

*From the Historical Society*

# World War II and the Home Town News—1

by Norma V. Sestero

*[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury service men and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the first in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a long-time Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]*

From the first issue of the "Home Town News" dated February, 1944: Hello there: On land, in the air and on the sea! Glastonbury has come to call in the form of a newsletter and expects to do so every month until the end of the war; and we figure the war isn't over until all of you come back to stay. The idea has been in the works for quite some time, but it wasn't until a group of women took the bull by the horns that the ball got rolling. These women...divided the town into sections and contacted your folks and friends for your addresses. Then there was the question of funds for stamps, etc. We put on our best smiles and tapped the heads of the different clubs and organizations asking for their financial support for one issue. All were in accord with the idea...Expenses for this copy are being paid by the USO. A file has been set up with a card for each of you, complete with name, address, etc. Of course, some of your ranks and addresses may not be correct but we hope to catch up with your promotions and changes soon. (By the way, how can you afford to move so frequently? Costly isn't it?) Besides trying to keep you informed on the whereabouts of townspeople in service, we will give you the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Your buddies are just as keen to hear from you as we are. Write us a line or two to pass along to them. Also tell us what improvements we can make in this letter. We aim to please.

Here's a little resume of news past and present. In the future we will try to keep up to date. Your home town is now 250 years old. On November 21, 500 gathered in the High School to observe the 250th Anniversary of its incorporation and separation from Wethersfield. Governor Baldwin presented greetings on behalf of Connecticut and commented on the fine record the town has achieved in the past in its

development and predicted a great future. A chorus of 125 voices sang...and the Governor asserted it was the best chorus he had ever heard sing the "Star Spangled Banner." (Think you that we might have some budding prima donnas and tenors in our midst?) Rev. John Ramaker reviewed the history of the town, saying it is just beginning to feel its progress. He paid glowing tribute to all you boys and girls in the armed services, promising that "we are going to preserve, cherish and promote Glastonbury for you."

Since you young blades have donned the Khaki and the Blue, the town has been deader than the Der Fuehrer's dream of world conquest. The Recreation Committee of the War Council came to the rescue, however, and has held a number of open house nights at the William's Memorial. The last one I attended consisted of a cornhusking bee, bowling, food auction and dancing. About 200 females and 50 males were present and I heard a number of maidens singing: "They're either Too Young or Too Old." To top things off—music was furnished by an all girl orchestra!

Welles Village, (a million dollar Federal 200-unit project with entrances on the corner of Harris and Griswold Streets) has been completed and has upped the population by 800. All defense workers, mostly from Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire, live there. Two town families managed to squeeze in...When this mess is over, it will be a fine spot for you to start a little love nest... "Victory House," a 7' X 10' building of colonial design with a small porch, has been erected between the police station and the First National Stores. It is used as headquarters for all organizations conducting drives to raise funds to aid the war effort. Several "pick-up" stations have been placed in the Center by the Chamber for the convenience of servicemen. They're little frame buildings with plenty of windows. Servicemen sit there and kindly motorists stop and give them a lift. Saves wear and tear on thumbs...

Townspeople are all digging down deep to help Uncle Sam get the things he needs to speed that Great Day. The Fourth War Loan Drive is on and unofficially, I've been told that we've gone over our quota of \$152,000. If you think that's good, listen to this: In the Third War Loan Drive we raised \$260,000. It was climaxed by

a rally at Station 35, with music, demonstration of anti-aircraft equipment and jeep rides. About 2,000 attended. Highlight of the evening was the auctioning off of three pounds of butter and a porterhouse steak... Now, butter and steak are as scarce as a hen's tooth, and when found, ration points have to be shelled out. The bidding was fast and furious and I could see the butter melting under the warm gaze of homemakers. C. S. Phillips walked off with one pound of butter to the tune of \$1,000 smackers in war bonds; another brought \$875 for Gus Preli; and a third \$500 from Leslie Dietrick. Bond total was upped \$775 when Lu Varni outbid several interested gourmets for the steak...

[There followed a description of a fundraising campaign in South Glastonbury where the goal was to raise \$2,500, the price of one field ambulance but they raised enough for three field ambulances. The next section had news about military personnel from Glastonbury had been killed or wounded. The section after that had news of Glastonbury people who had new positions in Town government or in "war industries." Then came a section called "SHORT TAKES" as follows:]

Over 700 local fellows have been inducted and a number are going each month. Married men with children are now being called. It's Lt. Raffa now. "Doc. has joined the USNR. Business men are having trouble getting help and are cutting out some lines. Franklin discontinued luncheons; Lenge closed up shop; Tony Pagano, unable to get a pharmacist, is mixing his own. Bus fares reduced. Only a thin dime to get to Hartford. Young women behind the wheel of Connecticut Company buses, and between you and me, maybe that (and not the gas shortage) explains why so many males are now "bussing it." Village mail delivery replaced by city delivery. (If only they could get a carrier that would stay longer than a week, everything would be "jake.") Principle benefit is that parcel post is included with delivery. Town factories humming with activity. War has brought orders to Matson Mills, Scott's Plastics and Roser's Tannery. Williams Silver factory is a busy place again making precision instruments for the Army and Navy Medical Corps...

SPORTS: Coach Hartwell reports that pin boys just aren't. So tough is the situation that the girl's league, which started with eight teams,



**This photo of the author first appeared in the *Hartford Times* on May 11, 1944, illustrating an article about Glastonbury's Home Town News. In the *Hartford Times* the caption for this photo was "Now, let's see, what else would the boys like to know?" Mrs. Nat Sestero**

had to fold up last week. Men's league started off with the usual eight teams and sometimes set up their own...

Postmaster Potter informs me that the U. S. mail allows just one ounce for three cents. Believe I've said my three cents worth in spite of cutting corners pretty sharp. So, let me say "thanks" to the women who are licking the stamps and addressing the envelopes and the USO for making it possible. Let me hear from you. Drop a line to Box 125 or to me directly at 26 School Street. If there's anything we can do for you, let us know and if it is humanly possible, we'll go to work on it.

So long now until next month. All of us here are thinking of all of you there and hoping the best always.

**Good Luck!  
Norma Sestero**

## World War II and the Home Town News—2

by Norma V. Sestero

*[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury service men and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the second in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a longtime Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]*

From the second issue of the "Home Town News" dated March, 1944: Hi! Another month has gone by and time for another chat. Before I start rambling on about the latest doings around town and giving you the low-down on some of your buddies, let me thank you for the letters you have sent my way... Just a bit late this time, but at the last moment thought that you might like a "Who's In and Where" list and had quite a time separating the Army from the Navy and vice-versa. It was a tough fight, but I made it—I hope. Some of you Marines may find yourselves in khaki, but how is a poor civilian supposed to decipher those complicated addresses and come out with the right answer every time?

[The list was six pages long with over 150 names per page except that the last page had fewer names. Names were listed alphabetically by postal location. For example, for those serving in the army overseas in the "European Theater" mail was directed to "APO New York" indicating an Army Post Office facility in New York City. For naval personnel in the European Theater the listing was under FPO (for Fleet Post Office) New York. For those serving in the Pacific Theater there were the same post office designations but the city address was San Francisco. The Marines and Coast Guard had other postal designations in the same two cities. Similar mailing addresses weren't available for those in the maritime service or for army and naval personnel not assigned to foreign duty so they're listed under those categories. Others were listed under addresses for a few locations in the U. S. or under "Address Unknown," "Discharged" or "Prisoner of War." Each name listed began with an abbreviated indication of the person's rank. "The Home Town News" continues:]

Wish you'd keep us informed on your promotions. Somehow ranks don't make much difference to the people in your town. To them you are just "boys and girls" who are doing a big job, and they are proud of each and every one of you from the rookie who marched off last week to those who have accumulated stripes, gold and silver bars, oak leaves and stars.

