

# *Mercer Memorial Day 500*

## *Observance Program*

*Citizens Cemetery, 12 – 1 P.M.*

*South End of Pitt Street at Veterans Platform*

*Welcome .....conducted by Uncle Sam\*, a well-known icon of Freedom*

*Announcement..... Captain David Robinson, 10<sup>th</sup> Pa Reserve Volunteers  
Company "C" Mercer Rifles\* [www.10thpa.com](http://www.10thpa.com)*

### *Salute To The Flag*

*Presentation Of Color... VFW Post 6345, Larry Houston, Commander*

*Pledge Of Allegiance.. Please Stand with Hats Removed*

*National Anthem.... All Sing*

*Invocation... Presented by Pastor Chuck Schwartz\*, Bible Baptist Church,*

*Silent Moment Of Remembrance*

*Introductions... Master of Ceremonies Jim Cardamon\**

### *Musical Selections*

*The Wildcat Regiment Band\* of Indiana, PA under the direction of Mr.*

*Bruno Pina [www.wildcatband.com](http://www.wildcatband.com)*

*Honoree Presentations County Commissioner Kenneth Seamans\**

*Presenter of 3 Honoree Awards to John Getway, USA, Ken Heider,  
USN, & Ed Hoagland, USN (Refer to Honoree Button under 2007  
Events for biographies)*

*Honoree Presentations County Jury Commissioner Maurice Keaveny\**

*Presenter of 3 Posthumous Awards for Carl "Jim" Forrester USA,  
Michael Adam Marzano USMC, & Michael Misinay, USA.*

*Biographies may be read at Honoree button, 2007 Events*

*Musical Selections by the Penn Ohio Singers\* directed by Geoff Mucha*

*Words Of Remembrance by Colonel Gary Salander\*, USA, Retired,*

*Mercer County Director of Veterans Affairs*

### *Recognition of Special Guests*

*By Richard Wilds\*, USMC Retired recognizing Ralph Griffiths and  
Bill Bletso, Two Jima Veterans. Biographies are available below.*

*By Michael Williams\* 5 former Prisoners of War. Albie Abraham, Bataan  
Death March, Philippines; Wayne McClelland, Jim Zimmer,  
Germany; Harold Beerbower, Dailey Halsey; Korea.*

*Remarks By Honored Guests and/or Honorees (optional)*

*Traditions Of Memorial Day*

*Gettysburg Address. Michael Williams, High School History Teacher*

*Placing Of The Wreath. Girl Scout Maddie Hessmann*

*Musical Selections The Balmoral Highlanders directed by Jimmie McIntosh*

*Salute To Fallen Comrades*

*Prayer Of Remembrance, Pastor Chuck Schwartz*

*21 Cannon Salute, Members of the Pennsylvania National Guard*

*Taps And Echo, Wildcat Regiment Band*

*Closing Musical Selection, Benediction And Dismissal*

*\* The asterisk indicates more information below.*

*Please note: The Remembrance Table on Veterans Platform has great significance. You may read about it below.*

*Following the Observance plan to attend the*

## *Civil War Observance*

*Honoring Lewis Brest\**

*the only Congressional Medal of Honor Winner*

*buried in Mercer County, the award having been presented April 24, 1865.*

*This brief 15 minute ceremony will take place 50 yards  
down the Cemetery at his gravesite and also take you back in time.*

*You will join Captains Robinson and Taylor*

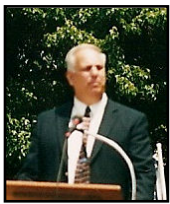
*as they pay tribute to Private Brest. along with the soldiers of the  
10<sup>th</sup> Pa Reserve Volunteers Company "G" Mercer Rifles and the Beaver Center &  
Cushings/Taylor's Battery traveling here from Union City. Horses and cannon are  
scheduled to be present.*

*\*You may read about Lewis Brest 's life below.*

**Bob Ross** has lent his talent portraying Uncle Sam to "The 500" from its inception. He and wife Terry winter in Pittsburgh and summer at Conneaut Lake, PA.

