

Bronxville's World War II

By Raymond H. Geselbracht

Prelude to War

Most of the few villagers still in Europe at the time Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 got on a ship headed for home as quickly as they could. Famed World War I ace Eddie Rickenbacker, who lived in Bronxville through most of the 1930s, left the day before the war started, even though he didn't think war was imminent. It would come eventually, he told the press, but not now. He was quickly proved wrong. Charles J. Pannill, the president of the RCA Corporation, who lived in Lawrence Park West, also got out right before the war started. Mr. and Mrs. J. B. L. Macdonald, who lived in Armour Villa, escaped from Europe just in time, But their ship, the British liner *Athenia*, was torpedoed by a German submarine. The couple was rescued and taken to Ireland. Roy Johnson of Dusenberry Road left Britain aboard one of the last passenger ships to depart before the war started. His wife and daughter, though, stayed behind to continue their vacation travels, apparently completely unaware a war was breaking out. Johnson must have suffered an agony of worry until he was sure they were on their way home.

While others from Bronxville were fleeing home from Europe, another village resident, Frank Gervasi, a reporter with the International News Service, was going in the other direction, by airplane, eager to begin covering the outbreak of war.



Bronxville resident Joseph P. Kennedy, who was the United States ambassador to the United Kingdom, was doing everything he could—including working through his birthday party on September 6, 1939—to get Americans stranded in Britain back home. He decided to send his family home to Bronxville for safety too, but he kept his son John with him for a while. In fact, he sent JFK as his personal representative to help make arrangements for the survivors of the *Athenia* sinking, including Mr. and Mrs. J. B. L. Macdonald. (*Joseph P. Kennedy photograph courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation.*)

Back home in Bronxville, people were settling down to a long period—over two years—during which the United States remained neutral. Many Americans, often called isolationists, felt that their country’s involvement in World War I had been a mistake, and they didn’t want the United States to be pulled into this new faraway war. Congress, influenced by this isolationist sentiment, passed several Neutrality Acts in the mid to late 1930s, designed to keep the United States out of the war. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who wanted to be able to help friendly nations who became involved in wars, reluctantly signed all these measures.

After the outbreak of the new European war, Bronxville moved slowly toward what had been called during World War I “preparedness.” It formed a civil defense organization and began the work of staffing and training the many volunteers that would be needed to run the organization. The village was divided into defense districts and it tested its lone air raid siren, which was on the tall chimney of the Lawrence Park power company on Kensington Road, down by the railroad tracks. The siren’s blare couldn’t be heard in much of the eastern part of the village.

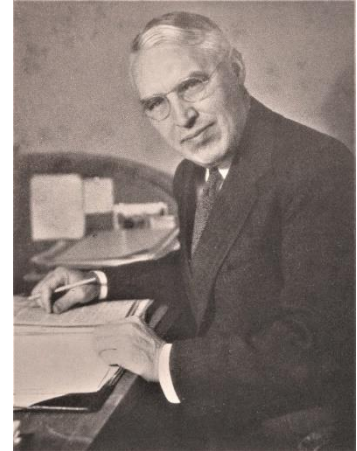


Bronxville was divided into seven sections comprising twenty-nine defense districts. Air wardens, who would assure that everyone abided by blackout requirements, were assigned to each district. Bronxville History Center.

Other aspects of wartime life, familiar to older residents of Bronxville who remembered what it was like in the village during World War I, also reappeared. The

Bronxville chapter of the Red Cross started making surgical dressings and clothing items, and raising money for the relief of those in need in the new war zones in Europe. War Bonds, called “defense bonds” prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, reappeared again in the fall of 1940, by which time it had become clear that the United States had to rearm to defend itself. War Bond posters and all the other patriotic marketing devices that went into selling the bonds, also returned.

Bronxville’s schoolchildren were affected by the new European war too. With the United States officially neutral, but with the war possibly creeping closer and becoming more dangerous for the country, Bronxville’s educators struggled to find the right standpoint from which to teach their students about the world situation. The Bronxville superintendent of schools, Frederick P. Bair, had been thinking about this question and decided that teachers should avoid any type of partisanship in their teaching about the war. The safest thing, he told a meeting of Bronxville School faculty shortly after the war in Europe had begun, would be for teachers to spend as little time as possible on the war, and he pledged that “we intend above all else to remain neutral in the strictest sense of the word and not bring Europe’s quarrels into our classroom.” Such an attitude certainly fit in with the isolationist sentiment in the country, but it would be challenged as the peril inherent in this new war became apparent.



Frederick P. Bair

During the two years leading up to the Pearl Harbor attack, the people of Bronxville were challenged every day to try to understand the importance for them and for their country of distant events. They confronted a constant outpouring of news about a war that wasn’t their country’s war, but which often involved them emotionally and intellectually, and confused them, and sometimes divided them. Villagers struggled to understand how to feel and what to do.

One thing they increasingly did in the days and weeks following the outbreak of war in Europe was go to the library. The Bronxville Public Library reported that patrons were checking out a record number of books and maps about Europe and European history. This helped people understand the war’s historic roots, but more was needed. Several present and former Bronxville residents who had gained prominence and had an ability to influence public opinion responded to this need by speaking out about the complex world situation. The *Bronxville Review Press* ran stories about these people and their ideas, and villagers attended their lectures and considered and learned from the points of view they presented.

Eddie Rickenbacker, probably the most famous person in Bronxville when the war broke out, gave talks and made statements which were often reported in the *Review Press*. He always had a strong point of view to offer. He warned in late 1940 what would happen if Britain were to fall to the Germans. If the British government survived but was forced to flee to Canada, he said, the United States would be at war with the Axis powers for thirty years. And if Britain were forced to surrender, the United States would be militarized and would lose some of its liberties. If the United States wanted to keep the war away from its shores, Rickenbacker asserted, "We are going to have to build thousands and thousands of bombers that can travel 300 miles an hour and range to Europe, drop their loads of destruction, and return."

Two prominent villagers who lived very close to one another in Sagamore Park — CBS radio journalist William L. Shirer and Columbia University historian Allan Nevins — also offered strong opinions regarding the war.

Shirer said in October 1941 that the German way of waging war had proved "to be a march back to the dark ages. We must make up our minds," he insisted, "to destroy it. It will involve sacrifice, unity and common sense, but it can be done. Germany is strong, but not invincible."

Nevins, speaking at about the same time to an audience in Bronxville's Christ Church, said that Americans must work to change the flawed international system in order to achieve an enduring peace after the war. "A world community must be set up in place of international anarchy," he argued. "Once this is done, all the sound parts of [American civilization] — political liberty, civil rights, religious toleration, equality, fraternity, social security — will be strengthened.... It will then no longer be possible for the brutal plans of a single gangster government to throw the whole planet into chaos and conflict."



I. D. Taubeneck

The most important of Bronxville's educators and guides with respect to the war was probably Ignatius Donnelly Taubeneck, the head of the social studies and public speaking departments at Bronxville High School. In 1932, Taubeneck began giving a series of programs on public affairs which he called the Bronxville Community Forums. These programs were astonishingly popular, drawing hundreds of people.

Taubeneck wanted to make people think and learn to conceptualize issues and come to their own conclusions. At a January 1940 forum, he warned that this new war was going

to be a war of attrition, just like World War I. "Are we going to turn our world into a shambles, a super-cemetery," he asked, "and bankrupt our children for generations to come?" In December of that year, he said that the United States could not afford to "sleep through the battle of Britain," and argued that American industry should be mobilized for war. In February 1941, he warned that, because of the war, military rule was a possibility in the United States, and that the Bill of Rights might be in danger. Taubeneck was a tireless provocateur in the cause of educating the people of Bronxville about the new war that was quickly becoming a world war.

The people of Bronxville listened to the views of Rickenbacker, Shirer, Nevins, Taubeneck and others who helped them to understand the European war. Every day villagers read the newspapers, talked with one another about the war, thought about what they had learned, and their understanding of what was happening and what they were in for grew and matured. The time wasn't far distant when this seemingly faraway war would be their war.



Almost all the lead stories heading the front page of the first issue of The Bronxville Review-Press published after the Pearl Harbor attack are about the war.

The Village Prepares to Defend Itself

Bronxville began preparing to defend itself from the possible consequences of the European war in late 1940, about a year after the war began. In October, Mayor Frederick Devereux set up a village defense committee and appointed fifteen members, headed by Harold Van Buskirk, a prominent builder in Bronxville. Both Devereux and Van Buskirk were well-qualified to lead the village's civil defense effort. Devereux was

a colonel in the Army Reserves, a veteran of World War I and a past commander of Bronxville's Leonard Morange American Legion post. Van Buskirk was a Navy veteran and the newly appointed commander of the Morange post.



Frederick L. Devereux (left), pictured in uniform not long after the end of World War I. Mayor Devereux set up Bronxville's civil defense organization before resigning to take charge of the Westchester County branch of the New York State Office of Civilian Protection. Harold Van Buskirk (right) was appointed by Mayor Devereux to head Bronxville's civil defense committee at its inception in October 1940. He later became deputy director of the village's civil defense organization. Bronxville History Center.

Van Buskirk believed the war posed serious threats to Bronxville. He warned that about fifty unidentified and highly mysterious airplanes—possibly German spy planes—had been flying over Westchester County for several weeks. The Army and the FBI, he said, had not been able to identify them. He also worried that if New York City were bombed by the Germans, hundreds of thousands of people would flee northward through Westchester County. Bronxville would have to prepare for such an emergency by training hundreds of volunteers to help the police and fire departments keep control of the situation.

Bronxville began registering its residents to determine what skills they could contribute to a volunteer force. By mid-May 1941, about 150 people per day were registering at the village civil defense office at 79 Pondfield Road. Mayor Devereux said the registration would help to identify “volunteers willing and able to serve as air wardens, fireman, policemen, first-aid specialists, guards at military objectives and workers in other fields.” Flags reminding villagers to register flew throughout the

business district, and Bronxville School students carried banners through the village reminding people to register. Devereux was greatly concerned that “Fifth Column” groups would try to sabotage the registration effort. Despite such worries, the response to the call for volunteers was strong and the volunteer defense force probably included about 700 people by late summer 1941.

