electronically will be unaffected by the change.

To learn more about the Federal government's switch to direct deposit-or to change VA benefits to direct deposit-visit www.GoDirect.org. Information about the Federal government's "Go Direct" campaign is also available at 1-800-333-1795. Along with payments for VA benefits, the change will also affect recipients of payments from Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Railroad Retirement Board, and Office of Personnel Management.

TV GAME SHOW HOSTS BOB BARKER

Former TV game show host Bob Barker is donating \$2 million to a charity that helps injured members of the military and their families.

The former host of "The Price is Right" will donate to the Semper Fi Fund, which assists Marines, soldiers, sailors, and Air Force and Coast Guard members who are injured during service.

Barker is a former World War II fighter pilot. He's also an animal rights activist and last year donated \$2.5 million to help People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals open a new location in Los Angeles.

FLAG DAY
JUNE 14, 2011

INDEPENDENCE DAY
JULY 4, 2011

PURPLE HEART FOREVER STAMP



As a new postal rate increase goes into effect, Senators Hillary Clinton and David Vitter and Representative Peter King announced that they have introduced the Perpetual Purple Heart Stamp Act in both house of Congress to make the Purple Heart stamp a permanent "forever stamp." The stamp, which commemorates the heroic service of our service members wounded in service to our nation, is in jeopardy of being retired with the new rate change.

The Perpetual Purple Heart Stamp Act honors the sacrifices of the brave men and women of the Armed Forces who have been awarded the Purple Heart by providing for the permanent issuance of the Purple Heart stamp and by making the Purple Heart stamp one of the Postal Service's "forever stamps." A "forever stamp" is a new innovation by USPS under which the stamp meets the postage required for first class mail up to one ounce in weight even if the rate of postage is later increased. The Purple Heart stamp was first issued by the USPS on May 30, 2003.

The Order of the Purple Heart for Military Merit, commonly known as the Purple Heart, is the oldest military decoration in the world in present use. The Purple Heart is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to members of the Armed Forces who are wounded in conflict with an enemy force, or while held by an enemy force as a prisoner of war and posthumously to the next of kin of members of the Armed Forces who are killed in conflict with an enemy force, or who die of a wound received in conflict with an enemy force. There are over 1,535,000 recipients of the Purple Heart medal, approximately 550,000 of whom are still living.



Outstanding Patriot for Spring 2011

Staff Sgt. Frank A. Kravetz

Among Frank's accomplishments are:

- * Past Director for American Ex-Prisoners of War
- * National Service Officer, American Ex-Prisoners of War
- * President, Pgh. Chapter, American Ex-Prisoners of War
- * Speaker, American Ex-Prisoners of War
- * Past Post Commander, VFW Post 5008, East Pittsburgh, PA
- * Past President, Chalfant Servicemans Club
- * Chairman, East Pittsburgh World War II Monument Fundraising Drive
- * Author, "Eleven Two" -One World War II Airman's Story of Capture, Survival and Freedom
- * Inductee, Southwestern Veterans Center Hall of Fame

Ed Werle submitted his father-in-law Frank A. Kravetz a Staff Sgt. in the US Army Air Corp, B-17 gunner in World War II for the Outstanding Patriot for this Spring.

Ed said in addition to the above, he has selflessly worked on behalf of hundreds of Veterans in assisting former Prisoners of War and their spouses in receiving their service connected disability claims, mentoring them in the use of the VA Hospital, and guiding families through the death and burial process and widow's compensations. He conducts the former Prisoner of War prayer and burial service at the funerals of his laid to rest fellow POW's. He serves on the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System's committee to honor former POWS' during the annual National POW Recognition Day held every year at the VA Highland Drive hospital.

Kravetz was shot down while on a mission to bomb oil refineries in Merseberg, Germany. A tailgunner on a B-17 aircraft, Kravetz ended up being shot in the leg while they were in flight and, once the plane was hit, it limped in westward, with the crew hoping they could put it down in friendly territory, or they would be picked up by Allied Forces on the march through Germany.