**The 10<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserve Volunteers Company G Mercer Rifles**, originally recruited from surrounding counties. Some are descendants of the originals. They are affiliated with the Mercer County Historical Society. Below you may read more about them and you can also check them out on the Web. And below you will also find out more about Lewis Brest, the only Congressional Medal of Honor winner to be buried in Mercer County here in Citizens Cemetery.

**The Wildcat Regiment Band** has an interesting history from the 1800s. Read more about them by clicking on the Concert/Reception button in 2007 events or check out their website [www.wildcatband.com](http://www.wildcatband.com)



**Pastor Chuck** Schwartz has led a well rounded life. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree from Westchester State University and went to work for the Department of Defense. Then he schooled at Maranatha Baptist Graduate School of Theology and has been a pastor for 18 years, a Christian School Teacher for 10 and many have seen him perform as a PIAA official at area sporting events.

**Jim Cardamon**, once a member of the Old Guard Drill Team and guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, has been our Master of Ceremony for The 500 for 3 years. He served in the U.S. Army from 1956 to 1958 and served as Sentinel and Assistant Relief Commander. He was assigned to Honor Guard, Continental Color Guard, The Old Guard, Drill Team, in Company E, 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Infantry, Fort Myer, VA.



**Kenneth A. Seamans**, County Commissioner, served in the U.S. Army's Armed Services Police from 1957 to 1960 on Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands, In the Pacific.

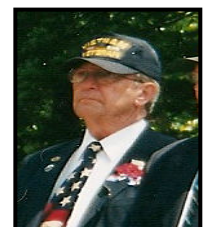
**Maurice Keaveny** served his country in the Merchant Marines from 1945 to 1946 and the U.S. Army from 1946 to 1947. He now is the Mercer County Jury Commissioner.



The biographies of the County's **6 Honorees for 2007** may be found under Honoree, 2007 Event, and in the General Honoree Section of the Website.

The **Penn Ohio Singers**, 35 men strong, under the direction of Geoff Mucha, have been regulars with the 500. We continue to invite them because they provide a somber, melancholy, spiritual voice to the Observance. They are a superior Men's Choral Organization whose goal is to strive and be recognized for musical and competitive excellence. They've been making sweet music together since 1981.

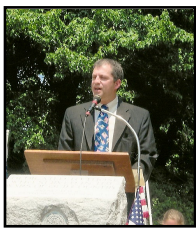
**Gary Solander**, the County Director of Veterans Affairs, has a distinct reputation for 'telling it like it is' with soldiers. You will sense this about him as he delivers thoughts one can grab hold of and keep concerning those we are here to honor today. He has served his country in the U.S. Army for 37 years in Germany, Okinawa, South Korea and Vietnam, and is the recipient of the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, the RVN Gallantry with Palm Medal, National Defense Service and Defense Meritorious Awards.





**Richard Wilds**, U.S. Marine Corp, Ret. will recognize two of our Special Guests on Veterans Platform for the role they played in the Marine/Navy struggle to take the Island of Iwo Jima during WWII. Rich served his country in Vietnam at DaNang and Con Tien. While serving he suffered the loss of his right eye and received severe leg injuries; and was awarded the Purple Heart, Presidential Unit citation, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnamese Service Medal, the Vietnamese Campaign Medal.

**Ralph Griffiths**, U.S. Marine Corps, Ret., and **Bill Bletso**, U.S. Navy, Ret., participated in the struggle to secure Iwo Jima, an island in the Pacific where, within 48 hours of fighting commencement 1500 Sailors and Marines lay dead on the shore or afloat. Read their moving stories below.



**Michael (Mike) Williams**, a history teacher at West Middlesex High School has long been ready and willing to do his part to honor veterans. His willing spirit and speaking skill has landed him the honor of presenting the Gettysburg Address and of recognizing five men who gave their all and then some under the flag of freedom: 5 former prisoners of war.

**Former Prisoners of War** Abie Abraham, USA, Wayne McClelland, USAF, Jim Zimmer, USA, Harold Beerbower, USA and Dailey Halsey, USA are our country's heroes. Read their stories below.



