

THE PATRIOT

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‘Remarkable saga of family service’

6 brothers, Navy veterans to be honored in D.C.

By Cora Higgins

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A dedication ceremony is set for Saturday, July 15 to honor the six Oddo brothers, of Bellevue, at the U.S. Navy Memorial in Washington D.C.

It’s significant to note that, to date, the largest number of siblings to all enlist in the Navy is five, the famous Sullivan Brothers. Since the military branches haven’t kept a record of familial connections, it is impossible to know for certain, but the six Oddo brothers could be a record.

“What a remarkable saga of family service, and even if this level of commitment is not unique, it is certainly exceptional,” said Robert Smith, the Navy Memorial historian.

While visiting the memorial in March, Roger Oddo, originally from Bellevue, discovered a plaque wall in remembrance of sailors. The wall, having an elegance and moving presence, inspired him to initiate fundraising efforts to pay tribute to his father and uncles. While gathering information from the memorial to see this come to fruition, the story of the brothers was told to Smith.

Roger’s father, Richard, was the last of the six Oddo brothers to pass away in November 2022.

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Charles Oddo, an immigrant from Sicily, came to America and settled in Bellevue at just 18 years old. He married Mary Grace Baptista, the daughter of a Sicilian immigrant. They instilled a deep love for country and family in all six of their sons who then went on to each join the Navy, making them both brothers by blood and brothers by sea.

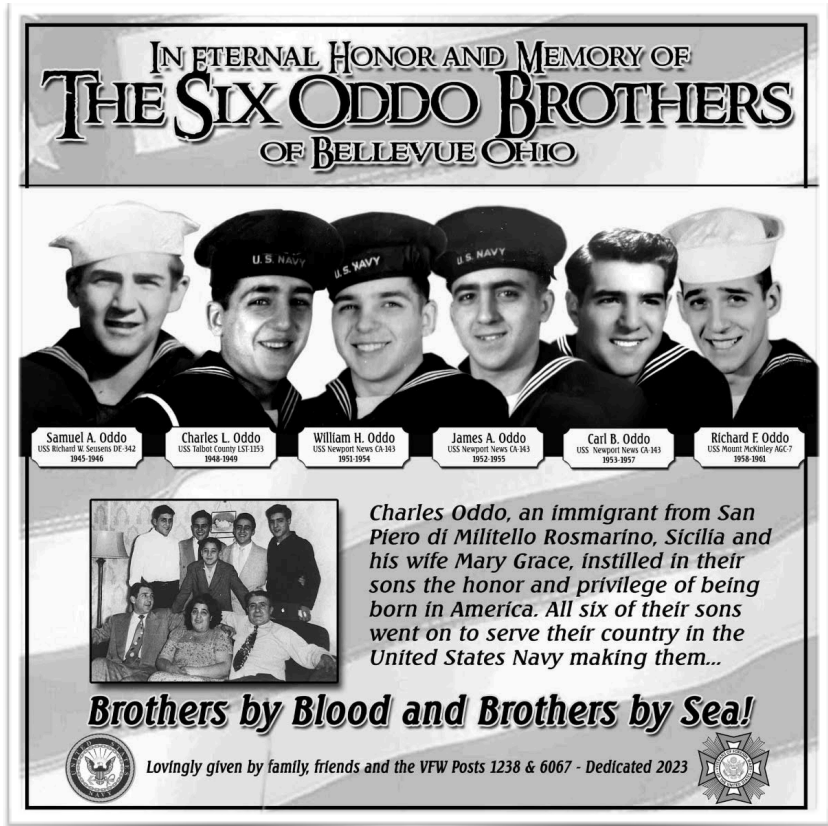
While the Oddo brothers may have been scattered around the world during their times of service, they each returned to the Bellevue area.

“We couldn’t be prouder of our fathers, and their dedication to both their service to our country and to our family. It felt appropriate after my father passed away to do something that honored them with the same level of significance that they brought to every life they touched,” Roger Oddo said.