However, after Kravetz parachuted out of the plane, he was soon grabbed by German soldiers. So he began a six-month odyssey that took him from a gloomy, threadbare hospital and a trudge through forbidding prisoner-of-war camps. Kravetz and his fellow prisoners were liberated April 29, 1945, the day Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his Berlin bunker, and he was shipped home the following month.

"Eleven Two" (see page 8) published by Silver Bear Graphics of Stahlstown, is named for the month and day Kravetz, now 87, was shot down and captured. With somewhere in the vicinity of 1,000 World War II veterans dying every day, there are getting to be fewer and fewer people around with similar tales of fear and heroism to tell.

CHAPTER 455
CONTACT INFORMATION
COMMANDER LOUIS LACIVITA
FAX -412-954-5171
E-MAIL moph455@yahoo.com
WEBSITES:
mophchapter455.org
mophdepartmentpa.org

NOTE:

We are asking our members to submit an outstanding Patriot who has donated a lot of time and energy in helping our veterans. The Patriot name will be listed in our Chapter MOPH newsletter. We would like to get at least one Patriot for each quarterly newsletter.

Please submit a picture and a brief history of the Patriot.

BOOSTER'S-JAN. 1, 2011 TO DEC. 31, 2011

MIKE & VERONICA BLAZEVIK

JOHN & CATHERINE COLLINS

WAYNE DONALDSON

CHARLES & IRENE HALL

WILLIAM & LINDA HYSLOP

SPECIAL BOOSTER'S

JOHN & CAROLYN ABRAM

DAVE & JANET ALDEN

JOHN & JOAN ALDEN

MR. & MRS. WILLIAM ARONSON

EDWARD & SUSAN BARKER

GEORGE & MARY ANN BIGELOW

CONRAD BLACK & MARILYN OBRIEN

ROBERT & FLORENCE BUCHOLTZ

WILLIAM CARR

VANCE & MARGARET CARTER

DOMINIC & BETTY CERSOSIMO

PHILLIP CERUSSI

ANNE & ROCHE-CONNERS

JAMES & RENAE COSTABILE

ANDREW & DOROTY CHEROK

MICHAEL & MICHELE CUMMINGS

GREG & BARBARA DALEY

HOWARD & EDNA EICHNER

RAY & PEARL FRITZ

LOU & GLORIA GAMBOGI

JOHN & DONNA GOCHNOUR

EMIL HOSKO

IRA C. HOUCK JR.

JOHN & DOROTHY HRIBAR

LENNY KASUBICK

JOE & LOIS KENNEY

JAMES & JULEEN KEPHART

DENNIS & MARSHA KING

LARRY KUSHNER

LOU & DOLLY LACIVITA

WAYNE & KAREN LAMPING

ROBERT LAKES

JIM & BETSY LANG

JOE LAPLACE

MICHAEL LASKOWSKI JR,

M/SGT LEROY LEWIS

MASSARO CORPORATION

STEVE MASSARO

JOE & MLINAC & DONNA MADEJA

CHARLES MANCUSO

OLIVER McCLELLAND

COL. ALEX & MOLLY McCLINCHIE

HARRY McCracken

DARRYL MERRISON

JAMES PELLA & MICHELE HANSON

MICHAEL & MICHELE RATWAY

ERNE & NANCY RIVERS

STANLEY & MARY ROZANSKI

CHESTER & M. JANE SATTIAUX

JOE & ANNA SERENKA

ROBERT & PEGGY SMITH

MARK & NANCY SUTTON

TERRY & RUTH SWINDELL

LARRY & MARY UPLINGER

ROBERT & RUTH VANCE

NICHOLAS VIGLIONE

ED & JOAN VOGEL

ED & CHERYL WERLE

JOHN & PATTY WRIGHT

UPDATE ON NEWSLETTER

We have decided to continue mailing the newsletter to those who don't have a e-mail address until our funds run out.

Our chapter is still asking our members again to support our boosters and special boosters send \$6.00 and we will list your name and your spouse name for the up coming year 2011. If you give can more you will be listed as a special booster.

We also are asking anyone that would like to place and ad in our newsletter it would be greatly appreciated, the price for the ad would be \$25.00. Send your money to the address at the top of the newsletter also make your check out to MOPH C

More Purple Hearts After Army Clarifies “Concussion”



Army Spc Gregory Miller wears the Purple Heart presented by Defense Secretary Robert Gates on March 7, in Kabul.

