

“Let us remember those who set their private lives aside to answer the call of duty” (10)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Memorial Day May 27, 2019

(10th in a series of posts on Memorial Day)

Alan Lowcher, Esq. concentrates on real estate and land use law, speaks on the life of Abraham Lincoln, presents history-themed “lessons for lawyers” through the NJ Bar Association, and is a member of several associations promoting a deeper understanding of American history.

Like Gadfly, Vietnam could be considered “my war” except that my draft number was high enough, the war was winding down, and I was entering my first year of college: there was little chance of being called to serve. I cannot put myself in the shoes of a combat soldier in the field — who among us really can do that unless we’ve “been there” — and we are left to reading about the “war” in books or, if we are lucky, talking to veterans who are willing to talk and share their stories.

I am a student of history — US history in general and military history specifically — and have been privileged beyond words to speak with

- the grandson of Charles F. Hopkins, Medal of Honor recipient from my home town (Corporal Hopkins rescued a comrade under heavy fire during the battle of Gaines Mill, 1862, and, although twice wounded in the act, carried his fellow soldier to safety), who learned of his grandfather’s service from the old soldier himself;
- Frank W. Buckles, the last surviving (now deceased) American soldier who served overseas in WWI;

- Harold A. Miller, Capt. U.S. Army (now deceased), “Battle of the Bulge” combatant commanding an anti-aircraft “flying battery” and, most importantly, the father of my wife;
- and my father, Robert Lowcher, Petty Officer, Second Class, US Navy (now deceased), who joined the Navy in 1949, who first considered underwater demolition, but when he told his mother about it, she cried so much that he joined the “silent service” instead (his mother cried even harder).

We can only imagine the strength of character, bravery, and moral resolve that these men — and so many men and women who wore the uniform and still wear the uniform — demonstrated. Let us now not glorify war (Captain Miller’s descriptions of what he experienced in WWII would dispel any illusion of the glory of war), but let us remember those who set their private lives aside to answer the call of duty.

Alan