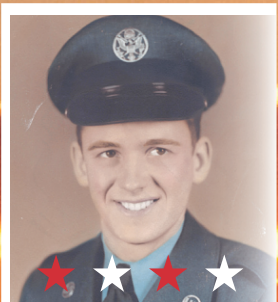
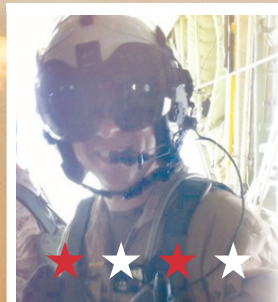




STORIES OF HONOR



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A story of enduring service

Ken Winchell wanted to 'do my part' after 9/11

STORY BY | MELISSA GUAY

When asked about his present military status, Hudson Falls resident Ken Winchell calls himself “just a veteran.” However, when one realizes he’s dedicated his entire adult life to serving our country, first as a sergeant and crewmaster in the U.S. Marine Corps and currently as the director of Veterans Services in Washington County, somehow “just a veteran” doesn’t seem to suffice.

Winchell entered boot camp in August 2004, just after graduating from high school.

“I was old enough to be impacted by September 11th. It was a wake-up call, not only for me, but also for our country. I wanted to do my part,” he said.

Winchell joined the Marine Corps because he heard it was the toughest

branch of the military.

“I think I had something to prove to myself. My grades were never great in school so I thought the military would be my best option, and I wanted to go all in,” he said.

Winchell was quickly deployed to Iraq after training. He served two tours, from August 2005 to February 2006, and again in August 2006 to February 2007. Winchell said he was first tasked with base security, and second as an airframe mechanic for the C-130 aircraft.

“Much of our job during the Iraq tours was maintaining and establishing positive control. Iraq was holding their first democratic elections, and it was during that time they were going to hang Saddam (Hussein). Our job was to make sure extremists

didn’t come in and take back control,” Winchell said.

Winchell described his Iraq tours as a “high stress” environment where they were “rocketed and mortared on a daily basis.”

“I was the youngest Marine on the base on my first tour. It was a shock for me,” he said. “But going to Afghanistan on my third tour, that was an entirely different animal.”

Winchell decided to re-enlist and served two additional tours in Afghanistan, from February 2008 to March 2008, and again August 2011 to February 2012.

“Our mission was to re-establish control and stabilize the area by pushing extremists out. I was part of the Aviation Combat Element, or ACE. We offered air support wherever we were needed,” Winchell said.



During his second tour of Afghanistan, Winchell was promoted to crewmaster, which meant he would fly continuously with the C-130. Duties depended on the day, he said, including transporting cargo, aerial deliveries of supplies, close air support for troops on the ground, mid-air refueling for other aircrafts, and identifying targets and employing weapons against those targets. His crew also transported prisoners of war at times.

“I had between 1,500 to 2,000 flight hours my second tour, with many combat hours in the mix.”

It was about this time Winchell began to plan his retirement from active duty.

“My daughter Brielle was born in 2011, and it was getting harder and harder to be away. My wife

Danita had been doing it a lot on her own and it felt unfair to keep missing all of (Brielle’s) firsts,” he said.

Winchell served one more tour, for a Special Purposes Crisis Unit from 2012 to 2013, where he spent a few weeks to a few months at a given location reinforcing U.S. embassies.

“I went to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the Horn of Africa; I went everywhere,” he said. “This was during the rise of Isis, and we would be on standby for any perceived threat. I was ready to be done but I did get to see some amazing things,” he said.

“Sometimes it feels like it was yesterday, and sometimes it feels like it was all some dream,” Winchell said.

Winchell retired from active duty in September 2013, though he is still very much involved with

the military in his role as director of Veterans Services for Washington County.

“I thought I was going to be a police officer. That was always the plan when I got out. But when this job fell in my lap I had to make a choice, and I knew I had to do whatever I could to help other veterans,” he said.

“My job is to basically be an advocate for veterans and help them find the resources available to them, anything from education programs, to home loans, to VA benefits. It’s one of those things you can’t understand unless you’ve been through it. I understand, and I want to do my part to help and honor their service in any way I can,” he said. ★

STORIES OF HONOR ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



A story of family ★ ★ ★ ★ legacy

Kyle Taylor enlisted to honor memory of great uncle

STORY BY | **MELISSA GUAY**

Hudson Falls resident and Army veteran Kyle Taylor felt early on that he wanted to honor the legacy of his great uncle, Owen Goodsell.