Exhibit 2-3

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN
REQUESTED BY
THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEFENSE COUNCIL
COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING, WHITE PLAINS, N. Y.
(Please Print Answers in Ink)

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

1. Married..... Single..... Widow..... Color.....
2. Children under 16 (ages).....
3. Birth: Place..... Date.....
4. U. S. Citizen: Yes..... No..... First Papers.....
5. Health: Good..... Fair..... Poor..... Incapacitated.....
6. Present Occupation.....
7. Business Address.....
8. Trade..... Profession..... Hobbies.....
9. Education: (last school attended) Grade.....
High School..... College.....
10. Languages: Read..... Write..... Speak.....
11. Are you: Registered Nurse.....
Red Cross Nurse..... Practical Nurse.....
12. Have you received training in, or are you adept in:

Air Raid Warning	Filing	Photography
Auto Mechanics	Fire Arms	Public Speaking
Aviation	First Aid	Recreation Work
Canteen	Food Preparation	Sewing
Child Care	Gardening	Shorthand
Dairy Work	Home Hygiene	Signalling
Entertaining	Medicine	Social Service
Farm Work	Morse Code	Typing
	Nutrition	
13. If you desire training in any of the above, state which.....
14. Can you operate proficiently: A Car.....Bus or Truck.....
Plane..... Motorcycle.....Power Boat.....
15. Do you own a motor vehicle that could be called on for emergency service? Type of vehicle.....
16. Do you ride a Bicycle..... Horse.....
17. Have you had any previous training in connection with military matters. State what.....
18. Have you been a Girl Scout, or member of similar organization.....
Are your children.....
19. Will you donate to a blood bank, if requested.....
20. Will you assist in defense measures, if called upon.....
21. What volunteer service are you now engaged in (Answer on reverse side)
22. Please state what training or experience in any other capacity than those above mentioned, that might be of use in defense.....

Remarks:

(Please state any additional information on reverse side of this form)

Volunteers filled out a questionnaire to help officials identify what useful skills a person had. Women, but not men, were asked about their training and skills in food preparation and service, child care, house hygiene, nutrition, sewing, shorthand, social service and typing. Men, but not women, were asked about their training and skills in clerking, firefighting, house repairs, house wrecking, police work, road repairs, telephone service and maintenance, sewer service and water service. Bronxville History Center.

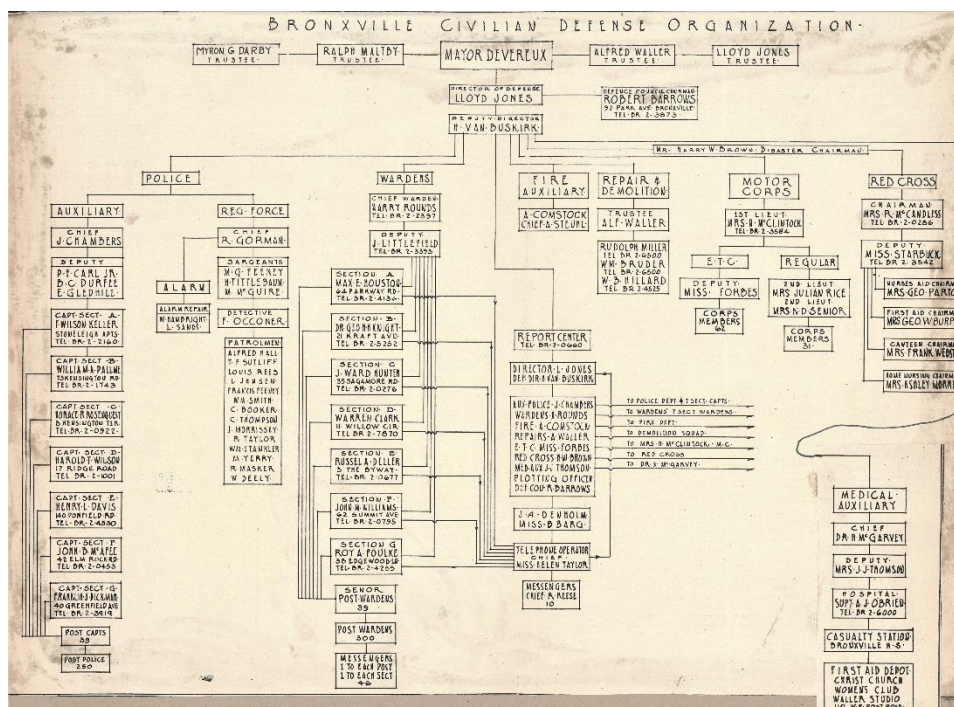
Devereux thought civil defense should be organized at the county level, and he proposed the formation of a Westchester County Civil Defense Organization. He also began planning for the creation of a 15,000-person volunteer force called the Westchester Defense Volunteers. Devereux himself designed uniforms for the new force and was determined that it be well-trained and effective. “The untrained, unprepared civilian,” he argued, “is one of the greatest menaces to the country’s safety today.”



Volunteer police auxiliaries had to be trained for their job. Here defense director H. Lloyd Jones poses with volunteer auxiliary policemen and some of their pistols at the firing range in the basement of Village Hall.

Not every idea put forward to guard the people of Bronxville was accepted by the civil defense committee. Mrs. W. D. Lee, who in the 1930s had originated Bronxville's voluntary dog tag program, thought that the same idea would work with children. She proposed that all village children be registered by the civil defense volunteers and issued brass tags to wear. Identification data for the children would be kept in four different places, including a fireproof, flood proof, bombproof underground vault in some distant location. If a child ever got lost during some wartime crisis, she argued, it could quickly be identified and reunited with its parents. The committee decided against putting brass tags on the village's children.

By the end of the summer of 1941, Bronxville was organized for its new civil defense role. The village was mapped into seven sections comprising twenty-nine districts for purposes of distributing air wardens. A chief air warden for the village was selected, as were three volunteer deputy police commissioners. Mayor Devereux appointed Bronxville trustee and police commissioner H. Lloyd Jones director of the village's civil defense organization and Harold Van Buskirk was named deputy director. A hand-written organization chart from this time lists, besides the air raid wardens and police and fire fighter auxiliary units, a repair and demolition unit, a motor corps, a communications center, a Red Cross unit, and a medical auxiliary.



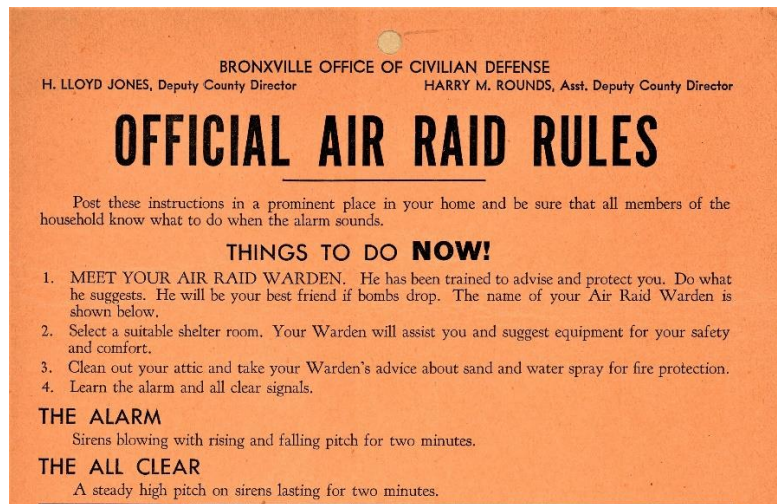
An organizational chart showing the Bronxville civil defense organization in late 1941.

There was a sense in Bronxville that in time war would come to America, and many people felt that time was not far distant. On November 16, 1941, only three weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Mayor Devereux spoke bluntly regarding the threat of war to an audience of six hundred people in Bronxville School's auditorium. "We must recognize...," he warned, "that day by day this emergency is creeping up on us."

After the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941, Bronxville intensified its civil defense preparations and the number of volunteers in the village steadily increased. New volunteers were trained to take up the specialized emergency duties of air raid wardens, auxiliary police and firemen, nurse's aides, telephone operators, and distributors of food and clothing. Four first-aid stations and one casualty station were set up in the village.

Bronxville's air raid system was first tested on December 13, 1941, only a few days after the Pearl Harbor attack. The village's lone siren—a World War I vintage piece high up on the chimney at the Lawrence Park Heat, Light and Power plant on Kensington Avenue—sounded four times to begin the drill, and twice to indicate the all clear at the end of the drill. The siren's blare was loud and clear but some residents living in eastern areas of the village couldn't hear it, and a second siren was later

installed at 5 Oakledge Road, known during the war as Red Cross House. After this first drill, villagers heard one brief siren blast every day, except Sunday, at noon.



What the *Bronxville Review* called a “dress rehearsal” of the village’s civil defense organization took place on January 25, 1942. Twenty-one volunteers staffed a telephone center which flashed reports to over two hundred wardens working from the thirty-nine posts located throughout the village. Seventy-eight auxiliary police officers, equipped with their new caps, badges, nightsticks and armbands, were stationed at Bronxville School, ready to respond to emergencies. The motor corps operated vehicles at both the police auxiliary station and Red Cross headquarters. Doctors and nurses were ready at Lawrence Hospital to receive and treat the wounded. A demolition and repair squad was on alert at the village’s Department of Public Works garage. Everyone was on the job, and the entire organization operated well and effectively.

The next mobilization drill was conducted during the village’s first test blackout. On March 8, at about 9 o’clock at night, lights went out, curtains came down, and the village went dark. Villagers were informed in advance that a blackout and test mobilization were taking place so they wouldn’t panic when the siren blasted for a full two minutes at the beginning of the drill. Posters were put up around the village and flyers were mailed out informing villagers that every building had to be dark during the blackout. Only police, auxiliary police and air wardens were allowed on the streets, all others were to stay inside.

Another test blackout took place on April 4, this one not announced in advance. The sirens’ two-minute blast started things again, and eight hundred members of the Bronxville People’s Defense Corps spread out through the village to ensure that the blackout was total. The village remained in darkness for an hour and nineteen minutes.

The police and air wardens discovered only four violations of the blackout rules. "This was democracy at work," Mayor Devereux declared.

Devereux resigned as mayor of Bronxville shortly after this to accept appointment as director of the Westchester County office of the New York State Office of Civilian Protection. He named H. Lloyd Jones to be his deputy in Bronxville. At about this same time, Bronxville's civil defense council was replaced by a newly created Bronxville War Council, and the People's Defense Corps was renamed The People's Army Corps. The village purchased the Reformed Church's parsonage on Midland Avenue and designated it the headquarters for its growing civil defense bureaucracy. The new headquarters building was named "Victory House."



The question remained in people's minds, though—how would Bronxville's civil defense organization respond to an actual invasion of enemy combatants?

The Battle of Bronxville

About eleven hundred volunteers were working in Bronxville's civil defense organization by early summer 1942. It was well organized and well led, and it had performed successfully in mobilization drills. It was time to find out if everything would work well in real battlefield conditions.