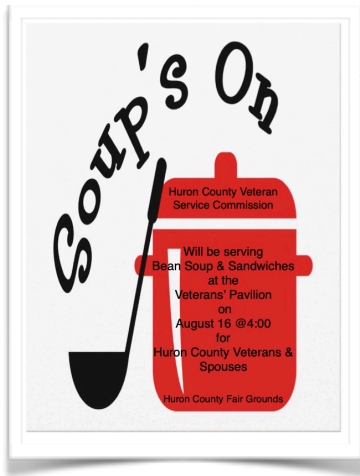
“These were exceptional men, neighbors, comrades, sons, brothers, spouses, and mostly, fathers. Leaving a legacy that will remain part of history for others to see at the U.S. Navy Memorial helps us share with others who visit the memorial a bit of what they gave to us. The effort put into making this dedication happen wouldn’t have come to fruition without the lesson of rallying together that we learned from them.”

The last surviving spouse, Sherron (Dick) Oddo, will lay a wreath at the foot of the Lone Sailor statue during the July 15 ceremony. While in D.C., the family has been granted White House tours and are excited to take their Italian/American family gathering all the way to our nation’s capital.

“This was a combined effort of family, friends, community, and the VFW posts 1238 and 6067. It’s inspirational to see the groups they dedicated themselves to, giving back in honor of them. Our fathers were unintentionally inspirational. They just had a way of positively impacting others without expecting anything in return. We hope their story inspires those who read it to live the way they did, putting service above self,” Oddo said.



This is a rendering of the U.S. Navy Memorial plaque that honors the six Oddo brothers, all of whom served in the Navy. It will be dedicated July 15 in Washington D.C. PHOTO COURTESY OF CORA HIGGINS



Annual Bean Soup dinner set for Aug. 16

NORWALK — Mark your calendars!

The Huron County Veteran Service Commission will be serving bean soup and sandwiches for Huron County veterans and their spouses during the Huron County Fair. Our annual Bean Soup dinner will be on Wednesday, Aug. 16 at 4 p.m. at the Veterans Pavilion in the Huron County Fairgrounds.

We hope to see you there.

HCVSO sponsors trip to U.S. Air Force museum in Dayton

NORWALK — The Huron County Veteran Service Office is sponsoring a two-day trip to the National Museum of the Air Force in Dayton, Ohio on Wednesday, Sept. 20 and Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023.

Veterans who are Huron County residents and their spouse are eligible to participate. Participants will be responsible for paying for their food and hotel room (\$121.77 per room). Admission to the museum is free.

Space is limited to 54 people. To reserve your spot, come by the Huron County Veteran Service Office, 185 Shady Lane Drive, Suite C, Norwalk, or call (419) 668-4150. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. through 4 p.m.

The deadline to sign up is Monday, July 31. A mandatory pre-trip meeting will be Friday, Aug. 4 at 3 p.m. at American Legion Post 41, 406 W. Main St., Norwalk.



Free dental hygiene for veterans

ELYRIA — The Dental Hygiene Clinic at Lorain County Community College (LCCC) is providing educational, preventive, and therapeutic dental hygiene services to veterans. Patients can be assured that the faculty/student interaction during the appointment means that all care meets the highest standards of quality. This opportunity not only benefits future dental hygiene professionals, but also offers the opportunity for veterans to receive no-cost (free!), quality care in a friendly atmosphere.

Transportation will be provided by the Huron County Veteran Service Office. Lunch will be provided by the LCCC Dental Hygiene Clinic.

This is limited to the first 7 veterans to sign up. Contact or stop by the HCVSO, (419) 668-4150.

Mural painted for Norwalk's American Legion

NORWALK — A new mural and freshly repainted American Legion seal greet people as they enter Post 41.

The American Legion hired Beth Sage, the owner and operator of Sagebrush Artistry. She has created murals for more than 40 years and is self-taught.

“What’s most important to me is when I can feel attached to whatever it is I’m working on. I love for it to have meaning; it’s a whole lot more important to me than painting someone’s signage,” Sage said. “I tend to lean toward projects that have meaning behind them and I turn down a lot that don’t.”

