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Veterans are Celebrated at the Knolls

As the Covid curtain withdrew, the treasures within our community became apparent. When we saw that Veterans Day was approaching, we took stock of our population and discovered that among us were seven World War II Veterans and 11 spouses of deceased WWII veterans. We have a total of 26 veterans from WWII through Vietnam, that's more than 20% of our population and a part of our population that needed to be shown appreciation. We cannot forget our role models of what has become to be known as "The Greatest Generation." Today's young adults were born in the century that followed the sacrifices of these honored heroes. World War II, for them, is a subject of history. The Korean War is known as "The Forgotten War" and Vietnam Veterans were disparaged upon coming home and never were thanked nor appreciated for their part in serving their country. Nothing less than a grand ceremony and party would suffice to honor them.

At 11:00 am, on November 11th, the sounds of scores of residents reciting "The Pledge of Allegiance" could be heard throughout the building. One by one, each World War II Veteran was thanked and given a special World War II Challenge Coin.

Vincent Sclafani took the podium and talked about the last combat mission of WWII that was flown by a B29, call name Blueplate 36, of the 315 wing, 20th Air Force. The last of their 13 combat missions flown. He presented a photograph of that crew and identified each crew member by name, rank, position on the plane and their hometown. Vincent, the tail gunner, is the only remaining crew member to tell the story.

Following the recognition of our WWII veterans, each widow of a WWII veteran then was presented with a flag pin as her husband's name was called in honor. All of our veterans, spouses and guests cheered during the presentations. As our ceremony closed, the Knolls singers led us in "America the Beautiful." The veterans exited to a well-deserved lunch as each group's service song was sung by everyone. We started with the Marine's Hymn and finished with the Army's Caisson Song. This event was unique because, while the Knolls was the sponsor, the residents wanted to do the work themselves, from planning, stuffing cubbies, folding cards, decorating, and serving lunch. It turned into a momentous groundswell of appreciation. To serve a veteran is a privilege.

This piece was written by a resident of The Knolls, Arlene Grauer. The Knolls, a part of Bethel, a not-for-profit community offering a full range of services in Westchester. The Knolls, is their continuing care retirement community in Valhalla.



Vincent Sclafani



Don Jacobson



Robert Doonan



Shirley Leitner