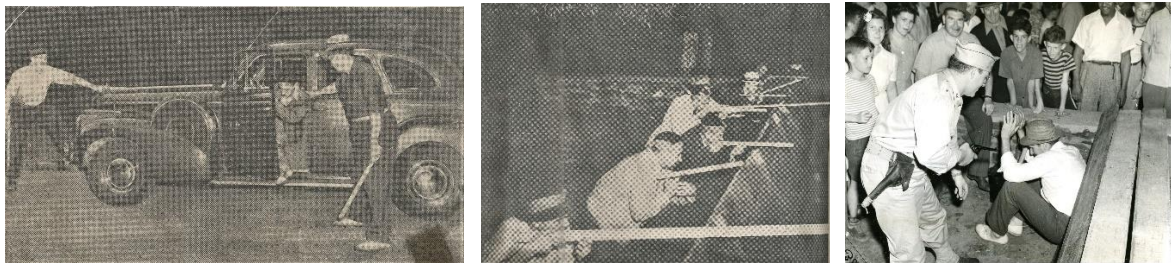
The so-called Battle of Bronxville took place on Monday night, August 3, 1942. About one hundred "saboteurs"—actually volunteer police auxiliary members—slipped surreptitiously into the village carrying wooden rifles and machine guns and flour-sack bombs. Their leader was villager Pitt F. Carl, Jr., who in real life was a World War I veteran and onetime aide to General Douglas MacArthur. The saboteurs advanced on the railroad station, seized it and burned it down. They tossed a flour sack bomb onto the railroad tracks, producing a small puffy white cloud, and looted nearby Gramatan National Bank. Two of the saboteurs stopped a car and, waving their night



Pitt Carl

sticks, pulled the supposedly terrified motorist out. The saboteurs were taking over the village.

The tide of battle turned when the village defense force, augmented by units of the 65th Regiment of the New York Guard, converged on the village from three different directions—from the south down Gramatan Avenue, from the west along Palmer Avenue, and from the north, probably coming down Midland. Village forces completely surrounded the saboteurs, who withdrew to a last-stand position behind a barricade on Bronxville School's athletic field. Village forces charged the saboteurs' position, leaping over the barricade, and the saboteurs were overwhelmed. The Battle of Bronxville was over. It had lasted about an hour and three-quarters. A good many



Left to right: Saboteurs pull a motorist from his car during the Battle of Bronxville.

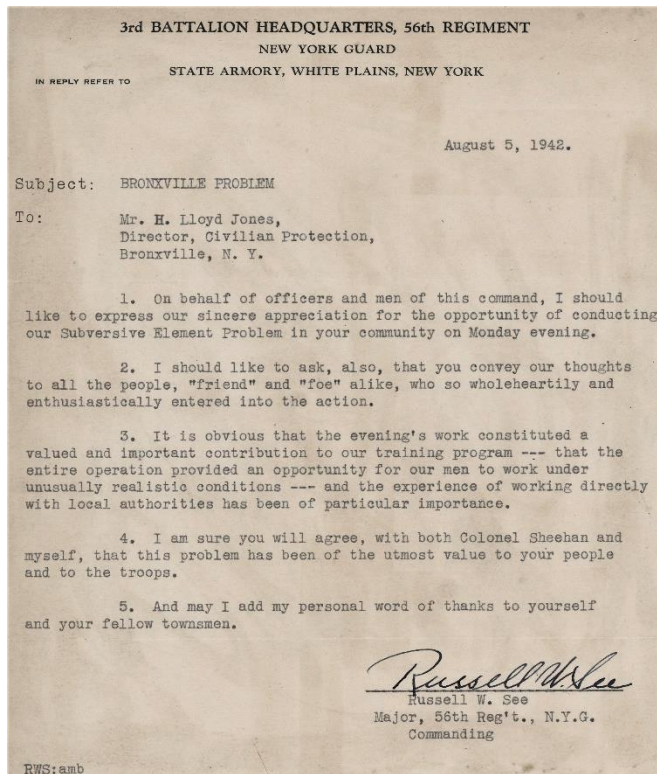
The saboteurs' last stand, behind a barricade at Bronxville School. A soldier from the New York Guard takes a cowering saboteur into custody.

play-act casualties were suffered during the battle, all treated by Red Cross volunteers at Bronxville School, and two real casualties. Two of the last-stand saboteurs had been bumped in the head when the Village troops jumped over the barricade; one suffered a loose tooth, the other went home with a headache.

There was nothing playful about the Battle of Bronxville for former Bronxville mayor Frederick Devereux, now the Westchester County director of civilian protection. "Had this been an actual group of saboteurs," he grimly announced, "they probably would have destroyed most of the important points in the village, taken a large section of the population prisoners, and killed a large part of the attacking force."

The *Bronxville Reporter* reviewed the Battle of Bronxville positively. The exercise, it said, "gave definite foundation to the belief that Bronxville's civilian protection units are well trained and capable of cooperating with armed forces in an emergency," and it showed the people of Bronxville the necessity of having a well-trained and effective civil defense force. The commanding officer of the New York Guard units that participated in the Battle of Bronxville was also pleased with the battle's outcome. "...The entire operation," Major Russell See wrote to Bronxville's civil defense director,

H. Lloyd Jones, “provided an opportunity for our men to work under unusually realistic conditions...and the experience of working directly with local authorities has been of particular importance.”



Major Russell W. See of the New York Guard wrote to Bronxville's civil defense director, H. Lloyd Jones, that the Battle of Bronxville was "a valued and important contribution to our training program...[and was] of the utmost value to your people and to the troops."

A gang of saboteurs such as terrorized Bronxville during the Battle of Bronxville never materialized during the war. Bronxville and other Westchester County communities probably sometimes overreacted to feared threats regarding aliens, spies and possible saboteurs, and the civil liberties of innocent people may sometimes have been violated. But there may well have been some real spies in the county. In April 1942, police assisted by the FBI and military intelligence officials conducted raids on enemy aliens living in Bronxville and surrounding communities. Several people were taken into custody and their activities were suspicious enough to require review by a federal enemy alien hearing board. In June 1942, the FBI captured four saboteurs who had been landed on eastern Long Island from a German submarine. They had brought with them enough explosives to conduct what the Germans confessed was planned to be a two-year long program of sabotage operations against American targets. The FBI suspected that one of the planned targets was Kensico Dam. Westchester County, and

Bronxville, possibly faced some real threats from spies and saboteurs during World War II.

About 20 per cent of Bronxville's population—about 1,500 people—were at any one time serving as civil defense volunteers during the war. About half were men, half women. About 450 were serving as air wardens, 250 as Red Cross aids and another 135 as emergency medical personnel, 235 as auxiliary police, and 180 as air warning control personnel. Others served as telephone operators, auxiliary firemen, drivers, and demolition personnel.

The village's wartime organizations began cutting back their activities in late 1944, and they had for the most part disbanded by the time Germany surrendered in May 1945. Victory House was demolished at about this same time, symbolizing the end of Bronxville's wartime civil defense program.

Bronxville's sirens sounded many times in the months following the Battle of Bronxville, and there were many more practice blackouts and even a few more mock bombings in the village, but no enemy planes ever appeared over Bronxville, no bombs ever fell. The war's violence never reached New York City either, and its people never fled in terror north in their panicking hundreds of thousands into Westchester County. But if the enemy's bombs and bullets had ever reached the New York City area, if the masses from the big city had ever come streaming as refugees down Bronxville's streets, or if saboteurs had ever threatened the village, the people of Bronxville were organized and ready, and they knew what to do to defend themselves and their village.

Paying the Price of War

The United States Government spent about \$300 billion on World War II, an immense amount, equivalent to over \$4 trillion today. The government increased taxes to very high levels to raise money for the war, but still was able to bring in enough to pay for only about 40% of its cost. The rest had to be raised through loans.

One way in which the government was able to borrow money was through the sale of so-called War Bonds to the American people. The government gradually developed sophisticated marketing campaigns—including colorful posters, thrilling public rallies, and clever newspaper advertisements—for what were called "War Bond Drives." There were eight drives in all, each lasting from three to six weeks. The first drive was in late 1942, and there were two drives in 1943, three in 1944, and two in 1945.

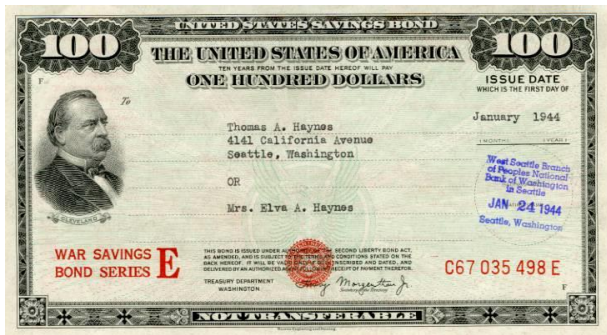
The last one, the eighth, was called the Victory Loan Drive and took place about three months after the war had ended.



Charles S. Andrews

Bronxville's bond sales were run by its War Finance Committee, which had an office on Palmer Avenue. It was headed by Charles S. Andrews, the president of the Bronxville Trust Company. War bonds were sold in denominations from \$25 to \$1,000. The Series E bond, which was first sold to the public on May 1, 1941, was the bond most villagers bought.

The bonds were sold at the Bronxville Post Office and at the village's three banks—Gramatan National Bank on Kraft Avenue, Bronxville Trust Company on Parkway Road, and Bronxville Federal Savings & Loan Association on Pondfield Road. Volunteers from Bronxville's women's organizations also set up booths around town—at the Bronxville Women's Club, Woolworth's Five and Ten Cent store, and the Bronxville Theatre, for example—where one could sign a pledge to buy a War Bond and then buy the bond later at a bank or at the Post Office. If you didn't have enough money for a bond, you could buy War Savings Stamps and paste them in a stamp booklet until you had enough to trade them in for a bond. Stamps sold for as little as ten cents and were available almost anywhere in Bronxville's shops.



Most villagers purchased Series E bonds. They were called Defense Bonds prior to the Pearl Harbor attack; afterwards they were called War Bonds. War Savings Stamps, which cost as little as ten cents, were pasted into a booklet until they added up to at least \$18.75, the cost of a \$25 War Bond.

Mayor Frederick Devereux and the head of the village defense committee, Harold Van Buskirk, bought the first two bonds sold in Bronxville on the very first day they were available—May 1, 1941. This was over a year before the War Bond Drives began, but even without the encouragement of a bond drive campaign, with its posters and

slogans and quotas and community organizing, the people of Bronxville were by early 1942 buying about \$150,000 of bonds each month.

The First War Loan Drive began on November 30, 1942. No quota was set for Bronxville for this drive. When it ended three weeks later, villagers had purchased \$795,000 worth of bonds.



Bronxville was assigned a quota of \$750,000 for the Second War Loan Drive, \$350,000 of which was earmarked for the purchase of a B-17 Flying Fortress bomber for the Army Air Force. The Army said that if Bronxville could raise the money, the B-17 would be named *The Spirit of Bronxville*. This provided an exciting goal for the drive. The \$350,000 that was needed to purchase *The Spirit of Bronxville* was quickly realized, and villagers kept buying and buying. They shot past the \$750,000 quota and by the end of the drive had bought an astounding \$3,128,000 worth of War Bonds.



With this money, the government was able to buy not only *The Spirit of Bronxville*, but seven more B-17s as well. Students from Bronxville School joined with some of the staff of the War Finance Committee to name the planes. The names chosen were *Bronxville Broncos*, *Bronxville Avenger*, *Bronxville Eagle*, *Pondfield Prowler*, *Bronxville Odyssey*, *Trust Bronxville*, and *Chief Gramatan*. The names *Eagle*, *Avenger*, and *Prowler* must have come from the students, and *Bronxville Broncos* too, and maybe *Bronxville Odyssey*. But *Trust Bronxville* and *Chief Gramatan* seem somewhat sedate and may have been contributed by the adults on the committee.



