

Eagle Scout Project



Omaha Beach Memorial Normandy, France.



Scouts from Troop 630 who helped Ryan with his Eagle project

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unknown soldier. I was impressed, and the benches are awesome. He was very well spoken, and he did a great job directing people to complete the task."

To accomplish an Eagle Scout project, the Scout must complete a project plan, complete with a budget, and the plan to raise the needed funds. He researched benches and the committee approved a wooden one with an eagle and patriotic-themed cast onto the sides of each one. The plan was for six benches to be placed throughout the memorial site for the public to use. Wellence convinced them to add a seventh, which he wanted reserved for the missing soldiers.

"There is so much good that comes out of these Eagle Scout projects, and I knew I wanted mine to be somewhat artistic," Wellence explained. "I really wanted to have one set aside for an MIA with a chain across the front explaining why no one is sitting there."

That bench will sit at the southern end of the memorial, adjacent to the canon. The plaque on the gold chain will read, "The old chair depicts an unknown force, representing no specific Soldier, Sailor, Airman, or Marine, but all who are not here with us."

To accomplish his task, Wellence wrote letters to local businesses to raise the needed funds. Along the way he received a surprise gift from Grand Island's American Le-

gion Post 1346.

"We have quite a relationship with the Grand Island schools," explained Ray DeGlopper, the 80-year-old commander of the Post and the nephew of Charles. "That year, a class was helping us sell our poppies and when they came back with the money, we decided to match it and give it to the young man who was providing the benches at the memorial. I like to see kids with that kind of attitude of wanting to help out especially for our veterans."

Once Wellence raised nearly \$3,000 he obtained the benches and put together a team of Scouts and family members to work one evening assembling them before they were sealed by him and his father and then delivered to the memorial site.

"When my Scouts have a passion for a project, that is what I like most, and Ryan certainly had that for this project," explained Swagler, the leader of the troop based at St. Stephen R.C. Church. "We have had many Eagle Scouts over the years, and it is such a pleasure for me to drive around the Island to see the various projects our Eagle Scouts have done here. It is important for our Scouts to see the positive impact they have had with these projects on the Island."

Swagler said his troop has long been involved with the DeGlopper Memorial space, helping each spring and summer with taking care of the flower gardens and now

with the placement of benches for visitors.

"When I began this project, I never realized the magnitude of it all," Wellence explained. "Along with the DeGlopper statue and the tributes to the KIAs and all the Island veterans, it's quite impressive. Equally impressive are all the people who are working on this project."

For this Eagle Scout, when the statue of the Island's World War II hero is unveiled on June 5 and his story is retold, Wellence can reflect back to the time he stood on Normandy Beach where it all began.



The finished bench.

Charles N. DeGlopper Memorial Statue and Killed in Action Plaques Unveiling Saturday, June 5, 2021, 9:45 a.m.

Grand Island Boulevard at the corner of Baseline Road



GEORGE E. SMITH
March 15, 1914 - November 6, 1944



Lieutenant George Smith was raised on Grand Island and educated at Kenmore High School and Mechanics School of Rochester. He worked with his father at Kenmore's Smith Boys Auto Supply while earning his pilot's license at the Buffalo Aeronautical Flying School and enlisted in Military Service in 1941.

Transcontinental & Western Air (TWA) contracted its five Stratoliners to the Army Air Force's Air Transport Command after the attack on Pearl Harbor, November 7, 1941.

Lt. Smith had been with TWA for two years when, on November 4, 1944, as First Officer, he co-piloted a California flight from San Francisco to Burbank. The Douglas DC-3 twin-engined transport carried 21 military and civilian passengers and 3 crew. The plane crashed and burned, killing all aboard.

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what's NEW

Brick Oven is offering new menu items, visit them at 2457 Grand Island Blvd.

St. Stephen School

is offering fish fries every Friday during Lent, from 4-7 p.m. The meal is for takeout or curbside pickup only. The school is located at 2080 Baseline Road. Contact numbers are 773-4347 or 336-4581 or go to: ststephensgi.org.