“My uncle was in Vietnam. He’s on the Vietnam Memorial in D.C. I knew I wanted to honor his service. Owen is my middle name, after him, and I’ve always felt connected to him. ... I wanted to be more than your average Joe, so I enlisted in the Army,” he said.

Taylor enlisted on March 24, 2011, the day after his 20th birthday. He went to basic training in Fort Jackson, S.C., and then Advanced Individual Training, or AIT, for three months in Virginia. Taylor completed AIT to become a wheeled-vehicle mechanic, earning the

rank of specialist, or SP4, the same rank as his great uncle.

Winchell said his duties included performing maintenance and recovery operations on wheeled vehicles, as well as heavy-wheeled vehicles and select armored vehicles.

“I’ve always has a knack for machines. When I was 4 or 5, I started working on bikes. I went up to fixing lawnmowers, and started working on cars when I was about 15. There was no doubt that I wanted to focus on mechanics when I enlisted,” Taylor said.

Taylor then went to Camp Shelby, Miss. It was there he learned he would deploy to Kuwait in March 2012.

“I was paired with a unit from South Carolina and our mission was to drive around finding and

disposing of missiles and weapons left at certain sites. We basically drove around picking up the mess left over,” Taylor said.

Part of the mission involved an EOD, or Explosive Ordinance Disposal Specialist, detonating any weapons that were recovered to make sure they didn’t fall into the wrong hands or cause injury.

“That part was awesome,” Taylor said, laughing. “The explosions were massive.” He said in addition fixing and maintaining vehicles on base in Kuwait, he often led recovery teams to find a fix broken vehicles off base, at times crossing the border into Iraq. It was on one such mission in October that Taylor and his team hit an IED roadside bomb.

“Our mission was

to grab two LMTVs (Light Medium Tactical Vehicles), which are like troop or cargo carriers. They broke down and we were going to fix them and bring them back. I was in the last vehicle of an eight-vehicle convoy. We were hit by a roadside bomb,” he said.

“When I came to, the roof of the vehicle was about 3 feet away and bullets were flying overhead. It took me a few seconds to realize what was happening. My brothers in arms covered me until I came to and we did what we needed to. We subdued the enemy,” Taylor said.

Taylor and his team were evacuated by helicopter and he sustained injuries to his back and left leg, as well as a traumatic brain injury.

“I was eventually

medevaced to Germany, but they had to wait a few weeks because of the threat of missile attacks. I was in a wheelchair and couldn’t move my leg at all,” he said.

Taylor spent several weeks in Germany in recovery. Finally, in November 2012 he was returned to Fort Drum near Watertown. He had several surgeries at the Syracuse VA Medical Center in January 2013.

“I had collapsed veins and blood clots in my leg. I spent eight months in a wheelchair. The recovery was really tough. I couldn’t rely on walking and spent hours a day doing pool therapy, then regular physical therapy,” he said.

In April 2013, Taylor left Fort Drum and continued drilling with his unit in Glenville as a reservist

until his discharge from the Army.

“I would have liked to make a career of the Army but I had a hard time with the physical training tests after my injury. I didn’t want to be a liability to others so I decided to retire. It was a tough,” he said.

Taylor is currently employed as a mechanic at the Albany Stratton VA Medical Center.

“I knew I wanted to be with veterans if I could. This job was the first place that felt like home. It’s hard to explain, but being with people who understand you, who you don’t have to explain everything to makes a big difference.”

“Working on machines and being with veterans is pretty much all I ever wanted to do. It’s a brotherhood,” he said. ★



STORIES OF HONOR ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Charles Zmitrovitch is a Korean War Veteran with U.S. Air Force, serving from Sept. 1951-May 1953. Now 87 years old, he and his wife Mary reside at the Warren Center in Queensbury



A story of service and reflection

Charles Zmitrovitch enlisted in Air Force during Korean War

STORY BY | MELISSA GUAY

Eighty-seven-year-old Charles Zmitrovitch doesn't have an unkind word for anyone. It's been his modus operandi ever since his service in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War.

"I learned quickly that when the enemy's out there, there's no use quarrelling with those on your side. It's something good I brought home with me and tried to instill in my children," Zmitrovitch said.

