

Veterans' Day, A National Holiday Since 1926

by Carol (Klenk) Heck

Remembering the Madeira veterans involves quite a long list of dedicated men and women going back to the Revolutionary War. There have been citizens living right here in Madeira who served our country. We, at the Madeira Historical Society, have some written research history, pictures, presentations, and files. One very interesting binder entitled *Sawdust and Shavings* contains newsletters written by Oscar Meyer. He was the owner of the George Meyer Lumber Company and life-long resident of Madeira. During the WWII years of 1944-1945, Oscar Meyer and his wife, Charlotte, composed letters (also called *Sawdust & Shavings*) to the soldiers about their hometown, Madeira, thus keeping the servicemen abreast of the local happenings and events. "A new edition of *Sawdust and Shavings* newsletter came off the press every two weeks. At Oscar's own expense, the newsletters were sent airmail to all Madeira men and women in the service all over the world." *¹ Such reports included news on the school sports scores, Kiwanis, boy scouts, police and fire runs, marriages and births; and even supplied updated addresses of any serviceman or servicewoman who could supply their information back to Oscar and Charlotte.

Because of these letters, Madeira soldiers could rendezvous with each other in military bases overseas or in the states because of these thoughtful correspondences from home. An example of "a chance meeting was between Whitey Poppenhouse (Navy), Jack Korte, (Navy) Dick Niehaus (Marines) and Steve Carmichael (Marines) in Hawaii. They were able to spend the day together." *² "Dom Ancona (Navy) met Ivan Beeman (also Navy) in New Guinea." *³ Some Madeira men met in a "New Guinea hospital, such as William "Bill" Klenk, (Army) as a hospital worker, and Ken Crawford (Army?) as a patient." *⁴ Because *Sawdust and Shavings* reported soldiers' whereabouts in the newsletter, they knew when and where to look for each



other. I think these familiar faces from home meant a lot to our soldiers. And it made Oscar happy too because he brought them together. Light-hearted jokes were included and news about fellow men and women home on leave were uplifting sources of reports.

Each letter was typed on a typewriter, and 250 copies were mailed out every two weeks. It is surmised that 10,000 copies went out to boys and gals in the service. Much later, sometime in 1975, these newsletters were laminated, and put into the afore mentioned binder for prosperity. Three such binders are housed in The Miller House Museum library.

Madeira had a World War II memorial that is shown in the first black and white photo on page one. It's reported to have stood on the northeast corner of Camargo and Miami. This shows its early stage. Seen in the next picture are two young sisters sitting below the name of their oldest brother, William Klenk. This **Honor Roll**, as it was called, was later upgraded.

As the war progressed, more panels had to be added to the sides making a larger structure. This third picture with the eagle states it's from June of 1943. Its banner reads **Madeira Civilian Defense Area**. It was eventually located out in front of the original high school building later known as Marshall Sellman Middle School.



After that time, circa 1948, some residents remember that a Veterans' Memorial was a six-foot stone pyramid with a fancy plaque that stood out by the driveway of Sellman Middle School,



which would be close to Sellman Park now. The information that I have is not abundant. If any of you have more details, I would love for you to share them with me. Please contact the Madeira Historical Society at 513-561-9069. This pyramid memorial was inadequate in the eyes and minds of some Madeira residents. After an improvement was designed, I believe the plaque

from the middle of the pyramid structure was moved to the lobby of the new City Hall. The shape is identical! The original pyramid structure, which was maintained and donated by either the Madeira Garden Club or Madeira

Women's Club, was dismantled and then incorporated into the newly planned monument. If you study the two, it looks like the same stones were used. (See page three.)

A new Veterans Memorial plan honoring all veterans who served was presented to city council in 2003. The location was to be at McDonald Commons and it took five years to complete. The planned landscaped area included a circular brick pathway with benches, a four-sided rectangular monument, and flags from all the branches of the military. Engraved paving



bricks were purchased by families and friends of veterans which helped defray the cost of this bicentennial project. The efforts of numerous volunteers and private donations made this memorial come to life.



The stately bronze eagle atop the entrance structure was sculpted by Vietnam Army veteran Forest Atkins with the consult of Les LeFevre, Marine, who also served in the Vietnam war. Kathy Bechtold, Parks and Recreation and Memorial Committee Member, was very instrumental in the planning of the project. Jim Benjamin, Vietnam Navy veteran and Memorial Committee Member is quoted as saying, "Volunteers spent thousands of hours in building and contributing to the construction of the memorial. We did this as a community project. It shows there is a lot of support." *⁵

I have heard that there is now a new plan already in progress to redo this area by adding the United States Space Force - Department of the Air Force, complete with another flag. This new upgrade will remain at McDonald Commons Park.

It is important to honor and recognize the sacrifices and bravery of our fellow war veterans. Maybe they truly wanted to serve their country, maybe they were drafted and accepted the duty. Whichever way it was, whichever war it was, we who got to stay home and wait cannot know what they endured. Please take a day to really think about those who served. It's not too late to thank our soldiers who can still hear our voices.

Regina Villiers, noteworthy columnist for The Suburban Life Newspaper, published countless articles about Madeira during her lifetime. If you want to read more about Madeira WWII veterans, let me suggest her articles that can be read on the Madeira Historical Society website, madeirahistoricalsociety.org under Columns by Regina Villiers; "When Madeira Went to War, a Homespun Newsletter Followed WWII Troops Around the World", "Last Moments of B-17 Bomber Captured in Painting", "Madeira Vet Remembers Cold of Europe During World War II", and WWII Vet Recalls D-Day and Service".

¹ Indian Hill Living, Nice People, Barbara Baxter, June 1991

² Sawdust & Shavings 1944-1945, Oscar and Charlotte Meyer. Newsletter Number 2, Feb. 11, 1944

³ Sawdust & Shavings 1944-1945, Oscar and Charlotte Meyer. Newsletter Number 4, Mar. 10, 1944

⁴ Sawdust & Shavings 1944-1945, Oscar and Charlotte Meyer. Newsletter Number 14, Aug. 7, 1944.

⁵ Suburban Life, by Forrest Sellers, May 23, 2007

Lists of War Veterans of Madeira Current Status, Warren Joy, 11-21-96

Photos courtesy of Cleo Hosbrook, Madeira Historical Society, and Carol (Klenk) Heck

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Also see “Waiting for the Eagle to Land” and “The Spauldings & McDonald Commons Park” under Madeira Families.