The slogan of the Third War Loan Drive, which was widely displayed on posters in shop, office, and residence windows throughout the village, was “Back the Attack!” The drive opened on September 9, 1943 and Bronxville’s quota was set at \$1,000,000, considerably higher than in the first two drives.

An advertisement that ran in the *Bronxville Review Press* in September 1943 shows an American soldier taking cover in a foxhole or behind a small hill as artillery shells and bombs explode all around him. “I’m here...the enemy’s just over the hill!” the soldier says. “Maybe I’m your boy.... I’m here, with a million other boys just like me. We’re your INVASION forces.... It wasn’t easy getting here, and it is going to be a lot harder before we’re through.... We’re giving it all we’ve got.... But you see, this isn’t going to be enough. Not unless those planes we need snarl down out of the sky on the enemy.... Unless those tanks get here. Unless the supply ships get through. Unless there are enough bullets for this rifle.” He asks that Americans—the people of Bronxville—buy War Bonds so that he and his buddies can do their job. “You’re buying a stake in VICTORY,” the soldier says, “and that means America, yours and mine!”

The people of Bronxville responded to pleas like this one and bought \$2,869,000 worth of War Bonds during the Third War Loan Drive, almost three times the village’s quota.

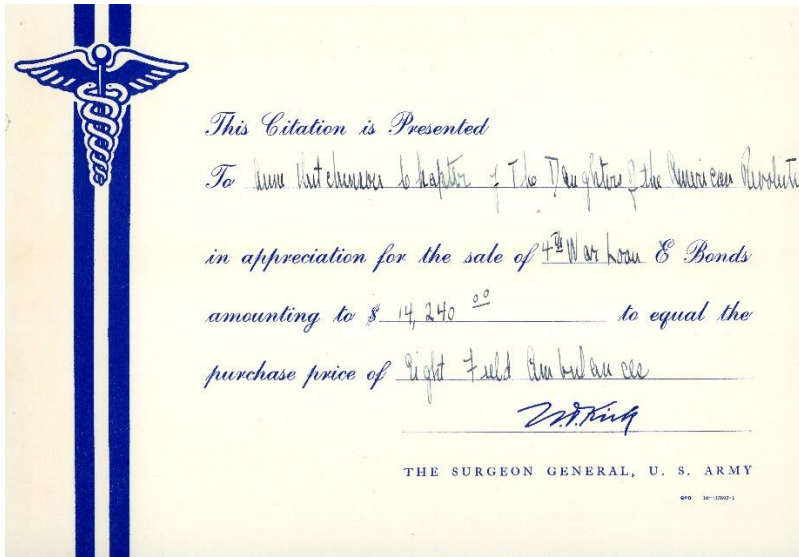


The money raised during the Fourth War Loan Drive, which took place in early 1944, was to be used to buy medical equipment and supplies, fully equipped hospitals and convalescent facilities, and ambulances and ambulance airplanes.

One day during the drive, loud singing—patriotic songs, like “Anchors Aweigh” and “Over There”—was heard in Bronxville every time a train came into the station. It was coming from the roof of the Bronxville Trust Company. The singers were Helen and Louise Lebrecht, well-known twins in the village. They were singing on a stage set up in one of the bank’s big front windows, but speakers on the roof carried their voices to most of the downtown area of the village, creating just the right mood for buying War Bonds. Two sales people stood outside the bank taking orders from passers-by.



Villagers again did their job. They bought \$3,139,000 worth of bonds during the Fourth War Loan Drive, over three times Bronxville’s quota.



The Surgeon General of the U. S. Army sent this citation to the Bronxville chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution to thank the organization for selling over \$14,000 of War Bonds during the Fourth War Loan Drive.

The Fifth War Loan drive was run during the summer of 1944, and there was worry among the War Finance Committee members that people would feel that the war was almost over and that it was too late to worry about buying War Bonds. Sales were sluggish for some time, but then villagers started buying. The final amount of War Bonds sold during the drive was \$2,815,000, slightly less than during the previous drive, but still well above the village quota. The money raised during the drive was earmarked for the construction of twelve field hospitals.



Germany was almost defeated when the Sixth War Loan Drive began in November 1944, but the war against Japan had a long way to go, and this unfinished war in the Pacific was emphasized in the government's poster for the drive. It shows an American soldier looking down at a map of Japan, with a bold, bright red, single-word caption at the top of the poster, reading, almost shouting out, "NEXT!" As with the Fifth War Loan Drive, there was serious concern that Bronxville would not meet its quota. Mrs. Gordon Fletcher, vice chair of the War Finance Committee, who was worried villagers might be becoming complacent, issued a statement that challenged them to buy bonds. "What...will be the reaction in Berlin and Tokyo," she asked, "if they learn that citizens here have to be egged on to support their country? Would not a great, spontaneous demonstration of individual determi-



Mrs. Fletcher

nation expressed right now through the purchase of...Series E Bonds be a first-class blow to Axis morale?"

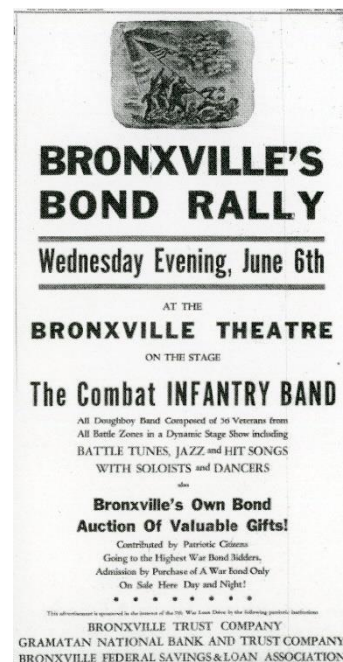
Many of Bronxville's women's organizations identified specific goals for this drive. The Bronxville Women's Club decided their bond sales would buy a pursuit plane for the Army; Sarah Lawrence College's goal was a trainer aircraft for the Navy; St. Joseph's Auxiliary's was a hospital service aircraft and eighteen ambulances; the Girl Scouts wanted a jeep; the Women's Republican Club a tank. When the drive came to a close in mid-December, Bronxville had exceeded its \$2,000,000 quota and all of the village organizations which wanted their bond sales to pay for planes or ambulances or landing craft had met their goals.

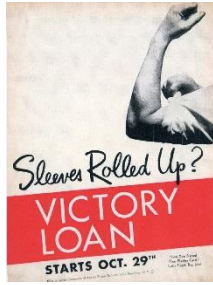


The Seventh War Loan Drive began on May 14, 1945. Germany had surrendered by this time and drive organizers had reason to worry that Americans might not be easily persuaded to buy yet more War Bonds. With Germany defeated, many people must have felt, Japan couldn't hold out for long by itself. In Bronxville, the drive's focus was put on buying fighter planes, bombers, a medical evacuation aircraft, a landing craft, and an amphibious tractor—all for the Navy, which was taking the lead in the war against Japan, a war which government planners were saying would probably last another year or more. The War Finance Committee sent a letter to all of Bronxville's residents, urging them to buy War Bonds and reminding them of the unfinished war in the Pacific. "We shall never forget Pearl Harbor," the letter said. "Our Number One Enemy is Japan."

A War Bond rally was held at the Bronxville Theatre on Kraft Avenue on June 6, 1945, the first anniversary of D-Day. The centerpiece of the rally was an unusual auction in which people did not bid amounts of money to win the items up for auction, but rather bid dollar amounts of War Bonds they would buy in order to win the items. A pair of nylon stockings sold for \$3,000 in War Bond purchases, a set of six neckties went for \$10,000, and a vacuum cleaner also brought \$10,000. Losing bidders often bought War Bonds anyway, and at the end of the auction, the dollar amount of bonds purchased at the auction was more than three times the total of the winning bids.

Bronxville sailed way past its \$2,000,000 quota for the Seventh War Bond Drive, buying \$3,300,000 worth of bonds.

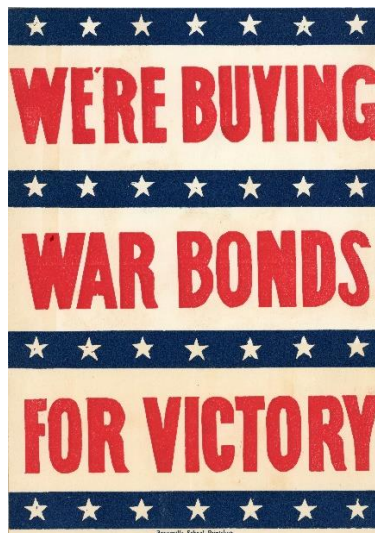




The Eighth War Loan Drive was called the Victory Loan because World War II was over when the drive started on October 29, 1945. The drive's goal was to buy hospital equipment to facilitate the care and rehabilitation of the country's soldiers who had been wounded and maimed. Bronxville's quota was set at \$1,500,000.

There was much anxiety that the village would not reach this goal. This was a familiar feeling in the village during recent drives, and perhaps now that the war was over, some people worried, village commitment really would falter. But this last World War II bond drive followed the same pattern as the two drives before it. First came the recognition that there might be a problem realizing the needed level of sales. The *Review Press* headline on November 29, 1945, read, "Bronxville Lags Behind Quota." Then came a period of worrying and fretting. The headline on December 6 read, "Bronxville Faces Long, Hard Pull for Bond Quota." And lastly came the same old story, familiar from earlier bond drives. The headline for December 13 reported triumphantly, "Bronxville Soars Over Top in Sale of Victory Series."

The people and businesses of Bronxville bought \$20,829,000 in War Bonds during World War II's eight bond drives. This equates to about \$365,000,000 in 2023 dollars. It was used by the Army, Navy and Marine Corps to buy aircraft and other armaments that would help win the war, and hospitals and medical equipment and supplies that would assure that wounded American soldiers were well cared for. The people of Bronxville did their duty in helping the country to pay for the war.



*A flyer made in the Bronxville
School printshop.*

Caring for the War's Victims

After the war began in Europe in September 1939, the Bronxville chapter of the American Red Cross, which had been in existence since 1916, quickly increased its activities relating to the relief of war victims. In June 1940, the chapter opened a permanent office at 29 Pondfield Road. In late 1940 or early 1941, it moved to a new, much larger and grander headquarters at Oakledge, a mansion on Pondfield Road, built in 1870 by John Masterton and loaned to the Bronxville Red Cross for the duration of the war by its owner, Mrs. A. J. Purdy. It was called Red Cross House during the war.



The Bronxville Red Cross's work was primarily in three areas: the making of surgical dressings and clothing items for war victims, both soldiers and civilians; the collection of blood donations for the care of war victims; and fund-raising for its own work and for that of the American Red Cross.