She has painted murals at more than 150 schools throughout Ohio, including in Norwalk, Monroeville, South Central, Plymouth, and Willard.

Most recently at Willard City Schools, Sage painted life-size portraits of 39 athletes on the Wall of Fame who were first-team All-Ohio and state champions, dating back to 1938. One of her future projects is painting a mural on a six-foot wall at the Attica Area Veterans Memorial Park.

Kristy Stockmaster, Post 41 commander, contacted Sage about creating a mural for the Norwalk building.

“This one with the veterans really pulled at my heart strings,” Sage said. “When I went originally to meet (with the American Legion), they wanted something painted inside, but there’s no real wall to do it on.”

Sage designed and painted the mural on plywood that later was attached to the outside of the building.

“She wanted an eagle that was looking at you and I love painting eagles,” said Sage, who decided to put it “front and center” in the middle of a star.

The painter used a concrete sealer for driveways on the mural, so the colors will stay intact and won’t yellow for many years.

“I wanted to make sure they had it for Memorial Day weekend,” said Sage, who was pleased with the final product. “It was better than what they were expecting, which is always nice to hear.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMERICAN LEGION POST 41



Margie Roll (left) and Sarah Williamson, of the Sandusky VA Clinic, were among more than a dozen community partners who had tables at the 2023 Veterans Barbecue. *PHOTOS BY CARY ASHBY/HCVSO*

Veterans Barbecue is successful

NORWALK — More than 150 veterans and their spouses enjoyed the annual barbecue hosted and coordinated by the Huron County Veteran Service Office.

We greatly appreciate the enthusiastic support of the community partners who attended and engaged with veterans and spouses at American Legion Post 41.

In attendance were: 945th Engineer Company, American Legion Post 41, Coles Energy Propane, Disabled American Veterans, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, EHOVE Career Center, Enrichment Centers for Huron County, Family Health Services, Huron County Area

Veterans Council, Huron County Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Huron County Department of Job and Family Services, Marine Corps League, Sandusky VA Clinic, and Team Red, White and Blue.

Thanks also goes to Coles Energy, Family Health Services, Foghorn Designs, New Horizons Baking Co., Rural King and Schild's IGA SuperCenter for their important contributions.



A truck from Tony Burns Racing and two vehicles from the 945th Engineer Company make up the static display outside American Legion Post 41 in Norwalk.

Veteran recalls special Memorial Day memories

MONROEVILLE — Richard Palmer, commander of American Legion Post 547 in Monroeville, was the parade grand marshal and guest speaker for the Memorial Day festivities in the village.

He served in the U.S. Army as a Hawk Missile System Electrician. In addition to holding several positions at Post 547, including four years as commander, Palmer is in the color guard. In 2021, he received the Huron County Veteran of the Year award. He has served as a volunteer firefighter, coached little league baseball, was president of the Monroeville High School Athletic Boosters, has been involved at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, and was instrumental in the development of Clark Park and the Jason Sparks Memorial Field in Monroeville.

Palmer shared his important memories of the Memorial Day festivities in the village.

“Growing up in Monroeville, I remember working hard the night before Memorial Day decorating our bicycles and looking forward to being in the Memorial Day parade. Next came the Boy Scouts.



The message on this decorated wagon in the 2023 Memorial Day parade in Monroeville says it all. PHOTOS BY MINDY SOISSON-CALHOUN

We marched in the parade in uniform carrying our flags. Then came high school. I was in the marching band and we marched in the parade, just like the marching band joining us today. Next was the Army. I was gone for three years and missed out on the parade at home, but I began to realize what Memorial Day is all about,” he said.

“After my military service, I joined the American Legion, where every year, as a group, we visit eight cemeteries. We perform a salute and prayer in honor of those veterans who are no longer with us, especially those killed in service to the country. Most recently, these were James Sprowl in Vietnam in 1968 and Jason Sparks in Iraq in 2004.”

