

Answering the Call: Honoring the Jersey Shore's Fallen Heroes



William J. Duffy at the Brick War Memorial, located in front of the Brick Township Municipal Building on Chambers Bridge Road.

Stories about retirees who spend their golden years at the Jersey Shore may be a dime a dozen, but every now and then, a diamond gleams from within the retirement pool's waters.

Consider Clark, New Jersey native William J. Duffy, who relocated to Ocean County with his wife, Ronnie, after retiring from forty years of law enforcement service in 2011.

Sounds like a typical retirement story, but Duffy is not your typical retiree.

Instead of golfing, fishing, or spending long days lying on the sand, Duffy's delight is an extension of his military and law enforcement background and a calling he considers to be his life's mission.

To date, he has researched and

preserved the stories of eighty New Jersey fallen heroes, most of whom called the Jersey Shore home.

"I love doing this," Duffy said. "It's a labor of love and my passion. I came home from a war zone, but they did not." Duffy considers it his duty and mission to honor the fallen heroes by sharing their stories. "Their sacrifice must never be forgotten."

Duffy's fervent interest in military history began as a child. "My father was a World War II Navy combat veteran and read books about World War II. When he'd put a book down, I'd pick it up and read it," Duffy said. "To this day, I have an addictive fascination with World War II, a war that had to be fought to save the world. I've loved United States history and military history ever since I was

a little boy, and it's still in me."

After graduating from Clark High School in 1967, Duffy's father suggested he enlist in the military rather than waiting to receive a draft notice because enlisted personnel were more likely to get a better MOS (military occupational specialty). "I entered the Army in August 1968 and got orders for Korea in March of 1969," he explained. "I spent thirteen months up near the DMZ (demilitarized zone) between North and South Korea as a hydraulic mechanic for M110 Howitzers in an artillery unit." Duffy noted that most do not realize that the United States is technically still at war with North Korea. "The Korean War reached an armistice in 1953, but peace was never declared nor a peace treaty ever signed."

Duffy returned from Korea and worked as a Drill Sergeant for eighteen months at Fort Jackson in South Carolina. He said, "That was the greatest job to this day I ever had."

He decided to take the civil service test instead of reenlisting in the Army, again as advised by his father, and after earning the highest possible score on the test, he was hired by the Clark Police Department in 1972.

It was during his first year as a police officer when his interest in fallen heroes piqued.

"I joined the department's Honor Guard, and during the 1972 Veterans Day Services at the Clark War Memorial, I saw the names of twelve fallen heroes from World War II and three from Vietnam," Duffy explained. "I asked the guys from the VFW and American Legion about these men, but nobody knew anything about them."

Duffy's innate love of history inspired him to research each fallen hero's story in a time when the internet was decades away from being invented. Unsuccessful research trips to the Clark Library and Clark High School forced him to painstakingly

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