Originally from Saranac, Zmitrovitch enlisted in the Air Force in September 1951. The Korean War had already begun when North Korea invaded South Korea the year prior. The conflict saw North Korea, aided by communist China, fighting against South Korea, aided by first the United States and then United Nations forces.

It was one of the deadliest wars in modern history.

Zmitrovitch, at the age of 17, said he was fully aware what he was signing up for.

"My father had to sign for me to enlist. My family believes deeply in fighting for our country, ever since World War I. We have a long line of veterans that have served this country. I wanted to do my duty," he said.

Zmitrovitch went to basic training at Sampson Air Force Base in Seneca Lake, in central New York, which closed at the end of the Korean War. Upon completion, Zmitrovitch attended college classes until he was deployed.

"I was sent to Korea in the spring of 1951 and came home in May of 1953. I was in the 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron, TCS, stationed at

Brady Air Base in Japan," he said.

Zmitrovitch explained that Japan served as an access point to Korea, so the base of operations was there. His squadron was tasked with aerial transportation for troops between Japan and North Korea.

"I worked in squadron operations and was in charge of 10 aircrafts and their crews. Making sure the right crew connected to the right aircraft. We would airdrop troops behind enemy lines," he said.

"Our poor men. It really was the worst for the ones heading to rice paddies in North Korea. We'd bring back so many dead or wounded. They are the real heroes. I wish you could talk to them, instead," Zmitrovitch said.

Zmitrovitch was awarded the Purple Heart medal for being wounded in the line of duty, when shrapnel injured his right leg.

"I don't really remember exactly where we were. I just remember it hurt and I still have the scars," he said.

Zmitrovitch also earned the rank of sergeant, serving as a non-commissioned officer until May 1953.

"I am very proud of the job I did and the men I worked with. I really thought that'd be the last war. It's a shame it wasn't," he said.

When Zmitrovitch returned to his family's home in Saranac, he was able to quickly resume civilian life.

"Some men had a real hard time coming home. I was lucky I didn't. I fit right back in and I was ready to meet a nice girl and start a family,"

Zmitrovitch said.

Zmitrovitch enrolled at Hudson Valley Community College to take industrial electronics classes, qualifying him for a job selling replacement parts for televisions. It was during a work stop that he first saw his wife, Mary.

"I knew I was going to marry her the first time I saw her. I remember telling my friend. She was a doll then, and she's still a doll now. Smartest woman you'll ever meet," he said. "I asked her to a clam steam and we had a good time. We've been having a good time ever since."

The couple married in 1958 and had three children. Zmitrovitch described his two daughters as "precious, kind and smart."

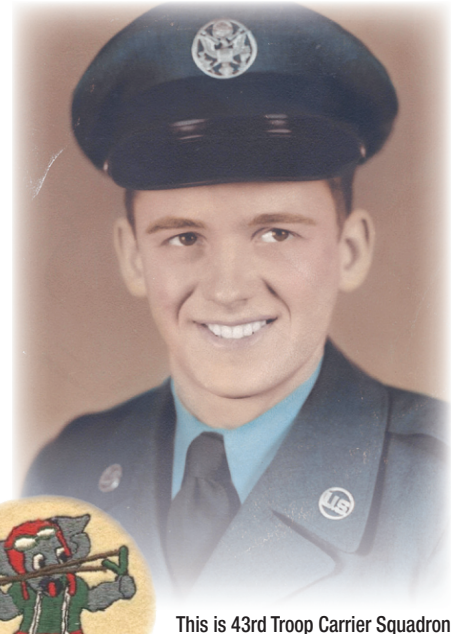
When he spoke of his now deceased son, Joseph, he

told of his pride. Zmitrovitch said Joseph committed suicide after his own service in the U.S. Air Force as a technical sergeant.

"It's all too common, veterans taking their own lives. The statistics are getting better but there should never be any. I was so damn proud of him. He'll be gone 11 years this August," Zmitrovitch said.

Charles and Mary both reside at the Warren Center in Queensbury. The couple now has three grandchildren, and gets to visit with family often.

"I got to do a lot of living after the war. I'm thankful for that," he said. ★



This is 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron emblem in which Charles Zmitrovitch served during the Korean War.

STORIES OF HONOR ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Richard LeBlanc, now 78, resides at the Warren Center in Queensbury. He is a Veteran of the U.S. Army and served in Germany during the Berlin crisis.



A story of learning and growing

Richard LeBlanc repaired, rebuilt tank engines for the U.S. Army.