This will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> year the **Balmoral Highlanders** have joined us to help craft a memorable salute to veterans. Their music seems to drift on the air with deep meaning even far after they have finished playing. Director Jimmy McIntosh, MBE, studied with the Royal pipers at Balmoral, Scotland and was awarded The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire from Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace before emigrating to America in 1984. He formed the Balmoral School of Piping in Pittsburgh.

**Maddie Hessmann**, Presenter of the Wreath to honor Veterans is a Girl Scout from Troop # 609 and has been in scouting for five years. She is eleven years old and is in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Mercer Elementary School.



The 21 Cannon Salute today is provided by First Sergeant **David Gatewood** and fellow Pennsylvania National Guardsmen from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 107<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Group. When not participating with his fellow soldiers he is teaching at Grove City High School. View an interesting history of the Guard by pushing the PARADE BUTTON.

The Remembrance Table on Veterans Platform tells a story that all should know. See below for the significance of each item placed on it.



## In Memorium

*As you entered the dining room this evening, you may have noticed a small table in a place of honor. Please let me explain. The military caste is filled with symbology.*

The **TABLE** is set for one - allow that "one" to represent all of our "brothers" who are not with us tonight.

The **TABLECLOTH** is white - - symbolizing the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call to arms. **REMEMBER!**

The single **ROSE** in the vase reminds us of the families who loved them. **REMEMBER!**

The **RED RIBBON** tied so prominently on the vase symbolizes the closeness that we shared. **REMEMBER!**

A slice of **LEMON** is on the plate to remind us of their bitter fate. **REMEMBER!**

There is **SALT** upon the bread plate symbolic of their families tears. **REMEMBER!**

The **GLASS** is inverted - they cannot toast with us tonight. **REMEMBER!**

The **CHAIR** is empty - they are not here. **REMEMBER!**

## Lewis Francis Brest Congressional Medal of Honor

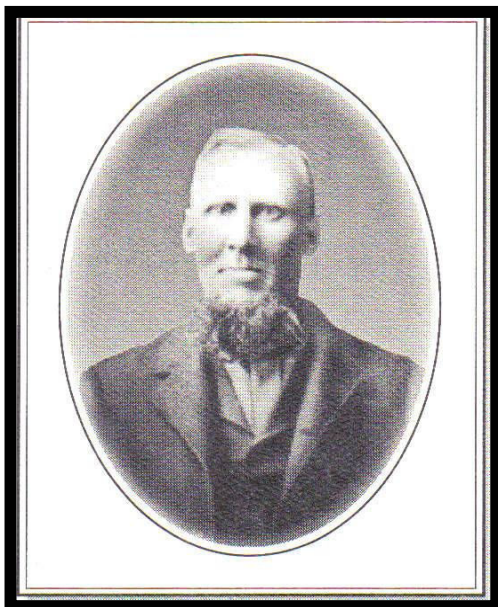
During the years of 1861 through 1865 the United States was involved in the bloodiest conflict in its entire history, the American Civil War. Mercer County contributed many men to fill the ranks of the regiments formed in Pennsylvania, who fought to preserve the country and to end the institution of slavery forever. Over 600,000 lives would be lost in those four years of terrible warfare, and somehow touched just about every family that was living in the country during that period. Our small communities in Mercer County also suffered by the loss of fathers, sons, brothers and uncles, who marched off to defend the Union and who never returned. A few of those who did survive the ravages of war and who were lucky enough to return to their homes here in Western Pennsylvania, returned as heroes of a grateful country. Many of these Union Veterans would be fortunate to live out their lives and see their beloved Republic go on to become the greatest country in the free world. One such local soldier who's country bestowed upon him the title of Hero and awarded him our country's highest honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor, was none other than Lewis Brest.

