



PANORAMA



VALLEY STREAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XXIV ISSUE 4

JANUARY 1997

PAGAN FLETCHER RESTORATION
143 Hendrickson Avenue
Valley Stream, NY 11580, 516 872-4159

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15 1997

8:00 p.m.

HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH HALL
BROOKLYN AVENUE AND 7th STREET
VALLEY STREAM

PROGRAM

LIGHTS AND LEGENDS

Dr. Harlan Hamilton, professor of English at New Jersey State Teachers College for the past 31 years, will do a slide presentation of twenty major lighthouses from Point Judith, R.I. to Throgs Neck, NY. This will include lighthouses on Long Island itself. Dr. Hamilton is an expert on this subject and will have his book Lights and Legends available.

Refreshments at the the January meeting will be provided by Carol McKenna, Evelyn McQuade and Anita Buckley.

RECAPITULATION

The November 20th meeting of the Historical Society was a memorable one. As anticipated, Captain John Miller arranged to come down from Poughkeepsie for the meeting and spoke of his experiences as a test pilot for the XJL amphibian, built in Valley Stream by the Columbia Aircraft Corporation.

Valerie Esposito made an audio tape of the program which has been given to the Waldinger Library for inclusion in the Society's collection of tapes. For those who might be interested, an audio tape of Captain John Miller, made in 1990, is already on file at the library.

SPECIAL GIFT

Gabe Parrish, who was instrumental in arranging the November 20th program and spoke himself, has donated a custom made model of the XJL amphibian which is on display in the exhibition room at the Restoration. The XJL was the successor of the Grumman Duck. There are photographs of the XJL and the Duck in the display case.

RESULTS OF GINGERBREAD HOUSE CONTEST

There were many participants in the very successful Gingerbread House Contest and everyone who participated received a copy of the History of Valley Stream. Since the Restoration had been decorated for Christmas, there was a particularly festive air. The winners of the contest were as follows: First Prize, Linda Cutare; Second Prize, Arthur J. Hendrickson Park and Vicinity created by three families who have participated with amazing creations for the past few years. The children are Amanda and Paul Scalza, Matt Reilly, and Chris, Joe, Julianne, Jim and John Ruggiero; Third place, Girl Scout Brownie Troop 2504.



VINTAGE GAS STATION AT RESTORATION

The Valley Stream Historical Society is very fortunate to have, as one of its main attractions, the earliest gas station in Nassau County. It was moved to the grounds of the Restoration from its spot on Corona Avenue where it was a familiar sight for many, many years. The gas station was owned and operated by the Raustein family who had emigrated from Germany. When the parents of Fred and Elsie died, Elsie operated the gas station. She also had a large vegetable garden at the site and sold tomatoes and asparagus. In the 1950's or 1960's, Elsie turned the operation of the gas station over to her daughter, Dolly, who ran it until the property was sold and a development of very substantial homes was built on the site.

The gas pumps in front of the station are unique. The one on the left would measure gas into a can which was then transferred into the vehicle. The pump on the right dates from 1918 and pumped gas in varying amounts: a pint, a quart, a half gallon and a gallon. Farm tools are stored inside the gas station.

Seeing the Historical Society's unique gas station is one more reason to visit the Restoration.

AIDS TO VOLUNTEERS

The Valley Stream Historical Society is still actively recruiting volunteers to conduct tours of the Pagan Fletcher Restoration on Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Ted Libath has made a video tape tour of the house which includes interesting genealogy of the Pagan Fletcher family. It was particularly interesting to note that many of the early members of the family are buried in the St. John's Methodist Church graveyard in Elmont. Audio tapes are available at the Country Store at the Restoration to be used in the house. One is the history of the house related by Ted Libath and Gordon Fairchild; the other by Claire McMahan emphasizes the contents of the rooms.

CONDOLENCES

The members of the Historical Society extend their sincere sympathy to Joe Gunther on the death of his brother, Edward, in early December.

BITS OF HISTORY-MOSTLY LONG ISLAND

**VALLEY STREAM
IN WORLD WAR II, LVII
by Al Mayernik**

More items from the pages of the Valley Stream Mail and the Gibson Herald:

December 7, 1944 issue: Major Kenneth E. Richards, son of Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Richards, has been awarded the Bronze Star, with accompanying ribbon, for "meritorious service in action against the enemy." The award was made by Colonel John A. Rogers. Major Richards is "somewhere in Europe" with the First U.S. Army, as an officer of the Medical Administration Corps.

December 7, 1944 issue: With the Army Air Force Engineer Command in Italy: Gilbert M. Dorland...the stepson of Mrs. K.L. Dorland, of 56 Sylvan Place, recently assumed command of a veteran aviation engineer regiment, building airfields in Italy and received a promotion to the rank of Colonel.