The Glastonbury Chamber of Commerce is financing this special issue. The Chamber, you know has been instrumental in getting many things done which have proved advantageous to the town. Right now it is busy with Post War Planning. A committee...has been set up. Heads of town governmental agencies have been in-

vited to present their views on town needs at meetings of the committee. The committee will be augmented by a Veteran of World War II, as local men and women represent more than 10 per cent of the town's population, and the Chamber feels that their point of view for Post War Planning would be of great value. The committee hopes to serve as a coordinating agency to help promote projects which will provide the greatest benefits to the town as a whole over an extended period of time. The Chamber is also sponsoring a War Garden program, to promote interest in raising food for the winter use.

[The]... registrars of voters report that a law passed at the special session of the legislature makes it possible for all persons in the armed forces who are eligible be made voters in their own state. Have been told that about 50 of you have reached men's estate [turned 21] since entering the service. Now I don't have to tell you what a great privilege it is to be able to pick the persons who will head your government, state or town. So very few people in other countries enjoy that right today, that it makes it doubly important for us who have that right to take advantage of it and exercise it. All you have to do is write a letter...requesting an application blank...

An innovation in the fire alarm system of the new town fire department has been put into effect by the Board of Fire Commissioners. A hook-up of sirens between the North and South end has been completed and henceforth all town residents will dial 500, in case of fire. A code system will be tried whereby the companies will be able to determine in what section the fire may be. For Co. 1, North end, there will be several short blasts, and for Co. 2, South end, two long blasts. Co. 3, East Glastonbury, is not yet connected with the alarm system and Co. 1 will take care of its calls for the present time.

By the way, Co. 3 answered its first call several weeks ago, put out a chimney fire in Angelo Finoche's house and now they're all puffed up on the way they handled the situation. The Board has purchased a truck for them which will be reconditioned as a fire truck and will be equipped with pumps, booster tank, hose racks and other necessary fire equipment. Fire Commissioners are asking prices on a number of land sites in the South where a firehouse may be built sometime in the future...The department has received its first inhalator...

Judge Foley is a very dejected man these days. The law of averages has up and failed him. Seems as though the Judge had two cars stolen on him within the period of a few years and thought he had had his share of bad luck so he would park his car most anywhere, leave the keys in it and leave it out overnight. Well, come one morning last week he got up and gazed out to see what kind of weather the new day had brought and to his amazement his little gas buggy wasn't where he had left it the night be-



**A photo of the writer/editor of the Home Town News seated in her car, a 1930s model. After the United States entered World War II, American auto companies manufactured military vehicles, including tanks. There were no 1942-1945 model year automobiles available for civilian use. As a result, during the war civilians, if they had a car at all, drove one that was at least a few years old.**

fore. A careful mental check revealed that he had parked it in his driveway. (The Judge has been known to have parked his car in the Town Office Building yard on various occasions and to have tripped merrily home after a meeting, leaving that precious piece of metal and steel there and not being aware of it until the following day.) He up and put in a hurried call to the local gendarmes and they broadcast the word around.

The next morning the Judge received a call from the New London State Police informing him that his Buick was resting just two blocks from the police station. He rushed down and was relieved to find not a scratch or dent on it. On his way back, he noticed that his gas was running pretty low so nonchalantly reached for

his precious ration coupons in the glove compartment, but was shocked to find they were no longer there. He managed to get home coasting wherever possible. Now the Judge is chairman of the Ration Board so maybe he can convince the stern gas panel to let him have some of that precious fuel presto. Come to think of it, how come that four or five cars...that were driven off by someone other than the rightful owner have always been found near the Sub Base. Maybe you boys in blue can enlighten us on the mystery.

*[This is but a small part of the eight-page single-spaced newsletter typed and reproduced on standard-sized typing paper that was filled with names of Glastonbury people of the time. Norma signed off with Good Luck!]*

## World War II and the Home Town News—3

by Norma V. Sestero

*[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury servicemen and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the third in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a long-time Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]*

[These Newsletters had headings which always included two humorous lines that were different each month, along with the slogan: "Glastonbury—Town of Friendly People" that never varied. For the newsletter dated April, 1944, the humorous items were, on the left side of the words HOME TOWN NEWS, the sentence: Weather—Moon still working the nite shift but lover's lane has gone on strike. On the right side was: Subscription Price—Notification of change of address.

The text for the April 1944 issue began with the greeting Hiyah Gang and launched into an extended description of spring in Glastonbury with mentions of things like robins, tree sap Victory gardeners, lawn mowers, emerging leaves, fishermen and farmers plowing their fields. Then comes the first news story:]

Yep, it finally happened! Somebody broke into the local Ration Board. In the wee hours of April 16th, when all the good people in town were asleep, somebody gained entrance to the Town Office Building through a window in the Assessor's office, jimmied the lock on the Ration Board door and made off with 12 precious meat and shoe ration books. Files were ransacked and records were strewn all over the floor. The door between the Ration Board and Welfare office also was forced open and papers were scattered about. Being bold individuals, they even visited the Court Room and a number of court records were taken out of their files. Chief Hall predicts that the culprits will some day return to the Court Room under the strong arm of the law. Who-dunit? Some say it was a well organized gang, looking for large amounts of gas coupons to sell on the black market (all bulk coupons were safely locked away in the vault in the Town Clerk's office), others claim that it may have been youngsters looking for a bit of cash; all in all it still remains a mystery. Both local and State Police are investigating.

A Youth Recreation Council has been set up

by the local War Council. Due to the number of juvenile problems that have arisen in recent weeks the Council is attempting to coordinate and increase recreational facilities for young people from 8 to 18 years of age. Plans are being made to hold outdoor games during the summer in all sections of town. There are over 30 buildings spread throughout the town that are used for various group activities and the Council hopes that organizations owning such meeting places will cooperate with the community program and make their halls available on a sectional basis for community use...

Your town has topped its \$8,000 quota in the Red Cross War Fund drive by \$1,439.73. School children contributed \$362.56, and most residents and business establishments doubled their last year's donations for this worthy cause...The annual Easter Seal Drive netted \$429.35.

[This eight page newsletter contained much more hometown news. It also contained excerpts from letters that The Home Town News had received from its readers. Here are some of those excerpts. The mailing addresses which followed the names are omitted.]

Chief W.O. Theodore P. Olson "Since leaving the old home town back in '39, have met only one from there. He was Vincent Ryan, at that time in Hawaii. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then and only once did I even come close, that being during the New Georgia campaign when I met many friends from Hartford, but never had the luck of seeing a local boy. There is little or no news I can pass on as we leave all that to the Public Relations division of the Army...I can say that I am in the South Pacific area somewhere."

S/Sgt. Walter Zesut Our combat tour has been raised a little more on the Flying Forts, but by the time you receive this letter I shall be better than half through. Lately we have been paying our respects to the "Fatherland" most frequently, (we see the prettiest scenery: smoke and fire) and believe me we always leave our targets in a mess."

Albert LeTendre "Have been overseas for a year and although I got a Hartford paper it sure does seem good to read some real home town news for a change."

Pvt Paul Dubicki "I have been through three major campaigns and hold three "stars." I am somewhere in Italy and have been here for quite some time...Have been here for a year and a half and it was the first time that I heard any-



**Rationing of food items and gasoline challenged civilian shoppers during World War II. Limited numbers of rationing stamps were issued to residents who were then required to turn in to the merchant the appropriate stamps when purchasing rationed items. Here are some of the rationing books, stamps and related items**

thing about my home town and I thought the town had moved out."