STORY BY | MELISSA GUAY

Lake George native Richard LeBlanc enlisted in the United States Army because he admired his older brother and had no desire to take his advice.

"I chose the Army mostly because my older brother told me not to," he said, smiling. "He was already enlisted with the 82nd Airborne and I looked up to him. He didn't want me to go through what he did, but like brothers do, I didn't listen. I wanted to be like him."

LeBlanc enlisted right after he graduated from Lake George High School in 1961. He went to Fort Knox in Kentucky for basic training. LeBlanc then entered the Ordnance Department, with the broad mission of supplying Army combat units with weapons and ammunition,

as well as overseeing their procurement and maintenance.

LeBlanc was shipped to West Germany in 1962 to serve during the Berlin crisis and was stationed at Warner Kaserne in Munich, which was a massive base that held thousands of soldiers.

"At first I was in the motor pool. I was a basic mechanic for Army vehicles. I was always good with my hands and enjoyed that kind of work," he said.

Part of LeBlanc's deployment was on Temporary Duty Assignment as a member of a special division that traveled from base to base repairing and rebuilding tank engines.

"There were about 20 guys in my TDY

and I loved the work. Sometimes we'd have to strip the engine right down to the crankshaft and rebuild it. I'd go chase spare parts often, and I'd take off like a rabbit to find them," he said.

LeBlanc's TDY division was a high spot of his deployment, where he was able to work closely with men from all over the U.S.

"It was a great group of men. We were from all over: California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, West Virginia. Conditions were real simple for living. We'd live out of a suitcase and sleep in basements or attics – wherever there was room. Then we'd be off to the next base," he said.

Much of his time in

West Germany was steeped in downtime and camaraderie – elements he really enjoyed.

"We never saw combat. We played a lot of cards in our bunks, pinochle and poker mostly. I was with a really good bunch of guys. We stuck together and never went looking for trouble," he said.

LeBlanc called Munich the "Hollywood" of the Berlin crisis. He would get dressed up and go out at night with other soldiers, though at times they were not warmly received.

"Most were happy we were there. But sometimes guys would pick fights with us. My buddies were 6'5" and 6'6", so not many tried. We'd stay out of trouble because we didn't want to hear about it again back at

base. Only a few times it got hairy," he said.

LeBlanc returned to the states in 1964 and met and married his wife, Martha, that same year. When the couple learned Martha was pregnant, LeBlanc decided not to re-enlist.

"The baby coming put the brakes on everything. I've now been married 55 years," he said.

LeBlanc returned to work in the boatyard where he was employed prior to the Army. He made his career as a master mechanic and craftsman, restoring antique wooden boats from engine to mast.

"I began there when I was 14, for \$2.75 an hour and worked my way up the ladder," he said.

The couple have two daughters who still live locally.



Richard and Martha LeBlanc were married in 1964, right after Richard returned from deployment in Germany. The couple has been together 55 years, sharing 2 daughters and many grandchildren.



Lake George native Richard LeBlanc served in the U.S. Army from 1961-1964 as a mechanic, rebuilding tank engines and Army vehicles. He earned the rank of SP4 and was deployed to Germany to assist in the Berlin crisis.



STORIES OF HONOR ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



A story of pride & commitment



Bill Utermark, Wren Utermark, Shawna Utermark, and Aubri Utermark at their home in Hudson Falls. Bill Utermark served with the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Reserves from 1989 to 2010.



Hudson Falls Resident Bill Utermark served as a senior human resource manager with the U.S. Army, and U.S. Army Reserves during his 20-year military career. He was deployed to Afghanistan in 2008 and helped mentor and train the Afghan National Army.



Bill Utermark served in Army, then Army Reserve, including in Afghanistan

STORY BY | MELISSA GUAY

Like so many veterans, Hudson Falls resident Bill Utermark has a deep well of skills, leadership, and training from his military career.

Utermark, who grew up in Saratoga Springs, knew he wanted to join the Army long before he was old enough to enlist.

"I finally went to the recruiter in 1988, between my junior and senior year of high school. I had to wait until the next year to go to basic (training), but I always knew I wanted to be in the military," he said.

"Both my grandparents and several uncles, all served in the military. I have members of my family in the Army, Air Force, and Navy. It's a history I'm proud of and wanted to be a part of," he said.

