



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

LOCAL HEROES, LOCAL STORIES TRANSCRIPT

May 31, 2016

Introduction

Thank you for coming this afternoon. Manlius Library is collaborating with the Manlius Historical Society to capture, preserve and share the living history of Manlius, with a special thanks to the Manlius Senior Centre for their considerable knowledge and help.

In a few minutes, we'll interview these local veterans to my right, all of whom served in World War II, and hear their stories. Those stories will be recorded and shared digitally, online, so that future generations can appreciate the incredible sacrifices and challenges overcome by World War II soldiers.

As an introduction, I'd like to spend a few moments setting the stage.

World War II began in 1939 with the German invasion of Poland, but direct American involvement didn't begin until after the surprise attack by Japan on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The Allied forces of the US, Britain, and the Soviet Union fought advances by the Axis powers, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan for the following three and a half years.

This truly global war included a European theatre, Mediterranean and North African theatres, and a Pacific theatre. Allied forces closed in on the European fronts in the spring of 1945, leading to a May 8th surrender by Germany, known as VE Day. Japan continued to fight in the Pacific, despite significant losses and heavy bombing of major Japanese cities. In early August of 1945, the US dropped two atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which prompted a Japanese surrender and marked the conclusion of the war.

In the course of the war, more than 16 million American men and women served, and tragically, 400,000 lost their lives. 215,000 soldiers died in Europe and another 165,000 died in the Pacific. Another 600,000 Americans were non-fatally wounded.



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

Soldiers from New York, a state that represented 11% of the US population, disproportionately represented 15% of the casualties, totaling more than 43,000, according to the New York State Military Museum.

Of those 43,000 New Yorkers, 170 hailed from Madison County, 530 came from Oneida County, and 787 came from Onondaga County.

Years ago, Kathy Crowell of the Manlius Historical Society compiled an honor roll of 58 men from the Town of Manlius who had been killed in action, killed in airplane crashes, or were missing in action. This list also includes nine men who died in accidents while training or on leave.

Those from the village of Manlius who gave their lives include Carl Alexander, Charles Cox, William Dailey, James Denig, Omar DeRycke, Gilbert Fox, Mason Gaffney, Glenn Knapp, Everett Leland, John McTiernan, Carl Meigs, John Morley, John Phelan, Eugene Shearer, Charles Tallon, Richard Thompson, Harold Verdow, Nelson Walker, and Francis Wolven.

Wolven was the first casualty, missing in action in February of 1942. The 25 year old was a first class seaman who was reported missing after his aircraft carrier, the USS Langley, was sunk in the Battle of Java.

The last Manlius casualty of World War II was Charles A. Tallon of the airborne division, who died on May 5, 1945, just days before V-E day. Three boys from Fayetteville, Franklin Harley Brown, Emile Motquin, and Leo Oeinck, also died the same week, but all three were in the Pacific.

Of those 16 million who served, only 10% of those World War II veterans are still able to tell their stories.

In 2014, the Manlius Historical Society and Manlius Library, with the help of Madison County historian Matthew Urtz, collected the stories of Command Sergeant Major and 24 year reservist Robert Good, military historian Ralph Richter, infantryman Patrick Heagerty, infantryman David Schism, and 8th Air Force Bombardier Bill Titley. Mr. Titley passed away this past February.

Two years later, we will hear from two veterans of the war who call Manlius home: Reginald E. Adams and Donald C. Nash.



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

Reginald Adams

I'm a product of two Scotch immigrants that came to this country in 1922. My father was in World War I in the British army for three years. He survived. He worked on a steam ship, a passenger liner, coming back and forth from England to New York.

There was no work in Scotland when he returned after the war. So he saw what New York was like and he compared that to Glasgow, Scotland and he said "well, I'm going to emigrate." So he immigrated to this country.