Lewis Francis Brest was born on May 15, 1842 in Mercer, Pennsylvania. On December 13, 1861 he enlisted as a private in the 57th Penna. Volunteer Infantry Regiment, Company 'E'. During the next four years Private Brest would remain with his regiment and share the hardships of warfare with his comrades. Together they would fight on the fields of Virginia, during the Peninsula Campaign, The Seven Days Battle, Second Battle of Manassas, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville Campaign. In June of 1863, Private Brest would suffer the effects of typhoid fever which would confine him to the regimental hospital, and prevent him from being in the ranks of the 57th, as they fought along the Emmitsburg Road just South of Gettysburg. He would slowly recover from the effects of the fever and return to his regiment later that year. He would be present in the front lines from the last months of 1863 to the end of the war. During those last months of 1863 the Country would ask the men of the 57th to reenlist for three more years to see the end of this terrible Civil War. Private Brest would reenlist like many of his comrades and they would be designated as Veteran Volunteers.

He would march with the 57th as they crossed the Rappahannock River under the command of General U.S. Grant during the spring of 1864. At the Battle of the Wilderness in May of 1864, Private Brest would be wounded in the neck, however the wound would not keep him out of action for long. The 57th Penna. Infantry would



continue to fight and die with the Army of the Potomac on their final move toward Richmond and the defeat of the rebel Army of Northern Virginia. The 57th Pa. would find themselves in the trenches surrounding Petersburg, Va., where they entered into the tedious trench warfare for the next several months. During this period many of the companies were consolidated due to increasing casualties, Prvt. Brest would now find himself a part of Company 'D'. As the ever tightening noose began to tighten around General Lee and his rebel army, the time finally came when Richmond City and the rebel government had to be abandoned. As the 57th pushed into Petersburg in their pursuit of the retreating confederates, Private Brest and his comrades realized the end of four terrible years was rapidly approaching. On April 6, 1864 as the battle lines were again forming near a stream known as Sailor's Creek, the 57th was preparing to deliver a death blow to their vanquished foes. As the two lines of battle crashed together in the hand to hand combat that issued, Private Brest captured the enemies battleflag. For his bravery in this action he was awarded our Country's Highest Honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor.



On April 24, 1865 Private Lewis Brest received for his meritorious actions on the battlefield, a thirty day Leave of Absence from the War Department. This furlough would take him out of the camps of his regiment to a well deserved rest, and away from the terrible scenes of war. After his thirty day leave, Private Brest returned to duty with his regiment and would take part in the Grand Review through the streets of Washington, D.C.

On June 29, 1865, along with the rest of the 57th Pa. Regiment, he would be mustered out of the United States Army.

Lewis F. Brest would return to Mercer County after the end of the War and pursue the quiet life of a civilian. He would marry, Margaret J. Hummel, and live the rest of his life with the effects of his wounds received in the defense of his beloved country. He was a member of the local G.A.R. post in Mercer, Pa., enjoying the company of his comrades of old. On the 2nd day of December, 1915 at the age of 73 years, a hero of forgotten battlefields died at the home of his daughter. In the announcement of his death in the local newspapers, no mention was made of his distinguished service to his country in time of war, or of his being awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Private Brest was buried in Citizen's Cemetery in Mercer, Pa. in a grave donated by the local Grand Army of the Republic Post, with a headstone which only read Prvt. Lewis F. Brest 57th Pa. Infantry.

The members of the Western Pennsylvania Civil War Reenactors Society have planned this special Memorial Ceremony for this important part of our American Heritage. Through their efforts the United States Government has awarded Private Brest this new memorial headstone, that has engraved upon it in gold 'Medal of Honor'. We would like to extend our appreciation to all those who were interested in honoring this important chapter of our local history by attending this recreated Civil War Memorial Ceremony and to the dedication and efforts of the men and women of the WPCWRS in helping to preserve our local Civil War Heritage. A reception will be held on the grounds of the Mercer County Historical Society and will follow the dedication at the cemetery.

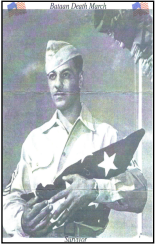
Anyone who is interested in making a donation to the Western Penna. Civil War Reenactors Society, 'Lewis F. Brest Memorial Fund', may do so by mailing it to the Mercer County Historical Society, c/o Lewis F. Brest Memorial Fund, 119 So. Pitt St., Mercer, Pa. 16137.