Lt. George M. Gutt "S/Sgt. Vincent Dondi and myself have been together in the same outfit since Feb. 3, 1941...believe me it's nice to have someone from your own neighborhood to talk to once in a while. Vince and I both came up through the ranks together...I finally passed him when I received a battlefield promotion last Oct...keep up the good work you are doing back there and we will 'give 'em the works' over here...I haven't seen any supermen in these krauts yet."

Chap. J. Jack Sharkey "Cruiser life is far from dull. There is always someone at my door with money, wife, service or spiritual troubles...we don't beat around the bush and sensitivity is out of place...have 175 to 250 out for service every Sunday and you should hear them sing...nothing fancy about cloths either...they drop their work and come to worship and resume work immediately after church...dress in dungarees but the feeling is there regardless."

William Watson "I was wondering if there is anyone else besides myself in the 'Seabees'

from Glastonbury. If so, would really appreciate their address. (That one has me stopped. Can't distinguish a "Seabee" from a WASP by mere addresses, so you "Bees" get buzzin' and send Billy a note. Ed.)

Lt. Walter O. Wick "Good to hear news of the town which seems to be really my second home." (Understand that Walt is a censor and wonder if he's responsible for cutting paper dolls out of some of your letters. Ed.)

PFC. Steve Ruff "Here at MacDill Field, I am chief dispatcher of the 488th Bombardment Group Motor Pool...so far have covered around 30 states and have never found any place like the good old town of Glastonbury."

Pvt. Frank Marinelli "I was drafted into this so-called man's army and never expected to be a "Bed pan commando."

[These were only ten of the 36 letters excerpted in the April issue of The Home Town News, and this article includes only a small sampling from the news section. Getting the newsletter written, printed and mailed each month was a major project.]

## World War II and the Home Town News—4

by Norma V. Sestero

*[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury service men and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the fourth in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a longtime Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]*

[From the fourth issue of the "Home Town News" dated May, 1944:] Hiyah Gang: Another month is crowding near and time for another little visit with all you fine sports who are giving such a fine performance on land, in the air and on sea. Everyone here in your home town is thrilled by the latest reports of your successes on all fronts because they know that every time the American Flag is raised on a hill in Italy or an Island in the Pacific it means that the peace that is every true man's wish is that much nearer and that the day for your return to Main St. and all its side streets may not be too far off.

On May 16, over 1,000 civilian defense workers were awarded ribbons and certificates for meritorious service by the War Council. Dr. Russell McGown reviewed the history of the local Council and asserted that a large number of townspeople have been trained to cope with any disaster that may strike. Some of you who were air raid wardens, first aiders, auxiliary police, etc. before joining up with the big leagues better start rearranging your medals and ribbons because you have an extra ribbon to pin on. Your awards will be given to some member of your family for safe keeping. Neglected to tell you in previous letters that a motion picture showing local civilian defense personnel in action has been made. It was released the other night and I spotted some of your handsome faces on the screen. Make sure that you see this four bell picture when you return.

Firemen of Co. 3, East Glastonbury are very well pleased at the way the latest town meeting turned out. The meeting voted to purchase the

former Angus Park Mill property for a sum of \$4,000 and appropriated \$2,000 additional to convert a concrete garage on the property into a firehouse. It has been rumored that some of the property may be sold and the remainder, including Fisher's pond and pine grove may be turned into a town park...

Your kid brothers and sisters are all in a dither over the announcement by Charles Littel, chairman of the Youth Recreation Council that a canteen may be opened soon where dancing, table games, etc. would be available. Plans also are being made to organize a baseball league for the boys. So enthused are the "kids" that five groups have already organized voluntarily. It is hoped by members of the War Council that these plans will help avert the tide of juvenile delinquency that has struck many towns and cities in the state.

Charles Alexander has been named custodian of the Honor Roll in front of Town Office Building while "Mac" MacGillvary recuperates from a long illness. Honor Roll is being redecorated and all of you who are on the "Home Town News Honor Roll" may be sure that your names will appear on it so that everyone will know that you are among the 800 best dressed men and women in town...

[In this issue there are 38 excerpts from letters received people in the services. Each entry includes, right after the writer's name, the military mailing address. These are omitted.]

Pvt. Charles Froncak "I'm in Italy slugging it out with the Jerries...Had many close calls but was lucky so far... While I'm writing this letter shells are bursting all around and the Jerries aren't far away...Benney Bednarz is here with me.

Pvt William J. Faber "Am somewhere in Italy...Previous to coming here saw much of North Africa...Have received a combat star for the battle of (censored)...By the way, that doesn't mean I'm a Brigadier General."

Cpl. Louis C. Siwy "Think this is the only place in the world that you can stand in mud up to your neck and dust blows in your face at the

same time...Tojo manages to make the nights sleepless...His "Washing Machine Charlies," a nick name for his inferior bombers, keep us on the alert at times...One of his "wash machines" dropped a few eggs a little too close for comfort to me and now when the alert sounds I grab my clothes, shoes and trusty old helmet and use my fox hole as a dressing room...All in all, though we don't seem to mind Tojo's antics, the climate and insects which are plentiful, but homesickness causes the most misery...Grand old man Uncle Samuel does his best to keep our morale high by giving us movies and trying to get our mail to us as fast as he can...Our open air theatres really have large audiences...Terra-firma serves the purpose for cushioned seats and mosquitos don't make the attendance any smaller."

Francis Taylor "Have been in the Seabees for 14 months and going on eight months overseas, at Tarawa...At present am in the Marshalls group. Like Sgt. "Hub" Pfau, am looking forward to coming home and getting the hockey team together."

Lt. George Burney, Jr. "Am somewhere in England flying a bomber dealing out death and destruction to the enemy...I don't like this sort of business any better than anyone else, but if it will help shorten the war I'm in favor of it...We go out every day with our "bundles" never knowing whether we'll come back or not...Have had a few anxious moments."

S/Sgt. John Scaglia "Have been in England for several months and have seen quite a few of the historical places, but I would never think of trading that little place on Chestnut Hill for the Buckingham Palace."

Pvt. Sebastian Monaco "Have been 'somewhere in England' for eight months and hope to be in France very soon."

The Exchange Club is paying expenses for this month's issue. The club is very active in civic affairs. Among other things it is sponsoring the Boy Scouts in town. Every Saturday members of the club man the trucks while Scouts pick up scrap paper around town. Over



**Marcel Germaine, shown here in his dress uniform, was one of hundreds of Glastonbury citizens in the military. On his left front pocket is a single service ribbon along with two medals. Other patches on a soldier's uniform identified the soldier's rank and unit.**

50 tons of paper has been collected in this manner and money from its sale will enable over 50 Scouts to go to Camp Pioneer, Winsted for two weeks this summer. Plans are also being made to build a cement swimming pool at Camp Goodwill...

So-long until just about this time next month when I'll be coming your way again with news from your home town and a word or two from your buddies.

Good Luck!  
Norma V. Sestero (Editor)

## World War II and the Home Town News—5

by Norma V. Sestero

[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury service men and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the fifth in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a long-time Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]

[From the fifth issue of the "Home Town News" dated June, 1944:] Hello there! May I come in? It's been a long time since we've had a chat. Four weeks to be exact, and what a thirty days that has been! D-Day! Most of the townspeople were asleep when the news came that the greatest military operation in history had begun. It wasn't long however, after the dawn on June 7, that your town was aware of the dramatic events that were taking place. The news was received quietly and soberly. There were no celebrations nor demonstrations. Services were held in churches with special prayers for a speedy victory. War maps were in brisk demand and by noon all stores were sold out. Radios were kept going far into the night and on the fifth day after D-Day, news that the boys on the French coast were there to stay came through and only then were we able to draw our breaths without aching anxiety.

