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Civilian Patrol member Frank DiCarlo, center, was able to share the moment with his family when he received a citation from Valley Stream Mayor Ed Fare.

Neighbors

WWII veteran earns honor for service

By [Brian Croce](#)



Provided photo
Frank DiCarlo in the 1940s during his service with the U.S. Air Force.

Frank DiCarlo, a Valley Stream resident since 1950, was one of the millions of U.S. soldiers who put their lives on the line during World War II in order to protect their country's freedom. He has received many awards since, including the Bronze Star.

DiCarlo was 18 years old when he enlisted in the United States Air Force and served three years in the military, and spent more than a year in Europe, from 1944-45. Now, 67 years after the bloodiest war in the world has ended, DiCarlo received the French Legion of Honor for his service in France. He was recognized at a ceremony on May 8 at West Point.

“When I was in West Point, the French people gave me so

much attention. They hugged me, kissed me, shook my hand, it was unbelievable,” he said. “I never got so many ‘thank yous’ in all my life.”

DiCarlo added that he told the French officials, “I hope that when I kick the bucket, God is French.”

Now 88, DiCarlo has been a member of the Valley Stream Civilian Patrol for the past 15 years and still goes out for his weekly tour. “I like doing it because it gives me something to do as a volunteer,” he said. “I got a lot of friends in the Civilian Patrol.”

He was recently awarded a citation from the village for his years of service to the Civilian Patrol. DiCarlo said it was an honor to be recognized by local officials.

He and his wife, Terry, who died in 1995, raised their six children in Valley Stream. DiCarlo now has nine grandchildren with a 10th expected next month. He owned Frank’s Glass Service in Valley Stream until he retired in 1985.

When he turned 18 in the early 1940s, he got a card in the mail informing him that he was to be drafted in the near future. Rather than be told which branch of the military to join, DiCarlo elected to enlist in the Air Force. When growing up in Brooklyn, he wanted to become an airplane mechanic.

While training in Atlantic City, DiCarlo was transferred to aerial gunner school in Texas. He was then asked to do a job he didn’t like at first, but quickly grew to enjoy — cook. “I didn’t realize it then, but it’s the best job in the army,” he said. Three days after the U.S. stormed the beaches of Normandy, France, DiCarlo was sent there to set up a soup kitchen for soldiers. He said they only had five-gallon cans of stew, water and coffee to serve.

To his surprise, he was then sent to England for advanced combat training because the U.S. needed its troops on the ground. DiCarlo fought in many battles, including the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. He came dangerously close to death in 1945 while he was simply minding his own business in Munster, Germany.

He was invited to a German family’s home for dinner one night and even though soldiers weren’t supposed to fraternize with German civilians or leave camp alone, DiCarlo decided to go. While he was walking home, three shots were fired right passed his ear — he was being sniped at. He ducked in a darkened doorway and took out his rifle. He thought the shots were coming from a nearby steeple so he started firing on it. Minutes later, a Military Police vehicle came by and told him to get in, taking him to safety.

In 1945, DiCarlo also helped liberate a women’s concentration camp. The soldiers led 3,000 women to a nearby river to wash up and then clothed and fed them. “The job of a soldier is not just fighting, it’s about helping people,” DiCarlo said.

After the war ended, he spent time occupying a small German village that was surrounded by mountains. "It was the best time of my life," he said. "When we got there, the German people disliked us. When we left they cried."

DiCarlo found a 3-year-old girl who had lost both of her parents and took care of her. When it was time for the U.S. soldiers to leave, DiCarlo told his commanding officers that he wanted to adopt the girl, but it simply wasn't possible. "It was one of the saddest moments in my life to have to leave that little girl there," he said.

DiCarlo returned home and started a family in Valley Stream. His years of service to his country, his family, those in need and his community are big reasons why he's a part of "The Greatest Generation."

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