# PRISONERS OF WAR

MERCER MEMORIAL DAY 500 ~ 724 662 2786

All 5 men will be on Veterans Platform, Citizens Cemetery, South Pitt Street  
Noon Monday, May 28, to remind us of the price of freedom.



**ABIE ABRAHAM**, was born in 1913 in Lyndora, PA. and enlisted in the Army at age 19. During WWII he served with the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry, New York; the 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Panama; the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry; the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry, San Francisco, and unassigned in China when the ship Paney was sunk. He was a light-weight boxing champ with the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry in Manila, Philippines, where he served for 9 years. He fought, was captured, and was forced to participate in the 60 mile long Bataan Death March. Imprisoned for 3 ½ years he was bravely rescued by the 6<sup>th</sup> Rangers. Staff Sergeant Abraham became Master Sergeant Abraham and stayed behind at the request of General Douglas MacArthur for two and a half more years identifying and helping disinter the bodies of his brave fallen comrades along the death march trail and in the prison camps, and seeing that they were properly laid to rest. He has written two books: "Oh God, Where Are You?" and "Ghost of Bataan Speaks". He may be contacted at 142 Hoffman Lane, Renfrew, PA 16053.



**WAYNE MCCLELLAND** joined the Army Air Corp in the early stages of WWII in the European Theater. He considers graduation from flight school one of his greatest life achievements. As a young bomber pilot he was shot down and held at Stalag 3 as a POW near the Polish border for a year before being released by General Patton's troops. He remembers always being hungry and credits the Red Cross for keeping him alive. When he was moved to a second camp near the Neuremberg Rail Station there was a very real fear of thousand pound bombs from aircraft killing them. "It was a war of nerves. The strain not knowing your fate was terrible," says McClelland. "We were often threatened by the Germans and once came close to being shot to death when accused of stealing food." He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War and served in the Air Force Reserves earning the rank of Colonel before retiring in 1980.



**JIM ZIMMER** was detained in 9-B Stalag, considered to be among the worst of the camps, after having been taken prisoner by the Germans prior to the Battle of the Bulge. It was nicknamed Little Siberia because it was so cold. The wind blew through broken windows in the barracks. He was forced to stand out in the snow for hours and they were given only enough wood to heat their stove for one hour a day. His group of 140 men were jammed into barracks 100' long and 20' wide and were locked in at night. It was so crowded nearly a third had to sleep on the floor. Malnutrition was a general condition and POWs slowly starved to death. Unlike Stalag 3, only one Red Cross shipment reached them. Jim ate out of a tin can or helmet and had to use his fingers. Food consisted of putrid watery soup, sometimes with turnips or beets, potato peelings or German food cast-offs thrown in. Prisoners received bread made of flour and sawdust-at the beginning, one loaf for 6 men; later one for 12 men. "When American rescue came many were too weak from hunger to leave their bunks."



At 18 years of age **HAROLD "CURLY" BEERBOWER**, U.S.A., a machine gunner serving in D Company, 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, and G Company, 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, found himself in a foxhole with his buddies on each side of him dead and a bayonet at his neck. His regiment was overrun at the Imjim River near Yongwon-ni, South Korea in 1951. He was marched 500 miles to the infamous Chinese Communist Prison Camp 1 near Chang Song, Northern border of North Korea along the Yalu River near Manchuria. The march began with 1500 soldiers and ended with only 700 alive. He was detained for 28 months and proudly reports he was considered by the Chinese as one of the "Incorrigibles", those who would not co-operate with them. Part of their torture was being confined in a 6' x 6' area. He was forced to stand in temperatures 45 degrees below zero for hours. There was no medicine "If you got sick it was up to you to get over it or die", he said. He became jaundiced and recovered. His staple was rice with worms or soy beans with a small piece of ham added to feed 250 men.