A West Point graduate (Class of '36), he was first assigned to his present unit in September 1942, joining the Army Air Base at Richmond, Va., as Commanding Officer of one of its battalions. Then a Major, he brought his command into North Africa with its invasion, directing the construction of those first crucial airfields, which provided bases for the first feeble resistance offered the Luftwaffe by the Air Force. During the ensuing Tunisian campaign, his unit earned for itself a reputation for skill and initiative in the rapid construction of airdromes, many of them built under enemy fire. For his expert guidance of his command, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

Now in command of his trail-blazing engineer regiment, Colonel Dorland is responsible for the construction and maintenance of over 65% of the airfields within occupied Italy. Guiding him in the responsible command are his experiences learned in French Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Persia, India and Burma. Colonel Dorland attended Central High School.

December 14, 1944 issue: Warrant Officer Dominick DiStasio, 27, whose wife and parents reside at 2 Sunrise High way was killed in France, November 25, according to a telegram from the War Department last Saturday....

He was attached to the Field Artillery, 3rd Army, and had been on foreign soil for the past six months. "Dom"...was born here and attended the public school and Central High School, graduating in 1936. He was employed by the Mail-Herald during his high school years.

His wife is Wilma DiStasio, and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John DiStasio. Mr. DiStasio is section foreman for the Long Island Railroad Company in the Valley Stream section where he has been assigned for more than 40 years.

Warrant Officer DiStasio was inducted into the service in 1941 and after being attached to several corps throughout the country, was sent overseas from Camp Campbell, Ky. A letter received by his wife last week stated that he had enjoyed a "good old-fashioned Thanksgiving dinner in France...."

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VALLEY STREAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XXIV ISSUE 5

FEBRUARY 1997

PAGAN FLETCHER RESTORATION

143 Hendrickson Avenue
Valley Stream, NY 11580, 516 872-4159

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY, February 18, 1997

8:00 p.m.

HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH HALL
BROOKLYN AVENUE AND 7th STREET
VALLEY STREAM

PROGRAM

SWITZERLAND

Joan Duffy, VSHS trustee, will do a slide presentation on the Alps, cities and lakes of Switzerland. The pictures, taken by Joan's husband, Francis, a professional photographer, provide a dramatic glimpse of a fabled country. As a maritime photographer, Francis Duffy was invited to travel to Switzerland by the Swiss Travel Board to photograph vintage steamboats on the many lakes of Switzerland.

Refreshments at the February meeting will be provided by Lillian Weaver, Kay Keely and Agnes Libath.

Please Note: The Historical Society meetings will be held on Tuesdays in February and March.

GIFT OF PHOTOS

Arthur Foti, retired as photographer for the Mail Leader and gave his collection of negatives to the Historical Society. Jim Buckley and Ted Libath found among them a series of pictures depicting the move of our vintage gas station (featured in January's Panorama) from Corona Avenue to the grounds of the Restoration. The pictures are mounted in a frame and can be seen at the Restoration.

MISSING CHARTER

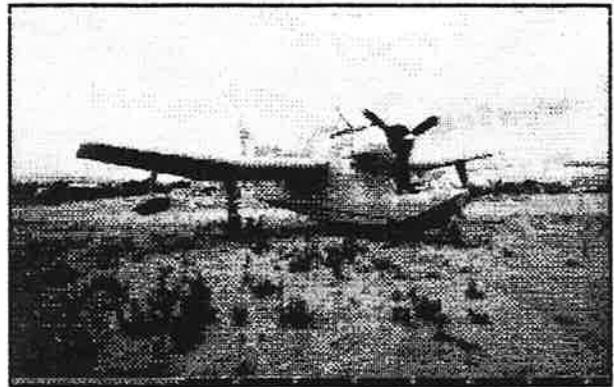
The trustees of the Historical Society are trying to locate the organization's original charter. If any member of the society is in possession of the charter, we would appreciate its return to the Restoration.

HISTORY OF DISTRICT 13

VSHS member, William Stris is writing a history of District 13. He is anxious to acquire information from anyone who attended one of the four schools in the district: Wheeler Avenue School (formerly School #13), Howell Road School, James A. Dever School, and Willow Road School. Mr. Stris is a member of the District 13 Board of Education as well as the High School Board of Education. He was an art teacher in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn for thirty years. Mr. Stris can be reached at 41 Parkwold Drive East, Valley Stream 11580 or at 872-8205.

JAY MCKENNA FUND

The Valley Stream Historical Society is still accepting contributions in the memory of our late beloved president. Checks should be made out to the Valley Stream Historical Society for the Jay McKenna Fund and sent to VSHS P.O. Box 22, Valley Stream, N.Y. 11582



THE XJL IN ARIZONA

This picture which depicts the XJL in Arizona comes from the collection of Gabe Parrish. John Connolly, from Lynbrook, graciously supplied the Historical Society with a set of pictures taken of the XJL at the Pima Air and Space Museum outside of Tucson, Arizona. One of the two Columbia-built XJL's is preserved there. In the museum guide, the Columbia XJL is identified as the "monoplane evolution of the Grumman Duck" and was first flown in 1946. We in the Society are privileged to know the test pilot, John Miller (speaker at the November 1996 meeting). We are also fortunate to have a model of the original XJL donated by Gabe Parrish and on display in the exhibit room at the Restoration. As John Connolly said in his note, "The plane in Pima might just be the last, or at least the next to last aircraft built in Valley Stream."