The Army will allow more battlefield concussions to be eligible for a Purple Heart, embracing the latest scientific findings that even brief periods of dizziness or headaches are evidence of the wound.

The decision to expand the definition for concussions will mean thousands of Purple Heart medals going to soldiers denied them in the past.

For decades, Army award regulations used the term “concussion” for the injury, but left it to doctors or battlefield commanders to decide whether a blow to the head during combat warranted the medal.

Many held the view that “you’ve got to be bleeding to get (the medal),” says Gen. Peter Chiarelli, the Army vice chief of staff, who has pushed for the clarification on awarding a Purple Heart for concussion.

The new rules spell out precisely what constitutes a concussion, with symptoms such as any momentary loss of consciousness or memory, dizziness, headache, nausea or light sensitivity. Medical treatment, also required for the medal, is defined by the rules to include merely rest and Tylenol.

More than 80,000 GIs have suffered concussions since 2001, many in combat and often from exposure to roadside bomb blasts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The figure dwarfs the 26,000 Purple Hearts given to soldiers for other wounds in the two wars. How many concussion injuries will qualify for the award remains uncertain.

Chiarelli, who has worked to reduce a stigma in the Army about mental health problems, says he pushed for the changes in order to correct misconceptions that more subtle forms of concussions cannot be true war wounds.

“We’re trying to change our culture. We’re trying to get rid of the stigma. And it’s hard to do,” he says.

“The confusion among Army doctors,” says Col. Jonathan Jaffin of the Army surgeon general’s office, “was how much head injury qualified for the concussion diagnosis warranting a Purple Heart.” The changes now provide clarity, he says.

Col. Tom Quinn of the Army office that oversees awards is urging soldiers who believe they were wrongly denied the award to seek a review of their case. “We think that some deserving soldiers may not have been appropriately recognized,” says Quinn, urging soldiers to re-apply through their chain of command and veterans to call 888-276-9472 or hrc.tagd.awards@conus.army.mil.

The Army began reviewing how Purple Hearts are awarded for battlefield concussions last year in response to a story by NPR-ProPublica.

Rep. Bill Pascrell, D-N-J., co-chairman of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, hailed the changes as long overdue and called for similar criteria for other service branches.

“It is imperative that the Pentagon makes it crystal clear that all service members, no matter what branch they serve in, will be awarded the Purple Heart when they are wounded in anyway,” Pascrell says.

**Senate Declares March 30th as
“Welcome Home
Vietnam Veterans Day”**



etnam fell to a communist government, communism would spread throughout the rest of Southeast Asia. The US Armed Forces began serving in an advisory role to the South Vietnamese in 1961, and in 1965, ground combat troops were sent into Vietnam. On March 30th, 1973 after many years of combat, all US troops withdrew. More than 58,000 members of the United States Armed Forces lost their lives and more than 300,000 were wounded in Vietnam.

Senators John Boozman (R-AR), Thad Cochran (R-MS), James Inhofe (R-OK), and Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and Mike Johanns (R-NE) co-sponsored the legislation. The resolution now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

The U. S. Senate declared March 30, 2011 as “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day,” agreeing unanimously to a resolution introduced by Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Veteran’s Affairs.

On March 30, 1973, all U. S. troops withdrew from Vietnam under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. This March 30th, the Senate has encouraged Americans across the country to recognize Vietnam Veterans for their sacrifice and demonstrate a warm welcome to these soldiers who returned from war to a politically divided country.

“I’m pleased that the Senate has agreed to set aside a day to give our Vietnam veterans a warm, long overdue welcome home. I strongly encourage communities throughout North Carolina and across the country to observe this day with activities and events that honor these veterans for their service. It’s time they receive the recognition they have earned and deserve. This day also provides our nation with an important teaching moment. Never again should our men and women serving in the armed forces receive the same treatment as those returning from Vietnam,” said Senator Richard Burr.

Senator Burr introduced the resolution for the second consecutive year on Feb. 16, 2011.