Then came the news of the landings on Sipan [Saipan], the bombing of the Japanese mainland by our B-29 Super Fortresses and the great Naval Air battle around the Marianas. And every day we are told of the steady progress being made by our brave men on the Italian front. Yes, all roads leading home have been started. True, there will be many obstacles to overcome along the way, but every day that passes will find that another obstacle has been removed. Then there will come one great day when all the roads which you are so patiently working on today will merge into one super highway. A highway leading straight back here to your loved ones and home.

After July 1, the Old Town Hall [now Museum on the Green] will be known as "Jiver's Junction" the name selected by your kid brothers and sisters for the teen-age canteen which will operate Wednesday and Saturday nights during the summer months...

The entire Old Town Records Building [in 2014 the site of the parking lot next to Daybreak Coffee] is now being used for a Police

Station, and if you should drop in to see the Chief he'd invite you into his sanctum sanctorum. Yep, the Chief has an office all to his own complete with newly varnished desk and chairs and a little birdie told me that the Chief has been seen shopping around for frilly curtains to adorn the windows...

In checking over one of Policeman Jackson's reports for a news story came across a number of words that didn't make sense. When I asked Jackson to explain he wrinkled his brow and said, "That typewriter at the office doesn't spell worth a damn."

[This issue of The Home Town News contained excerpts from 43 communications received from people in the service. Here are a few of them with the mailing addresses omitted.]

Sgt. Vincent Dondi "Was inducted into the Army as a National Guardsman in Feb., 1941, in the only tank outfit in the state...Left the States to arrive in Africa about March 9, 1942...Had about six months of moving from one place to another until I finally ended up in the invasion of Salerno. From then on I and the rest of the boys in my outfit have been on the line...In my particular hole we have a radio and listen to the news and whatever music we can pick up. Know it is tough when there is a war on but we boys know that we have a job to do and are only too glad to help our country out of this mess and make this world a peaceful place to live in."

Edward Lessor "A year ago I started working for Army Transport out of Boston as an able bodied seaman and after five months was promoted to quartermaster...Spent seven months in the North Atlantic as far North as the Arctic Circle, crossing it twice...The past five months travelled from Boston to San Francisco below the equator in the South Pacific and West of the 180th meridian."

Lt. Robert F. Hutt "Notice that several Glastonbury boys are in this theatre, but Bob Purtill is the only one I've seen...Have been overseas two years, England, Africa and now Italy." (If you boys in that theatre write to Bob you can perhaps get together someday. Ed.)

Sgt. William Connell "Think I was the happiest man in my outfit yesterday when I received April's Home town News—it was sent to Ky. then to PEO (censored) then to a hospital in England and finally here."

Cpl. Vito Fierravanti "The other day com-



In this photo from the early 1940s, to the left of the Franklin Pharmacy building (now home to Daybreak Coffee) is a small structure with two arched windows on either side of an arched center door. It was constructed in 1881 to house the Town's records. As reported in the Home Town News, in 1944 it became Glastonbury's Police Station.

ing out of a theatre in London ran into a boy who lived next door to me for four years. It was a surprise for us both."

Everett E. Bantly "The men on this ship are always interested in news. News that they themselves make, news from home towns, but there is one piece of news that hurts worse than the Japanese and that is when we hear of people going on strike. People like that we don't even want in the service."

Pfc. William Baribault "Last place I was stationed met up with Lt. Henry Kinne...We really had quite a chat...They are keeping us busy making airfields, but keeping busy and moving about a lot has made my eight months in New Guinea really fly by."

Lt. Peter Bagshaw "Until recently I had done little combat flying but things are a bit improved now...After watching the B-25s having a fine time for themselves at tree top level I transferred to this group and find that work most interesting...Last night we held our first dance. Red Cross girls and nurses were invited. The music was excellent and the bar well stocked...The mess officer being an understanding soul served tomato juice this morning—really a wonderful chap."

Cpl. Morris Darling (Somewhere in the Admiralty) "Have been overseas for 28 months...Little I can tell about only that things in this theatre are progressing beautifully and am very optimistic about the outcome of the whole thing."

This edition of the "News" comes to you with the compliments of one of your buddies stationed in the South Pacific. This young man would rather remain anonymous sent me a sizable check saying "I hope this will help you to get a few more copies off the mimeograph machine or purchase a few stamps or even better yet would be an automatic stamp licking machine to make the job of sealing and stamping all those envelopes more enjoyable for you." I took a long look at my tongue in a mirror and decided that it was capable of licking many more stamps and flaps. Also thought of my friends whose tongues seemed to be in very good condition the last time I talked to them so an automatic stamp machine seemed a waste of money. There was enough money to purchase stamps and envelopes for an entire issue and this is it. I know that all of you are grateful to this young man for his generosity.

## World War II and the Home Town News—6

by Norma V. Sestero

*[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury service men and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the sixth in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a long-time Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]*

[From the sixth issue of the "Home Town News" dated July, 1944:] Hiyah Gang:... Many letters have started coming my way from boys overseas expressing concern for their loved ones after hearing about the disastrous fire that destroyed the Ringling Brothers "Big Top" on July 6, in Hartford. Let me hasten to assure you that no one from our town was killed or seriously injured and only a very few received minor burns. As far as I know Mrs. Anna Rath is the only one who required hospitalization. She suffered a fractured leg when she leaped over the tent's side wall from the top of the grandstand to safety. However, not all towns were as fortunate as ours as the death toll has already reached about 166 and about 140 are still in hospitals suffering from severe burns. I was there but because you who are making history have so much to report in this letter and space is limited I cannot go into detail about my experiences. Suffice to say those of us who were there will never forget those short ten minutes which left scores of broken homes and hundreds of broken hearts in their wake...

[Here are a few of the 38 excerpts from letters received by the Home Town News:]

Sgt. William Connell "I like France a lot and think the French like the Yanks by the way they act... They like gum and candy the way the British do... They wear wooden shoes as the other shoes are too expensive... Have plenty to eat and that's a lot to be thankful for."

Richard B. Behnke "Was out of school three weeks when I came into the Navy... Went through 'boots' in Sampson and Storekeepers School in Toledo, and from there to Shoemaker, Calif., and then out to this forgotten land, and here I've been for four months."

Lt. Harley Reed "Haven't been here too long but already have quite a few missions under my belt as pilot on a Flying Fort... So far have been in 39 of the 48 states and will settle for Conn., any time."

Pfc. Newton B. Phillips "By now you must have read about the raid on the islands of Japan by B-29s, the new super bombers... Our sqdn. took part in that raid and I guess you can expect to hear more about the B-29s from now on." (Yes, we've heard, and we want to hear more of the same, often. Ed.)

Lt. Samuel Solmer "Blessings to the Home Town News! Patients here from parts of the country miles away from Glastonbury enjoy reading it just to get the feeling that is part of a home town... Have been convalescing now for better than three weeks and may be here quite a while... My left leg and hip hurt like the dickens and the funny thing is that there is no reason on earth for it hurting... It's like having an ingrown toe-nail when a tooth-ache was the real trouble."

Pfc. Harold "Bud" Krohn, Jr. "Have been in the service 15 months and am still in the states. Sorta makes a fellow feel kinda guilty knowing that so many of the fellows are overseas doing their part and I'm still a 'home front hero' or 'USO Commando' as the boys overseas call us... Right now am working on B-29s. Can't say very much about them as they are very new and secret... They are the biggest and best bombers in the world today... On Feb 22, I became a married man... My wife is the former Jeanette Ferry."