MABEL ACKERLY'S PAINTING

Edmund Michler donated an oil painting by Mabel Dibble Ackerly to the Restoration. Mabel sold the painting to raise money for the Restoration in the mid-70's. Mabel, was a descendent of the Payan (Pagan) family, founders of the Village of Valley Stream, and she herself, at the age of 84, approached then Mayor Tom Ward about founding a society devoted to the history of the town. That was in 1972.

ORAL TAPE

Helen Dowdeswell made an oral tape of Mr. Robert Baum who lived in Valley Stream during his childhood for fourteen years during the World War II period. Helen said that his memories were very vivid and quite extraordinary.

HOFSTRA COURSE

On April 27th, Sundays at Hofstra University's Continuing Education Program is presenting "A Sense of Place: Long Island History and Heritage." Anyone interested in attending this course should call 516-463-5993. The fee is \$24

CALENDAR PICTURE

The First National Bank of Long Island features the Pagan Fletcher Restoration in its 1997 calendar.

BITS OF HISTORY-MOSTLY LONG ISLAND

**VALLEY STREAM
IN WORLD WAR II, LVIII
by Al Mayernik**

The Christmas issue of the Valley Stream Mail and Gibson Herald continues the tragic and courageous stories of Valley Streamers overseas.

December 21, 1944 issue: Private Fred Carroll, 20, son of Mrs. Anna Carroll of 91 Derby Street has been reported killed in action, December 4, in Germany according to a telegram from the War Department.

Private Carroll, after breaking all records at St. Francis Xavier High School with an average of 98 percent, won a scholarship to Holy Cross College where he studied for one year before being inducted into the service. He was placed in the Infantry. Mrs. Carroll is a widow.

December 21, 1944 issue: An Eighth Air Force Bomber Station, England. Staff Sergeant Robert J. Burke, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Burke, of 234 East Avenue, has been awarded a second Oak Leaf Cluster to his Air Medal, it was recently announced by the Commanding General, Eighth Air Force.

Sergeant Burke is a ball turret gunner of a B-17 Flying Fortress and is a veteran of many of the Eighth Air Force's huge daylight precision bombing assaults against the Nazi war machine. He participated in missions over Hamburg, Merseburg and Frankfurt, as well as troop support missions over Metz and the area around Aachen, all of which were carried out with excellent results and greatly aided our ground forces. Staff Sergeant Burke has displayed great courage and skill on all these occasions and his actions reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States, it was stated

Prior to his entry into the Army Air Force, Sergeant Burke was employed as a riveter by the Grumann Aircraft Co., Bethpage, New York.

December 21, 1944 issue: First Lieutenant Milton A. Hendrickson, 28, pilot of a B-17 Flying Fortress of the 95th Bombardment Group, has been awarded the 2nd Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for "meritorious achievement" while participating in Eighth Air Force bombing attacks on Nazi airfields, supply dumps and gun emplacements in support of advances by Allied ground forces on the Continent. The presentation was made by Colonel Karl Truesdale, Jr., of Washington, D.C. group commander. The Lieutenant's wife, Mrs. Edith Hendrickson, resides at 77 Elmwood Street in Valley Stream.

The necessity of Americans to invest in War Bonds was related by the young officer in a recent letter to his father, Arthur J. Hendrickson of 59 North Central Avenue. The Lieutenant wrote in part:



Some time if you run across anybody who thinks that War Bonds aren't a good thing to invest in tell them this story. The 8th Air Force over here in England wanted to do something so they pledged that they would buy 6 million dollars worth of War Bonds; that would be enough to buy a squadron of planes of the types used by the 8th Air Force. They said they would raise it in the month of August.

Three weeks have passed and the 6 million mark is passed by a couple of hundred thousand. Not bad, eh? Our own group had a quota of \$85,000 and we already met that with a week to go. We can't lose, Pop!...."

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VALLEY STREAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XXIV ISSUE 6

March 1997

PAGAN FLETCHER RESTORATION

143 Hendrickson Avenue
Valley Stream, NY 11581
516 872 - 4159

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY

MARCH 18, 1997

8:00 p.m.

**HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
BROOKLYN AVENUE AND 7TH STREET
VALLEY STREAM, N.Y.**

PROGRAM

TERMINAL EAGLES

David Morrison, a Branch Manager of the Long Island Railroad, will give a slide presentation on the Pennsylvania Station and Grand Central Station eagles. Mr. Morrison has been interested in this project for ten years. These terminal eagles were originally placed on the newly constructed Pennsylvania Station in 1907 and Grand Central in 1912. Mr. Morrison's program will include the story behind the eagles and where they are located today.

Cakes for the March meeting will be provided by Dorothy Vitale, Barbara Ehlinger and Gloria Fetter.

APPLICATION FOR ABSOLUTE CHARTER

The VSHS had decided to petition for an Absolute Charter from the Regents of the State University of New York. This is a complicated undertaking and will probably take a year to complete. Trustees of the Society are presently studying information proved by the State in preparation for completing the twenty six page application. Up till now the Society has had only a provisional charter.

