

# Dezil's Dispatch

Issue 002

Newsletter

Summer 2021

Dezil's Dispatch is sponsored by the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund.

**Welcome to our quarterly newsletter!**

**In each edition of Dezil's Dispatch, we will share exciting news of our happenings and accomplishments. Family and friends will give us "A Dose of Dennis" so you will learn more about our hero and son.**

## A Dose of Dennis

**Told by Greg Sisto**



Dennis and I have a lot of great memories together, dating way back to when we first met in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. From the young age of 8, Dennis and I knew our friendship was a forever lasting one, being an only child Dennis was like the brother I never had. There are several memories that really stand out to me, especially when we took weekend trips up to his family's house in the Poconos.

I knew I needed to be on my "A" game prior to those weekends due to Dennis' competitive nature. From playing pool down in the basement, manhunt, racquet ball, and tennis his mind was set on winning! Who can forget playing video games on rainy days and the several intense games of UNO we all played after dinner. No matter what, we were always doing something, we never just sat around unless it was time to call it a night. But honestly even then, we were in his room listening to music on his CD player (remember those?) or hysterically laughing while listening to the Jerky Boys pranks. ~

\*If you'd like to share a short story about Dennis in an upcoming issue, please send us an email at [runwithdennis@yahoo.com](mailto:runwithdennis@yahoo.com).

**DONATE TO OUR FUND**

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## **A Conversation with WWII Veteran Charles “Crabby” Sona**

**By Karla Bardinas**

*I've interviewed a lot of people in my 25 years as a television news reporter... celebrities, criminals, politicians, CEOs, presidents, governors, and witnesses to just about everything. I have always been most touched, humbled, and honored when speaking with those from our Greatest Generation. My conversation with WWII Veteran Charles Sona left me wanting to hear more stories, more wisdom, more everything. I am grateful for his time and am proud he said I could call him “Crabby” – a funny nickname his friends gave him for his incredibly witty humor that had me giggling unexpectedly.*



At 96 years old, Charles Sona has a crisp memory and is razor sharp with his answers and stories. The World War II Naval Veteran who lives in Freehold said, “I guess God hasn’t taken me yet because I still have too much to do.” He says being blind and old now isn’t easy, but he wants to carry out his mission to help as many veterans (who have been honorably discharged) as possible.

“Crabby” went into the service in 1943 at 18-years-old. He wanted to enlist earlier but his mother wouldn’t sign the papers. He trained at Camp Endicott, a Navy Seabee facility in Rhode Island, and then in Maine and Southern California. But soon, the upper ranks discovered his extraordinary senses. Charles could hear people walk on dry grass. Soon he was off to Hollandia in New Guinea, to do clean-up work in the war. He says God has kept him around this long to pay penance for his “dirty deeds” there more than 75 years ago.

While in New Guinea, there was an explosion. It knocked Charles to the ground. He suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury which threw off his balance. His remarkable hearing was also no more. He still hears ringing in his ears to this day, but there would be no Purple Heart Award for this hero. You can’t receive a Purple Heart if no blood was shed according to Charles. I hear a sadness in his voice. “But they thought I wouldn’t make it very long, so after two hospitalizations in Australia, I was discharged.”

**[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)**

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## **Remembering the Military Child**





### **“Daddy or Mommy Dolls”**

Summer can be an especially difficult time for children of deployed soldiers. Without the distractions of school sports and classes, they might be left missing their mom or dad who are overseas even more than usual. “Daddy or Mommy Dolls” could be a way to comfort them.

“I especially missed my Dad at night. He used to read my sisters and me bedtime stories, cuddle with us, watch tv, and just be fun. My Mom had ‘Daddy Dolls’ made for us with his picture on them. Squeezing the little pillow tight helped me fall asleep when I was sad. It was hard. I’m so glad that he’s home now,” said 8-year-old Ellie Zilinski of Middletown. Many of you know Ellie, the third-grade daughter of Matt (Dennis’ brother) and Brie Zilinski. Matt was reunited with his wife and three little girls one year ago after an 11-month deployment overseas.

“Now, a year later, we’ve had time to absorb how Matt’s deployment affected our girls. They longed for their Dad to be part of their everyday lives. They couldn’t share their triumphs with him about school. He couldn’t watch them play, share meals, enjoy birthdays, and celebrate holidays. As much as I tried to comfort them, they just wanted their Dad,” said Brie Zilinski, Major Zilinski’s wife. “It helped us and maybe it could help other families struggling.”



### **Please Don’t Say** **“Happy” Memorial Day**

Military Appreciation Month has just wrapped up with celebrations and remembrances throughout the month of May. On Armed Forces Day, we honored and thanked those who are currently serving. On Memorial Day, we remembered those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. People often mistake these holidays for each other, but it is important to recognize the differences between them.

Armed Forces Day is the proper day to honor all current servicemen and servicewomen, unlike Veterans Day which

thanks all of those who have served in the past. Armed Forces Day celebrates active military personnel in all branches of the military and includes those in the Reserves and the National Guard. Armed Forces Day was created on Aug. 31, 1949, to replace the previous separate Army, Navy and

Air Force Days. Armed Forces Day is celebrated on the third Saturday of May each year. Armed Forces Day differs from Memorial Day, which is the holiday that honors the men and women who have lost their lives while serving in the United States military. This holiday emerged following the Civil War and was originally called Decoration Day. It was made an official federal holiday in 1971 after the Uniform Monday Holiday Act was passed. Memorial Day is recognized on the last Monday of May each year. The date is often mistaken for the kick-off of the summer season on the news, with barbeques and beach festivities highlighted on television, but we ask you to honor our fallen soldiers on Memorial Day with respect and gratitude. Indeed, it is not a “Happy” Memorial Day, rather a somber occasion recognizing loss and honoring those lost, like our Dennis.