Utermark went to basic training in Fort Leonard Wood, MO in 1989, and turned 18 while he was in basic training. Utermark then went on to Advanced

Individual Training, or AIT, where he studied to become a personnel and administrative specialist.

"It's a lot like human resources for the Army, at the battalion level," Utermark said.

Utermark said he chose that specialty because he wanted to work with soldiers in a one-on-one organizational setting.

"Oftentimes when someone thinks of the military they picture infantry. People don't realize all that goes behind our soldiers on the ground or in the air. You need people to pack and monitor supplies, you need officers, cooks, medics, mechanics. You need people to make sure everyone and everything is where it's supposed to be or it all falls apart," he said.

Utermark first served in Fort Bragg, N.C. Then from 1992-1994 he was stationed in Heidelberg, Germany.

Utermark finished his active duty time in Fort Campbell, Ky.

"My service at Fort Campbell is one of the aspects of my career I am most proud of. I was with the 101st Airborne Division, and to be part of the history of that division meant a lot to me," Utermark said.

The division has a rich history beginning at its inception in 1942, and has had significant impact in every major conflict since World War II.

Utermark took a brief hiatus, but ultimately decided to enlist in the Army Reserves in 1997.

"I was able to walk right into the job because my active duty was so recent. I enjoyed the reserves – it's the best of military and civilian life combined. It's laid back, with less time commitment and closer-to-home locations," he said.

In February 2008 Utermark deployed to Afghanistan.

"My duties were several. I was a senior supervisor, overseeing pay, leave, evaluations, and soldier accountability. My job was to do that for our side, but also to train my counterpart in the Afghan National Army. It was part of a mentor program, and we were helping stabilize and train their army there," he said.

Utermark said they were stationed at the Kabul Military Training Center, "a high stress location."

"I was doing what most consider office duties, and carrying a sidearm the whole time. Everything over there is a combat area," he said.

Utermark explained that something as simple as getting the mail required soldiers to be on high alert.

"The place we got our mail was actually attacked a lot.

You have to realize everyone is a potential threat because the enemy used women, children, motorcycles, cars – anything could be an explosive weapon," he explained.

Utermark said one specific close call had his convoy miss a car bomb by mere minutes.

"I'm thankful it wasn't us. British soldiers were hit just five minutes after we passed through," he said.

Utermark served nine months total in Afghanistan and returned home to complete 2 additional years in the Army Reserves. He retired in 2010, after 20 years of military service.

"Coming home was tough for me. I went from a well-respected position as a supervisor and being my own boss to what felt like the opposite back home," he said.

Utermark was working as a dishwasher at Skidmore

College, a job he still holds today. During his deployment he also underwent a divorce.

"I came back angry, short-tempered. There was no time to adjust," he continued.

Utermark said he was able to cope by joining Wilton EMT, becoming increasingly involved in his church, and recognizing his leadership extended past his job description.

"It's hard when you spend 20 plus years in a field, but your civilian job doesn't line up with your skill set. Military experience isn't the same as a college degree. But I've come to realize that leadership is about attitude and example, not title. I am very proud of my military career, and what it has taught me," he said.

Utermark is now remarried, with 3 children. He earned 20 awards and decorations over his career. ★

STORIES OF HONOR ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A story of faith & service

Air Force Veteran Dale Connell served in the military for 20 years, working in Thailand, Turkey, and New York. He is currently a resident at Slate Valley Center in Granville.



Dale Connell served in the Air Force for 20 years

STORY BY | **MELISSA GUAY**

For Air Force veteran Dale Connell, his 20-year military career was the vehicle that allowed him to see the world, serve his country and live out his Christian faith.

Originally from Pine Bush N.Y., Connell is presently a short-term resident at Slate Valley Center in Granville. Connell enlisted in the Air Force on June 7, 1968.

"I joined the Air Force because I was interested in auditioning for the Air Force band, which is known to be an excellent band. I play a wide range of instruments, though piano is my main instrument. The competition was very tight, and I didn't make the band, but I don't regret my choice to enlist either. I'm glad I stayed with Air Force," he said.

Connell went to basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. He then went to advanced training for inventory management.

“Basically, we’re trained to research, locate and

catalogue parts to support aircraft maintenance from a base supply aspect. There are military supply depots throughout the U.S. I would make sure the base had the proper supply levels for parts, and hunt down any parts that were needed from those depots," he said.

