

## A New Memorial to Veterans at Elmwood Cemetery

A new Veteran's Memorial can be found at Perinton's Elmwood Cemetery, on the corner of Carter and Furman Roads. The project was conceived and implemented by Eagle Scout candidate Josh Fess of Boy Scout Troop 209. I recently attended the dedication ceremony for the new memorial, an impressive event which included family and community members, as well as local veterans and members of VFW Post 8495. The memorial includes a plaque mounted to a large boulder, surrounded by landscaping and a bench. An American flag is proudly displayed on the newly installed flagpole. Josh and his team of friends and family made all this happen, with the support of several organizations, businesses, and the town of Perinton. During his dedication speech, Josh reflected on why he chose this project:

*"My Grandfather, or as we call him in German, Opa, Mr. Jack M. Jonza, is a World War II Veteran. He served in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army European Theater of Operations. My Opa was the one who truly inspired me to do this project. When I was younger and still today, he tells us stories that are so interesting they could be made into a book. His pride that he shows for this country is tremendous. When it came to Veterans Day in eighth grade, my social studies teacher, Mr. Mike Barker, gave us a veterans reflection assignment. Obviously I chose my Opa to write the paper on. During this week long assignment, I learned so much about my Opa, and about what it was like during that time. He told me of some of the hardships that he had to go through to get back home. These stories my Opa told me made me realize that every veteran should be honored. So I decided to make something to honor my Opa, and every other veteran of our nation."*

Inspired by Josh Fess, I want to take a moment to honor Kenneth Bridges, one of the many veterans memorialized at Elmwood cemetery. Born in 1922 to a farming family on Carter Road, at the age of 20, not long after his graduation from Fairport High School, Kenneth Bridges enlisted in the Army Air Force. After attending flight school and receiving his wings, Flight Officer Bridges left American soil in November of 1944, never to return. He flew missions at New Guinea, Leyte, and Luzon, over one hundred combat hours in all. His life ended off the coast of China on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945. The letter notifying his parents included the following information:

*"Kenneth's plane, accompanied by five others from this squadron, took off from Luzon at 0645 A.M. on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April to attack enemy shipping off the coast of China. About 1130 A.M. three enemy escort vessels were sighted northeast of Swatow at approximately 24.00 N – 118.00 E and in the ensuing fight your son's plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed into the sea. Kenneth, although he has been with us only a relatively short time, proved himself to be one of our most able and efficient pilots. In combat he was courageous and skilled and in routine camp*

*life he was efficient and companionable. His quiet good sense of humor won him many friends and all of us feel his loss deeply."*



Thanks To Perinton resident Josh Fess of Boy Scout Troop 209, the veterans of Elmwood Cemetery, including Flight Officer Kenneth Bridges, have a memorial of their own.

*Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian*

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