He worked for about a year, saved money, and sent the money home to his girlfriend. She came out, they got married, and the girlfriend became my mother. I was born in 1924 in Stanford, Connecticut. All of my father's relatives came from Scotland and moved to Canada. Niagara Falls, Canada. So we moved to Buffalo, to be near them. Because they liked to be near one another. They always referred to Scotland as home as long as they lived in this country, Scotland was always home.

My aunt married a dairy farmer and in the summers I used to work on the dairy farm. And I learned a lot from watching what farmers have to know. Incredible. Because in those days, they did everything. They grew corn and oats and wheat. They had pigs and chickens. They had four horses and a tractor with big lugs. They didn't have rubber tires in those days.

I graduated from high school with a bachelor's of fine arts degree. I was always interested in art. I always wanted to be an artist.

I was drafted when I was 18 years old, one month out of high school. I went to the draft board and they said "what branch of the service do you want?" Can you imagine enlisting in the army or the marines? So I chose the navy! Clean beds and good food.

So I served my boot camp at Sampson, New York. That was like a vacation because I was a boy scout for six years and got my eagle badge, and that required a lot of hard work. So anyone I speak to that went to eh army or the marines, I can't imagine going through that.

So after boot camp, the navy decided, through testing, that I was going to be a signalman. Ironically, my father was a signalman in the British army in World War I. He had taught me some before; morse code. I don't know how the navy found out.

But anyway, I went to a naval training school at Sampson, New York. It's outside of Geneva, new York on Seneca Lake. It's now a state park. There's also a museum for the navy and the air force at Sampson, New York. It's held in the only building that they have left. It used to be the brig. It's a stone building. So if you're ever in Geneva, New York, it's a worthwhile trip to go there.



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

After I finishing signal school, they sent me down to Little Creek, Virginia. An amphibious training school. They put us on an LCI: a landing craft infantry. There are pictures of it over on the table. And so we conquered Chesapeake Bay. We learned how to load troops and unload troops.

From there, they sent us down to Orange, Texas and we picked up the ship that I was assigned to. It was an LCI. It was 23 feet wide and 153 feet long. It had a 3 feet draft on the bow and a 4 foot draft on the stern. It was designed to be run up on the beaches and ramps would come out and 200 troops would unload from the landing craft onto the beach.

From there we went up to San Diego and we trained marines at Oceanside, California. And we picked them up spanking clean and gung ho. We dropped them off seasick and very, very green. But that's part of the marine training.

It took me a while to get used to the ocean, too. Some people, I guess, never got over being seasick. And on an LCI, it moved up and down an awful lot because of its lightness and construction. It was designed not to be sea-going but we went to ocean anyways.

From San Diego, we went over to Hawaii, and again, we trained troops up and down. And then we went over to Sai Pan, which is near Guam. We had engine trouble so we missed a big invasion there, where a lot of people were killed. But from there we went over to the first invasion in Leyte, which is the first invasion in the Philippine islands. After Leyte, we went back to New Guinea and they changed us to a troop landing to a mortar ship.

They mounted 4.2 army mortars on our well deck that fired a 40 pound shell two miles. And we alternated high explosive with white phosphorous.

We'd start a mile from the beach and start firing those shells in. And while we were doing that, cruisers were firing shells over our head and dive bombers were dive bombing on the beach. We would pull off the beach and the troops would land. And I felt so sorry for those guys that had to go into that mess. We did that in Leyte, Lushan and Okinawa and Iwoshima.

Iwoshima was the place that Ernie Pyle was killed by a sniper, a Japanese sniper. Okinawa was the worst invasion in the Pacific for fatalities. The Japanese, who were only 300 miles from Okinawa sent over 3,000 suicide planes. They sunk 40 ships and killed 9,000 seaman. On land, the marines and army lost more than that. So it was the toughest invasion in the pacific.

After three months, Okinawa was secured so they sent us back to Pearl Harbor and they started prepping us to invade Japan from the north. We were going to up to the Aleutian Islands and come down.

Someone dropped the bomb. They dropped the second bomb and they sent me home.



