

# **Fort Taber Flag to honor George E. Patisteas, KIA during WWII Aboard the USS Bunker Hill**

During the month of May, the 21st Lights for Peace flag to fly at the Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum honors the memory of George E. Patisteas, killed in action at the age of 19, during WWII aboard the aircraft carrier, USS Bunker Hill, while serving in the United States Navy.

George Evangelos Patisteas was born on January 10, 1926. He was the son of Greek immigrants, Evangelos and Olga (Bakakeas) Patisteas and was the brother of Arthur, James, Stella and Aphrodite.

George was seventeen years old when he decided to leave New Bedford High School in his Junior year to enlist in the United States Navy on February 26, 1943. He received his training at the U.S. Naval Training Station in Sampson, NY and was assigned to the USS Bunker Hill as a Fireman First Class.

During his “nearly two years overseas, Patisteas had taken part in 10 major battles and 12 engagements. Then came that dreadful morning, May 11, 1945. While supporting the invasion of Okinawa, Japan, the USS Bunker Hill was attacked” by two Kamikaze planes. “George, along with 346 other crew members, perished in the attack. Another 246 were injured and another 43 were reported missing. The attack came just 4 months before WWII would end. He was buried at sea,” as detailed in a podcast by Linda Roy of the Standard-Times, in a series entitled Traffic Island, which profiles the veterans behind the names we see on highways, bridges, overpasses and traffic islands that are honored throughout the city.

It is fitting that Mr. Patisteas is being honored during the month of May, marking the 76th anniversary of the attack on the USS Bunker Hill. Over the years there have been many ceremonies honoring F 1/c Patisteas, who died at the age of 19, while serving his country heroically.

On July 4, 2007, the city of New Bedford honored Patisteas by naming the overpass on Route 195 and Route 18, the George Patisteas Memorial Overpass. Scott Lang, the mayor at that time, attended the ceremony stating "He was a true American hero. George went to war to protect us and he gave his ultimate. He gave his life."

George's brother, James, a Navy veteran himself, was quoted as saying "The whole family is so grateful. It goes to show that no matter how many years go by, the memory of the sacrifice they made never dies."

According to a Standard Times article, Kenneth G. Monteiro, George's nephew, who led the effort to have Mr. Patisteas honored, choked with emotion as he addressed the gathering. "I had the idea, the dream," he said. Monteiro described how meaningful it was to have his uncle remembered along with the other men who lost their lives in the attack that took the USS Bunker Hill out of commission for the remainder of World War II.

On December 8, 2014, 73 years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, veterans were honored at Battleship Cove in Fall River. The ceremony marked the moment of the devastating surprise attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor 73 years earlier. Navy military and museum leaders aboard the Battleship shared the history of that day and their appreciation for those who died in the attack, moving the large crowds to both silence and applause in honor of their country and their lost veterans.

"That history bears repeating on each anniversary, so that each subsequent generation will know what happened there and

will never forget what that terrible day meant for America," said Adm. Gardner Howe, President of the Naval War College in Newport, RI.

The Massachusetts Medal of Liberty Ceremony was held on May 22, 2019, when Representative Hendricks joined Governor Charles Baker and Major General Gary Keefe to honor service men and women from the Commonwealth who were killed in action or died in service. Veteran's next of kin received the Massachusetts Medal of Liberty to recognize their family member's service and sacrifice. According to a Standard-Times article, Stella Monteiro, George's sister, accepted the medal on behalf of her brother.

Private 1st Class George E. Patisteas is memorialized at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, where his name is inscribed upon the Tablets of the Missing in Honolulu, Hawaii. He received the following commendations for his service to our country: the WWII Victory Medal, the Purple Heart, the Combat Action Ribbon, the American Campaign Medal, the Navy Presidential Unit Citation, the Navy Good Conduct Medal the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal and the Navy Expeditionary Medal.

Linda Ferreira, of **Empire Ford of New Bedford**, researches the life histories of area residents. American flags are provided by Empire Ford of New Bedford. Flags are raised by the staff at Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum. Those who would like to honor a local veteran in the future can contact Ferreira at [lferreira@buyempireautogroup.com](mailto:lferreira@buyempireautogroup.com).