

Nephews reminisce about 'Uncle Charlie,' Grand Island's World War II hero

BY MICHAEL J. BILLONI

Three of "Uncle Charlie" DeGlopper's four closest relatives – Ray, 80; Charlie, 77; and Earl, 69 – met this week at Tim Hortons to reminisce after a nearly 7-foot statue of DeGlopper was mounted to a granite base at the memorial in his honor.

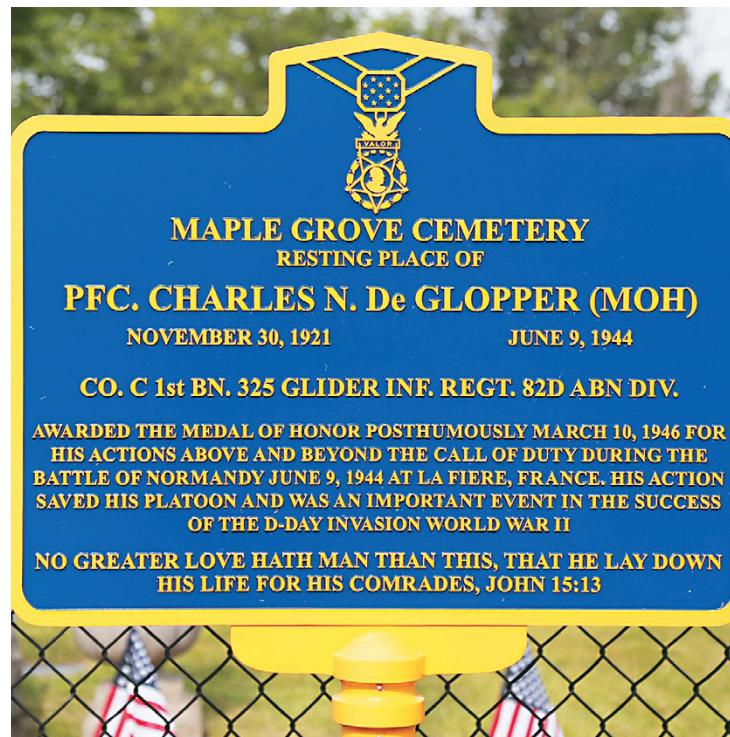
The unveiling, postponed last June because of the COVID-19 pandemic, will occur Saturday morning. Those men will be joined there by a fourth brother, George, 78, and more than 50 family members for the solemn, military ceremony that will also recognize the Island's Killed In Action soldiers, those who fought in the Civil War, all Island veterans and the Unknown Soldier.

"After growing up and hearing stories about Uncle Charlie, he set the bar real high when it comes to heroes," explained Earl, who travelled from Floral City, Florida, with his wife, Meredith. "To me, that term is so overused and watered down today. Along with a lot of other soldiers in World War II, Uncle Charlie set the bar pretty high in regard to what a hero is. I was always proud of that."

During World War II, communication from soldiers or the United States Army to families was slow. DeGlopper's parents learned of his death in a short telegram shortly after it occurred, followed by a letter dated July 14, 1944, by Maj. Gen. J.A. Ulio confirming the death of their son, "Private First-Class Charles N. DeGlopper, 32,581,337, Infantry.

"I wish there was more information to give you but unfortunately, reports of this nature contain only the briefest details as they are prepared under battle conditions and means of transmission are limited."

On Feb. 15, 1945, the family received a letter from Wayne W. Pierce, captain of the 325th Glider Infantry, Commanding Co. "O," giving graphic details of his death, but also adding, "Your son was the most out-



The plaque that is outside the Maple Grove Cemetery on Stony Point Road. (Photo by Bob Haag)

standing soldier we ever had in Company 'O.' Please accept the sincere sympathy of myself and everyone of Company 'O.' We lived with your son, we fought for our God and Country with him and we knew him as a man."

DeGlopper, originally buried in a U.S. Army cemetery in Normandy, is now laid to rest in the family plot at Maple Grove Cemetery on Stony Point Road.

Ahead of the unveiling, Charlie arrived from Concord, North Carolina, with his wife, Christine, and is staying at the home of his daughter, Christine, and her husband, Christopher, and children, Grace Noel and Jesse, in Burt. He will be joined by their daughter, Susanne, and her husband, Tom, of Cornelius, North Carolina, and children, Duncan, Oliver and Reece.

"Our dad told us they called Uncle Charlie, 'The gentle giant' because he would tower over people even back when he was at Tonawanda High School," he recalled. "He had to duck to get into rooms and, when they would wrestle as kids, Uncle Charlie would take on three at a time."

Charles N. DeGlopper was the youngest of Len and Mary's four children and they grew up on the 60-acre family farm on Fix Road. George and Ray, both veterans, live in houses on the property. Ray will be joined at the ceremony by wife, Anita; son, Stephen; and stepchildren, Gregory and Douglas. George is not married.



Standing above the cemetery stone of their Uncle Charlie are the DeGlopper brothers: from left, Earl, Ray and Charlie. (Photo by Bob Haag)

Since DeGlopper gave his life during the Invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, there have been many tributes to the fallen war hero, including a statue in Normandy, France. His nephews said this is the culmination of those tributes and they are so proud it is happening in their hometown.

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DEGLOPPER PROGRAM



Presentation of Colors

Welcome & Introduction.
Major General (Retired)
David J. Conboy

Presentation of Wreath for Civil War Veterans

Chaplain Philo G. Cook Camp #223,
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

Lodema Strickland Tent 56,
Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War

Roll Call for Killed in Action

Unknown Soldier
Morgan Schaefer, Artist

Charles N. DeGlopper Tribute

Prayer to the Fallen
Alan Lee
Charles N. DeGlopper Memorial Post #9249 VFW

Rifle Salute

Taps
Mark Hughes

Tribute to Past, Present, and Enlisted Forces

Statue Unveiling

Closing Remarks

Military Music Salute

ROLL CALL

In memory of those from Grand Island who gave their lives in defense of their country:

- ★ World War I
 - Edward P. Pierce
- ★ World War II
 - Charles N. DeGlopper
 - Eugene F. Dinsmore
 - William S. Gillen
 - Francis K. Goodchild
 - William L. Rohde
 - Howard W. Salton
 - Charles A. Smith
 - George E. Smith
- ★ The Korean War
 - Albert J. Keppler
 - George H. Kinney
- ★ The Vietnam War
 - Joseph A. L'Huillier
 - Robert B. Luther
 - Joseph E. Muench
 - Philip C. Taylor
 - Richard B. Trotter
- ★ Operation Iraqi Freedom
 - Terrence K. Crowe



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