Connell also served as a material support specialist for civil engineering, with duties that included taking care of the electrical, sanitary, roads and grounds and mechanical supply needs for the base where he was stationed.

"Basically, we kept the base up and running," he said.

In 1970, Connell was deployed to Ubon Royal Thai Air Base in Thailand as part of a Red Horse Squadron, “which means we could be activated at a moment’s notice,” he said.

There, his duties included repairs and maintenance of the base facilities, in addition to stocking and upkeep of

engine parts and manuals
for every aircraft on the
base.

"We had to be incredibly organized and efficient. If I didn't do my job well, others were unable to do theirs," he said.

While stationed in Thailand, Connell began to grow deeper in his faith through the Air Force Chapel.

"I played organ for the chapel services, and had the pleasure of meeting a Dutch missionary couple there. Through a chapel program I was able to go to the Chiang Mai region and do missions work in the leprosy colonies. I realized I had a gift and a calling.

Also while stationed in Thailand, Connell began a correspondence with a young woman from Friendship, N.Y.

"We wrote letters and sent pictures back and forth. I asked her to marry me even before I met her

in person, and she said yes," he said.

Connell returned to the U.S. in December 1970, and the couple was married at Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome on July 24, 1971.

Connell remained in Rome for the next several years, working on the base, helping plan and play music for two new Baptist churches in the area. The couple also had three children during that time.

"It was a busy time, but we were happy. I had a very supportive wife," he said.

From there, Connell and his family moved to Niagara Falls for two years, where he worked as a recruiter for the Air Force until 1977.

"I really enjoyed that work. I was able to learn about sales, and I liked speaking in the schools," he said.

He went back to school for base engine management, after which he was deployed to Incirlik

Air Base in Turkey, from
January to December
1979.

“As a base engine manager, I was responsible for engine turnaround for any aircraft, overseeing the upgrading of engines, rebuilding engines, shipping and locating parts and maintaining supplies. It was a huge job, because there were several different aircrafts, many of which needed upgrading. You’d have to know the engines and their parts inside and out,” he said.

Connell said a highlight of his time in Turkey was when he was able to preach at a chapel on base.

"I was already ordained and one of the chaplains fell ill so I stepped in for two Sundays. Each Sunday, I did an altar call to invite new people into the faith.

On the first Sunday, six people responded. On the second Sunday, there were 12. We held a baptism in the base swimming pool. It meant a lot to me to be a part of that," he said.

Connell finished out his military career working at Plattsburgh Air Force Base until 1988. He was assigned to the 380th Area Bomb Wing Alert Facility, where he worked as the resource manager, making sure the facility ran efficiently. He received several rank promotion and medals for his service, including two good conduct medals.

"I had the pleasure of meeting every high ranking official, many senators and congress members that came through our facility," he said.

Though Connell and his wife divorced after 30 years of marriage, he is presently engaged to be married next year. He is the proud grandfather of 15 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

"I am proud of my time in the Air Force and thankful for all it allowed me. I am even more grateful for how I was able to use and grow my faith during those years," he said. ★

STORIES OF HONOR ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



A story of rewards & challenges

Timothy Miller works with sensitive Navy communications

STORY BY | MELISSA GUAY

Seaman Timothy Miller began his service in the U.S. Navy in the hopes of combining his studies with his desire to help people.

"I was going to classes at SUNY Plattsburgh but I didn't feel like I was doing what I really wanted to. It felt like just going through the motions," he said.

"I have always really enjoyed helping others. I was a student coach for the peewee wrestling team, and became a volunteer coach after I graduated. I wanted to figure out how I could help others and give more meaning to my studies. The Navy provided that for me," Miller said.

Miller graduated from South Glens Falls High School in 2016 and spent

the next two years at SUNY Plattsburgh, studying cybersecurity and business. Miller began looking into a military career after speaking with a recruiter in June 2017.

Following a screening and aptitude testing process, Miller chose special training in information technology for the Navy.

"I left for boot camp Nov. 7, 2018. I chose the Navy because it was the best way to stay with what I knew. It was my best opportunity to continue doing what I liked," he said.

"I also hope to have a family someday, and the Navy has great resources for families and educational opportunities."

Miller headed to boot

camp in Great Lakes, Illinois.

"It's very cold. And coming from upstate New York and saying that, you know it's really cold. Boot camp, like anything in the military, is what you make of it. I was lucky to have drill sergeants that really cared about our education. It was still really physical, but they pushed us to learn as well," he said.