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

So they sent me back to San Francisco to a ship called the Elkhart. It was a big army transport ship and that was on the road to be decommissioned up in Seattle. And the only time I ever worked on that ship sending signals or receiving signals was leaving San Francisco and they asked “where are you going?” and I said “we’re going to Bremerton” and that was the only signal I ever sent to that ship.

But prior to that, I sent and received all the messages that came on board our ship. There were two signalmen and one quarter master and we’re the people who told the captain what was happening because he couldn’t read Morse code.

One of those things you never forget. Morse code.

I had a good rating. I was always on topside. I never had to go down to the engine room.

In the invasion of Lushan, the Japanese had hid a lot of little suicide boats in little alcoves and places where they could hide them and at night, they would come out with a loaded ship with all kinds of explosives on the bow and run into the side of a ship and sink the ship.

Our sister ship was sunk one night that way and I lost a lot of my good friends. We were lucky. They missed us.

At Okinawa, four planes dove on us. We shot two down, but the other two, because we were small, they missed us. But psychologically, it was a nervous time.

You never get over it. I volunteer at the art therapy at the VA hospital. And I see poor guys there. They just will never get over it.



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

Donald Nash

I'm 89, so I'm just a kid.

I graduated from high school in 1944 in Schenectady, New York, and they were just invading Normandy in June. So there was a question of what to do you do, enlist or get drafted? So needless to say, I enlisted in the Navy and went on to Sampson, and from Sampson, we went down to Little Creek, Virginia. Because at that time, they were building landing ships by the thousands, getting ready for the invasion of Japan.

Most of the time we spent in Little Creek was spent going up and down Chesapeake Bay training. From Chesapeake Bay, we went to Brown's shipyard in Houston, Texas and they were putting men through Sampson and these other naval bases so quick that they couldn't build the ships fast enough, so we waited.

What are they called? Rosie the Riveter, they were building the ships down there. We stayed down there in Houston and watched our ship being built. And once the ship was built, we went out into the Caribbean and went down into Cuba for training exercises, down through the Panama Canal, up into San Diego. And that's where we'd put on ammunition and that type of stuff and went on to Pearl Harbor. Being 17 years old, there was thousands of these ships being built for the invasion of Japan. So we went to Pearl Harbor, and then I went out to Guam, and that's where we were stationed. And from Guam, we did our training, all around.

And then went up to Okinawa for the invasion of Okinawa, as he said, that was a bloody day. I was in Buckner Bay in Okinawa. From Okinawa, we were taking troops, tanks.

I was on an LSM. We took tanks on our ships. And tanks and troops that ran the tanks. So we went up to Okinawa with the tanks and would go back. And sometimes you'd take pontoons and that kind of thing.

From Okinawa back to Guam and all of a sudden, we hear they're dropping the bomb.

So what do you do? They dropped the bomb. We upped the anchor. I was in charge of the maps on board of the ship and the captain said "Go get this map." Nagasaki. Never heard of it. That's where they dropped the bomb. So they sent our ship down around the southern part of Japan, up into the China Sea and we landed tanks and troops at Sasebo, that's the port harbor at Nagasaki.

We landed the tanks and the troops and they said, you got two days liberty while you're here. We didn't know what was going on. They had just dropped the bombs. So we went on liberty. Walked all through the devastation of Nagasaki.



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

The Japanese were more scared than we were. But I was lucky because we went ashore and already there were army nurses ashore.

We went to a big warehouse and they said “the war’s over. They just surrendered so pick out a few items.” I picked out a Japanese sniper rifle and I picked up a Japanese flag. And they said “the USO will send them back to your parents.” So we did that.

After we were there, we said, “well, what’s next?” And the captain said “We gotta go out into the China Sea. The Japanese just cut all their mines loose.” So we had to shoot them. That went on for a week or so because they didn’t want the ships bringing the troops in to collide with them.

We did that and then finally, things were winding down then. We went back to Guam. And at that time there was no rubber in the United States because they were taking all the rubber and building tires for the airplanes and things oversea so they wouldn’t bring the planes back to the states, they just put them in the water and sunk them, but they took all the rubber off of them.