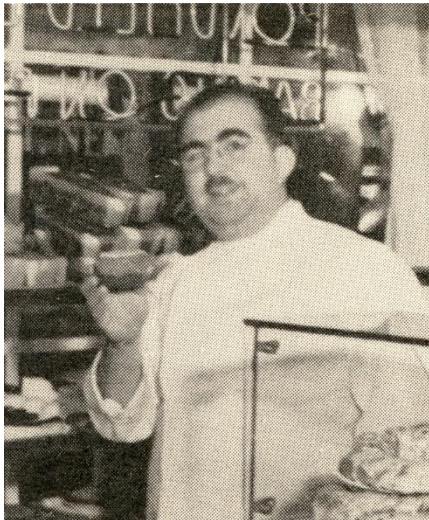
The chapter's so-called Production Unit was comprised of volunteers who made surgical dressings and clothing items for war victims. Beginning in March 1940, the Production Unit met regularly at the Reformed Church, then later at Nurses Home on Palmer Avenue, the Gramatan National Bank, and Red Cross House. The unit sent its first shipment of surgical dressings—17,000 items—to Europe on the freighter *SS McKeesport* in late June, 1940.

The number of volunteers and of work sessions increased greatly during the war. By the summer of 1944, the unit was able to respond to an emergency call for surgical dressings by making 100,000 of them in seventeen days.



Two Production Unit volunteers, ninety-year-old Mrs. Jay Morton and nineteen-year-old Anne-Hart Brown.

One of the Bronxville Red Cross's most important activities was conducting blood drives. In September 1940, one of the first Bronxville residents to donate blood — Hannah Colt, who had led a Red Cross unit in France during World War I—assured others who might be thinking of donating their blood that there was, as she said, “no cause for apprehension. Anyone can give his blood casually on the way to work.” Mrs. Colt meant what she said, and she frequently donated her blood. When the Red Cross set up a blood donation operation in the Reformed Church on November 17, 1943, Mrs. Colt donated her seventh pint of blood.



John Sirot
Some Villagers couldn't be persuaded to donate their blood, but others followed Mrs. Colt's lead and donated as often as they could. One of these was John Sirot, known in Bronxville as “John the Baker,” who ran a bakery at 77 Pondfield Road. When he gave blood for the seventh time, someone pointed out to him that a person only has five or six quarts of blood in their body, and he had already given away over half of his blood. He said he didn't miss it. “The way I feel...,” he said, “is...maybe I can't do anything to keep a man from being wounded, but I can help keep a wounded man from dying.” The next time Sirot gave blood, he was given a red ribbon that identified him as one of the very few members of the “gallon club” in the village.

The third major Bronxville Red Cross activity was raising money. In May 1940, as the Germans invaded and quickly defeated the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France, the Bronxville chapter began raising money to aid the victims of war in those countries. It sent a letter to every resident of the village, appealing for donations. \$6,000 was received within a week.

One donation, for \$5.00, was from a school girl. "This is all the money I've saved this year," her letter said. "When I got to school this morning, I thought how lucky I was to be able to get there and that my home wasn't being bombed or burning up like those of so many children in Belgium and Holland. Then I thought I'd like to get something right off to help those poor children. I wish I had saved up more."

President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed the entire month of March, 1943, "Red Cross Month," and announced a national fund-raising goal of \$125 million. Bronxville's share of the goal was \$54,000.

A dramatic appeal published at the top of the first page in the *Bronxville Review-Press* summed up the reasons why the money was needed. "In your heart," the appeal said, "you yearn to save the life of that boy bleeding to death on the battle field; bind his body in soft, sterile bandages; ease his sufferings.... Instinctively, you want to give shelter to the homeless, food to the starving, nursing to the sick, sanctuary and care to the aged and the young in lands desolated by war's fury." A large rally held in the Bronxville School auditorium kicked off the drive. The village's churches held special services to offer prayers for its success. Merchants along downtown streets put up elaborate displays in their store windows, including posters made by Bronxville School students, and some merchants donated a part of their sales to the drive. Topp's Pastry Shop on Pondfield Road, for example, donated 10% of their receipts for a week to the Red Cross during the fund-raising drive.

Even Bronxville's dogs help raise money for the Red Cross by being enrolled as donors by their owners. The first dog-donor was Koko, a French poodle. Right behind

Your Red Cross

In your heart, you yearn to save the life of that boy bleeding to death on the battle field; bind his body in soft, sterile bandages; ease his sufferings in a far-away hospital; write his letters and keep him in touch with his loved ones at home.

Instinctively, you want to give shelter to the homeless, food to the starving, nursing to the sick, sanctuary and care to the aged and the young in lands desolated by war's fury.

In your mind, you rush food, clothing, blankets, medicine and housing to American victims of tornado, flood, fire, pestilence and other catastrophes.

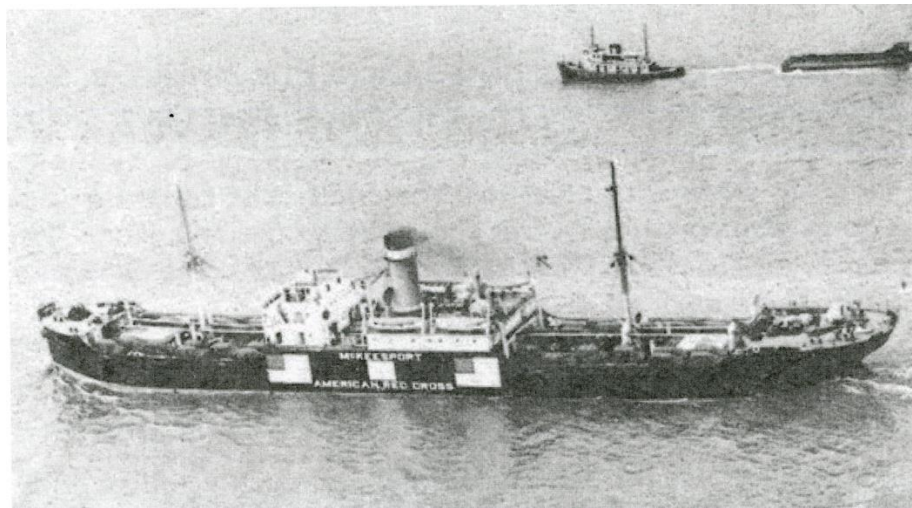
But you, yourself, cannot do all these errands of mercy. Your dollars can — if you donate them to the Red Cross. The Bronxville Red Cross War Fund Campaign for \$54,000 starts Saturday. Let your money do these missions for you!

Needs Support NOW!

Koko in the line of canine donors was Major, a German shepherd. Two Irish setters were next, and then came Heinz, an animal of complex appearance who was identified by his owner as an “American mutt.” By mid-March, 1943, dog-donors had contributed \$35 to the drive.

Donations to the drive continued throughout the spring and into the early summer. The Bronxville Red Cross chapter raised over \$60,000 during the drive, well past its \$54,000 quota.

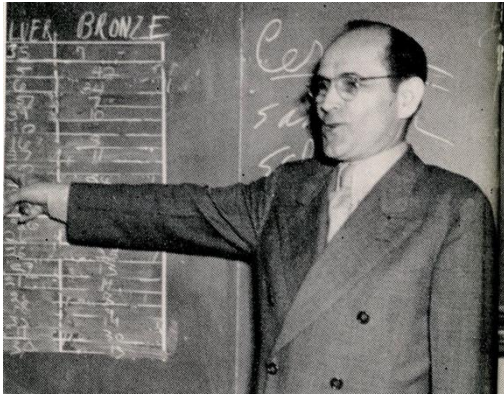
Just as Japan was surrendering and World War II was coming to its end, the head of the Bronxville Red Cross said the Red Cross’s war relief work was not yet finished. “The war cannot be ended for the Red Cross,” she said, “until every man and woman now in our armies and navies is safely restored to their normal lives.” The Bronxville Red Cross had much left to do.



The SS McKeesport carried the Bronxville Red Cross’s first shipment of surgical dressings to Europe in June 1940. Courtesy Steam Ship History Society of America.

Ignatius Donnelly Taubeneck and the Bronxville Community Forums

Ignatius Donnelly Taubeneck was, at the time war was breaking out in Europe and Asia, the head of the social studies and public speaking departments at Bronxville High School; he also became a well-known and widely experienced lecturer in the



I. D. Taubeneck, 1943

Bronxville area. In 1932, he had begun giving a series of programs on current affairs, usually held in Bronxville High School's library. These programs were not just lectures, though Taubeneck spoke at almost all of them and special guests also sometimes spoke. They were also forums, public opportunities for members of the community to join in discussions of the events of the day. The programs became very popular and often had to move their venue from the school library to the

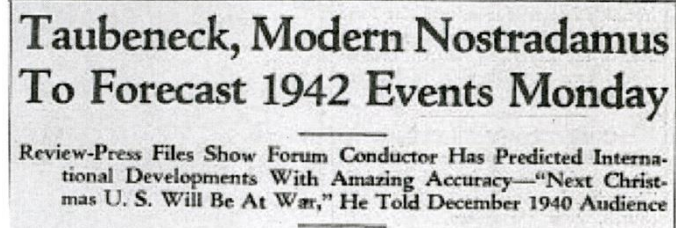
much larger school auditorium. Taubeneck called his program series the Bronxville Community Forums. Their purpose was, as he said, to make people "better informed and more intelligent in participating in public affairs in order to further the workings of a democracy." When the war started, Taubeneck decided he wanted his forums to teach the people of Bronxville about it, and he especially wanted to help them conceptualize it and learn to make their own judgments regarding it.

Taubeneck's forums were sponsored by the Bronxville Parent and Teacher Association. Eight forums, and sometimes more, were presented each year. The audience size during the war years was usually huge—typically more than 500 people, and sometimes almost 1,000. Every seat in Bronxville School's auditorium might be filled for a forum, and sometimes people would be crowded in the back and along the sides.

One of the ways Taubeneck got his audiences interested in the war was to make predictions about it. He had gained a reputation in the village as an outstanding

prognosticator, and in late December 1941 the *Bronxville Review-Press* likened him to the sixteenth century astrologist and seer, Nostradamus. He was, the article said, a "Modern Nostradamus" and noted two of his predictions that

seemed to foretell the attack on Pearl Harbor—his 1939 prediction that the United States



would enter the war “through the Orient,” and his December 1940 prediction that everyone should enjoy their Christmas, because “...next Christmas, 1941, the United States will be officially at war.”



Japan attacked the American Naval base at Pearl Harbor in the early morning of December 7, 1941. In 1939 Taubeneck had predicted that the United States would enter World War II “through the Orient.” In December 1940, he advised his forum audience to go home and enjoy their Christmas holidays because “...next Christmas, 1941, the United States will be officially at war.”

Taubeneck’s fame was spread beyond Bronxville by a May 1942 *New Yorker* article which called him the “Bronxville Prophet.” The author of the article had counted up all Taubeneck’s predictions—57 “major” predictions and 83 “minor” ones, a total of 140

I. D. Taubeneck Is Given Role Of Prophet In Current New Yorker Magazine Article

predictions, and, he determined, the Bronxville Prophet was right 89% of the time! When Taubeneck

made a prediction, the article concluded, “the odds are nine to one that he’s right.”

