

Opening Remarks ~ 9 NOV 2024 ~ Dedication of Bronze Plaques

*by John T. Jeffery SFC (USA, Retired)
Public Affairs Officer 109th Infantry Regiment Association*

Though not a resident of Greenfield Township I have multiple connections to soldiers memorialized on the stones here. I served for many years (1996-2010) as a Federal Technician with SFC Paul F. Criscera at OMS 25 in Carbondale and FMS 2 in Taylor, and with SSG Boris Telep in Headquarters Company of the 1st Battalion, 109th Infantry. I served the Pennsylvania Army National Guard as a member of the 109th Infantry Regiment from 1989-2010, and am currently serving as the Public Affairs Officer for the 109th Infantry Regiment Association. I was one of the "Iron Soldiers" who deployed to Ramadi, Iraq from 2005-2006 with the 2nd Brigade 28ID. While there I served with SGT Eric Slebodnik, and fulfilled his mother Cynthia's request by giving him what turned out to be his last hug. I had the pleasure of knowing Eric's grandfather Stephen A. Slebodnik. During the dark night of 28-29 SEP 2005 I had no doubt that Eric's remains would be interred next to his grandfather. Prior to this ceremony I placed 109th Infantry Regiment Association coins on every stone that had anything to do with the Regiment, including one soldier that I did not know personally: SGT Sebastian L. Montone who served in the 109th Infantry Regiment during WWII.

The families and fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines of those memorialized here do not need reminders to remember them. We will never forget them. We cannot. We are glad to see it done nevertheless. We want them and their service of our nation to be remembered by others. We do not want either to be forgotten. In many communities in our land this is not done, and that is sad. Here, with these reminders, education can take place. Those who did not know them may learn here about their service and sacrifice. This generation, and those to come need this. May it serve its purpose, and may some of those who learn the lessons of this park follow the examples of those memorialized here.

Also prior to the ceremony I tabulated some facts about those memorialized so far on the stones here. Besides organizations there are 73 names, and there is room remaining for many more! These names are of those who served in the Army, Army Air Corps, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Army National Guard, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine. Their service includes three in the Civil War, one in the Spanish-American War, and others in WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Among the WWII veterans are two recipients of Bronze Stars. If all of the histories were known multiple volumes could be written documenting the experiences of these combat veterans.

What Greenfield Township has done in the development of this Veterans Memorial is commendable. Too many communities in our nation have no memorials like this. A large contingent of 109th Infantry Regiment soldiers recently visited the sites of historic battles of our Regiment in Europe during WWII. When the people in those communities see the red keystone of the 28th Infantry Division it very quickly becomes obvious that neither they nor their children have forgotten what that division and its Regiments did for them during WWII. More communities in this land need to be like them, and like Greenfield Township. I commend the Park Committee, the Historical Society, and the Board of Supervisors for their efforts towards this end.

In the book of Joshua, chapter four, we read these words:

“That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them....”
(Joshua 4:6–7, KJV)