

Rotterdam Lodge #2157, Richard Durant was presented with the “Outstanding Veteran’s Service Award”. This is the first award of its kind at Rotterdam Lodge, and the Lodge expects it to become an annual award. Richard has dedicated his entire life to our country. He has 34 years of military service, starting out in the US Navy in 1962 where he served for 2 years, and then moving to the US Army for 4 years. He served 2 tours of duty in Vietnam as a helicopter door gunner. He was awarded 5 purple hearts, the Bronze Start for Valor, the Distinguished Service Cross, and he was nominated twice for the Congressional Medal of Honor. He finished his career in the Air National Guard in Glenville with approximately 20 years of service there, being discharged with the rank of Master Sergeant. But Richard’s greatest contribution has been his dedication to the Veterans in our community. Richard spends countless hours helping veterans at the VA Hospital, on the streets, and in the Lodge. For this he is truly an Outstanding Veteran.



Dunkirk Lodge #922 – “So long as there are Veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them.” Gerald Haase, PER purchased gift cards from Save-A-Lot Food Store in Dunkirk. The idea was to give back to Veterans during the holiday season. When Haase approached the store owner, Kevin Connelly and store manager Jim Bartlett they were receptive to the idea and donated gift cards of their own to the lodge so they could support more Veterans. These cards were then presented to the County American Legion. The County American Legion wishes to thank the Lodge and Save-A-Lot store for their generosity and willingness to support area Veterans. Pictured above L to R; ER Scott Bonafede, store manager Jim Bartlett, and Chautauqua County Veterans Affairs Officer James Hurley.

1/2 boy 1/2 man
1/2 girl 1/2 woman



The average age of the military man is 19 years. He is a short haired, tight-muscled kid who, under normal circumstances is considered by society as half man, half boy. Not yet dry behind the ears, not old enough to buy a beer, but old enough to die for his country. He never really cared much for work and he would rather wax his own car than wash his father’s, but he has never collected unemployment either.



He’s a recent high school graduate; he was probably an average student, pursued some form of sport activities, drives a ten year old jalopy, and has a steady girlfriend that either broke up with him when he left, or swears to be waiting when he returns from half a world away. He listens to rock and roll or hip-hop or rap or jazz or swing and a 155mm howitzer.

He is 10 to 15 pounds lighter now than when he was at home because he is working or fighting from before dawn to well after dusk. He has trouble spelling, thus letter writing is a pain for him, but he can field strip a rifle in 30 seconds and reassemble it in less time in the dark. He can recite to you the nomenclature of a machine gun or grenade launcher and use either one effectively if he must.

He digs foxholes and latrines and can apply first aid like a professional. He can march until he is told to stop, or stop until he is told to march. He obeys orders instantly and without hesitation, but he is not without spirit or individual dignity. He is self-sufficient.

He has two sets of fatigues: he washes one and wears the other. He keeps his canteen full and his feet dry. He sometimes forgets to brush his teeth, but never to clean his rifle. He can cook his own meals, mend his own clothes and fix his own hurts.

If you’re thirsty, he’ll share his water with you; if you are hungry, his food. He’ll even split his ammunition with you in the midst of battle when you run low. He has learned to use his hands like weapons and weapons like they were his hands. He can save your life – or take it, because that is his job.



He will often do twice the work of a civilian, draw half the pay, and still find ironic humor in it all. He has seen more suffering and death than he should have in his short lifetime. He has wept in public and in private, for friends who have fallen in combat and is unashamed.



He feels every note of the National Anthem vibrate through his body while a rigid attention, while tempering the burning desire to ‘square-away’ those around him who haven’t bothered to stand, remove their hat, or stop talking. In an odd twist, day in and day out, far from home, he defends their right to be disrespectful.

Just as did his Father, Grandfather, and Great-grandfather, he is paying the price for our freedom. He is the American Fighting Man that has kept this country free for over 200 years.



He has asked nothing in return, except our friendship and understanding. Remember him, always, for he has earned our respect and admiration with his blood.

And now we even have women over there in danger, doing their part in this tradition of going to War when our nation calls us to do so.



As you go to bed tonight, remember this shot..... A short lull, a little shade and a picture of loved ones in their helmets.



Of all the gifts you could give a United States Soldier, Sailor, Coastguardsman, Marine, or Airman, a prayer is the very best one.



Beacon Lodge #1493 delivered 25 turkeys to the Castle Point Food Pantry for the seventh year in a row. This enabled 25 Veterans and their families to a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner. Pictured above , left to right are Elks Keith McArthur Jr.,Keith McArthur Sr, Carl Oken and Veterans Food Pantry Volunteer Lou Osterman.