

A FULL LIFE OF MILITARY HONOR

Register of graves joins fallen veterans

By ANTHONY SPINELLI
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DERBY — Joseph Glomb spent his adult life serving the Valley's military dead, honoring their memories with flags and wreaths and even Mardi Gras-style beads every Memorial Day.

Now it is up to someone else to remember Joe.

Glomb died naturally in his sleep at the age of 85, a couple of days after Memorial Day last

month when he made his final visits to the graves of more than 8,000 soldiers, sailors, submariners, airmen and Marines who gave their lives for the cause of American freedom.

Born on June 2, 1920, in Dupont, Pa., he was a member of the now-rapidly disappearing Greatest Generation, the men drafted by the millions to beat back Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini, and survived to father the post-war baby boomers, the largest generation of Americans who are now gray-haired themselves.

Glomb was one of the greatest of men, too, his friends said at his wake last week at the Edward F. Adzima Funeral Home. They described him as a man of such compassion that even the Japanese enemy prisoners praised him for his goodness. Not even old age, they said, could stop him from making rounds to all the cemeteries in his position as Derby's registrar of graves.

He was also a longtime member of the Catholic War



File photo

For decades, Joseph Glomb of Derby placed thousands of American flags on the graves of veterans. Glomb died naturally in his sleep at the age of 85, a couple of days after Memorial Day last month when he made his final visits to the graves of more than 8,000 veterans.

Veterans, St. Michael's Post 1562.

"In World War II, he was an MP, and he guarded the Japanese prisoners," said his daughter, Janice Schroder of Fort Mitchell, Ky. "He treated them with such respect, even though they were the enemy, that many of them gave him their war medals to take home as a souvenir."

At area cemeteries, Glomb placed small American flags on the graves of veterans, the size a person might keep on his or her desk. He also went around town passing out Mardi Gras beads, favoring the color purple.

Maybe he had been inspired by that World War II-era pop standard, "String of Pearls." Maybe he had been inspired by Mardi Gras itself, and the images from a New Orleans chestnut such as "When the

Saints Go Marching In."

Whatever it was that moved Joe Glomb, it moved him strongly: He spent more than 30 years as the registrar of graves.

"I keep going. I don't stop for nothing," Glomb said during a 2003 interview while taking a break from his daunting task.

Glomb was determined to spread patriotism and wanted to make sure that the sacrifices of his generation were not forgotten. He succeeded in his mission, said former Mayor Marc Garofalo, who attended the wake.

"I'm going to miss Joe," Garofalo said.

His old friend, Helen Giammarino of Ansonia, will miss him, too.

"He was such an angel," Giammarino said.

"He was wonderful," said

his son-in-law, Jeff Schroder.

"My favorite memory is when I took a car trip with him, alone, to visit Pennsylvania. He showed me around all the places he knew when he was growing up," said his granddaughter, Dawn Brochinsky of Derby.

"I was 10 or 12 at the time. I'm 27 now. It was just me and him, visiting Pennsylvania," she said.

He was buried at St. Michael's Cemetery, the place he knew so well from all his visits with flags and wreaths over the decades.

He was buried with full military honors.

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