

Fort Taber Flag To Honor WWII New Bedford Veteran PFC Irving C. Kaplan

During the month of December, the 51st Lights for Peace flag to fly at the Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum honors the memory of PFC Irving Chandler Kaplan, of New Bedford, a WWII veteran who was killed in Germany in 1945.

Kaplan, who lived at 26th Eight St., New Bedford, was born on July 6, 1915. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Kaplan. According to the archives at the University of Massachusetts Library, Kaplan attended Boston University and Harvard University Law School and went on to practice law in New Bedford, with offices in the National Bank Building.

He was inducted into the U.S. Army on Dec. 14, 1942 and served with the U.S. Army Signal Corps. PFC Kaplan was killed on August 25, 1945, at the age of 30, as the result of an accident while serving in Kassel Germany during WWII.

According to army.mil, throughout WWII, the Signal Corps served a variety of functions and had the responsibility for one of the most important systems used during World War II – radar. Success in combat depended on good communications and that was the Signal Corps' main mission. At its peak strength in the fall of 1944, the Signal Corps was comprised of over 350,000 officers and men, over six times more than had served in WWI.

According to army.mil, "In addition to sending messages, the Signal Corps retained responsibility for the Army's signal security and intelligence activity. The 2nd Signal Service Company performed intelligence-gathering duties."

Another specialized field that fell under the Signal Corps

function was photography. "Its value and versatility reached new levels, especially during the second half of the war, partially due to improvements in training and organization. The Signal Corps created orientation and training films, using the talents of notables such as Frank Capra, who was commissioned as a major in the Signal Corps in 1942, and Theodor Seuss Geisel, who served as a member of Capra's documentary film crew. The Signal Corps also created an unprecedented pictorial record of World War II."

Members of the Jewish War Veterans New Bedford Post 154 erected a monument in Irving Kaplan's honor. On June 19, 1949, a parade and memorial service were held, and Kaplan Square was dedicated in his honor. Kaplan Square is located at the intersection of Fair and Bolton Streets in the South End of New Bedford.

"If you take County Street south to Fair St. and turn right, you will drive straight to this monument in the middle of the Portuguese community which was then populated by many Jewish," according to an article at the UMASS Library archives.

"In 1997 the 6th grade class of Mrs. Susan Baroody of the Congdon School took it on as a local beautification project to refurbish and replant the Kaplan memorial. It was rededicated on June 18, 1997, by the Jewish War Veterans in conjunction with the city of New Bedford."