S/Sgt. Rocco Marone "Am with an Inf. Div. which I've been with for 19 months... Have been training newly inducted men for almost six months, otherwise my job is a machine gun section Sgt... A battalion of us were picked to go to New York for the opening of the 5th War Loan drive."

Seems as though you're all sorta longing for your old home town. Well I'm gonna break down and tell you right here and now that your home town is awful lonesome without you. Somehow or t'other doesn't seem the same since you left. Sompin's lacking and I know

what 'tis. The town needs the punch that guys between 18 and 38 can give it. Well, the cream of that crop is you, and you just ain't here so that leaves it flatter than an empty hot water bottle. There just ain't nothin' excitin' going on. Why even Mark and Tony close up their "hot spots" every night at ten, and when they close the sidewalks pull in and period. Of course the town hasn't broken down physically "cause you left it in our hands to take care of while you went away to see that nothing would ever happen to it and I must say that we're doing all right there, but it just can't laugh like it used to "cause you ain't here to laugh with it. Methinks though by the way you're slapping those Jerries and Nips around that it won't too long before you come bounding back and when that day comes your town will bust its buttons wide open and laugh right out loud and keep right on laughing from then on...

Among those who dropped by during the month were Sgt. Robert Slater and Sgt. William Phillips, both on furlough from overseas service. Sgt. Slater has seen 21 months service in the India, Burma, China theatre of operations where he was connected with the air transport command in radio maintenance and operation. He crossed the "hump" many times and told of the living conditions in China and India which are not good in our way of thinking. For the first time since '39, the three Slater boys who wear the uniforms of war were brought together for four hours on July 20... S/Sgt. Harold Slater who witnessed the bombing of Pearl Harbor and Nelson Slater, E.M. 1/c who has seen action in the Aleutians and South Pacific aboard a destroyer and is ready to take off again.

Sgt. John Phillips home from the Army base at Alberta, Can., is a flight engineer, whose job is to crew bombers which are ferried to Russia. He has been in four crackups, the last occurring in a wooded area about 300 miles from Nome, Alaska. He and the pilot were occupants of the B-25 when the engine failed at a level too low to bail out. Both men were knocked out when they hit the ground. Phillips was the first to come to and administered first aid to



**During World War II, women did not serve in combat but they did serve in female military units and, as is the case here, in the Red Cross. Images of females were popular with the troops. Often these were of movie stars in bathing suits called "pin-up-girls," but more dignified photos were also appreciated. Here in full uniform is an attractive publicity photograph of Florence M. Megson of Glastonbury.**

the pilot who had severe head injuries. For three days and nights they remained in the woods living on K rations and were finally discovered by an Army search plane. Phillips was hospitalized for over a month with three broken ribs and abrasions. He received only minor injuries in the other crackups...

[Norma signs off with:] keep gunnin' cause you've got 'em runnin' and the faster they run the sooner you'll be back here where you're badly wanted and needed by each and every one of us.

## World War II and the Home Town News—7

by Norma V. Sestero

[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury service men and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the seventh in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a longtime Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]

[From the ninth issue of the "Home Town News" dated November, 1944:] Hiyah Gang! Now that Election Day is over and everyone is on speaking terms again, all have joined forces in an effort to raise \$214,000, Glastonbury's allotment in the Sixth War drive. The War Finance Committee headed by Lee Laundry is making plans to conduct a house-to-house canvas with the hope that each wage earner will purchase an extra bond. We back here are well aware of the fact that it costs money to wage a war and as you men on the battlefronts are giving your all, the least we can do is lend our money so that equipment will flow in a never ending stream into your hands, well trained hands, which with superior equipment will speed the day of victory. Each new day news filters back of the great strides which you are making on all fronts. Although the enemy is still holding on it seems to be getting a bit groggy and someday, we hope soon, the Hun and the Nip will be knocked out in such a manner as never to arise again.

Governor Dewey won over President Roosevelt in Glastonbury by 26 votes. Dewey, 1,879, and Roosevelt, 1,853. In 1940 the President carried the town by just one vote. Governor Baldwin received the greatest number of votes, 2,064, while his opponent, Robert Hurley got 1,596. Republicans carried the entire ticket with the exception of one representative and U. S. Senator Danaher lost to McMahon by only five votes. For the first time in Glastonbury, a woman was elected state representative. She is Mrs. Blanche Pitney, Republican. Aaron W. Kinne, Republican, was defeated by John W. Lawrence, Democrat, by 12 votes. Henry J. Carini, Democrat had 1,601 votes, and Lewis O. Kinne, independent 576. It was unofficially reported that the soldier vote was evenly divided between the two major parties. A total of 3,790 votes were polled.

Dr. Russell M. McGown has resigned his pastorate of the First Church of Christ to accept a call to be pastor of the First Congregational Church of Stamford. His resignation will take effect on Jan. 7, the fifth anniversary of the dedication of the new church building. . . . the

church building, destroyed by the hurricane of 1938, was rebuilt and stands today as one of the outstanding churches in the region. Dr. McGown took interest not only in his parish but in all town affairs and will be greatly missed by the entire community.

The front cover of the annual town report, which contains a picture of the honor roll has been dedicated to you men and women serving in World War II. The report also contains the names of all Glastonbury men and women who have donned the uniforms of war during the present conflict. Over 850 names appear on the list. Something new has been added to the Honor Roll in front of the Town Office Building. Each night after the sun sinks in the west, bright lights are flashed on the roll and left burning all night, as a tribute to all of you who are fighting a good fight.

[This newsletter included excerpts from 53 letters received from those in the services. Here are a few of those excerpts with the writers' military addresses omitted.]

Pfc. Joseph Wilk "have been in the Army since April 14, 1942. . . . Have covered a good portion of France including the city of Verdun. . . . It rains here every day so we never are short of water. . . . Was in a few major battles and had three 88s [artillery shells] land only a few yards away. . . . My job is driving an ammunition truck to firing lines."

S/Sgt. Charles MacDonald "That 'somewhere overseas' they told us about turned out to be Ascension Island. . . . This place is 100 percent rock with no trees, grass, etc., at all. . . . It's nicknamed 'the rock' very appropriately."

Cpl. "Ted" Tyrol "Have been here in France a little over three months and overseas 21 and manage to keep plenty busy. . . . At present am driving one of the biggest trucks the Army has and sometimes wonder if it wouldn't make a better apartment house than a truck."

Lt. Samuel Solmer "This damp, wet cold makes me feel 63 instead of 36. . . . Have the Selectmen put up benches on the sunny side of G'bury's Post office Square so that the returning old, decrepit veterans can soak up some of Connecticut's sun in order to drive out the dampness they acquired in the Old World? . . . What I'd give right now for a New England hot buttered rum or a jug of cider or a nice, black, shining and hot kitchen range to park my feet on. . . . Fuel is at a premium and in a minute am going to scavenge some firewood."

S/Sgt. John Pagani "The chips are down and every American boy here is putting his shoulder to the wheel. . . . The common myth that the Hun never retreats has been exploded by



Here is the cover of Glastonbury's 1944 annual report showing Glastonbury's new Honor Roll that stood in front of the Town Office Building which then occupied what is now the law office at 2252 Main Street. The saluting Marine, WAVE, Army, WAC, and Navy soldiers appear to have been added to the picture using earlier techniques of what today is called photoshop.

butcher, baker, clerk and garageman in uniform. . . . They may not consider it retreat, but they sure can advance swiftly in the direction from which they came. . . . The cuisine here is not to be envied, as it sure injures my gastronomic pride. . . . We live on the equivalent of civilian alphabetical soup, like K, C and A rations. . . . Even this tastes like steak at times. . . . Being in the Engineers is long, hard work, but the results are worthwhile. . . . Every mile of road that we build put us one mile nearer home and there's no place like Glastonbury."