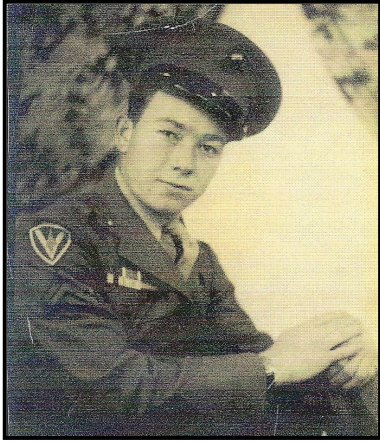


**DAILEY HALSEY**, a 20 year old U.S. Army squad leader in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry "Indian Head" Division, hit all the hot spots of the Korean War, fighting from Pusan to the Yalu River until he was captured during one of the biggest battles at Kum-Ri. After 5 months of combat his squad and others were ordered to set up a defensive boundary on the mountain above Junu-Ri. They ran out of ammunition days earlier but marched on, hoping to reload once they reached the other side of the mountain. Mr. Halsey was 3<sup>rd</sup> in line as the group approached the mountain's top. Ahead of him was a Lt. Colonel and Carl Hunt, his best friend in the squad. In an instant both men were shot dead and lay crumpled at Dailey's feet. Five rifles were pointed at his head as thousands of Chinese Army troops closed in. He would spend the next 33 months as a captive facing an everyday struggle for sanity and survival. Still suffering from the effects of frostbite he is proud of being considered by the enemy as a "Reactionary", one who would not betray his country. His hearing loss came from being buried in a foxhole when a mortar struck nearby. Asked what Memorial Day means to him he says, "It's the ones we left behind I'm thinking about." 7,140 Americans became prisoners of war there and had the highest death rate for American Prisoners of War since the Revolutionary War.



# MERCER MEMORIAL DAY 500

## -IWO JIMA VETERANS ON STAGE-



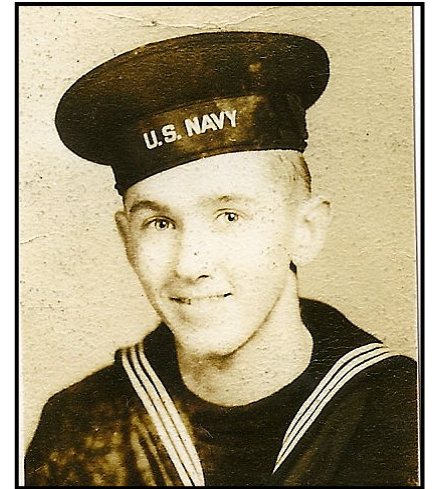
### **RALPH GRIFFITHS.** U.S. MARINE CORPS

Ralph joined the Marines when he was 17 years old. He was a part of Easy Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 28<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 5<sup>th</sup> Division since its beginning in 1944. He participated in the Battle of Iwo Jima, serving and training with every flag raiser for one year. He received a Purple Heart and Presidential Citation after being wounded by the same shell that killed flag raisers Sergeant Michael Strank and Corporal Harlon Block. After months in hospital he rejoined his old outfit and

trained for the invasion of Japan. When the war ended he was sent to Japan as part of the occupation force in 1945.

### **BILL BLETSO.** U.S. NAVY

Bill served on the U.S.S. Gregory DD 802 that provided fire support to the assault made by the Marines on Iwo Jima Island. His ship had the honor of shooting down the first plane over Iwo. It was believed to be a suicide bomber. Bill was the radioman on the bridge at the time. On February 23, (1945) he saw the Marines raise the flag. A couple days later the Japanese laid shells within 50' of his ship. Iwo Jima is 8 square miles of volcanic rock. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Divisions began landing at 9a.m. Forty eight hours later 1500 Sailors and Marines lay dead on the shore or afloat. When the five Marines and one Sailor struggled to emplace a rusted piece of pipe to which was tied "our" flag-a flag raised early in the battle it was significant in that it was to *guarantee* victory. From that moment on victory was never in doubt...the cost was.



**For further information concerning these special guests contact the  
Mercer Memorial Day 500**

**228 S. Erie Street, Mercer, Pennsylvania 16137**

**724 662 2786**

[parade500@yahoo.com](mailto:parade500@yahoo.com)

[www.mercermemorialday500.homestead.com](http://www.mercermemorialday500.homestead.com)