Miller graduated boot camp in January with 71 other recruits. Together, they earned academic honors for their class.

From there, Miller headed off to "A" school at NAS Pensacola Corry Station in Florida.

"I met some great instructors. All they want to do is help out sailors," he said.

The first part of his training focused on IT, learning to maintain networks, with components like hard drive space and storage, as well as user access to information.

"By the end of the first part, you feel like you can build your own computer from scratch," he said.

Miller said the second area of focus was on radio and messaging.

"But it's more complicated than that. It's about making sure connections are maintained from place to place, and messages arrive where they need to," he said.

Miller said messages are often sensitive in nature, so as a result of his training he holds a Top Secret with Sensitive

Compartmented Information security clearance.

Miller graduated "A" school in June, finishing second in his class. He went directly to his present post at the Naval Computer and Telecommunication Station on the island of Coronado, just offshore near San Diego, California.

"I am loving every single day. I get excited when I get to go into work. I have to be really careful what I say, but basically my job is to make sure messages get to where they need to. I can't say too much because of clearance, but it's very important I do my job well," he said.

Miller added that the secretive nature of his work is challenging at

times.

"You can't really talk about your work. Information is only shared with your team and the team relieving you so they are aware of what they need to do their job well. I can't share with my family or sailors about exactly what I do. I have to flip a switch when I leave my workspace. It's secure for a really good reason, but it's an adjustment I've had to make," he said.

Miller said he plans to take his military career one step at a time, but for the time being he is very happy where and how he is serving.

"I wanted to help people. I get to help people. Granted, they never know it, but I do get to help people," he said. ★



South Glens Falls native and Navy Seaman Timothy Miller is currently stationed at the island of Coronado near San Diego, California. He enlisted in 2018, and graduated Naval "A" school second in his class.

STORIES OF HONOR ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Janice Monroe is among several veterans honored at
The Granville Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing



A story of resolve & assistance



Inspired by her father's service, Janice Monroe served in the Marine Corps from 1970-1973. She worked in data processing in Barstow, California. She is currently residing in Granville, New York.

Janice Monroe followed in her father's footsteps into the military

STORY BY | MELISSA GUAY

Some little girls dream of being princesses when they grow up. Janice Monroe dreamed of being a soldier.

"I knew I wanted to go into the service ever since I was a little girl. My dad was in the Army, and I was in love with my dad so I loved the service. It was that simple," said the Hyde Park native.

Monroe said her father served stateside during World War II before she was old enough to experience it firsthand, "but the pictures of him in his uniform still had a big impact."

"I would touch his old uniform, and I used to love to play with the insignia of his uniform. It was shiny and I just

was enthralled. That's all it took," she said.

Monroe enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1970, at the age of 21.

"I liked the reputation the Marines had for being tough, so that's where I decided to enlist," she said.

Monroe went off to boot camp from around Thanksgiving to Christmas of 1970.

"There was a lot of marching and drilling. Some women cried. One girl held onto the leg of her bunk and wouldn't let go even when they pulled on her. I didn't think it was that tough, though," she said laughing.

"I think I was probably just a tough little thing. I use to run on my dad's 40-acre property and

helped load and unload groceries and stock for his store. Also, I was living my dream in a way. I always wanted to go to the service so I took advantage of the opportunity," she said.

After boot camp, Monroe went to military school in San Diego for communications. Upon completion, Monroe was stationed at the Barstow Marine Corps Supply Center in Barstow, California.

"At first they put me in data card punching, but I wasn't supposed to be there. Finally, they moved me to data processing, where we'd program the computers with the data cards to run certain programs," she said.

Monroe said she worked in a large room with about four other women. The key cards and computer programs helped the Marine Corps keep track of things like inventory, orders and personnel.

While serving in Barstow, Monroe was also trained at the Marine Corps Physical Fitness Institute as a physical fitness instructor for the fitness center there.

"I worked with the wives of the soldiers, helping with their clubs and physical fitness goals," she said.

Monroe was discharged in 1973, with the rank of sergeant. Still desiring a military connection, Monroe enlisted in

the National Guard Reserves, then the U.S. Army Reserves. She began taking college courses, finishing with a degree in behavioral science from SUNY New Paltz.

"I eventually settled in Poughkeepsie working at the Office for the Aging. I was there for about four years until I went home to Newcomb to care for my father in 1996," Monroe said.

