

East Fishkill's Hometown Heroes... **36 and Counting**

By Jeanne Cotroneo Darrow

 **A**s the saying goes, all good things must come to an end. Since January 2023, this magazine has carried the stories of East Fishkill's Hometown Heroes—the men and women who served our country with courage and humility. Month after month, hundreds of their faces appear on banners lining our streets from Memorial Day through Labor Day, and we brought to light three dozen of their lives in these pages.

The banner program began with a John Jay High School student, inspired by the way her grandfather's hometown similarly honors its Veterans. She helped design the 3-by-5-foot banners that now hang proudly across East Fishkill. The very first one honored Manny Bacon, a 23-year-old Hopewell Junction resident who was the town's first casualty of World War II. From that beginning, the project grew into a living memorial to hundreds of Hometown Heroes.

VETERAN VOICES

It seems fitting that last month's Hometown Hero story, perhaps our last, honored the late Dietrich Brengelmann, the father-in-law of Lori Brengelmann, who plays an important role at the East Fishkill Highway Department in keeping the hundreds of Hometown Hero banners clean and organized as they come down and go up as the seasons change.

For me, the journey began with admiration. I would drive past the banners, wondering about the lives behind the names. When I shared the idea of telling their stories with Craig Arco of Arco

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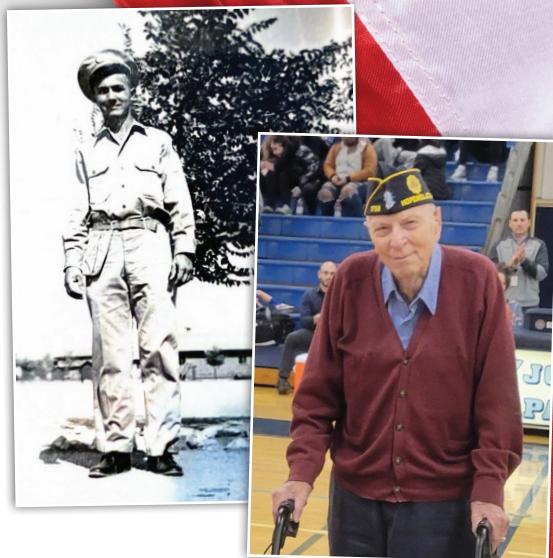
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Congratulations to Caroline Pogge (featured on our November 2024 cover) on her recent promotion to the rank of Brigadier General.



Simon Kaufman (featured in our April 2023 issue) was the Principal when I attended Fishkill Plains Elementary School and many years later was a referee for my sons' rec basketball games. We thank him for his service during the Korean War.



It was an honor to have met WWII Veterans Frank Hughes (featured in our August 2025 issue) and the late Owen Cottle (featured in May 2023), both centenarians.

Protection Systems, he immediately agreed to sponsor the section. His generosity sustained this project for three years, allowing us to share the voices of so many local Veteran heroes.

Not every Veteran wished to be featured. Many declined, feeling unworthy of the spotlight. Yet the stories that were told revealed extraordinary courage. Along the way, I met so many remarkable people, including two centenarians—Frank Hughes and the late Owen Cottle, who subsequently passed at 101. I learned firsthand about battles that shaped our nation's history. I sat with families who entrusted me with framed photographs and anecdotes, piecing together legacies that might otherwise have faded.

POGGE'S RECENT PROMOTION

Some stories rose to the level of cover features, such as those of Marikay Satryano, a U.S. Army Major, and Caroline Pogge, who in November was confirmed by the Senate as the Army's newest Brigadier General. Others reminded us of the strength found in

community, with many Veterans belonging to American Legion Post 1758, whose leaders and members have been steadfast friends throughout this journey.

Reflecting on this project, I am filled with gratitude. Each story carried meaning, deepened our understanding of service and sacrifice, and connected us more closely to our neighbors. Although this section is ending, for now, the banners will continue to wave, and the stories will remain. I am honored to have helped memorialize the lives of these military Veterans and grateful to Craig Arco for making it possible.

To sponsor an East Fishkill Hometown Hero or dedicate a banner for a loved one, contact the town supervisor's office at 845-221-4303. To read past stories, visit bit.ly/HometownHeroesEFL. And if you know of a local business that might help revive this section as its sponsor, please reach out to Jeanne at jdarow@bestversionmedia.com. ♦



In 2023, American Legion Post 1758 members John Polasko, Norm Dauerer, Bill Kriebel, John Call, Jeff Miedowski, Conrad Gagnon, and Jim Reynolds visited Manny Bacon's burial site and honored him with a ceremony, proof that time will not dim the glory of his deeds.



Doug McHoul (featured in our February 2023 issue) always wanted to be a Marine. Serving from 1963 to 1969, he "never regretted a minute of it. He and his friend Jim Gibb, a WWII POW (featured in December 2024), started the American Legion's Memorial Day service in Hopewell Jct. in 1970. He's pictured here with his first car, a 1960 Chevy.