

Stories

A Newsletter of Parishioners' Enlightening Stories of Life Events

VOLUME FIFTEEN

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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Family Story**
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from Fr. Eric
Tellez**



Betty & John VanMaenen

We Made Many New Friends & Enjoyed Our New Home

By John VanMaenen As Told to Dan McCabe

John VanMaenen was born in 1925 in the small town of Cedarhurst, Long Island, New York. He attended St. Joachim Catholic Grammar School where in the second grade he met the love of his life, Betty Donohue. Betty was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts and moved to Cedarhurst, Long Island.

Betty went on to a Catholic High School in Brooklyn on a scholarship, while John attended Lawrence Public High School in Cedarhurst, which he left in his

sophomore year to join the service. He would eventually return and graduate from high school upon his discharge in 1945. Betty corresponded with John while he was in the Navy but they never really dated until his discharge from the Navy. Eventually Betty and John married and celebrated 62 years together. John married his life long friend and grammar school sweetheart!

John and his friend Dennis Doyle decided in 1942 they would enlist in the Coast Guard, but they waited so long in line that they both

decided against it and walked across the street and enlisted in the Navy instead. Since they were both 17 at the time, they needed and had permission from their parents to enlist. They both thought that since they enlisted together they would stay together for the duration. They were sent to Newport, Rhode Island for their boot camp training for six weeks.

John was assigned to the amphibious force and was sent to Little Creek, Virginia for training as a signalman. He eventually was assigned to the Landing Craft Infantry #189

Introductory Letter from Fr. Eric

What I enjoy about our *Stories* Newsletter is how much more I learn about our parishioners that I did not know.

I see John often at the grocery store helping neighbors

with their shopping. We stop and talk football (Notre Dame of course) which I enjoy. I see him also helping with the bulletin each Friday.

John is a widower and keeps himself active in his ministries

at the parish. He is a fine example of how to stay active in retirement.

Peace in Christ,

Fr. Eric Tellez



John & Betty's 50th Anniversary with their children



VanMaenen Family 1962



John's Landing Craft 1940's

responsible for bringing soldiers to shore during many battles in the European theater of the war. John had to master the semaphore flag code of signaling which is very difficult. He eventually was able to send and receive 15 words per minute. John was part of the invasion fleet that was ordered to invade Sicily.

After the capitulation of Nazi Germany, John was stationed at Fort Peirce, Florida. John was awarded six Bronze Battle Stars for his service. When the war ended, he was able to return to his parents, Betty and his friends.

John is very proud to be part of this "Greatest Generation" who sacrificed so much so that we may enjoy all of the freedoms we have today.

After completing high school John was employed by the "Queensboro Gas and Electric Company/LI Lighting Company" as a merchandise customer service person, then went on to technical service and ended employment as an area



Betty & John 1947

supervisor. After two years of courtship, John and Betty were married on November 15, 1947.

Betty passed away on September 22, 2008. They have four children, two boys and two girls who now live in New York, Virginia and Arizona. They also have seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

After a few trips from New York to Arizona to visit their daughter Margie, John asked Betty, "Why are we going back to a cold climate from this nice warm place?" They decided to retire and move to Arizona. John retired after 42 years with the same company and they settled in Scottsdale in 1995. Their daughter suggested they attend St. Patrick where they made many new friends.

John is still active in church, attending many parish functions such as devotion to the blessed sacrament each week and helping out on

Friday mornings with the parish bulletin. He helps many of his friends who need transportation to and from Mass, taking some of



VanMaenen Great Grandchildren 2010

them shopping and to appointments. John still finds the time and energy to play a round of golf each week with his friends and neighbors.



John 1945

Editor's Comment:

We owe a lot to John and the many others like him of the "Greatest Generation." Let us all remember and honor those special people while we still have them with us. Thank you John.

If you would like to get to know more fellow parishioners, try joining one of the ministries John mentions in his story.

Get Involved!!

Adoration Ministry
Alex/Rosemary Cudzewicz
480-513-1762

Bulletin Bunnies
Debbie Rimbey
480-998-3843x119