Monroeville Police Officer Nick Meyer was named the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Kyle Long, the Firefighter of the Year. Long is the third generation serving at the Huron River Joint Fire District.

The Monroeville Community Choir and Monroeville High School band performed during the program at Commons Park. Ken Brown and Bob Good, of the American Legion, laid the World War I wreath.



Ken Brown, of American Legion Post 547, lays a wreath during the Memorial Day program in Monroeville. Looking on is Bob Good.

Hometown Heroes program continues to grow

NORWALK — The Hometown Heroes program in Norwalk now has 181 banners.

The city celebrated the third annual dedication with a ceremony May 19 at Suhr Family Park. The pilot program started in 2020 with 24 banners. Currently, 181 veterans are honored on East and West Main streets as well as Whittlesey and Benedict avenues.



Jugz & Thugz performs after the third annual dedication of the Hometown Heroes banner program in Norwalk.

Heather Chapman Smith, of Norwalk, led the crowd in singing the national anthem.

“It’s an honor for the city to even think of me, to invite me to do such a thing. This year is just a little extra special because I got married last year and my husband is a veteran. I put a banner up in his honor,” she said.

Elaine Lochner honored her two uncles who served in World War II, Donald and Robert Janotta.

“My mother enlisted in the Women’s Army Corps, in the hopes that (she would be) seeing her babies. Communicating through letters, they planned to meet in Salerno, Italy in a few weeks. However, this was not to be, as Donnie’s division left for England and Donnie soon lost his life.”

Janotta served as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division and the 505 Paratrooper Division of the U.S. Army. He saw action in Sicily and Salerno, and the invasions of Normandy and Belgium. He earned the Purple Heart and Silver Star medals and Combat Infantryman Badge.

“Donnie parachuted into Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944, but because of heavy cloud cover, he missed his drop location and was immediately captured by the Germans. He somehow escaped, hid in a ditch and went to a French farm, where they fed him and gave him civilian clothes. He eventually was able to get back to the 82nd,” Lochner said.

“In England, Donnie broke his foot in a parachute jump while preparing for the invasion of Holland. He spent time in the hospital and went back to Belgium, where he received his fatal wounds and died Jan. 4, 1945.”

Robert Janotta enlisted in the Army in 1942. He served at Fort Benjamin in Indiana, where he taught soldiers to read and write. Afterward, he returned to work with his father, John Janotta, in the building company then known as Janotta & Sons, which later became Janotta & Herner.

“Stories like this have been passed down through generations. I want to leave everyone with one thought: Keep sharing these stories with your family members, so one day you can honor your family’s heroes,” Lochner said.

Veteran Service Office provides transportation

The Huron County Veteran Service Office provides transportation services to any medical appointment.

At least 48 hours before your appointment, call (419) 668-4150. You also may request transportation online at huroncountyvets.com. Under the "services" tab, click on "transportation."

Be ready to provide all of the following: Your full name; your phone number; the date, time and location of your appointment; and the last four numbers of your Social Security number.

Ryan Wolfe or Cary Ashby, of the transportation department, will call you the day before your appointment to confirm your ride.

Huron Co. Veteran Service Office contact information

185 Shady Lane Drive, Suite C, Norwalk, Ohio 44857

Phone: (419) 668-4150; Fax: (419) 663-6215

Open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

www.huroncountyvets.com

Matt Raymond, Director — mraymond@huroncountyvets.com

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Ryan Wolfe, Part-time Driver/Transportation Coordinator — transport@huroncountyvets.com

Cary Ashby, Part-time Driver/Community Coordinator — community@huroncountyvets.com

4-H club honors veterans for Memorial Day

HARTLAND TOWNSHIP — The 4-H club Rumblin Riders put up flags at the Hartland Cemetery on all veterans' graves for the Memorial Day weekend.

Pictured are: Emalise Sanders, Landon Barnhart, Kaden Wetzel, Maylee Wetzel, Layken Barnhart, and Ophylia Sanders.

PHOTO BY ANDREA DALTON