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## **Military Appreciation Night, Play Ball!**



Never before have we been so excited to say, “Play ball!”

After COVID cancelled last year’s festivities, Military Appreciation Night is back at Jersey Shore BlueClaws Stadium in Lakewood this summer, and the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund is thrilled to be participating! It’s hard to believe it’s been two years since these pictures were taken, and it’s time to make some new memories with our family and friends.

The picnic and baseball game will take place on Thursday, July 8, 2021 at 6:30 pm. We hope you can join us to honor our service members who protect our freedom with a great day at the ballpark. We ask you to please bring items to send to our deployed troops which you could drop off at the registration table outside the stadium. Flyers with ticket info were mailed out, you can also check our website for more information.

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## **Collections for our Troops**

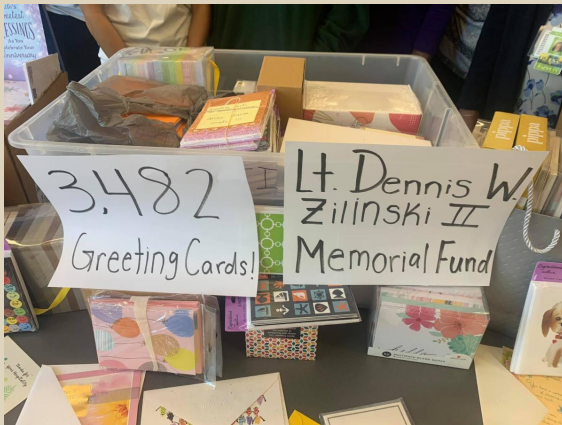




WAY TO GO STEVEN SHARPE! Our scholarship recipient from CBA collected 40 boxes of goodies and personal care items to send to our deployed troops! WE ARE GRATEFUL!



THANK YOU to the participants in the NJ Turnpike Authority collection for our troops! Special appreciation to our Board Member, Major Kevin Burke, NJ State Police retired, for organizing the project. The Zilinski Memorial Fund is PROUD to cover the shipping overseas... \$1847 for this shipment of 18 boxes!



Red Bank Catholic High School National Honor Society students recently spearheaded a greeting card collection that resulted in nearly 3,500 cards collected to be sent to troops serving overseas for their use to send to family and friends back home. The Zilinski Memorial Fund covered the cost of shipping the boxes.

"When we learned of The Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski II Memorial Fund, we knew that we wanted to contribute in any way that we could," said Olivia Morin, President of the National Honor Society at Red Bank Catholic High School. "After we put it out to the Red Bank Catholic community that we were collecting greeting cards for the Veterans, we were overwhelmed by support. We collected nearly 3,500 cards, far exceeding our expectations. I am so glad that I was a part of organizing the event for this cause and completing the project started last year by RBC alumna, Paige Comerford. This was the greatest way to end my senior year, knowing that my hard work made a difference for those fighting overseas." THANK YOU RBC NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY!!

**DONATE NOW**



## Celebrating Old Glory!

Many of us recently observed Flag Day on June 14<sup>th</sup> by hanging a flag outside our homes, but we ask you to show your patriotism each and every day to honor our veterans, soldiers, and of course, our country.

“The American flag symbolizes the values we hold sacred - freedom and liberty - and should be celebrated,” said Marion Zilinski, Gold Star Mother and Co-Founder and Board Member of the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund. “In this time of unrest and unprecedented challenges, we should remember that our country has had many triumphs and trials. Let’s not lose sight that the United States is the greatest nation on earth. Our Stars and Stripes embody our strength, bravery, and perseverance. As such, we ask you to be loud and proud with your patriotism... and continue to hang your American flag proudly throughout the year!”



A little history for you now... Betsy Ross made the first American flag for George Washington in 1776. This flag had 13 stars and 13 stripes, to represent the 13 colonies of America at the time. The flag has since been modified 26 times. The American flag, also known as “Old Glory”, now has 50 stars and 13 stripes, the 50 stars represent all 50 states of America and the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies. The colors used in the flag hold symbolic meaning, red represents hardiness and valor, white represents purity and innocence, and blue represents vigilance, perseverance, and justice.

Bernard Cigrand, an elementary school teacher, held the first observance of Flag Day in 1885 at Stony Hill School in Waubeka, Wisconsin. Cigrand was a known advocate for patriotism and encouraged the country to show respect for the flag through an annual day of observance. It wasn't until 1916, that Flag Day was established as a national day of observance. This proclamation was made by President Woodrow Wilson, and the first state to celebrate the official Flag Day was the state of Pennsylvania. Flag Day is a day for all Americans to appreciate the history and significance of Old Glory. So again, join us in celebrating Old Glory each and every day!

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### Upcoming Events

**Jersey Shore BlueClaws Military Appreciation Night - 7/8/2021**  
**A Toast to Dennis - A Night of Remembrance - 9/10/2021**

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[Visit our website](#)

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*The Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law (Tax ID # 03-0601077).*

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