We brought back on our ship thousands of tires to Oakland, California. And we said, well, we’re back to Oakland, maybe we’ll get discharged. And we got the word “Back to Guam, pick up more tires.”

So anyways, we did that two or three times and when the last time, they said “ok, you’re going to be discharged.” We came into San Francisco through the golden gate and then down through the Panama Canal again, up through New Orleans where we discharged all the ammunition and everything.

The ship went into Mobile, Alabama, and that’s where they told me get on a train up to Leto beach in Long Island.

They gave you a couple hundred bucks for all your work overseas and put you on a train and sent you home.

Our ship wasn’t destroyed. We gave it to Greece and Greece gave it to Turkey and they were using them as patrol boats all around the Middle East.

But anyway, came home and got discharged and that’s the end of my story.

I was in at 17 and out at 19, so I was pretty lucky.



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

Questions [15:05]

RA: I was able to use the GI bill.

DN: Oh, I used the GI bill. I went to college on the GI bill.

RA: And the government has got their money back many times over.

DN: But that's pretty much the story. It was an interesting time. Let's put it that way. And I belong to the VFW and the American Legion here, the VA and all that. So, still get a lot of benefits.

What was your homecoming like?

DN: Homecoming? Well, I came home at 19 and my folks said "you've got to get to college." So I went to Albany Business College for two years and got a business degree with accounting. And after that I went to work for GE. Got married and had a family. I was with GE for the rest of my life. And I retired way back in what, '88. So I've been retired a long time now. But that's the story. Very interesting.

RA: The government, with the GI Bill, sent me to five years of college. I got my masters and my bachelor's degree. You need a masters degree to be a teacher. I became an art teacher. I taught at Jamesville-Dewitt for 34 years. I'm still teaching. I teach at Menorah Park and I also teach at the VA hospital and that's what keeps me going: art and work.

DN: This VA hospital is one of the best ones in the country.

RA: Oh yeah, it is. It cost the government \$7,000 for five years of college.

DN: But I always felt that we were lucky. We got in at the tail end.

RA: Lucky to survive.

Have you been down to Washington and seen the war memorial?

DN: Yeah, I have.

RA: Have you ever heard of the honor flight?

DN: We took a busload. There was a busload that went down. I don't know if it was the senior center. We stayed overnight. Incidentally, my grandson works for the Navy Department right down there. So he sends me pictures all the time. I said "you'd better behave yourself"

It took a long time to build that memorial. A lot of people who really deserved to never get to see it.



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

DN: But I really think the bus trip is better than the airplane. You got down one day, stay overnight at the Baltimore Harbor and you get to see everything and get to come back the next day.

What was a day on the ship like?

DN: On the ship?

What was it like to live on a ship?

RA: Well, if you're not bothered by claustrophobia. Because our bunks were four tiers high, eighteen inches apart in a hold with no porthole. Ad all the air you got was pumped in with a fan.

DN: And you learn not to sit up real quick.

RA: When you're a teenager you can endure that.

DN: But being on a small ship like a landing craft, there's only 50 people on board. Or not even. Most likely 20.

RA: We had 24.

DN: We had 50 on our ship.

RA: That was the crew you're talking about.

DN: Yeah, the crew.

RA: We had four officers.

DN: We had five officers. And really, you never had to dress up. Everybody was in their jeans all day long. You had really no authority. The captain, you couldn't tell him from the seamen, hardly, because it was all one big family. But we had good times, too. We went into Guam and via landing ship, you know, you go right up on shore. We were known as alligators. Right up on shore. Have a nice beer party.

RA: We didn't have beer.

DN: We had a captain that liked to drink. You could do a lot of things that the big ships couldn't do. They had to anchor way out.

When you went up Chesapeake Bay, did you ever go up the Elk River?



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

RA: No. We went out to Cape Hatteras and that's where I really learned to get my sea legs.