CAST IRON STOVE ACQUISITION

After a long delay, the VSHS has acquired a cast iron stove which it purchased several years ago. According to Ted Libath, the stove, which probably used kerosene to heat with, is in "horrible condition" and will take a great deal of time and effort to restore. Ted plans to enlist the help of Sid Harvey, who has assisted the Society in the past, to sandblast parts of the stove. Ted and Jim Buckley have a massive job ahead of them. Plans are to place the cast iron stove in the pantry of the Pagan Fletcher Restoration where the radiator is now. The radiator, which is quite a conversation piece, will be moved into the kitchen.

RAFFLE OF AFGHAN

A Franklin Hospital scenic afghan which depicts historic sites in the area, including the Pagan Fletcher Restoration, will be raffled off at the May 21st Historical Society meeting. Chances will be sold until that time at 3 for \$ 1 at the Restoration and at prior meetings.

APPRECIATION

Marshall Anderson, a Valley Stream artist, has been given a five year membership in the Historical Society in appreciation for his restoration of the crayon drawings on the third floor of the Pagan Fletcher Restoration. The drawings on the walls and the bathroom were creations of Gordon Fairchild's younger brother. He was given permission to make the drawings by his mother.

CATALOGING

Mel Riddick has offered to catalogue memorabilia in the basement of the Restoration. Mr. Riddick will also make copies of Ted Libath's tapes. Jim Buckley has completed the valuable job of inventorying the contents of the Restoration and has typed the report.

FRANKLIN SQUARE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A delegation from the VSHS has been invited to attend the March 12th meeting of the Franklin Square Historical Society. The meeting will be held at the Washington Street School in Franklin Square at 8:00 p.m. Any member interested in attending should contact Carol McKenna at 825-2490.

ORAL TAPE

David C. Cooke, a writer who lived in Valley Stream and who has written 97 books was interviewed by Helen Dowdeswell. Mr. Cooke's books include children's books, travel, how to and aviation books among others. He was a syndicated columnist and has traveled with his wife to exotic places like Taiwan and Kuwait.

VALLEY STREAM IN WORLD WAR II

Al Mayernik is still collecting pictures and memorabilia about Valley Stream in World War II. Anyone with material for Al can contact him at P.O. Box 22, Valley Stream, N.Y. 11582.

GOODBYE RIO THEATER

Demolition of the decrepit Rio Theater, a landmark on Rockaway Avenue, used for vaudeville productions at one time, was begun on February 27th. Mayor James Darcy is credited with breaking the impasse over the fate of the theater which had been an eyesore for years. There are plans to construct a park and parking lot on the site.

HEALTH FAIR

A Community Health Fair will be held at South High School 150 Jedwood Place, V.S. on Saturday, March 15th from 10:00 a. m. to 2:00 p.m.

BITS OF HISTORY-MOSTLY LONG ISLAND

by Al Mayernik

**VALLEY STREAM
IN WORLD WAR -LVIX**
by Al Mayernik

I received the following account from Walter E. Dibble of 12 Carpenter Street. He graduated from Central High School in 1939 and entered the Merchant Marine on August 21, 1942:

I received a Midshipman appointment to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, L.I. to start basic training for commission in the U.S. Navy where Lieutenant (j.g.) was the rank attained.

I was aboard a new Liberty ship for its first voyage from New Orleans to Port Said, Egypt, a relatively short distance that would normally take 8 to 10 weeks, but the trip stretched to over 7 months. Because no convoy was available, our routing was the Panama Canal, the west coast of South America, around Cape Horn to South Africa and north up the east coast of Africa to Egypt. We were pounded by a 30 day storm down the west coast of South America where constant 40 foot seas crashed over the starboard side, destroying 2 lifeboats and 1 liferaft and causing several of the ship's plates to crack. One railroad tankcar (deck cargo) got loose and punched a hole in a deck plate. The ship required repairs and equipment replacement which necessitated an unscheduled stop in Durban, South Africa. Our first enemy action was on the return trip when 3 tankers in the middle of the convoy were torpedoed by German submarines.

After being commissioned in the U.S. Navy, I served aboard a Navy attack transport, the U.S.S. Lyon(AP71) as R division officer and senior officer of the watch.

I participated in enemy action as follows: August 15, 1944: We landed troops of the 45th Division during the invasion of southern France, east of Toulon near the town of St. Maxime in the Bay of Bognon. Our combat support consisted of 2 battleships, the

U.S. S. New York and U.S.S. Texas, 3 cruisers plus heavy air cover. This invasion marked the beginning of the end of the war in Europe.

Late 1944: our ship was transferred to Pacific duty with small engagements in New Guinea and the Philippine Islands.

April 26-30, 1945: We participated in the initial landing during the invasion of Okinawa. While steaming toward Okinawa, our convoy underwent nightly enemy aerial attack. However, once we started debarking the troops on "D" Day, the Japanese kamikazi pilots concentrated on the combat ships on the picket line. Those ships were protecting our landing operations and bombarding the inland enemy defense positions with the 16 inch guns of the battleships. By afternoon of "D" Day, the Lyon was underway for the open sea to make room for the following wave of transports. We felt safe because the enemy would not waste a bomb or torpedo on the empty ship whose mission had been accomplished.