Pvt. Harry Darling "Am writing this letter by candlelight in my pup tent somewhere in France. . . . Am not too near the front lines yet, but expect to be there soon."

Sgt. Herbert Pfau "Am still on Guam Island and the weather hasn't changed a bit. . . . It's hot and when it isn't raining you're walking around in mud. . . . We are now located at Camp McNair named in honor of Colonel McNair who lost his life here. . . . we have one thing to be thankful for and that is that we are up off the ground and have a dry place to sleep. . . . It's a big difference

from sleeping in foxholes filled with mud and water as we've been doing. . . . Have seen plenty of action."

Pfc. Rudy Albers "the American's entry into Paris, was a greater celebration than New Year's Eve in Times Square. . . . Had about a hundred French Belles swarm all around the jeep kissing me, and offering me drinks. . . . Was rather surprised to find quite a few Americans about. . . . They threw quite a few questions at me and a couple of minutes later when the French found out I spoke their language had a million questions tossed at me about the conditions of just about every town and city in France. . . . Autographed several French Bills and even posed with a couple of belles for a photograph. . . . Paris has hardly no damage at all, and it's just about one of the most beautiful cities going, so goes the general G. I. opinion. . . . We haven't had much time for sightseeing as yet."

[Norma signed off with:] . . . remember always that we back here are ever at your side with our prayers, our hopes and our best wishes at every turn of the road.

## World War II and the Home Town News—8

by Norma V. Sestero

[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury service men and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the eighth in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a longtime Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]

[From the tenth issue of the "Home Town News" dated December, 1944:] Hyah Gang! At length have gathered enough material to make our monthly chat worthwhile. Due to the bottleneck which developed in the mails on account of the Christmas rush, overseas mail failed to reach me on time and being well aware that our chat would be incomplete without a word or two from your buddies delayed writing until a sufficient number of letters came my way. However, the bottleneck seems to have been broken now as letters are pouring in from all parts of the world. Here are a few excerpts from those received within the past few days.

Joseph D. Nelson "Was in invasions of Saipan and Tinian and have been in another since then but due to censor regulations I cannot yet disclose it... Still awaiting that day when I will actually bump into someone from home... It has been fifteen months since I've seen Glastonbury."

Wallace H. Taft "I have been over a lot of the Pacific in the past months... Recently, as you know, the amphibs played a great part in the invasion of the Philippines... We've experienced raids and strafing attacks but have come out unscathed... Can't say the same for the Nippons... A few days ago one brave fellow dove at our boy, today he is no more, in fact, two seconds later he had sunk into the placid Pacific, a flaming wreck... We've seen little of the famous beautiful Pacific Islands. Guess we just haven't hit the ones with the natives with the swinging hips."

Cpl. Peter Miglietta (France) "In reading the "News" I saw where some of the local boys that are still in the States are lonely for good old Glastonbury; over here the boys are lonesome for good old States, any part of them... About half hour ago I got my week's rations after waiting in line one hour, now I will wait just another week for those two candy bars that I ate in fifteen minutes flat... It is just three weeks that I got a letter and in some cases it goes as long as two months at a time, but the G.I.s really make the best of it in spite of all the hardships... Remind the local boys that are still in the States that they are in Paradise."

T/S John Bunk "Am now in Belgium... Have been in England and France but will take Glastonbury anytime."

Edward C. Donahue "I cannot boast of being a member of your town, but I did spend considerable time there though with my brother who has made his home in Connecticut after his discharge from active naval service... Glastonbury may be my hometown when this mess is finally settled... Please keep the news-

letter coming, it is deeply appreciated."

Sgt. William Connell "What a difference going to town here! Steel helmet, rifle, rifle belt and leggings... The goods in town are mostly rationed and very high in price... France has been a beautiful country with all the colored leaves, but now they have fallen and the scars of war show more... We are living in buildings now... We sleep on the floor as there are no beds, but it is heaven compared to the foxholes with the mud and rain."

Lt. Russell Bantly (Aleutians) "The weather has been a little rough lately, but not as cold as some days you folks have had at home. The high wind is the troublemaker up here... We're making out all right though, just like all the fellows are, no matter where... Our plan here is getting real progressive. Any day now will have some of Montgomery & Ward's modern plumbing. Where did they ever get the logic for the saying, 'Back in the good old days?'"

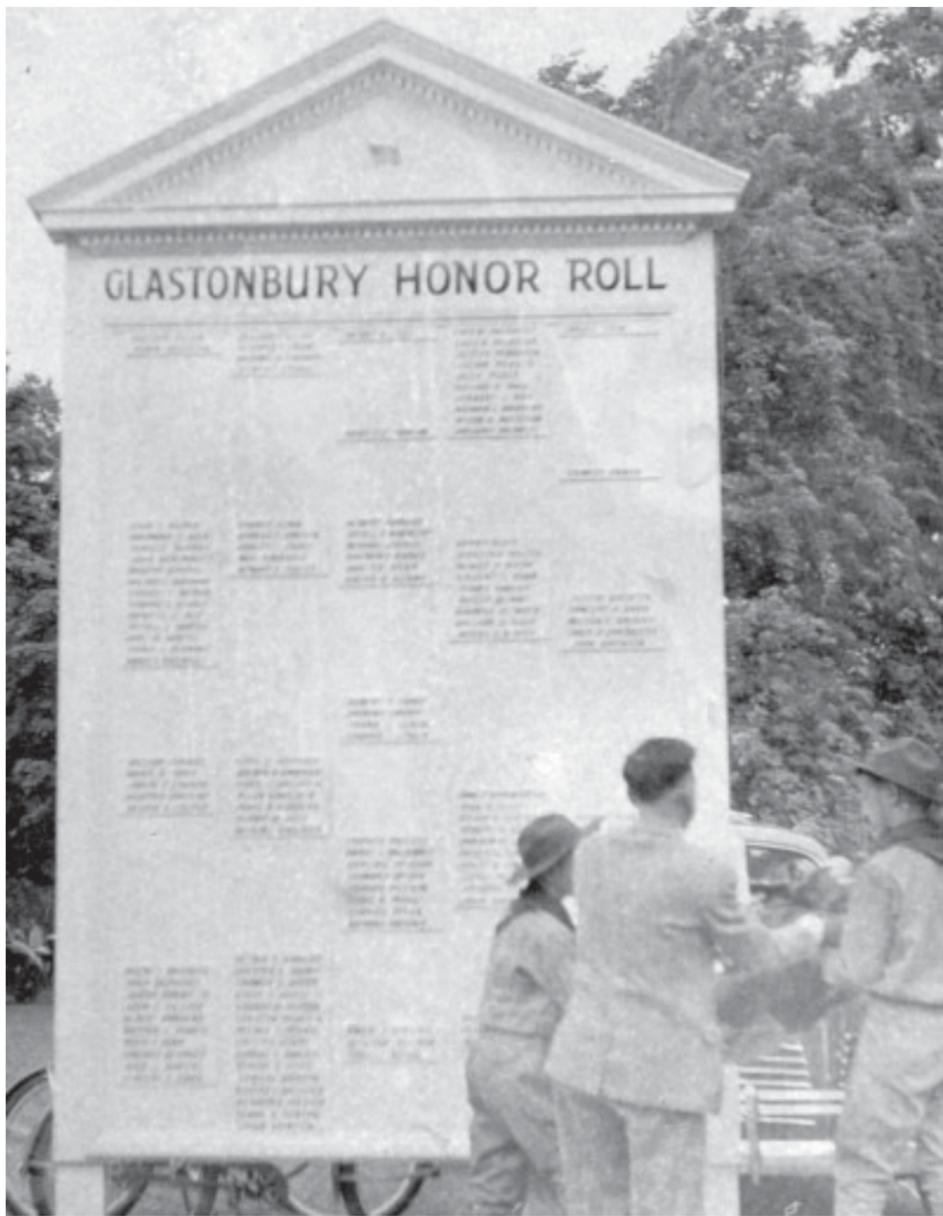
Sgt. Herbert Ellsworth (India) "Am situated at a pretty nice base over here though it's a far call from anything the southern Connecticut Valley has to offer... The weather is pleasant right now with warm clear days and nights cool enough for sleeping with blankets but I'd trade it all for a rainy foggy day at home."

