

War Dog Memorial Dedicated At Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremony

By **ASHLEY BOUWENSE** News View Media Group 4:39 p.m. June 5, 2016 edited



MOUNT OLIVE - The All Veterans Memorial at Turkey Brook Park in Budd Lake held its annual Memorial Remembrance program on Monday May 30, 2016. The Memorial's latest addition, the War Dog Memorial, was dedicated during the program, retired U.S. Army Corporal and war dog handler William "Bill" Wynne, gave the keynote address.

The day began at 10:30 a.m. with the dedication at the War Dog Memorial, where five war dog statues donning detailed characteristics of the original war hero and the landscape they served gave onlookers a realistic feel of the setting. Each dog was presented with his/her own specific dedication. At the end of each dedication, Ron Aiello, President of the U.S. War Dog Association awarded each canine with the War Dog Medal of Honor for their heroic service. The unique memorial depicts the landscape of five different theatre wars; five different breeds of canines assigned to five various missions.

Sergeant Stubby, a bull dog, terrier mix was the first official U.S. War Dog that served in WWI; **Smoky**, a 4 lbs Yorkshire terrier from WWII was the first documented U.S. therapy dog and Australia's first war dog; an **unnamed** Doberman Pincer who represents all the undocumented fallen canine heroes served in the Korean War; **Nemo**, a German Shepherd that served in Vietnam; and of course **Gabe**, a yellow lab IED detection war dog who served many tours during the Global War on Terror.

"It took two years to complete the memorial", Charlie Uhrmann, originator and founder of the AVM, explained, "Not only did we strive to show the exact likeness of each dog, we wanted to make the memorial educational and historically authentic." Each dog is placed in a scene specific to their story. For example, the replicated WWII scene features Smoky sitting in front of the culvert pipe that ran under enemy lines. Smoky had to crawl through the dark 70' x 8" pipe to deliver a critical message to the troops on the other side during WWII. "This is not your typical war memorial," Uhrmann said, "it is a lifelike rendering that replicates a dreary and not so pleasant warzone; barbed wires, fox holes and rugged terrain."

Karl Meier, owner of Meier Stone Company in Flanders, New Jersey was key to the project, as he provided solutions to all technical challenges and props for the memorial, while Ashley Bogosta applied the most tedious of details to each statue until she achieved an exact replica of each dog.

There was time before and after the dedication for the public to tour the various tactical military vehicles. The vehicles and rising of the military flags were presented by the 102nd Calvary, established in Newark, NJ in 1913; the original military unit that WWI Sergeant Stubby served under.

At 11:20 a.m., the formal Remembrance Ceremony commenced. It was like a miracle when the morning sun shone through the clouds with a bright ferocity on the AVM – a natural tribute to the fallen and their enduring service and loyalty to their country. It was truly a time of solemn remembrance for the country's heroes; a beautiful service honoring those who selflessly gave their lives so that people of the U.S. can stay protected and free.

A military processional march kicked off the ceremony; the procession included the Mt. Olive High School Marching Band, Color Guard and military re-enactors representing each war period. Michael McEntee opened the ceremony singing the National Anthem.

Susan Smarth, owner of recently deceased IED bomb-sniffing war dog, Sergeant Rowan, gave an emotional speech, paying tribute to her beloved friend. The Smarth family adopted Sergeant Rowan-Smarth after several tours in the Middle East.

One of the original creators of the AVM, Eric John Daniels Wood recalled his first meeting with Christy Burkhart, weeks after he laid the memorial wreath upon her fallen husband Armer Burkhart's grave at Arlington Cemetery. "Armor will never be forgotten" Wood said, "He is the hero we remember and honor today." After his speech, Eric presented to Ms. Burkhart a bouquet of 10 Peace Lilies signifying the ten year anniversary of Armer's ultimate sacrifice.

After a dance performance by members of Theater Dance Center located in Flanders, NJ and the laying of flowers at the Global War on Terror Memorial Bridge by Mt. Olive Girls Scouts, Bill Wynne gave his keynote address.



"Thank you all for coming out today," Wynne began. He gave everyone an idea of what it was like in WWII, both at home and in the Pacific: "The civilians of the United States did an outstanding job and never got the credit for it," Wynne said. He continued to explain how America was totally unprepared for the war, with barely any navy ships or airplanes to fight when the U.S. entered, but how the American public, especially the women, rallied together to further the war effort.

Then, Wynne explained how he fought in the Pacific Theatre as a U.S. Army Corporal with Smoky by his side. There were twelve of us, who were being sent over to a combat mission, we were all fighting over Smoky; we all wanted her."

Smoky was Australia's first war dog, originally found abandoned in a fox hole in New Guinea and was in the war for 24 months and was in 18 months straight of combat," he said.

Wynne wrote a biography of Smoky which also included his memoirs called, "Yorkie Doodle Dandy: A Memoir," published in 1996. Wynne admitted that there were details about Smoky that he had never known before writing the book, like how she ended up in New Guinea, and he hopes to write another book about his war comrade with the new information. A book signing took place immediately after the ceremony.



After Wynne's address, artist Ashely Bogosta presented him with an exact life-sized replica of Smoky in a WWII helmet on behalf of the AVM Board of Directors. This brought back a lot of memories for Wynne, as this was how he frequently carried the small pup.

The ceremony concluded with the laying of the memorial wreath, a gift from Gerald D'ablis and Will Barr, and a benediction by Lieutenant Colonel Terrance Walsh. "We pray for the military, the wounded, the fallen, the families, our current service members and for ourselves," he prayed. "Lord, give us peace. Amen."

In his opening prayer, Walsh quoted from Scripture, John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." This Bible passage is what the AVM Day of Remembrance was all about: honor those who selflessly laid down their lives for others: for families, friends and even strangers. Their loyalty and sacrifice to their country will not be forgotten.

Dueling taps, under the direction of John Diegidio of Mount Olive High School closed the ceremony, leaving more than 400 spectators speechless.

After the ceremony, local bands such as Emily's Youth Project and Americana Troupe provided entertainment as the spectators visited several displays and informational booths sponsored by veteran organizations.