How did he do it? Taubeneck insisted that he was no Nostradamus. “There’s no fortune-telling about it, there’s no astrology...,” he explained. His predictions were made scientifically. “I predict future probabilities, based upon present trends and an estimate of influencing factors.... Predictions are a matter of enlightened study. If people get enough facts and interpret them objectively, keeping out their wishful thinking and personal prejudices, the truth will evidence itself.” The facts he relied on to make his predictions came from his very wide reading in the national and international press, and from what he called his “personal fact-finding commission,” consisting of about seventy-five people with special expertise who regularly communicated their information to him from sometimes remote parts of the world.

Despite this disciplined approach, Taubeneck's predictions were not always right. Sometimes, though, he could wriggle out of an incorrect prediction. In January 1941, he predicted the United States would be in the war by March of that year. When this proved wrong, he pointed to the just-approved Lend-Lease program of aid to Great Britain. This aid to Britain, he maintained, meant that the United States was effectively already in the war. "You can't help a nation short of war without it being war," he insisted. "We are in this now."

Taubeneck warned his audiences about what the war might do to the country. Maybe it would go on so long that both sides, victor and vanquished, would be totally exhausted and severely harmed. "Are we going to turn our world into a shambles, a super-cemetery?" he asked during one forum. Or, as he warned at another forum, maybe the war would result in a serious loss of civil liberties in the United States. The Bill of Rights would be severely tested by the experience of war, he said, and the country's democratic form of government might be replaced by military rule. And, he cautioned, "the Army may not give the Bill of Rights back to us when the guns stop." He said he worried that after the war America might be ruled by a dictatorship, possibly even a communist one.

He said other frightening things about the possible consequences of being at war. Congressional debate and deliberation were a luxury of peacetime, he suggested, and he thought Congress should be disbanded for the duration of the war. Civilian control of the military was another peacetime luxury, he felt, and it should be suspended until the war was over. "Give the military and naval experts a free hand," he advocated. Freedom of speech was causing problems too, he said. Something had to be done to curb the effect of the media on the American people. And he worried that movies had over a period of years "sapped the emotions of the American people," and that radio programs "had dulled the thinking of the American people and made them gullible."

Taubeneck's audacious views time and again alarmed his audiences. His constant intellectual probing and willingness to think about the unthinkable, though, helped people educate themselves in the meaning of the war for their country and themselves. But he must sometimes have sent them home wondering whether any part of the traditional American way of life would survive the conflict.

The temptation to predict when the war would end was very strong, and Taubeneck succumbed to it. Such predictions were tricky, though, and he often went wrong. In April 1942, he predicted the war would be over before the end of 1943, a prediction he repeated three months later at the July forum, and then again at the December forum—at which he also predicted that Japan would surrender before

November 1944, and that President Roosevelt would not run for another term in 1944. All these predictions proved to be wrong.

Maybe because of these predicting errors, Taubeneck decided to try a different way of keeping his audiences engaged. Instead of making predictions about when the war would end, he would ask his audiences questions that made them think about what kind of world they wanted to come out of the of the war. Would the world be guided into the future by an international system based upon the rule of law and the quest for justice, or would it continue to adhere to the brutal law of the jungle, which would lead once again straight to war?

For the November 1942 forum, Taubeneck brought in four guest speakers, all Bronxville residents and all highly experienced in world affairs, to consider this central question about the postwar world. They were prominent journalists William L. Shirer and Leland Stowe, international affairs specialist and future ambassador to Israel, James G. MacDonald, and New York University economist Leland Lex Robinson. By the end of their discussion, they had all agreed that there must be some form of world government after the war, one patterned after the League of Nations but with sufficient military power to enable it to police the world.

Taubeneck invited these four speakers back a year later, and added to the panel another Bronxville resident, missionary, social reformer and Latin America expert Samuel Guy Inman. The question he put to them this time was “How can, will or won’t we win the peace?” Almost all the discussion focused on Europe. How could the expansionist tendencies of Germany be controlled? Would the nations of Europe choose communist governments after the war? Would the Soviet Union help secure a lasting peace? Could the United States do any better at providing leadership in the postwar world than it had done following World War I? It became clear as the discussion went on that the panelists were worried that maybe the United States and its allies could not achieve the kind of durable peace that everyone wanted.

The postwar world and the durability of peace was again the forum topic in December 1945. The war was over now, and Taubeneck asked his audience, “Are we winning the peace?” There were about six hundred people at the forum, and, without any hesitation, they all answered with a loud “No!” No one, apparently, was willing to hazard a “Yes” vote, and this struck the audience as funny in a black and terrible way, and they laughed. The forum’s six guest speakers then considered the question. Three of the panelists felt the peace would last, primarily because of the existence of the United Nations. The other three panelists were pessimistic. They felt powerful nations would behave as powerful nations had always behaved, and that war would come again.

When the panel discussion concluded, Taubeneck again put the evening's central question to the audience: "Are we winning the peace?" Again, the response was overwhelmingly "No!" And again there was a kind of unbelieving laughter. How could every single person feel exactly the same negative way about this crucial question? Was the world to come really going to be so bleak a place? Everyone probably went home that night hoping for something better, but fearing their hopes for the future might be disappointed.

In the thirty or so Bronxville Community Forums that Taubeneck moderated during the war years—which probably had a combined attendance of somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 people—he helped his audiences frame and understand the complex issues of war and peace which these years posed. To some extent, the people of Bronxville came to see the war as he taught them to see it.

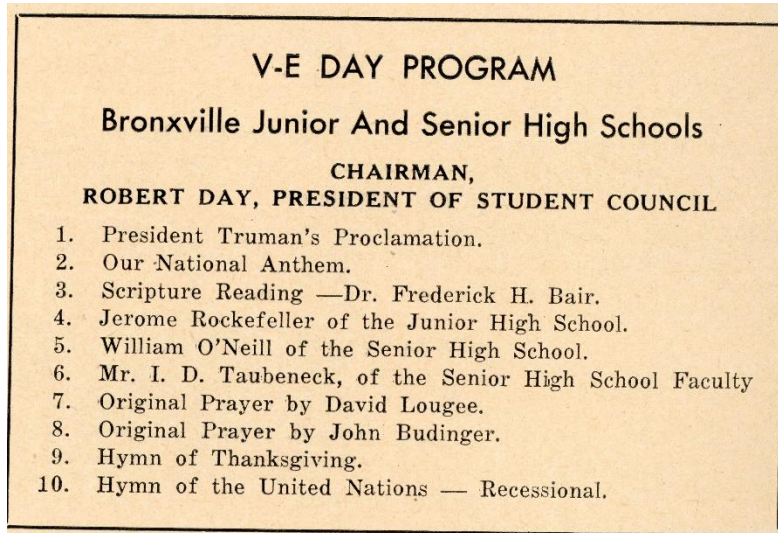


The world government that Taubeneck and his guest speakers talked about was established when the United Nations Charter came into effect on October 24, 1945. From 1946 to 1950, the United Nations General Assembly met at the New York City Pavilion in Flushing Meadows, pictured here. The Secretariat and the Security Council met in a Sperry Gyroscope Company building in Lake Success during these years.

Memorializing the War

World War II ended gradually, almost reluctantly, in Bronxville. It was as if people were afraid to rejoice too soon. The war had been part of daily life in the village for more than three years, bringing sadness and suffering to some and an element of chronic threat to others, and people seemed to want to see the struggle through to its complete and final end before dropping their guard.

When villagers heard President Harry S. Truman's announcement in the early morning of May 8, 1945, that Germany had surrendered, they reacted in a muted way. Stores closed, as did schools, and people left work and came home. Churches opened their doors to those who wished to pray and they offered special services. Villagers must have felt some deep happiness this day, but they apparently also felt the need to quietly maintain their resolve to finish the hard duty of war until the final battles against Japan had been fought and won.



From the student newspaper, The Mirror, May 15, 1945

student, Jerome Rockefeller. "What are the important things" about V-E Day, he asked. "First, we have stopped killing one another on one half of the globe. I think that civilization must be coming to a sad state when we celebrate the termination of the killing of human beings by other human beings. The second thing is that the war is half over; yet we are only a millionth of the way toward final peace."

Bronxville's reaction to the surrender of Japan on August 14 was quite different. Most people had thought the war against Japan still had a long way to go, that maybe another year or more of hard fighting would be necessary before the war would end. But then came the surprise dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the Soviet Union's entrance into the war against Japan, and, very suddenly, Japan surrendered. World War II was over.

A special V-E Day program at Bronxville School emphasized the somber and reflective character of the village's reaction to Germany's surrender. The program included a scripture reading, two prayers written by students for the occasion, a hymn of thanksgiving and a "Hymn of the United Nations," and a moving piece by a junior high school



In Bronxville, people crowded into cars and went through the village's downtown streets cheering and hollering out their joy. Pondfield Road, especially, became a parade route for V-J Day revelers. Whistles, tin horns, pots and pans clashed together, firecrackers, a few gunshots, sirens, and even a large clanging fire engine bell filled the village with their noisy celebration of the long-hoped-for end to the fighting. The cares and austerities of wartime were thrown off suddenly and almost violently. Even many people who typically preferred quiet to noise seemed to enjoy the unruly celebration, and many of them probably joined the revelers in the almost universal waving of small American flags. The *Bronxville Review-Press* summed up the situation in Bronxville with the headline, "Village Marks News of Peace with Noisiest Doings in History."

There was a quieter, more reflective side to the celebration as well. The bells of the Reformed Church rang out hymns to celebrate the peace, and many people attended special church services. The war was over. Everyone was grateful for that. But villagers must also have felt a troubled yearning for a peace that would be more enduring than the one that followed World War I.

Probably about 1,400 people from the Bronxville community served in World War II, and about 64 of these died in the war. Bronxville was somewhat slow in turning its attention to the creation of a memorial to these men and women, but both the Village of Bronxville and the Leonard Morange American Legion Post had by the fall of 1946 formed committees to consider ideas for a memorial.

The first idea which attracted the interest of both these committees was for what came to be called a "living memorial," one which would not be a great monument made of stone or steel, but rather one which would provide services which would make the lives of the villagers who had served their country better. A community center was suggested, but enthusiasm for such a project died away when people began to consider the great amount of money that would have to be continually raised to keep it going.

After the community center idea had faded, months went by without any real progress being made toward settling on a memorial plan. Several ideas were considered by the Village of Bronxville and Morange Post memorial committees, but neither committee felt strongly enough about any of the ideas to recommend one.

Finally in March 1948 the Morange Post's committee made a decision. It recommended that the Post endorse a plan to donate funds to Lawrence Hospital to help with the construction of a Community Memorial Building. The Post would also mount a plaque in the main lobby of the building which memorialized, in the committee's words, "the gallant men and women of this community who served their country in the armed forces during World War II" and which also dedicated the life-saving work of Lawrence Hospital to them. The Post's members, though, decided not to approve its memorial committee's recommendation. It feared that the fund-raising effort that such a proposal would require would be too heavy a burden on the Post.