Monroe started her career there as a resident counselor in group homes for the developmentally disabled.

"I've always liked helping people. I think it's just my natural way. It was how I was raised. I think that's why the military

appealed to me so much," she said.

Still, her favorite career was that of her military service.

"It was my dream coming true. If I had it to do over I'd have gone to college first then into the Army to be a commissioned officer," she said.

In 2018, Monroe relocated to the Granville Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing for help with sciatica and knee pain. She said she is undecided if she will remain a permanent resident.

"It's really nice here, and they do a lot to honor those who have served in the military, which means a lot," she said. ★

STORIES OF HONOR ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Glens Falls resident Ben Lane taking a break while maintaining security over watch south of Samarra, Iraq.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ A story of sacrifice & purpose

Ben Lane served in Iraq alongside other local soldiers

STORY BY | MELISSA GUAY

Glens Falls resident Ben Lane took his oath of enlistment for the National Guard on Sept. 10, 2001, the day before the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"It was one of those things. It made me feel like it was meant to be, like I was part of something larger than just myself," he said.

Lane joined the military after completing a year of college in Kentucky.

"I was just floating through it. A bunch of my local friends here recently joined, so I decided to as well," he said.

Lane went to basic training at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, over the course of the next four months. He finished in March of 2002.

"Basic was a good experience for me. It was tough, but I came out much more prepared for college. I was ready

to take ownership of my life," he said.

Lane said he and the other local members of the Charlie Company platoon had a few stateside deployments to places like the Indian Point nuclear power plant in Buchanan, New York.

"Then we got word that we would be used as a combat unit in Iraq. We were in disbelief," he said.

Lane said members of his unit still enrolled in college classes for the fall semester, certain the deployment would be canceled. Instead, they were activated in October 2003.

"We were tested as a company and for about two weeks that put us through this mock simulated war. We did so well we were given a difficult task to complete in Iraq. This little National Guard unit from

New York was attached to Special Forces and we were sent to a high-conflict area," he said.

Lane served with Charlie Company 2nd Battalion of the 108th Infantry, in Samarra, Iraq. Samarra was a city in the midst of civil war.

"It was volatile. It has a Sunni and Shiite population and holy sites, so there was constant conflict. We would go to bed at night and just hear them blasting each other," Lane said.

Their duties were to keep security, locate and confiscate weapons caches and try and build positive relationships with the local population.

"It was hard. You'd drive past a garbage pile and expect it to blow you up. It was just the reality of the place. We would find these massive amounts of weapon

caches. The threat was everywhere. ... We realized pretty quickly that we were going to have to be careful, and sometimes the place you happened to be standing might determine your fate," he said.

In one such occurrence, Lane lost his brother in arms, Nathan Brown of South Glens Falls, when a rocket-propelled grenade hit the Humvee he was riding in. Lane was in a separate vehicle just ahead.

"It was an ambush. It was Easter Sunday. My friend Rob was badly injured but he survived, and Nate was killed. If their spots had been switched, it would have been the other way around. That happened the first month we were there. Things like that were hard to wrap your mind around," he said.

Lane left Iraq in early September due to a severe knee injury.

"It just gave out. There wasn't a specific event, but the wear and tear and overuse just became too much. I've had three surgeries and I'm still dealing with the recovery process," he said.

Lane said one of the hardest parts of his service was watching his unit on TV while visiting his friend Rob at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Virginia, after coming back to the U.S.

"Rob was still recovering from the ambush that killed Nate and our unit was gearing up for a big mission in Samarra. It was hard not to be there. I don't know if it was guilt, or anger, or what it was I felt. It was just incredibly difficult to watch from the sidelines," he said.

Lane served stateside in the Honor Guard, and received a medical discharge in 2008. He returned to college, and in his own terms, "killed it."

"I had a better mindset and self-discipline. I found my calling in teaching and it gave me a new purpose," he said.

Lane has been teaching fifth grade special education in Whitehall for the last six years. His fellow soldier and friend Rob also works at the same school.

"I am humbled by my time in the service. Some of it was hard to deal with, of course, especially when I first came back. But I look back on my time with pride and honor. It gave me stake in my country and I realize how blessed I am to live here," he said. ★



From left to right Levi Seyward, Ben Lane, Nate Brown
April 8th - 3 days before the ambush that would take Nate's life.

Ben Lane on patrol with
Tigris River in
the background.



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