Pfc. Fred Lysik (France) "The life over here is a little more rugged than back in the States... Here we sleep in a foxhole and sometimes in a pup tent which isn't too warm... The weather here is the worst I've experienced in my life. All it does is rain, rain, rain... Sure miss the home town and have found that you never miss anything until you have to go without it for a while, but we have a little job to do over here before we can come back."

Charles Phelps "Guess the Navy has found a place for me at last. Thought they were trying to make a land sailor out of me... Volunteered with Seabees the latter part of October, '43. Trained at Camp Perry, Va. There I signed up for general service. A couple of months after that was sent to the receiving station in Boston. Worked in the butcher shop there for five months. Left there in August for amphibious training at Camp Bradford, Va. After a couple of months training there with a crew we went to Chicago. While there we had a few days training in gunnery at Great Lakes Training Base, and from there left to pick up our ship... Am now working in the galley cooking every day."

[These are just nine of the 40 excerpts included in the News which went on as follows:]

When a sailor picks up a girl in a port that's not news, but when a luscious actress of stage and screen picks up a local boy in the Hartford Railroad Station that is news. A crowd had gathered at the station to see the lovely Ann Coric off on the train. Among the spectators, also scheduled to take the same train, was Joseph Carl Jr. S2/c. Tony Pagano, who incidentally is Ann's brother-in-law, spotted our young sailor in the crowd and introduced him to the star. Ann immediately took the young man by the arm, escorted him on the train and sat next to him all the way down to the big city (New York).



This is the Honor Roll that stood in front of the Town Hall before it became necessary to install the expanded Honor Roll shown last week. Each name painted on a separate wood strip was nailed on so that additional names could be added with all names kept in alphabetical order. By the end of World War II there were over twice as many names as shown here. The uniformed Boy Scouts are helping add names.

Wonder how Carl felt sitting next to all that charm and loveliness?...

The most popular man back here is not the handsome individual with plenty of cash in his pockets and a snappy car with gas in it, but the guy with a pack of cigarettes—any brand. Cigarettes are so difficult to obtain that some girls have given up trying and have turned to pipes and a little bird told me that while winging his way around several houses here in town he spotted some of the weaker sex puffing away contentedly on cigars. Ercel Walker and two of her chums were spotted by a Hartford Times photographer in a restaurant with pipes clasped between their pretty lips and he promptly snapped

their picture which appeared in all four editions of the paper. Those who started rolling their own have also come up against a stone wall because cigarette tobacco and papers are as scarce as cigarettes and pipe tobacco is fast disappearing from the storekeepers' shelves while in most places cigars are rationed out one to a customer. Letters from some of your buddies serving in France state that there is a definite cigarette shortage there also, and some have had only one or two packs per week.

[Norma closes with a New Year's wish:] All your friends and neighbors send their best wishes for the New Year, a year which we hope will bring victory and ever lasting peace.

## World War II and the Home Town News—9

by Norma V. Sestero

*[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury service men and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the ninth in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a long-time Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]*

[From the 11th issue of the "Home Town News" dated February, 1945:] Hiyah Gang! The Home Town News is celebrating its first birthday this month. In February, 1944, the first issue went out to 250 local men and three women in uniform, the majority of whom were stationed in this country. Since then the circulation of the paper has grown by leaps and bounds and this month of the 776 copies being sent out nearly 500 will be received on foreign soil. Although it has been said that every editor sheds a silent tear of regret when his paper ceases publication, ye olde editor will shed tears for joy when the Home Town News comes off the mimeograph machine for the last time and it is her fervent prayer and hope that that day is not too far distant.

Snow shovels were given a good workout this month as your town dug itself out of the worst snowstorm in years. A grain warehouse, on 217 Hebron Ave., owned by Stanley Melzen was demolished when the weight of the snow caused the roof to collapse. Mr. Melzen estimated damage at about \$2,500. The loss is not offset by insurance.

Glastonbury's worst fire since 1941 on Feb. 4, destroyed a three-story chicken house, about 3,000 chicks and broilers and considerable equipment, property of Harold Cohn, 217 House Street, at a loss estimated between \$9,000 and \$10,000...

### EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

T/3 Kenneth Handel "Am now in Italy...Can't say that I'm too pleased with the country...Don't enjoy seeing poverty or respectable people begging for scraps of food and the cold coffee left in the soldier's cups. They actually fight over it...Met Lt. Frank Horton. We're not too far from each other and when we can manage a pass, take in the sights together...Have visited Florence, Naples, climbed the Tower of Pisa and have seen many other interesting places."

Sgt. Henry F. Libera "Haven't been overseas very long but have been in many places and have seen a lot of tough action...Been in

England, France, Belgium and even in Germany itself before the big German attack and now I'm back somewhere in Belgium again...It was our outfit that was at St. Vith when the Germans started the attack...I am radio operator and driver for Brigadier General McMahon, commanding general of this division."

T/Sgt. Josef Scaylea "Am now at an airstrip in the jungle...The scenery is the most wonderful I have ever seen and ever since arriving here my eyes have been bulging and my mouth has been agape from the wonders of it. It's absolutely fascinating...Everything here is on a gigantic and efficient scale. No fooling around as in the states...Living conditions are simple and primitive, but practical and the food is good...All in all the jungle suits me fine and consider myself very fortunate to be in this area instead of the cold European climate...I'm an aerial photographer, but hope to find time to get some good scenic shots from the ground. However, I may have to stick strictly to business as we are kept very busy...Out here everything moves fast and I surely won't be in any one place long."

Pvt. Charles Ekstrom "Our outfit took part in the D-Day invasion and it was plenty rugged for a while, but everything is okay now...I drive an ammo truck and three of us were cut off from our bunch for a while and while trying to re-join our group we ran into German paratrooper snipers. Had a little fun for a while but none of us got hurt."

Cpl. Robert E. Bantle "I celebrated Thanksgiving Day on the high seas; Christmas in England and New Years in France. At this rate we all expect to reach Berlin before many more months...However, by the looks of things I guess the Russians will surely beat us there."

Cpl. Richard Kowalsky "Have been overseas for 26 months...During that time have been in England, Africa, Scotland and Italy. Naples, Rome and Florence are fairly nice but there's no place like Glastonbury...When in Africa we got some replacements and William Faber was among them...This kind of job I'm doing is rather hard for you have to keep watching your step, for if you don't your life will be shortened, but guess that's the way it is with any job on the battlefield."

Lester Willis Jr. "There is really nothing to say about my duty here as instructor...Was home on leave in December and though it was an emergency leave, it was the bright spot of the year...Our home town hasn't changed one bit and both friends and strangers make you feel proud to be in service...Glastonbury still is the



**Only news photographers accredited by the authorities and military photographers were permitted to take battlefield photos, so pictures of local boys in action are rare. Here is one from the Historical Society collection but we do not know who these men are or where the photo was taken.**

finest town with the finest people in the world. To again live in a town like ours is well worth waiting for."

