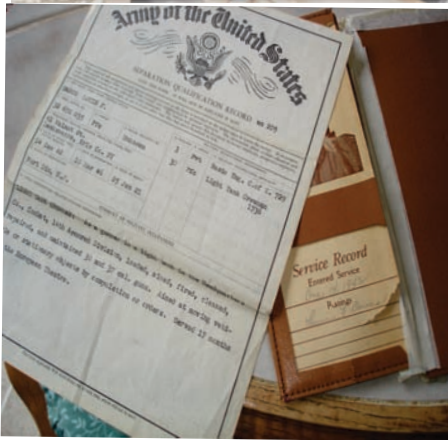




Heroes Among Us: World War II Veteran Shares His Story



Louis F. Danch

Born: Jan. 25, 1921 in Hastings, PA
World War II
Army, PFC
Served 1942-1946
France and Germany
125th Combat Engineers, Battalion C
and Combat Command Headquarters
14th Armored Division

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“When the United States entered World War II, the U.S. government turned to ordinary Americans and asked of them extraordinary service, sacrifice, and heroics...” writes Tom Brokaw in his best selling book, *The Greatest Generation*. Brokaw was talking about people like Louis “Frank” Danch, a World War II veteran, whose parents were first generation Austrian-Hungarian and had emigrated to the United States in the early 1900’s.

Frank was employed at Bethlehem Steel in Lackawanna, NY, before being inducted into the Army on Dec. 12, 1942. He was sent to Arkansas for basic training, Armored Engineer 125th Battalion. After 9 months of training, Frank was sent to Europe. He arrived in southern France where he and his battalion of about 350 soldiers advanced to the French Alps and then on to Germany.

A lean, tall man with a big smile, Frank was trained in handling explosives and 37mm cannons that were connected to the tanks. “I didn’t work in the tanks so much,” he recalls. “Instead of being in the tank, I was sent out to go through the buildings that they were going to use for combat command headquarters and check them for mines and boobytraps.”

“I had to check to make sure the traps didn’t go off and get rid of them. Most of the time the bombs were either pressure or pressure released. And, if you found one that was pressure, you spent extra time looking for where they had put the pressure release. If you didn’t have anyone blown up in the building you had worked on, you were given a pass. I had an awful lot of passes where you could go away for maybe a week and then you would come back to the company.”

When told that he had a lot of lives counting on him, Frank replied that he didn’t realize it. “You had a job to do and you did that job.”

“I always thought that the guy that was in charge of the personnel was a friend of mine because I got to go on so many passes,” he quips. “And another guy told me that the only reason you got so many passes is because when you worked on a building, nobody was blown up due to your neglect.”

Frank remembers one close call that he had just before returning home.

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Heroes Among Us

Personalized Care for Veterans

Hospice Buffalo is honored to provide the highest quality end-of-life care to veterans. Military service affects how veterans live and how they die.

Through the Heroes Among Us initiative, Hospice is focusing on increasing awareness to staff and the veterans community to provide extraordinary care for veterans unique needs when they are nearing the end of their lives.

Services for Veterans' Unique Life Experiences

- ★ Palliative (comfort) care for pain and symptom management
- ★ Music and massage therapy
- ★ Spiritual care and counseling for veterans' needs
- ★ Advance care planning (health care decision-making)
- ★ Resources for benefits for veterans and dependents
- ★ Excellent relationship with the VA

"The last time I worked on a building, we had had instructions on what the Germans were doing to arm their boobytraps. They were using some of their pogo powder to make up an explosive. I had gone through this building and found no bombs to detonate. I was just about ready to throw in some charcoal in the fireplace when I remembered the instructions about the different things the Germans were doing. I had two pieces of charcoal in my hand when I finally realized that I hadn't checked them. They had detonators on them that would have blown the fireplace and the building up. When I realized that it was going to blow up, I left them there and called two infantry men who helped me to carry them out."

Upon coming home, Frank met Irene Varga, who became his wife. They were married 53 years. She died in 2005 of complications following surgery. Now 88 years old, Frank is receiving hospice care in his home for cardiomyopathy and congestive heart failure. "I lost my eyesight in 1999 and look forward to the day I will be reunited with Irene," he says.

Hospice Buffalo salutes Louis Frank Danch and the many soldiers who gave their all for our country's freedoms. Through his personal story, and others like his, we can better understand the unique life experiences of veterans.



Frank with his Hospice Buffalo social worker and Hospice nurse who regularly provide care in his home.

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