



Lakewood invites you to be part of the *Veterans History Project*

Many of Lakewood's original residents were veterans and their families. The city's appreciation for military duty in service to our country was strong then, and has continued to be strong in every generation since.

When the city renovated and expanded its Veterans Memorial Plaza in 2015, commemorative bricks were laid around the memorial so that veterans with a connection to Lakewood could be remembered and honored.

Master Sergeant Dominick Spirito



Branch of service
Army

Dates of service
February 1943 to March 23, 1946

Location(s) of service and/or conflicts
World War II, Honnington Air Base, England and Istres Air Base, France

Medals earned

Reflections on this veteran's military service

Submitted by Lisa Rapp

My father, Dominick Spirito, was extremely proud of his service during World War II and his experiences truly changed his life. With his mother and two sisters, he came to the United States as a baby from Pastena, Italy to join his father who had emigrated earlier to work as a marble polisher in Los Angeles. He graduated from John C. Fremont HS in 1939 with a vocational certificate in printing. After graduation, he worked at the Voit rubber factory, but when it converted to a defense industry factory, he was laid off because he was considered to be an enemy alien. He went to William Volker & Co., a warehouse operation in Los Angeles, until he was drafted.

My dad told the story that on the day he reported to the induction center, after going through a short medical exam, he was issued uniforms, and then sworn in as a US Citizen! After basic training, in February 1943 he was ordered to Keesler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi to attend the B-24 Airplane Mechanic's Course. His first overseas assignment was Honnington Airfield, England, from early 1944 to September 1945 when he was transferred to the Istres Army Air Base in Istres, France.

While on furlough in May 1945, he visited Edinburgh, Scotland where he met my mother, Mary Ann Kane on V.E. Day. He visited again in August, and they were reunited on November 29, 1945. He was shipped home on March 7, 1946. Once he got to New York, he hopped a C-54 and flew back to California, stopping in Dallas, Long Beach, San Francisco, ending at Camp Beal. My mom had to wait for a year for the US Congress to pass the War Brides Act before she could set out for California at age 19 to join my dad to start their life together. After discharge, my dad returned to the job he had left when he was drafted, and he worked there for the rest of his life. Due to the extreme shortage of housing for returning GI's, they stayed first with my grandparents in Los Angeles, and they eventually bought a home in South Gate where they raised their family.

My dad passed away in 1979 at age 57, just after I graduated from college. He was a life-long patriot, always remembering with pride his service in the US Army.

Dominick was the father of Lakewood's Director of Public Works, Lisa Ann Rapp.

Sample of veteran history page

Now, to accompany the bricks and the memorial, the city has launched an online Veterans History Project to tell the stories of those veterans and active-duty military service members whose names appear on the commemorative bricks, or who otherwise have a Lakewood connection (*see sample at left*).

If you would like to share your story or that of a Lakewood-connected veteran or active-duty service member close to you, here's how:

- Review the questions on the back of this flyer, gather the information and select a photo of the veteran (see reverse for guidelines).
- Call to arrange an appointment with a volunteer who will meet with you, scan the photo, and submit your story.
- Or, if you want to submit your story online, go to www.lakewoodveterans.org.

To schedule an appointment with a volunteer who will help you submit your story, please contact:

Community Relations
City of Lakewood
562-866-9771, extension 2123
CommunityRelations@lakewoodcity.org





Veterans History Project Worksheet

Use this sheet to prepare for your appointment with a volunteer.

STEP ONE: Assemble this information and select a photo of the veteran to bring.

What is the veteran's connection to Lakewood (born/raised/live/work here, etc)?

Veteran's name and final rank:

Branch of service: Army Marine Corps Air Force Coast Guard
 Navy (including merchant mariners who served in WWII)

Dates of service: _____

Location of service and/or conflicts:

Medals earned: _____

Has a brick been purchased or installed for this veteran in the Lakewood Veterans Memorial?

- Yes – brick location number, if known: _____ (if not, we'll look it up)
 No I don't know

Photo: Bring a color or black/white photo to be scanned and returned to you. Photo should be a clear image of the veteran alone, such as in a portrait shot.

Reflections on this veteran's military service (maximum of 400 words). On a separate sheet of paper, write a few paragraphs on any reflections or comments about the veteran's military service and what it meant to them and their family. Include some details so the reader can get to know a little more about the veteran. The volunteer can help you put this together if you jot down some notes in advance.

STEP TWO: Call Community Relations at 562-866-9771, extension 3123 to find out about available dates and times to make an appointment at the Weingart Senior Center. **Bring the information requested above and a photo of the veteran with you to your appointment.**

(To submit the story online, go to www.lakewoodveterans.org and click the "Submit a Story" button. Scan and save the photo as a .jpg in advance. You'll answer the questions above and upload the photo.)