Fall 1945: We landed the first U.S. occupation troops in Nagoya, Japan

November 1945: I was transferred from the U.S.S. Lyon to Assistant Material Officer of the Sixteenth Fleet in Bayonne, New Jersey preparing Navy ships for motaballing..

March 18, 1946: I received Honorable release from active duty and returned to live in Valley Stream. After several household moves, I am now retired and living at:

20211 126th Ave.
Sun City West
Arizona 85375
Telephone (602) 584-6076

Medals/Service Ribbons Awarded
U.S. Navy American Theater
European Theater (1 star)
Asiatic Pacific Theater (1 star)
Philippine Liberation Medal
Victory Medal

U.S. Merchant Marine —Atlantic War Zone, Mediterranean Middle East War Zone, Pacific War Zone, Merchant Marine Combat Bar. Victory Medal

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APRIL 15, 1997!

VALLEY STREAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XXIV ISSUE 7

APRIL 1997

PAGAN FLETCHER RESTORATION

143 Hendrickson Avenue
Valley Stream, NY 11581
516 872 - 4159

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY

APRIL 16, 1997

8:00 p.m.

HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
BROOKLYN AVENUE AND 7TH STREET
VALLEY STREAM, N.Y.

PROGRAM

MINOR NATIONAL PARKS

Al Mayernik, VSHS member and author of the monthly "Bits of History—Mostly Long Island" in Panorama, will present a program on the "minor" National Parks. Al's presentation will include slides. A sampling of the parks he will display and discuss are the homes of Presidents, Sagamore Hill and Hyde Park, Jamaica Bay—Gateway National Recreation Area, Fire Island, the Statue of Liberty, Federal Hall, Gettysburg and Plymouth Rock. A former history teacher, Al can always be depended upon to provide an educational and entertaining evening.

Cakes for the meeting will be provided by Anita Buckley, Joan Duffy, Adele Hagman and Carol McKenna.

CLASS FOR TOUR GUIDES

A training session for prospective Restoration tour guides will be held on Saturday, April 12th at 10:00 a.m. Ted Libath will conduct a tour of the house explaining the significant features of each room and incorporating the history of the house.

FRANKLIN HOSPITAL AFGHAN

Chairs are currently on sale at the Restoration and at VSHS meetings for a Franklin Hospital Afghan. It will be raffled off at the May 21st meeting.

VISITING STUDENTS

Fourth graders from Wheeler Avenue School will visit the Pagan Fletcher Restoration for tours on April 4th, April 9th and May 12th.

COMMITTEE FORMED

A committee has been formed to prepare material for the State Board of Regents to petition for an Absolute Charter. Members are Carol McKenna, Bert Keller, Helen Dowdeswell and Joan Duffy.

VISIT TO FRANKLIN SQUARE

Several members of the Valley Stream Historical Society attended a meeting of the Franklin Square Historical Society on March 12th. Helen Dowdeswell will assist that society in beginning an oral history project.

PAINTINGS

Two additions to the Pagan Fletcher Restoration are the outstanding contributions of artist, Jack Gunther. An oil painting of Ted Libath which Mr. Gunther painted as a gift to Ted will hang in the Libath Room on the second floor of the Restoration. The artist also created an extraordinary oil painting of Robert Pagan and his wife, Ellen. This portrait will hang in the living room of the Restoration. Jack based his painting of the Pagans on photographs (daguerreotypes?) of Robert and Ellen which are now in the Libath Room. The picture of Robert Pagan, the founder of Valley Stream, is dated 1843. Ellen Pagan was instrumental in providing the first religious services in Valley Stream, opening her home to an itinerant Methodist minister to conduct services.

On Sunday, May 18th at 2:00 p.m. a dedication ceremony will be held at the Pagan Fletcher Restoration. At that time Ted Libath's picture will be officially presented to him for placement in the Libath Room and the Valley Stream Historical Society will present the painting of the Pagans to the Restoration. Jack Gunther, the artist, to whom we are extremely grateful, is expected to be present. All are welcome to attend this very special occasion.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

May: The VSHS will march in the Memorial Day parade on Monday, May 26th. Members will assemble at Wheeler Avenue School at 9:30 a.m.

June: The traditional Chinese Auction and Strawberry Festival will be held on June 18th. Be sure to start gathering your "treasures" to donate to the Chinese Auction.

October: Nina Maurer has been designated coordinator of another Autumn Fair by the Village of Valley Stream. Instead of the Malverne Piecemakers Quilt Show at the Pagan Fletcher Restoration in the fall, an art show may be held.

MEMORIES OF TEXAS GUINAN

The Valley Stream Herald is interested in profiling a local woman for Woman's History Month. The newspaper contacted the VSHS and Carol McKenna is making a wealth of material on Texas Guinan available. The famous entertainer appeared at the Pavilion Royal in Valley Stream in the 1920's

CONCERN FOR MEMBERS

Carolyn Gladky's husband, Bill, passed away on March 15th.

Eileen Brennan is recuperating at home after her recent hospitalization.

