

Thiele Honors Fallen Vietnam Veteran

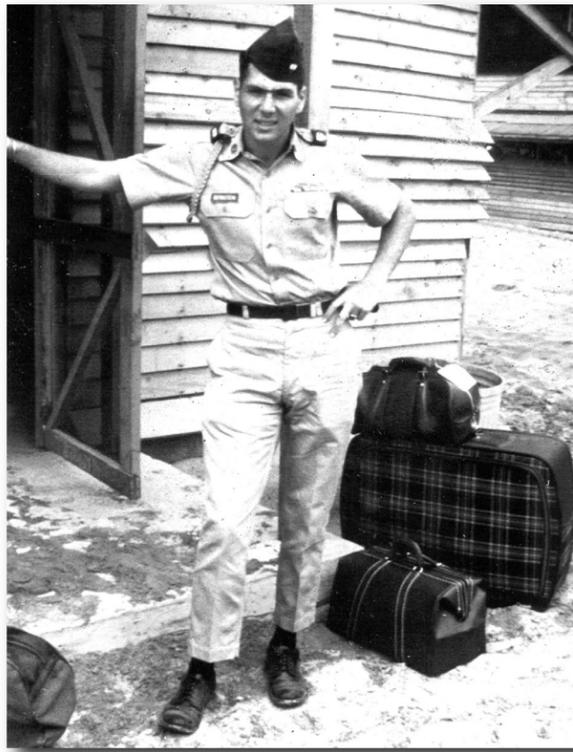
Most people may not remember Army Specialist Leslie "Paul" Bernstein, or the fact that he was killed on March 14, 1967 in Vietnam, but if Richard Tufferello, a columnist for the South Shore Press and friend of Bernstein has his way, Paul Bernstein will be remembered for ever.

Tufferello has been on a campaign over the last five years to establish an appropriate memorial to honor the fallen soldier from Mastic. After numerous meetings with Suffolk County Clerk Judy Pascale and South Shore Press Director of Sales and Marketing Fred Towle, a conversation was had with New York State Assemblyman Fred Thiele at last December's Christmas Parade.

Assemblyman Thiele pledged his support and five months later he has filed a resolution designating the bridge located on North Titmus Road, which crosses over State Route 27 (Sunrise Highway) as the "Leslie Paul Bernstein Memorial Bridge." Assemblyman Thiele is also being supported by Assemblywoman Patricia Eddington and Assemblyman Mark Alessi in the Assembly. Senator Kenneth LaValle is the Senate sponsor.

"Specialist Paul Bernstein is one of many great men and women who have served and protected our nation during times of war. At a very young age of 21, he made the ultimate sacrifice. By naming this bridge in his honor we are ensuring that his duty and service will never be forgotten," said Assemblyman Thiele.

Specialist Bernstein was awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge, a mark of distinction for



Army Specialist Paul Bernstein

fighting soldiers. Upon his death, he was awarded The Purple Heart, The Silver Star, the Military Merit Medal, the Gallantry Cross with Palm and the Conspicuous Service Cross.

According to Army records, while stationed in Vietnam, Specialist Bernstein's platoon came under attack on March 14, 1967. He advanced his platoon forward even though they were targets for intense enemy fire. When his platoon sergeant fell, mortally wounded, Specialist Bernstein took charge of the situation and rallied his platoon to push forward. During the ensuing action, Specialist Bernstein received wounds to both of his legs. He remained in a defensive position, directing his platoon until he was fatally injured.

Specialist Bernstein's personal sacrifice, inspiring leadership and unhesitating embrace of responsibility were instrumental in the company's defense. His undeniable valor in close combat against the enemy is in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

"While a plaque has been placed at the monument on Montauk Highway in Mastic honoring Paul Bernstein by Davin's Funeral Home and the Mastic Fire Department, Rich has always thought that more needed to be done. Dedicating this bridge is very important to honoring Paul Bernstein's memory. It is also important to remind our citizens about the cost of war and freedom," said Fred Towle, Director of Sales and Marketing for the South Shore Press.

Action on Assemblyman Thiele's legislation should take place sometime in June.