More months went by, and the discussion of memorial ideas went on and on. Perhaps Bronxville's war memorial could be an athletic stadium at Bronxville School; or a grove of trees at Village Hall; or an obelisk somewhere on village property; or a bronze plaque inside Village Hall; or a World War II flagpole like the WWI flagpole at Bronxville School.

In early 1949, the Post's memorial committee was finally ready to recommend a new plan. It proposed that two semi-circular stone benches be built around the World War I memorial flagpole in front of Bronxville School. The benches would have inscribed on them the names of World War II battles and also the names of Bronxville servicemen and women who died in the war. The Post's leaders and members were very enthusiastic about the new plan, and it was approved.

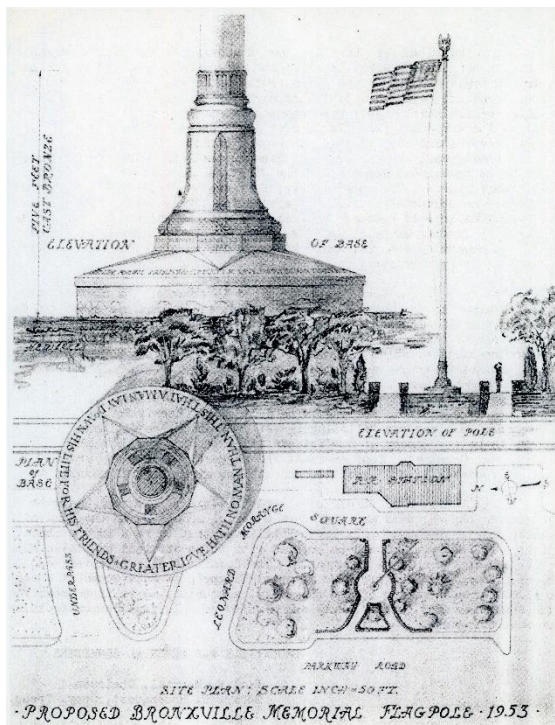
The Post presented the plan, along with a drawing of the proposed memorial benches, to the Bronxville Board of Trustees on February 14, 1949, and urged that the Village of Bronxville take over direction of the project. The trustees set up a committee to study the idea. They also determined that the proposed memorial should not be paid for by the Village of Bronxville, but rather that its funding should be privately undertaken.

The new plan quickly ran into trouble. The committee appointed by the Board of Trustees to consider it worried that it was too expensive, and that the Bronxville Board of Education might not approve placing it on Bronxville School grounds, right next to and even in a sense surrounding the World War I memorial. More months went by, and still the concerns were not resolved. By the end of 1949 it was clear to everyone that the plan was dead. There would be no memorial benches around Bronxville School's flagpole.

By March 1950, the Morange Post and the Village were circulating a new plan. It proposed a 26-foot tall granite torch, with granite blocks on either side on which the names those from the Bronxville community who died in World Wars I and II would be inscribed. The memorial would be built at the southeast corner of the public library property, near the intersection of Pondfield Road and Crow's Nest Road. In June 1950, Mayor Ralph Maltby posed on the library lawn with members of the village's war memorial committee, showing off a wooden model of the proposed monolith.



The new plan quickly became controversial, and the controversy wouldn't die down. Some people still wanted a living memorial rather than a monumental one, and others just didn't like the new design or the new location. The memorial torch idea, like earlier proposals, was given up.



It took over a year to develop and put forward a new plan. Sometime probably in mid 1952, the commander of the Morange Post proposed a very modest plan that he hoped would result in a quick realization of the so far elusive war memorial. The new plan called for the relocation to Morange Square of the flag pole in the landscaped area between Lawrence Hospital and the Hotel Gramatan, and the mounting at the base of the flagpole of a plaque bearing a memorial message.

The Bronxville Board of Trustees was not at first persuaded by this plan, believing that it was too simple and would not make for a worthy memorial. When Morange Post members learned the Board's reaction, many worried, as their commander later put it, "that once again, we would become involved in a grandiose scheme that would fall of its own weight." But when the Post revised its plan somewhat by including a newly made base for the flagpole, the Board of Trustees changed its mind and approved the plan.

It took more than a year to build the memorial, which was dedicated on Memorial Day, 1954. About 4,000 people gathered around Morange Square for the ceremony. Finally, almost nine years after the end of World War II, Bronxville had a war memorial. The people involved in planning the memorial must have felt a great sense of relief on that dedication day in 1954, and also proud that they had endured through so many delays and dead ends to see a handsome memorial finally built.

The main design element of the new memorial was the base of the flagpole. It was made of copper and was six feet in diameter and five feet high. An inscription encircled the base, from the Gospel of St. John: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." A small plaque was mounted just above this encircling inscription which said, "In honor of those of the community who gave their lives in defense of our country."



The memorial—planned from the beginning as a World War II memorial— included no mention of World War II, and it wasn't really a World War II memorial at all. Rather it was a memorial to the men and women from the Bronxville community who died in or ever would die in any war the United States had fought or ever would fight.

It is a quietly beautiful memorial with a noble message, but it is possibly also a somewhat confusing memorial whose message is difficult to recognize. And it probably doesn't cause many people to think about World War II. Perhaps to partially remedy this problem, the Morange Post sometime after 2003 put up near the flagpole a small memorial stone to those who served in World War II, with the legend, "Never to be forgotten."





This bronze plaque in the Reformed Church's entry foyer honors the service of the members of the parish who served in World War II. It lists the names of about 350 people who served in the war, and eighteen who died.



The center window of a triptych in Christ Church honoring the service of John Cutwell Campbell, US Army Air Force, who died in action on January 28, 1945.

The author thanks Mike Fix for showing him the church memorials.

Soldiers, Sailors and a Cryptanalyst

Probably about 1,400 people from the Bronxville community served in World War II. They are represented here by twenty-two men and women who in different ways served their country during the war and whose record of service has been sufficiently preserved that they can be remembered as individuals and their wartime experiences can be understood and appreciated. Most of these people were in the armed forces, but a few served in other ways than military service.

Service to country is often remembered solemnly, with gravity and maybe bowed heads and prayer. But the stories of these twenty-two people will sometimes give rise to feelings of excitement and awe and affection too as one discovers what they did and what they were like. One also feels that in some mysterious way their actions and experiences are also ours, part of our history as members of the Bronxville community, and that we can still feel their presence in the village.

It's extraordinary that one small village could have included people who experienced such a great range of wartime service as did these men and women.

Admiral Husband E. Kimmel

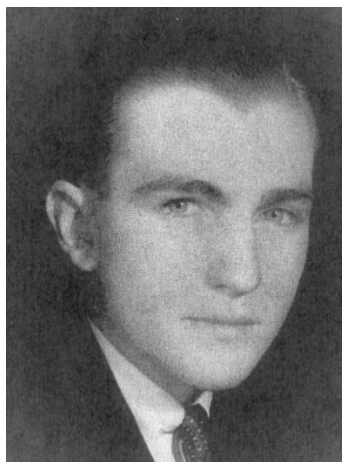


Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, who lived at 280 Bronxville Road, was commander in chief of the U. S. Pacific Fleet at the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He was removed from command ten days after the attack, and subsequently reduced in rank. He retired from the Navy shortly afterward. A presidential commission charged

to investigate the Pearl Harbor attack determined that Kimmel was guilty of errors of judgment and dereliction of duty during the period leading up to the attack. Kimmel defended himself during his testimony to the commission, saying that important information had not been given to him prior to the attack. His intelligence officer backed up his testimony, saying that he did not believe that Kimmel been given all the information the government had regarding Japanese forces.

Kimmel's family has tried on several occasions to have his four-star rank reinstated. Presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton all declined to do so. In 1999, the United States Senate passed a resolution asking the president to restore Kimmel's rank, but no president from Clinton to the present has acted on the resolution.

Walter Winslow



Navy pilot Walter Winslow (Bronxville High School Class of 1932) was taken prisoner by the Japanese when his ship, the USS *Houston*, was sunk off the coast of Java on March 1, 1942. In his last letter home before being captured, postmarked January 1, 1942, he wrote this: "I can't tell you where I am, where I am going or where I have been, but you can believe me when I say we are getting around. Life is not dull a minute...[and] I don't believe that I would want to be any place but right here."

Winslow was liberated at war's end. He returned to the United States on September 14, 1945, having been a prisoner of war for three and a half years.

Eliot N. Vestner, Sr. and Eliot N. Vestner, Jr.



Eliot Vestner, Sr. began service in the Army about two weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He spent most of the war in the Washington, DC area. In April 1945, as the war was ending, he was sent to California, and then, a few months later to Japan to participate in the American military government. He remained in the Army following the war.

Eliot Vestner, Jr. and his mother were left alone in Bronxville. The boy knew his father was serving in the war, but couldn't figure out exactly what he did. He was away most of the time and didn't say much about his work during his visits home. His letters didn't reveal anything either.

Eliot served his own kind of kid's wartime service at home in Bronxville. Air raid sirens might sound at any time, always for a drill, but the boy sometimes feared the siren might be warning everybody that the big German bombers people had been talking about were flying toward the village. If the siren sounded when Eliot was at school, he got under his desk. If the siren came at night, he and his mother had to quickly pull down the shades and turn off all the lights. If they forgot one, a warden would knock at the door and tell them to put it out. Eliot didn't mind the daytime sirens, but didn't like the nighttime ones. "The sirens at night were spooky," he later remembered.

He remembered too the rumors that sometimes frightened him. "Rumors were going around," he recalled, "...about German submarines lurking just off the coast sinking our ships; bodies of dead Germans washing up on beaches; German spies landing on the coast to carry out sabotage."

He sometimes had to puzzle over things he heard about the enemies—the Germans and the Japanese. "Aunt Margie," he remembered, "...had never gotten past

the last war and she didn't like Germans.... She would say things like 'I just can't understand why we can't put all the Germans in a big concentration camp. We did it with the...[Japanese] and I think it would make perfect sense.'"

Eliot and his mother left Bronxville to be with Eliot Vestner, Sr. in May 1948.

*Frederick L. Devereux, Frederick L. Devereux, Jr.,
Elizabeth C. Devereux*



In the summer of 1942, Bronxville mayor Frederick L. Devereux, who had served in the Army during World War I, stepped down as mayor and took a commission as a colonel with the Army's Ordnance Automotive Center.

His son, Frederick L. Devereux, Jr. (Bronxville High School Class of 1933), was commissioned a lieutenant in the Army in late 1940 or early 1941. He served as an instructor at West Point and later with the 7th Army in Europe.

Devereux, Sr.'s daughter, Elizabeth C. Devereux (Bronxville High School Class of 1936) was the first person from Bronxville to be accepted into the Women's Army Auxiliary Corp's officer candidate program. When Devereux, Sr. was asked about his daughter's Army service, he said, "Women will have to be in this thing.... This is a total war, and it requires the total effort of everyone according to their capacities."