BITS OF HISTORY-MOSTLY LONG ISLAND

by Al Mayernik

**VALLEY STREAM
IN WORLD WAR -LX**

by Al Mayernik

The following news article by Tom Becker is from the February 1, 1996 issue of The Valley Stream Herald:

Every year as New Year's Eve celebrations kick-off, Valley Stream resident James Patrick Gomil thinks back to the last day in December, 1942.

It was that year when something extraordinary took place....The events of that night made heroes of ordinary men like Mr. Gomil, then a young motor machinist first-class assigned to the submarine, the USS Nautilus.

The backdrop was Buka Island in the Pacific. The characters, the Navy submarine, her crew, 14 Bougainville nuns, two priests, a young girl and an infant, and finally the enemy, the Japanese war machine.

For Mr. Gomil, the event which was about to unfold before him that night was anything but scripted....

"I remember like it was yesterday," he said from his Valley Stream home. "I'll never forget it."

The USS Nautilus had been asked to carry out a very dangerous mission which had enormous potential to produce a great number of casualties. She was to creep into the harbor, locate a small group of nuns and get them off the island unscathed, all without alerting the island's new landlord, the Japanese military.

"I guess we knew that there was a risk, but we weren't thinking about that. We just wanted to get those nuns out."

As the submarine cruised toward its destination, a 400 foot wrench was thrown in her plans in the form of a Japanese destroyer which was just sitting in the middle of the harbor

The captain's first reaction was to strike, to unleash the sub's arsenal on the sitting duck. However, even a successful attack on the ship would hamstring the crew's ability to save the nuns, for their cover would be blown.

Instead, the sub distanced herself from the enemy ship and unloaded a small unit onto two inflatable rubber motor boats.

...Mr. Gomil said the boats caught a break when they spotted two fires on the shore, locating the position of the nuns.

"The entire island was full of Japanese soldiers. We got lucky by spotting the nuns right away but we had to be very careful in getting them off the island."

As the night had already been filled with the good and bad side of luck, the trend continued as the nuns appeared dressed in full white outfits under a bright full moon.

"I thought, so much for the cover of darkness," said the retired New York City fireman.

Loading the small boats with the increased load caused some rough sailing through the shark-infested waters, which were becoming choppy in the early morning hours.

However, somehow, some way, the mission was completed, the nuns, the priest and others were all deposited on the submarine: the only remaining problem was reminding the crew to mind their manners in front of their new guests.



"We acted like gentlemen, gave them the officers' quarters," he said. "After all, they were nuns."

Mr. Gomil received a medal for his actions that night, as he did for many of his missions, which included the raid on Makin Island, the infamous battle of Midway, and the sinking of the first Japanese destroyer in the war. Yet it is the nuns whom he remembers every New Year's Eve.

"Every year I have a drink to them a drink to myself, Mr. Gomil said....

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BITS OF HISTORY-MOSTLY LONG ISLAND

by Al Mayernik

**VALLEY STREAM
IN WORLD WAR -LX I**

by Al Mayernik

The following news article by Sally Lambert is from the August 12, 1944 issue of Newsday:

Valley Stream—"Ask Mrs. Knowles," folks in Valley Stream advise when there's work to be done. "She's the busiest woman in town by she always manages to find time for an extra job."

That's just what happened when the South Shore branch of the Citizens' Committee for the Army and Navy wanted a unit formed here to knit sweaters for departing Valley Stream servicemen and women. They simply asked Mrs. John Knowles, who lives at 29 W. Melrose St., and she said, "We'll start right now." So far 1,000 sweaters have been presented and almost as many letters of thanks have been received from all over the world.

Here's how Mrs. Knowles went about it. A prominent church and Red Cross worker, and a resident for 25 years, she has a wide acquaintance, so by dint of considerable labor she formed a committee of 150 members in March 1943. They pay annual dues of a dollar and when collection time comes, usually double the amount. Contributions from every church—Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Jewish, Lutheran and Catholic—poured in.

"Sometimes," Mrs. Knowles says, "People stop me on the street and offer money to keep our work going."

Two entertainments, a supper and a concert, are given annually with all proceeds going to the local unit. Last November, the Central High School band offered its services free and a large sum was realized. "That helped a lot," Mrs. Knowles said, "because the price of wool has gone up. Every sweater costs about six dollars. The work is done entirely by volunteers."

Are the sweaters appreciated? You should read some of the letters of thanks. One said, "It helps a great deal

to us fellows in the service to know the folks at home are pitching in to aid us in this, the people's war." Another: "The sweaters issued to us are tight all around and almost choke us to death. Yours fit as if they were made for us."

And again: "Thank God for the willing hands and hearts of our ladies at home." One Navy man wrote: "Your sweater is so nice and warm I wear it at night as well as during the day."

Mrs. Knowles also heads a unit that visits wounded veterans from St. Albans Naval Hospital every Thursday at Atlantic Beach, preparing food all day. A special homemade dessert is taken along. If a guy needs suntan oil on his back, he gets it. If he is blue, the volunteers comfort him with rosy talk. If he is homesick, they listen sympathetically.

