

New flags proudly wave above DeGlopper Memorial

Donations by local veterans, business make it possible

BY MICHAEL J. BILLONI

Ray DeGlopper shook his head in amazement as he watched the flags wave in the wind. They will proudly stand adjacent to the life-sized statue of his uncle, Pfc. Charles N. DeGlopper, a World War II Medal of Honor hero, at the northern end of the park that bears his name at Baseline Road and Grand Island Boulevard.

A new American flag is proudly displayed in the center, with adjoining flags representing the United States Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Merchant Marines, Coast Guard and POW (Prisoner of War). Organizers are awaiting the ninth flag – the 82nd Airborne Division – coming from Ft. Bragg in North Carolina.

Charles DeGlopper was a member when he was killed in action defending his troop during the bloody Battle of Normandy, France, on June 9, 1944.

What touched Ray DeGlopper most was the new flags were recently obtained and hung last week after the DeGlopper Memorial Expansion Committee received financial donations from Dr. William Waldron, owner of Grand Island Optical on Grand Island Boulevard; Paul Roeder, a lifelong Grand Island resident and veteran who served in Vietnam and now is retired from Dunlop; and another Island resident and veteran, Paul Sommer.

"This entire project has been a grassroots effort by so many Grand Island residents, veterans and friends," explained DeGlopper, commander of the Grand Island American Legion Post 1346.

"Seeing these flags fly in the wind and just reflecting on what they represent," he quietly said as his voice drifts off. "It's so very important to have them here. It gives this park such a patriotic look."

Roeder, a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, who recalls being on the DeGlopper farm on Alt Boulevard and Fix Road with Ray and friends when they were young boys, added,



Members of the DeGlopper Memorial Expansion Committee surround the donors who made the new flags possible for the park. From left: Ray Sommer, Al Prame, Paul Roeder, Gary Roesch, Dr. William Waldron, Ray DeGlopper, Paul Sommer, Peter Kuszczak, Deb Bota (holding Lillian) and Mary Cooke. (Photo by Robert Haag)

"It just makes you feel great to see these flags in this beautiful park."

Sommer, an Army veteran who was also part of the group at the farm in the mid-

1950s, said, "It is very honorable, and it does my heart good to see these flags here."

Waldron, an optometrist from Horseheads, has operated his optical business on the Island for nine years. It recently moved into former Buffalo Sabre Larry Playfair's new development at 2099 Grand Island Blvd. Waldron said he donated in memory of his grandfather, a World War II veteran, and his father, who fought in the Korean War.

"This is an awesome community and a wonderful way to help a great cause while also honoring my father and grandfather," he said.

The flag raising also showed DeGlopper and members of the hard-working, dedicated expansion committee just how

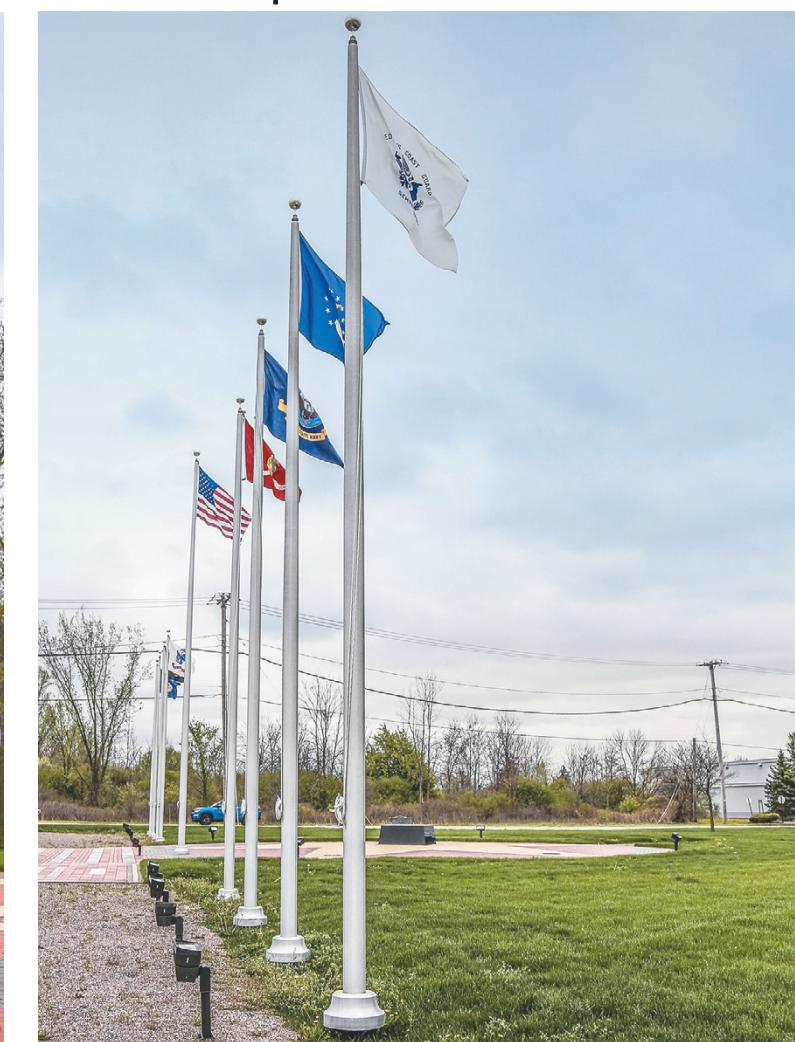
close they are to the June 5 unveiling of the 6-foot, 7-inch statue of the Island's war hero at 9:45 that Saturday morning.

Another indication they are close to what will be a historic day on the Island is the annual American Legion Post 1346's flower fundraiser, which began Friday morning at 7 a.m. and continues until 6 p.m., and again Saturday – or until the baskets are sold. Flower baskets are \$15 and, for the first time, patio tomato baskets are available for \$6 each. Credit and debit cards are accepted.

Once again, the American Legion will sell raffle tickets for a large planter with funds going to the DeGlopper Memorial Fund. Legion members use funds from the flower sale for donations they make throughout the year for worthwhile causes.

The humble, quiet, 80-years-young DeGlopper cannot express his appreciation in words for his own post's donations for the statue, and for the park that recognizes his uncle – along with Island veterans, and residents Killed in Action during any past conflict.

See DONATIONS continued on Page 10



The row of new flags at the DeGlopper Memorial. Organizers await the flag from the 82nd Airborne Division (Photo by Robert Haag)

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



JOSEPH E. MUENCH
August 16, 1946 - October 4, 1969



Corporal (Cpl) Joseph E. Muench, a Grand Island Resident, enlisted in the Army in 1969. Cpl. Muench was a rifleman with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment/ B Company.

On September 10, 1969, Cpl Muench's Battalion was tasked with a clear and search operation for enemy positions in the highly contested Binh Dinh Province. The operation would go on for a month, during which the Battalion suffered many casualties. On October 4th, Cpl Muench was hit and killed by enemy small arms fire.

For Cpl Muench's many heroic acts during this operation and in the months leading up to his death he was awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart, Bronze Star and many other metals for his service.

Cpl. Joseph E. Muench is laid to rest at Saint Joseph's Cemetery, Scio, New York.

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