DN: What I remember about Chesapeake Bay was the fact that the fishermen all got furious at us because we were going ashore and ripping up all their fishing nets and all that type of stuff, you know. But I still don't like that area. Little Creek and Norfolk. They hated the sailors, there were so many of them.

First I want to thank you both very much for your service to our country. The greatest generation brings tears to my eyes. I'm a product of the greatest generation. My dad is 96 and he was navy and he is still active, just like you both. And he lives in Florida. My nephew is just about ready to depart with the navy for a nine month tour. And I was reassuring his wife that communication is a lot different today. How did you communicate with home? How did you have a chance to talk?

DN: What were those little letters we had to send? V-mail? Little V-mail.

RA: No, we didn't have V-mail. I wrote letters home and my mother wrote back every letter that I wrote, she wrote. And all of her letters had underlining under different words and different phrases. And I couldn't figure it out in the beginning until I figured- my mother is teaching me how to spell and use the correct grammar. Born in Scotland, that was very important. English and grammar. She was teaching me, even away from home.

DN: Just a little interesting feature: when we landed at Okinawa, at Buckner Bay, the CBs were unloading our ship. I don't know if we had on tanks or something. And I looked at the CB and I said "do you by any chance know this fella's name?" My best friend that I grew up with down in Albany. "Yeah, he's right up there, building an airport. They're doing airports." So I got a Jeep and we went up there. And geez, I said, "Is there anybody here from Albany, New York?" He just about fainted. One of my best friends.

My brother bob was born here in Manlius in 1923 and he enlisted in the navy out of high school. He went into the Navy just like Sampson. But the trouble is he went down to Norfolk and trained to be a medical corpsman. Well the medical corpsman furnished the Marines.

RA: Marine's part of the Navy.

And he went into Saipan and I don't know if you went into Saipan with the Marines or Army?



1 Arkie Albanese Avenue | Manlius, NY 13104 | www.manliuslibrary.org | 315.682.6400

RA: When we were in Saipan we were getting supplies and the Marines were still up in the hills, hunting the Japanese.

You weren't there on the invasion when they landed on the beach?

RA: I was in Saipan in 1944.

Oh, okay. He was in the invasion of Saipan.

RA: Well they were still hunting, I mean the Marines were still hunting when we were there.

He wanted to be in the Navy to be on board ship and he ended up in the Marine Corps, which was the last place he wanted to be.

RA: A similar story to Don's, whenever I went into a harbor, I went on the light. I sent Morse Code via light and I started calling different ships around just to have a conversation. And one of the ships I called, turned out to be one of my neighbors that lived on the same street that I lived on in Buffalo so we arranged to have a get together in Honolulu.

Speaking of Saipan, one of our members who is not here today, Ed Rosovic. He was in the Marine Corps and he landed at Saipan and he got wounded. He was wounded twice. And I told him one day at lunch here I said, "Ed, I've never told you this but I want to thank you for what you did in World War II." He said "you know, Charlie," he said, "I was really young and very stupid." I thought that was probably a pretty good thing to be when you were doing that kind of stuff. Assault troops, geez.

RA: In Hollandia, New Guinea, the Japanese used to come and watch the movies at night in the hill. They wouldn't be known. They used to steal food. So they were still in Hollandia, because the united forces, they landed in Alai, in Finch, New Guinea. And they skipped the whole rest of New Guinea and landed in Hollandia, so there were thousands of Japanese still trapped there. A lot of them starved because they wouldn't give up. It was against their honor to give up. Well just recently-

They found one still holed up in a cave! He didn't know the cave was over! And everybody said "which war?"

RA: And he was in good health.

DN: Going through Nagasaki, I don't know who was the most scared, we or the Japanese. Just dropped the bomb and oh boy, they didn't want to be around us at all. And we just wandered all through those, where the buildings were demolished and everything. And never gave it a thought at that time because they didn't have the slightest idea about radiation. And to this day, I have to go to the VA once a year to take a blood test and I told them the last time, I'm not going to die of radiation at this age; I'm going to die of something else!