Every week, a delegation not connected with the unit goes along. All the churches have visited the boys and today the Valley Stream Legion Auxiliary will go. Future delegations will include members of the Order of the Eastern Star, ARC canteen workers, and the VFW Auxiliary.



If you think this is a crowded schedule for Mrs. Knowles, keep on reading. In addition to her church work, she spends Mondays and Fridays in the local ARC surgical dressings workroom and Wednesdays in the production room.

In her spare time, she does her housework and helps her daughter, Mrs. Walter Wolrab, also of Valley Stream. That's where Newsday found her—busily canning peaches in the kitchen.

Want anything done? Just ask Mrs. Knowles.

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**VALLEY STREAM
IN WORLD WAR -LX I**

by Al Mayernik

The following was obtained from two unidentified newspapers and an article in the Central High School Alumni Crier, dated February 1991:

Lieutenant Jacob H. Reisert, 24, of 151 Wheeler Avenue, is reported dead from wounds received in action in the Pacific area. His family was notified Saturday stating that the young officer had been buried with full military honors. A requiem Mass was celebrated for him at Holy Name of Mary Roman Catholic Church on Tuesday.

The lieutenant, a graduate of Valley Stream Central High School, attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute before entering the service in April 1941. He won his wings and commission at the Naval Air Station at Jacksonville, Florida on February 17, 1942. He was picked to be a primary flight instructor and served 16 months at Jacksonville, Florida and later at Anacostia.

"He scored a direct hit and a very near miss on a destroyer"

On March 1, 1945, Lt. Jacob M. Reisert, the Executive Officer of VT30 led a division of Avengers from the carrier U.S.S. Belleau Wood in a long-range strike on enemy warships near the Nansei Shoto Islands, Japan. Against intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire, he expertly led the planes of his division into position for attack. He scored on direct hit and a very near miss on a destroyer, contributing greatly to the damage and sinking of the destroyer.

Although seriously wounded and his plane badly damaged, Jake piloted his crippled aircraft for more than two hours until reaching an American submarine. With total disregard for his own wounds, he remained with his plane, circling overhead while his two crewmen parachuted and were safely rescued. In doing so, he overextended his strength to the point where he was unable to properly release himself from his parachute upon contact with the water. When rescued, he was dead from a combination of shrapnel wounds and exhaustion. His outstanding bravery, tenacity and solicitude for the safety of others was a brilliant example of courage, skill and devotion to duty.

Jake was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor, which was never awarded, but he did receive the Navy Cross, the next highest award.



His wife is the former Janet Rose of 120 Argyle Street, Valley Stream. The lieutenant's parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Reisert of Valley Stream have five other children: Fred, George, Marion, Madeline and Ann. Many Valley Streamers remember the Reisert farm and house on Wheeler Avenue, just east of the school. It was sold by the family estate

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**VALLEY STREAM
IN WORLD WAR II, LVIII
by Al Mayernik**

Charles J. Deignan —162 Cochran Place. There were three Deignan boys in the service: Francis who saw service in Italy; John who served throughout Europe; and Charles J. The latter joined the Army as a private on April 4, 1942 and was appointed to aviation cadet school at Maxwell Field, Al. for training as a bombardier. He received his commission as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Force in Victorville, Cal.

He was then stationed in England. On the July 25, 1943 flight of Flying Fortresses to bomb Hamburg, Germany, his plane was shot up and the crew had to parachute to safety. (Each member of the crew was automatically members of the Caterpillar Club—an award given by the makers of the parachutes, of course.) He was a prisoner of the Germans at Stalag Luft 3 and Stalag N. Munich from July 1943 to May 1945. He was awarded the purple Heart (splinter wounds of both knees), Air Medal, European Theater of Operations medal, POW medal.

His father, Thomas F. Deignan, was notified of Charles' imprisonment by the US Government on August 4, 1943.

I received another letter from, "Chile" (Charles) on July 5, 1957. It's interesting what he remembers from the time of his long imprisonment:

As you know , I was shot down in July 1943. When I arrived at Stalag Luft 3, there were English flyers who had been in the camp for four years or more. These British

flying officers had been around long enough to have learned all the "ropes," and somehow they had learned that the Rolex Watch Company would honor an order from a Stalag Luft 3 POW. (I found this hard to believe, until I saw several of them.) This purchase could be paid after the war—which speaks for the Swiss projection of the outcome of the War, even back in 1943....My order was received and promised a shipping date of 5 to 8 weeks . We were marched out of Stalag Luft 3 on January 27, 1945—the Russians were coming so I don't know if the watch was shipped and not received or if the order was just not completed. However, I do recall that on the march from the camp, I kept checking the guards' wrists to see if anyone was wearing a Rolex (My Rolex??) Without success. Actually I don't know what I could have done if I did find a guard wearing one. Although I never did receive a Rolex, I am forever grateful to the Rolex Company for their unselfish cooperation

LETTER TO CHARLES J. DEIGNAN
Montres Rolex S.A.
Geneva
Dear Sir,

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your communication dated July 5th asking us to supply you with one of our Rolex watches.

The same has been put in hand and will be sent as soon as ready, which will be probably within the next 5 to 8 weeks.