Cpl. Richard Holmes "Have just finished Gunnery School and am now waiting around for shipping orders to an overseas depot to join a bomber crew...One can't say anything about Yuma without mentioning the sand. It's everywhere in your food, in your tooth paste, in your bunk and in everything you own...Every time I pick up the paper I see an article about snowstorms in the east...On that I can only say one thing and that is that I'd trade all the sunshine in the State of Ariz. and that of New Mexico for the chance of making one little snowball in G-bury."

[These are but eight of the 30 excerpts from letters in this issue of the News. These were followed by accounts of the experiences of local servicemen's activities in battle, in hospitals and in general. Here is a sample:]  
S /Sgt. Frank L. Hamer had a spine tickling

experience when on July 4, 1944, his platoon, first to move into position at Brest was completely surrounded by two German platoons. The Yanks fought over six hours before the enemy was driven off. Fifty-five days later his left foot was badly shattered by enemy machine gun fire. He is now receiving treatment at Lovell General Hospital, Fort Devens, Mass.

[This newsletter like all of them closes by giving credit to those who mimeographed it, and to those who paid for paper and postage. For this newsletter, the mimeographing was done by personnel at the J. B. Williams Company and the financing came from the Laura Hale Gorton's office, a real estate and insurance agency. Norma signed off with:]

Hope that henceforth enough letters will reach me early in the month so that Newsletters may go out on time each and every month.

Good luck!  
Norma  
V. Sestero  
(Editor)

# World War II and the Home Town News—10

by Norma V. Sestero

[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a monthly newsletter, "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury service men and women stationed "for the duration" in places all over the globe. The following is the last in a weekly series of excerpts from those newsletters. Norma, a long-time Hartford Times correspondent for Glastonbury, died in 2003 at age 92.]

From the 12th and last issue of the "Home Town News" dated April 10, 1945: Hiyah Gang! Spring is with us once more and I don't need to tell you how beautiful your town is at this time of year, especially the John Tom Hill and Matson Hill sections where peach, apple and pear trees are in full bloom. My wish is that all of you will be back with all of us before the fruit on those trees matures. With spring comes a great deal of hard work. Your moms and dads are busily engaged in spading home gardens, clearing lawns, putting up screens, house-cleaning, etc. Many of these jobs were once yours and I don't believe that you've gotten rid of them entirely. One dad remarked, "That kid of mine used mow the lawn in an hour, but it takes me all forenoon. Will get a new lawn mower when he gets back, then maybe he'll be able to do it in thirty minutes." One woman said, "Our screens haven't been painted since — went in service and that was three years ago. Guess he'll have to give them three coats when he gets back."

Big story of the month is the dismissal of Arthur Jackson from the Police Force. Jackson and five other men were arrested on morals charges involving three 16-year-old girls. Appearing in Town Court before Judge Raymond H. Friel, the 36-year-old ex-cop pleaded guilty to the charge of fornication and was fined \$75 and sentenced to two months in jail, execution suspended. [After providing further details about this case, there was as always more town news, including information about the high school, sport, births, engagements, marriages and deaths, there is the customary section of, in this case, 25 excerpts from letters to the editor of the newsletter. Here are a few of them:]

Pfc. Edward J. Miller (Iwo Jima) "The Japs were well organized on this volcanic island and they had plenty of artillery, mortars and rockets with which to inflict damage on us. They even had some new weapons which we never encountered on Saipan or Tinian. I thought Saipan was a bloody mess, but there's no comparison between the two now...When we landed on the beach on our right flank we could see a ridge covered with pill boxes with six inch guns in them pointing down at the beach, (we

later found that some of them were six feet thick in spots.) On our left flank we had Mount Suribotchi with its heavy machine gun and mortar placements...It was almost impossible to dig a foxhole. The sides always cave in, but if you were able to, a near hit would only cave it in on you. Found that out by experience, so I never minded filling sand bags at all during this operation, but to tell the truth I could never find enough to fill, this was one place we were always short."

Sgt. William Phillips "Am at Fort Nelson just below Whitehorse, Alaska. Boy, what a place this is. I met some of the boys who had been here for 18 months. They were talking to mice and little bugs that they caught. Asked a fellow if they were crazy and he said they aren't crazy until the insects talk back to them. There is no town or any women here. The only amusement is the base theater which shows films that were made when Roosevelt first became president...We fly in search of planes that crash in the woods."

Sgt. Milton C. Hollister "This cozy little island is known as Canton Island. It is noted for the fact that it has one tree on it...Having crossed the equator by boat I was duly initiated into the 'Ancient Order of the Deep' and am now a 'Trusty Shellback.' I have a rough cut hair-do to prove it. The hair was clipped to about one half inch in length on top and left long at the sides."

Pfc. Conrad Linger "I am with the Seventh Army now. If the Yanks can keep up the good work the war can't last too much longer. Have been overseas for six months now but haven't found any place half as good as good old Conn."

Lt. George M. Gutt "We made the D-Day landing (Philippines) here at H plus 75 minutes. The naval barrage is something I shall never forget, also the convoy we came over in. There weren't too many Jap planes around and those that did show up were shot down...It does ones heart good to see the results of what we have been so patiently waiting for...The Filipinos have really suffered these past three years. Their joy at having us here is shown on their faces. When we make a road march they stop whatever they are doing and line the streets and shout 'victory' and wave us on...Our division has done a bang-up job here. In one tank battle they destroyed 30 out of 42 tanks. They did it the hard way with mortars and hand grenades...Infantry against tanks is something new in warfare, but our boys proved it would be done."

Pfc. John Dysenchuk "Received the December edition of the Home Town News here on Iwo Jima several days ago and you'll never



This photo taken on September 15, 1945 shows naval personnel returning home from duty at Okinawa aboard the USS John D. Henley. They include Nat Sestero, the author/editor's husband who is kneeling in the front row, second from the left.

know how much I appreciated it...It was one of the first letters I got, and while I was reading it I was interrupted several times by Jap mortars and rockets...Despite these difficulties succeeded in finishing it and in the next couple of days about 20 or 30 fellows from all over the U.S. will read it."

Cpl. John J. Monaco "Can only say that I'm somewhere in the Pacific. Had a nice story for you but the censors turned it down...I was beginning to think I was the only Marine from the home town who was overseas but through the newsletter find that I have plenty of company...One good thing about this place is that the ocean is right at our feet where there's plenty of good bathing."

Pfc. Henry E. Krawiec "Necessity demands that I write with my left hand because my right is broken and in traction. Was hit in Belgium on Jan. 15...We're getting excellent care and treatment. Everything is done for a speedy recovery. Red Cross provides books and games to take care of the monotony and movies are shown once a week here in the ward."

[There was news about those awarded military medals. Norma closed as follows:]

The Glastonbury War Council is paying the postage for this issue of the newsletter, and the J. B. Williams Company has again volunteered to do the mimeographing.

Our little get together was delayed several weeks this month because your letters which are really the backbone of the newsletter were delayed in transit. Being a woman I suffer greatly when I have to put off my chatter for a time, and I'd like to suggest that those of you who can take time out from a busy day, jot down a few of your experiences pronto and send them along to 26 School St., so that I can visit with you on time next month.

And now have reached the end of my story. So-long and as always, good luck at every turn of the road.

[As it turns out, there were to be no more issues of this newsletter for the happy reason that Germany surrendered unconditionally on May 7, 1945, and the end of the war in Europe (VE day) was celebrated on May 8th. On August 6th and 9th atomic bombs were dropped on Japan resulting in its unconditional surrender on August 14, 1945. With that, the war was over.]