



*PFC John C. Wardell was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of his bravery and sacrifice during WWII*

PFC John M. Wardell was born on July 12, 1925 in Point Pleasant, NJ. After graduating from high school, John entered the Army in October 1943 in Camden NJ and attended basic training at Camp Blanding, FL. Arriving in England in April 1944, John volunteered for the Rangers and was sent to Baggy Point, England for Ranger training. On June 18th, 1944, he arrived on Omaha Beach and joined E Co, 2nd Ranger Bn. During the remainder of the Normandy Campaign, John conducted patrols and training for their next engagement.

In August 1944, they moved into Brittany engaging the Germans at the Battle of Brest before heading across France. John participated in the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest from September- November. In early December, the 2nd Battalion moved into Bergstein to gain control of Hill 400, to the Rangers that fought there, it was known as "The last Hill" John was wounded here on December 7th and later rejoined the Company on Christmas Day 1944. John was honorably discharged from the Army on October 26th, 1945, at Fort Dix, NJ. After his service, John started several businesses, generously served his community, and along with his wife, Nancy, raised their children Ted and Amy.



*Rep. Smith meets with Middletown Committeeman Ryan Clarke and his family ahead of ceremony honoring Army Rangers of WWII*

Committeeman Ryan Clarke, from Middletown, also attended the ceremony with his family. His wife Kristen's grandfather is the late PFC William Henry Kwasnicki. PFC Kwasnicki was born in Mahwah, New Jersey. He served in the 2nd Infantry Ranger Battalion and stormed the beach on D-Day. He helped destroy the German artillery on Omaha Beach. He was wounded 3 times and received the Purple Heart with 2 Oak Leaf clusters. He was also a recipient of the Silver Star for gallantry in action on D-Day, a Bronze Star and the entire Ranger unit was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.



*Rep. Smith with Renee Lomell, daughter of WWII hero Leonard G. "Bud" Lomell, along with PFC Wardell and Wall Township Police Officer Mike Malone.*

Also present at the ceremony was Renee Lomell, the daughter of Second Lieutenant Leonard "Bud" Lomell. 2LT Lomell, then a First Sergeant, landed at Pointe du Hoc, Normandy, on D-Day, and successfully scaled the cliffs, despite a withering German defensive barrage. Pointe du Hoc, a rugged 100-foot-high coastal promenade along the English Channel was located between the American landing beaches, Omaha and Utah. Lomell and another Ranger, Sergeant Jack Kuhn, found the guns undefended, and, with Kuhn providing cover, Lomell destroyed the weapons with thermite grenades and used his rifle butt to smash the sights of the guns. First Sergeant Lomell subsequently received a battlefield promotion to Second Lieutenant, and was awarded some of the Army's highest honors, including the Distinguished Service Cross, Purple Heart, and Silver Star.