Meanwhile we beg to remain,
Yours truly
Montres Rolex S.A.
Le Directeur General

P.S. We will send your watch Ref. Nr. i-Oyster Perpetual, centersecond, black dial (self-winding chronometer) because chronographs are forbidden to be exported.

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**VALLEY STREAM
IN WORLD WAR II**
by Al Mayernik

ARTHUR ZURA

Arthur Zura of 18 East Chester, entered the Army on November 17, 1943. He was stationed in Louisiana, New Jersey, California, Massachusetts and Oklahoma. He was promoted to corporal and his military specialty was automatic rifleman (BAR). He served in the European theater and the Pacific Theater (Philippines).

He wrote: "My outfit, the 86th Division, was kept in the United States for well over a year, so that we could complete intensive amphibious training. We were expected to be one of the first to invade the main islands of Japan. I was in the rubber boat platoon (the only one in the Division). It would be our job to land at night a few days before the actual invasion to reconnoiter enemy positions and take prisoners for interrogation. The Battle of the Bulge resulted in my Division being shipped hastily to Europe. We were in combat for about three months. During that time my platoon was chosen to cross the Rhine River in rubber boats at night to reconnoiter and take prisoners. This was Cologne. Also we were put in charge of the assault boats that we used to cross the Isar River above Munich. At least the Army made some use of our training.

"In early June 1945, my Division was the first to be returned to the United States from Europe. The invasion of Japan was still being planned and the powers-that-be

decided that we would soon be needed. I was in Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, when the atomic bombs were dropped and Japan surrendered. Within days we were shipped to Camp Stoneman, near San Francisco. The move had long been planned and probably could not be recalled easily. However, we were all assumed that we would not be shipped overseas. To our dismay, we soon found ourselves on ships that took us to the Philippine Islands. So far as I know, the 86th Division was the only Infantry unit that served in both theaters of operation.

"...the officers of the Division were told that we could expect 100% first wave casualties when we invade Japan."

"A few months ago, I spoke with my old battalion commander. He told me that, after a briefing in July 1945, the officers of the Division were told that we could expect 100% first wave casualties when we invaded Japan; this would include both killed and wounded. One can imagine that the use of atomic bombs was not a moral issue for me."

Arthur Zura was discharged from the service on April 24, 1946. He is entitled to wear the American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Medal with Battle Star; Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal; Bronze Star. Arthur lives in Massapequa Park, N. Y.

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**VALLEY STREAM
IN WORLD WAR II**

by Al Maye December 28, 1944 issue: esc

The file copies of the Valley Stream and Gibson Herald supplied the following information:
December 29, 1944 issue: The 399th Infantry Regiment of the 100th (Century) Division set some kind of record for the speed with which it said goodbye to the East River and hello to the Rhine....

Arriving in France on October 20th, the men ...spent several days assembling their equipment and regaining their land legs.

Then came the order to move up...toward the front. The men dismounted from their vehicles one night -and the next morning they were on the lines. They had relieved a veteran regiment that had seen service in Sicily, Italy, Anzio and southern France, and they took over a sector that was one of the toughest along the entire front.

The sector...was densely wooded and mountainous, with an almost jungle-like undergrowth impeding progress. But the 399th fought its way against a fanatic enemy, against countless land mines and booby traps and against terrain and weather difficulties that favored a well-entrenched enemy.

While the French Army drove to Strasbourg, the 399th helped smash the Nazis backward toward the Rhine, and soon won a reputation for being an experienced, hard-driving, relentless fighting unit.

Those from Valley Stream in this outfit are T/Sgt. Carl F. Cleon of 407 Rockaway Avenue; Sgt. John M. Giancola, 446 North Ave., and Pfc. Robert Hudson, 47 Filbert Street.

December 28, 1944 issue: Corporal Francis R. Kennedy, son of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Kennedy of

125 North Cottage Street, has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross , the War Department reported today. The award was made for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against the enemy....

Corporal Kennedy is serving with the troop carrier command. A graduate of Central High School...he has served overseas since last March.

Kennedy's two brothers are also serving: Technical Sergeant William J. Kennedy, Jr. is stationed in France and Pfc. Edward Kennedy is fighting with the American First Army in the European Theater of Operations.

December 28, 1944 issue: Second Lieutenant Alfred P. Sertl, 20, ...is now in England with the 96th Bomb Group undergoing a pre-combat training period of 10 days in preparation for combat action as pilot of a B-17 Flying Fortress in the Eleventh Air Force bombing attacks on Nazi war industries.

Lt. Sertl is now getting the benefit of the combat experience of veteran fliers. His course of instruction includes intelligence class, lectures on prisoner of war procedure, air-sea rescue methods, aircraft recognition, flak barrage and new enemy fighter tactics.

December 28, 1944 issue: With the Fifth Army Italy—Pfc. Andrew W. Fatscher, 10 Mineola Avenue, machine gunner, is fighting in Italy with the 388th Infantry Regiment which has been credited with killing and wounding many hundreds of Germans and taking nearly 700 prisoners in four weeks of cold, bitter fighting in the Gothic Line.

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