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 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, of 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 this too. Your buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear the highlights in local news. But you have a part in this too. Y our buddies are just as keen to hear

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. Sester

[During World War II, Norma Sester wrote a monthly newsletter "The Home Town News" which was distributed to nearly 1,000 Glastonbury residents 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 soon 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 think of a "Who's In and Where" list and had a quite a time separating the Army from the Navy and vice versa. It was a tough fight, but I made it—yes. Some of you Marines may find your-selves in khaki, but how is a poor civilian sup-posed 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 serv-ing in the army overseas in the "European The-a-ter," 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 Fran-cisco. The Marines and Coast Guard had other post office designations and some overseas personnel 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 as informative of your pro-motions. Somehow ranks don't make much dif-ference 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 benefit 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. [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 govern-ment, 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 applica-tion blank. An innovation in the fire alarm system of the new town fire department has been put into ef-fect 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 sev-eral short blasts, and for Co. 2, South end, two long blants. Co. 3, East Glastonbury, is not 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 sever-al weeks ago, put out a chimney fire in Angelo Finoce's house and now they'd all been 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. The Fire Com-missioners are asking prices on a number of land sites in the South where a firehouse may be built sometime in the future. The depart-ment has received its first inhalator…

Judge Foley is a very dedicated man this 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-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 follow-ing 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 com-partment, but was shocked to find they were no longer there. He managed to get home coast-ing wherever possible. Now the Judge is chair-man of the Ration Board so maybe he can con-vince the stern gas panel to let him have some of that precious fuel pronto. 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 non-st Pepsi 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!]

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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 automobile 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.
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—Notifica-
tion of change of address.]

The text for the April 1944 issue began with the greeting Hiya 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:]

Yo, 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, jimmed the lock on the Ra-
tion Board door and made off with 12 precious meat and shoe ration books. Files were tun-
scated and records were strewn all over the floor. The door between the Ration Board and the Welfare office also was forced open and pa-
ers were scattered about. Being bold individu-
als, 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. But no one says there will be any work immediately after church…dress in your best…drop their work and come to worship and re-
sing…nothing fancy about cloths either…they
don’t beat around the bush and sensitivity is a dull. There is always someone at my door with
the good old town of Glastonbury."

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."

Dr. 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 now and then."

Pvt. Paul Dabicki “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-
thing about my home town and I thought the town had moved out.”

Lt. George M. Gunn “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 ‘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…and have 175 to 250 out for service every Sunday and you should hear them sing…nothing fancy about clothes either…they drop their work and come to worship and re-
sume work immediately after church…dress in gymdaries 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 appreci-
ate their address. (That one has me stopped. Can’t distinguish a “Seabee” from a WASP by mere addresses, so you ‘Breez’ 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 Wally 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 Martinnell “I was drafted into this so-called man’s army and never expected to be a “Red pan commando.”"

[These were only ten of the 36 letters ex-
cerpted 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. Sestro

[During World War II, Norma Sestro 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: An article from the Historical Society]

From the Historical Society

Firemen of Co. 3, East Glastonbury are very pleased at the way the latest town meeting was presented on the screen. Make sure that you in action has been made. It was released the other month is crowding near and time for an other 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 on an Island in the Pacific it means that the peace that is every true man’s wish is that 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 McGoan reviewed the history of the local Council and asserted that a large number of townpeople 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 the law permits 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 sluggishly swinging it out with the Jerrys… Had many close calls but was lucky so far… While I’m writing this letter shells are bursting all around and the Jerrys aren’t far away. Bennye Bednuz 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. Siro “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 Charles,’ 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 antice, 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 but 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 mosquitoes 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’ Pias, 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 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 afternoon members of the club man the trucks while the boy scouts pick up scrap paper around town. Over 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. Sestro (Editor)
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 have 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 of 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 or 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 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 brother. It was a month collected in March, April and May. 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 would be an automatic stamp 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.

In this photo from the early 1940s, to the left of the Franklin Pharmacy building (now home to Darybreak 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.

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 I am very optimistic about the outcome of the whole thing.”
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 it 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...”

S/Sgt. Rocco Marone “Am with an Inf. Div. where I’ve been with for 19 months...”

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 crashups, 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 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 crashups...

Sgt. Harley Reed “Haven’t been here too long but already we've seen a quare few missions under my belt as pilot on a Flying Fort...”

Sgt. Leonard Simon “Don’t want to sound sumpin’ negative at this time...”

Lt. Richard Behnkne “Was out of school three months when I came into the Navy...”

Lt. Harley Reed “We've been out here too long and now everyone wants to hear all about what’s happening at home...”

From the Historical Society

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.
Dr. Russell M. McGown has resigned his pastorate of the First Church of Christ to ac-
ccept a call to be pastor of the First Congrega-
tional 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 was distributed to nearly 1,000
Glastonbury residents this year, was dedicated
"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 Historical Society

[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 allot-
ment in the Sixth War drive. The War Fi-
nance Committee headed by Lee Laundry is
making plans to conduct a house-to-house can-
table. Something new has been added to the
Honor Roll in front of the Town Office Build-
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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:] Ihyah 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 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. Tol “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 ain’t the ones to get along with the natives with the swinging hips.”

Cpl. Peter Mignetta (France) “In reading the “News” I saw where some of the locals are still in the States are lonely for good. It has been fifteen months since I’ve seen Glastonbury.”

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 the gunnery at Great Lakes Training Base, and from there left to pick up our ship…Am now working in the galley cooking every day.”

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. Excel 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.

[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 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. Tol “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 ain’t the ones to get along with the natives with the swinging hips.”

Cpl. Peter Mignetta (France) “In reading the “News” I saw where some of the locals are still in the States are lonely for good. It has been fifteen months since I’ve seen Glastonbury.”

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 the 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 news agent crosses 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 Coic off on the train. Among the spectators, also scheduled to take the same train, was Joseph Carl Jr, S/Sgt. 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 in removable cards now 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.

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[From the Historical Society]
by Norma V. Sestero

[During World War II, Norma Sestero wrote a weekly letter to 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 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:] Hi Yah 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 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 old editor will shed tears for joy when the Home Town News comes off the mimeograph machine for the last time and hope that that day is not too far distant.

Snow showers 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... We’re not too far from each other and when we got some replacements and William Faber was among them... This kind of job I’m doing is rather hard for you to have to keep watching your step, for if you don’t your life will be shortened... Lester Willis Jr. "There is really nothing to do out here in the jungle... The scenery is the most wonderful I have ever seen and even 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 rejoin our group we ran into German Para trooper snipers. Had a little fun for a while but none of us got hurt.”

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 to 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.”

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 even 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.”

San Diego “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 bank 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:]

Sgt. Frank L. Humar 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 Levell 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:]

Good luck! Norma V. Sestero (Editor)
[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 so we could sit beside 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 got 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 forty-eight hours 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 had plenty of artillery, mortars and rockets...Despite these difficulties succeeded in finishing it and in the next few days of 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."

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/husband who is kneeling in the front row, second from the left.

"For the duration" in places all over the globe. The Glastonbury War Council is paying the postage for this issue of the newsletter, and the J. H. 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 get 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.]