When the 7th Army liberated a small Austrian town near Salzburg, Frederick Devereux, Jr.'s unit encountered a Hungarian colonel sitting at a desk in the home of the village priest. When the Americans questioned him, he said he was guarding what he called "Hungarian valuables" — and these turned out to be the Crown Jewels of the House of Habsburg, including the imperial crowns, orbs, scepters, and swords used for centuries in the coronation ceremonies of the Holy Roman Empire and, later, the Austrian Empire.



John S. Allard



John S. Allard, who lived at 25 Edgewood Lane in Bronxville, served on the staff of famed World War II Air Force commander Jimmy Doolittle in the 12th Bomber Command in North Africa in 1942-1943, and afterwards he served as Doolittle's chief of staff in the Eighth Air Force in England.

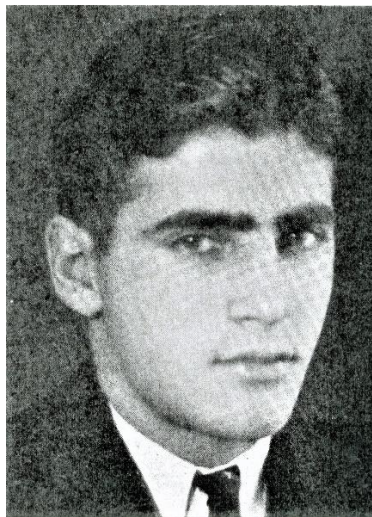
In 1945, Allard was, together with Jimmy Doolittle and also with actor Jimmy Stewart, one of the founders of the Air Force Association.

David Channing Moore



David Channing Moore, son of former Bronxville mayor T. Channing Moore of 12 Elm Rock Road, served in Brazil and in the China-Burma area during the war. In February 1943, while Moore was serving in Natal, Brazil, he was assigned to be President Franklin D. Roosevelt's driver during his visit there to inspect American and Brazilian troops.

Barty Tenore

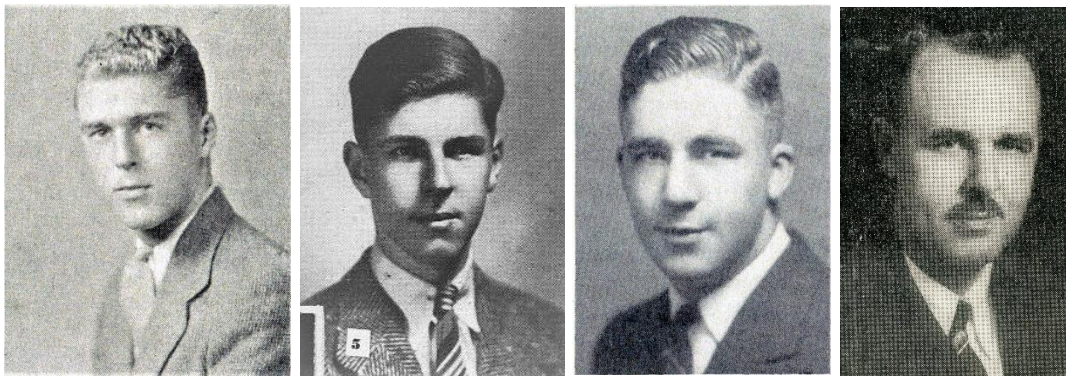


Barty Tenore (Bronxville High School Class of 1932), son of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Tenore of 12 Parkway Road, served as a flight leader with the Army Air Force in France. He flew 100 missions and became an ace, credited with shooting down eight enemy planes. He stayed in the service following the war and was among the first men in the

Army Air Force to be trained to fly its first jet fighter, the P-80 Shooting Star. He was killed in a plane crash in November 1947.

Tenore was an outstanding Bronxville High School athlete, especially in football. For several years following the war, a trophy named for him was awarded each year to the winning Bronxville High School contestant in the Football Field Day events, which were sponsored by the Leonard Morange American Legion Post.

*Bruce Van Buskirk, David Van Buskirk, Douglas Van Buskirk,
Harold Van Buskirk*



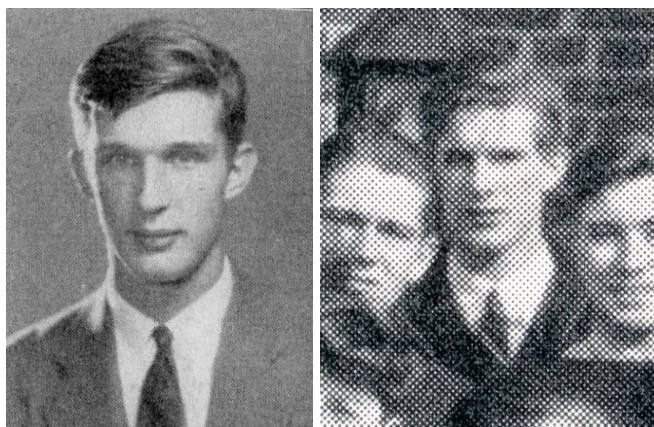
Bruce Van Buskirk (Bronxville High School class of 1936), the son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Van Buskirk of Stoneleigh Plaza, served in the Navy as the executive officer of a squadron of PT boats operating off the western coast of Italy. In the summer of 1944, three of Van Buskirk's PT boats encountered a pair of German destroyers and launched torpedoes at them. "Our first two 'fish' ran true and caught the lead destroyer amidships," he told a reporter for the *Bronxville Review-Press*. "The ship simply disintegrated. A third torpedo slammed home into the second German [destroyer] and a big fire started on her fantail. The flames must have spread to her magazines for as we withdrew there was a terrific explosion. She almost certainly sank."

Van Buskirk's brother David served with the Navy in the Pacific during the latter part of the war.

His brother Douglas (Bronxville High School Class of 1937), a pilot with the Royal Air Force, was killed in a raid over Germany in November 1941.

His father, Harold Van Buskirk, was the head of the Leonard Morange Post of the American Legion in Bronxville during the war, and he played an important role in organizing and administering Bronxville's civil defense effort.

Kenneth Rees, Howard Rees



Marine Kenneth Rees (Bronxville High School, Class of 1942), son of Bronxville Police Department officer Louis Rees, took part in the invasion of the Marshall Islands in January 1944. In a letter home, he summed up his experiences during the fighting in three words, "mud and rain."

His older brother, Army Air Forces sergeant Howard Rees (Bronxville High School, Class of 1938), told a more troubling story to his parents in his letters home. He went missing in action during a bombing raid over Germany in March 1943, and his parents learned that he was a prisoner of war. They heard nothing further for about a year. Then they received a letter from their son, written from Germany. He said he was doing all right, and he asked his parents to do something for him. "Write my friends," he wrote, "[that] I went down and I'll see them when [the war is] over."

He was liberated from a prison camp in Austria on May 2, 1945. He wrote his parents a letter shortly afterwards. "...For all the money in the world," he wrote, "I'd never want to turn back for a day to go through all the trials, tribulations and practically starvation which we went through constantly since I went down.... You all will never know and I hope never see what a war is or the hardship that it brings upon human life."

*Joseph P. Kennedy, Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., John F. Kennedy,
Robert F. Kennedy*



Joseph P. Kennedy and his family lived at 294 Pondfield Road from about 1929 to 1940. Kennedy served as United States ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1938 to 1940, and three of his sons, Joseph, John, and Robert served in the Navy during the war.

Lieutenant John F. Kennedy commanded a PT boat in the South Pacific. His boat, while on a combat mission in the Solomon Islands, was cut in half when it was rammed by a Japanese destroyer late at night on August 1, 1942. He and his surviving crew decided not to surrender, and instead swam over three miles to the nearest island. Kennedy, who had seriously injured his back, towed a badly burned crew member along with him as he swam, clutching a strap of the wounded man's life jacket in his teeth. Over the next few days, he made more long swims to other islands, hoping to find food and water for his crew. They were rescued on August 8. He was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his extraordinary heroism.



On August 12, 1944, Lieutenant Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., a Navy pilot, took off from a base in southern England. His plane was loaded with over 20,000 pounds of explosives. He was supposed gain altitude, put the plane on radio-controlled autopilot, which would direct it to a German submarine base, and bail out. But the plane exploded before Kennedy got out.

Robert F. Kennedy enlisted in the Naval Reserve six weeks before his 18th birthday in 1943. After several months on active duty, he was transferred to an officer training program. In early 1946, he asked to be released from the program and to be assigned to a newly commissioned destroyer named after his brother Joseph during its maiden cruise. He was discharged from the Navy in May 1946.

Halsey V. Barrett



U. S. Navy Reserve Lieutenant Halsey V. Barrett served aboard the submarine chaser USS *PC-1261* during the D-Day invasion of France.

In the early morning of June 6, 1944, Barrett's ship was escorting landing craft carrying American soldiers to the D-Day invasion beaches. Fire from German shore batteries struck its engine room and the ship sank. *PC-1261* was the first ship to be sunk during the invasion. Barrett suffered minor wounds during his D-Day action and was awarded the Purple Heart.

During the war, Barrett's wife, Janet, the daughter of future ambassador to Israel James D. McDonald, lived with her parents at Alden Place. After the war, Barrett and

his wife moved to 11 Wood End Lane, where they lived for many years. Barrett became a pioneer in the development of television, and was a co-founder of the American Television Society.

Ann Caracristi



Ann Caracristi (Bronxville High School Class of 1938) was born in Bronxville in 1921 and lived with her family at 3 Beechwood Road. At the end of her senior year in college, in June 1942, she was recruited by the Army's Signal Security Agency, which assigned her to work at Arlington Hall in Virginia, formerly a women's college, now the agency's headquarters for its work on decrypting the communications of the Japanese Imperial Army.

Caracristi joined the Japanese Army Codes Section, where she became the head of a research division which broke the codes of the Japanese Water Transport Command. This command controlled an immense fleet of ships moving cargo between Japan and its occupied territories throughout the South Pacific. The thousands of messages that Caracristi's unit decrypted included convoy schedules which told military leaders when ships were expected to reach specific locations. American submarines and aircraft were sent to intercept the convoys, and so many Japanese ships were sunk that the movement of cargo to Japan from its South Pacific empire was cut in half between 1942 and 1944.

Not long after the Water Transport Command code had been broken, Caracristi was listening to the radio one Sunday and heard that American submarines had sunk four Japanese ships, and she knew that those submarines had been lying in wait for the ships because of the messages which her division had decrypted. “That was a pretty good feeling,” she later said.

After the war, as the Cold War gradually took shape, Caracristi became increasingly involved with decrypting the Soviet Union’s communications. Her responsibilities steadily grew, and when she retired in 1982 she was the National Security Agency’s deputy director, which was the highest civilian post in the agency.

At the time of her retirement, President Reagan awarded Caracristi the National Security Medal, the highest decoration that can be awarded to a civilian working in intelligence.