Spring Training - Can Summer Be Far Behind?

by VINCENT PICA

One of the rites of spring (has anybody seen spring, btw?) is the resumption of on-the-water training by USCG Auxiliary forces. If spring training has begun, summer can't be far behind... **Batter Up!**

You can be assured and comforted that, 24x7x365, active-duty USCG regulars are at their posts - watch standers, boat crews, search and rescue teams - and at the ready for any emergency that might present itself. And, as the weather and water temperatures start to rise and turn a young man's (and woman's) to thoughts of fishing, boating and surfing, the USCG Auxiliary comes out of its winter dry dock for on-the-water "force multiplier" duties as part of USCG Forces.

Who's at the Plate?

The two vessels - CG25685 and CGAUX251384 - made way from their respective berths: the '685' from the Moriches Coast Guard station on Tuthill Cove and '384' from its mooring field in the bite of water between Gunning and Pond Points.

The '685' was skippered by BM3 Christopher Crociata, third from left, of the USCG Moriches Search and Rescue Detachment (the "SARDET" in Coast Guard lingo). '685' made way with 4 "POB" (people on Board). BM3 Crociata's 4th crew member is inside the boat cabin. As is my role, I skippered '384' and we made way with 4 POB - crew trainee George Nelson of Shirley in the foreground, crewman Tony Ruiz of Centereach, high up and second from the right, and crew trainee Bud Mazura behind the camera.

Both vessels are 25 footers (see the '25' in their vessel designations?). The CG vessel, with a state of the art electronics package, is a heavily ruggedized rigid hull/inflatable ("RHI") fully capable of handling the heavy surf of the Moriches Inlet and then some. The CGAUX vessel is a stock Parker 25' pilot house vessel with a strong electronics package to assist the active-duty regulars in their missions - radar, GPS, bathymetric charts and forward-looking infrared optics for SAR support.



The crews of CG25685 and CG-AUX251384 at the dock after training operations.

The '384' is capable of operating on its own when directed to by the USCG or the circumstances demand.

What Was the Game Plan?

The day's primary training mission was to take the "disabled" vessel into tow from the stern, approach the "marina", bring the vessel forward into a side-tow ("on the hip") and then lay her up against the dock so the passengers can get off.

We were given the privilege of going first - CG25685 motored off and the radioed that they were "DIW!" - Dead in the Water! We approached, conducted interviews of the crew of the "disabled vessel" - for example, "Are there any medical emergencies?" No, how about, "Is anyone on a scheduled medication now?" Why tow someone someplace and find that they succumbed to an illness or affliction because they couldn't get to their meds while you were towing them..? After circling the vessel to be sure that there were no other damages to the "disabled" vessel, we took them into tow in the classic "from the stern" position. As we approached the dock at USCG Moriches, we slowed, pulled the disabled vessel alongside ours and lashed her fore, aft and abreast to our "rescue" vessel. Then one of my crewmen was sent aboard the "disabled vessel" to give the

coxswain (me!) distance information as we laid her up against the dock - "10 feet... 5 feet... 1 FOOT!" When we completed our tasks, CGAUX251384 became the disabled vessel and the BM3 Crociata's crew rescued us! We also simulated "man overboard!" tasks to broaden the training (see SSP, Nov 8, 2006, "Man Overboard!")

Why All This?

Why bother training in towing skills since BoatUS and SeaTow are out there and quite capable towers? In fact, when we come upon a disabled vessel, the first thing we do is ask if they have commercial towing insurance (or can pay for it on the spot?) We are not in the business of impeding valid and well-regarded commercial activities on the water.

Certainly, emergency circumstances where there is imminent danger to life or property can arise and in that case we aren't going to stand on ceremony or protocol. In fact, a few Memorial Days ago, 251384 had to rescue a commercial tower in Moriches Inlet. The commercial tower, involved in a salvage activity, became over-tasked and was being swept down onto the rocks on the west side of the Inlet. We were directed by the USCG watch stander to render assistance and took the tower into side tow and pulled them away from the rocks. So, practice certainly matters!

More important than the practicing is the working together. As you read here on Feb 27, 2007 (SSP, "USMMA and USCGAux Train Together") and on Mar 21, 2007, (SSP, "Back to the Future - Maritime Domain Awareness"), we have to hang together or we will surely hang separately, as Ben Franklin said back in 1776...

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at USCGAUX2007@aol.com or go direct to MaryJo Cruickshank, who is in charge of new members matters, at FSO-PS@emcg.us and we will help you "get in this thing..."