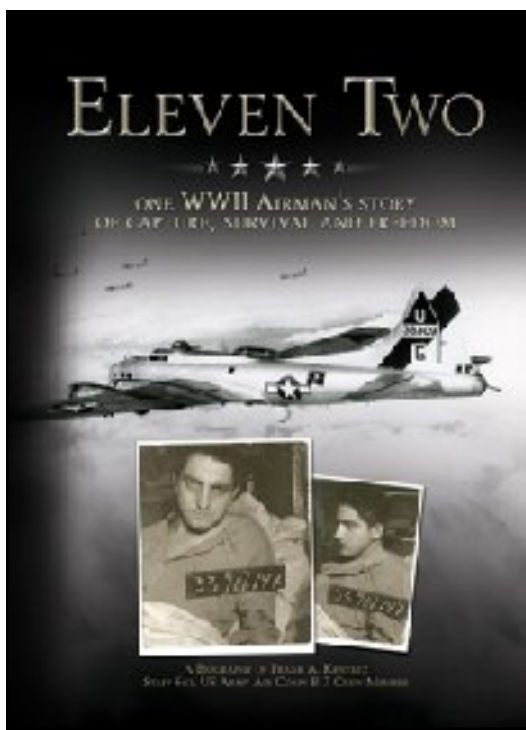
The United States became involved in Vietnam because policy-makers believed that if South Vi-

**CHAPTER 455
MEETINGS**

Our meetings are held the last Wednesday of the month at the VA Hospital at Highland Drive at 10 am sharp. Our office is in building one, 6th floor, room 6023w. Recently we have been having our meetings on the 2nd floor in room 2010W in building one because we have more space. After the meeting a lunch will be provided. If you need more information please call at 412-954-5166 Mon.—Wed. from 8:00 to 12.00 and ask for Dan or Jim.



ELEVEN TWO: One WW II Airman's Story of Capture, Survival, and Freedom



ELEVEN TWO: One WW II Airman's Story of Capture, Survival and Freedom.

A Biography of Frank A. Kravetz, Author, Staff Sgt. US Army Air Corps B17 Crew Member, and Member of Branch 35.

ACCLAIM FOR ELEVEN TWO: Mike Clark friend and award winning television journalist:

“Frank Kravetz personal story of honor and courage is a must read for every American who wants to understand the heartbeat of the “Greatest Generation.” Frank’s heroic love of God, country, and family pulled him from the valley of death, back home to Pittsburgh. Eleven Two is the story of a man of steel, who will melt your heart with the moving real-life tale of survival and patriotism. We salute you, Frank, and all of your POW comrades. God Bless you all.

U. S. CONGRESSMAN MIKE DOYLE:

“Eleven Two is a fabulous account of Frank Kravetz’s journey in the Army Air Corps during World War II. Frank showed his bravery and love of his country, as well as the deep appreciation

of those who helped him along the way. This is a great memoir of his service time that is indicative of thousands of other American servicemen just like him. I’m glad he survived to share his story with us in his book.”

JEFFREY PETERS, M. D. DFAPA: *Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.*

I find Eleven Two: One WW II Airman’s Story of Capture, Survival and Freedom to be an excellent book. The many men of his generation and the families of those who served and suffered are offered well deserved tribute in his book. It has been my honor for the past 25 years to provide psychiatric care to men who served in WW II and Korea, face combat and military captivity, and returned home. I have blessed with the opportunity to meet many of their family members over the years.

It is moving to see, in detail, the true story of one man’s journey in life, which is typical of the experiences of many others. I have been profoundly moved in my professional career by the resilience, patriotism and honor that Mr. Kravetz and so many other veterans display.

ROBERT F. (“ROCKY”) KRAVETZ, JR. ESQ.:

“For my entire life, my grandfather, Frank, has been my hero. His continuing service to God, his family, and his country is truly inspiring. I am thrilled that, with the publishing of his memoirs, others will get to learn about this great American.

To purchase your copy of Frank A. Kravetz ELEVEN TWO: One WW II Airman’s Story of Capture, Survival, and Freedom go to: www.eleventwothebook.com or the publisher’s website at www.silverbeargraphics.com/frankakravetz or email us for more options info@eleventwothebook.com or call the publisher 724-613-1814.