

New Bedford to observe Veterans Day 2018

The members of New Bedford's Veterans Advisory Board extend an invitation to area residents to attend New Bedford's Veterans Day ceremonies, including a service in memory of World War I veterans of the National Guard's 26th Yankee Division 102nd Field Artillery, Battery D of New Bedford.

The New Bedford based unit lost 22 young men from the city during World War I. The Battery D service will be held at National Guard Artillery Square, where the monument erected to Battery D stands, at the corner of Kempton and North streets, on Saturday, November 10 at 1:00 p.m. Refreshments will follow at the Waldron Barrack, 1092 Kempton Street. The "doughboy" statue at the square was modeled after Warren M. Frank, city resident, and Battery D veteran, and was originally dedicated on May 30, 1924.

The Veterans Day Parade will be held on Sunday, November 11, beginning at 11 a.m. It is presented by the City of New Bedford Veterans Advisory Board Veterans Day Parade Committee.

At 11 a.m., marking the signing of the Armistice of 11 November 1918, bells will toll across the country including the bell in front of the New Bedford Main Library at 613 Pleasant Street.

City Veteran's Agent Chris Gomes said the organizers are extending an open invitation to all area veterans to march in the New Bedford parade, whether they are a post member or not. "Our local veterans' groups welcome all veterans to march with their organizations, and we hope they will be able to join us in the parade rather than as observers," said Gomes.

Parade participants will gather at the intersection of Rockdale Avenue and Union Street (Buttonwood Park) at

approximately 10:30 a.m. and the parade will step off at 11:00 a.m. sharp.

The parade route has changed this year due to ongoing roadwork in the City.

The parade will march east on Union Street, then turn north onto County Street, and then turn east onto William Street to the reviewing stand located in front of the New Bedford Main Library on the corner of Pleasant Street and William Street.

A Veterans Day service will be held at the reviewing stand at the conclusion of the parade and all participants and parade attendees are encouraged to attend. Seating will be reserved for elderly and disabled veterans near the reviewing stand.

Parade organizers have announced that World War II and Korean Conflict veteran Octavio "Tacky" Pragana will serve as the Grand Marshal of the 2018 parade.

About Octavio "Tacky" Pragana

The New Bedford Veterans Board proudly announces that Octavio "Tacky" Pragana, a Navy veteran in World War II and Korea and a retired New Bedford police officer, has been named the grand marshal of the annual New Bedford Veterans Day parade. Mr. Pragana is 92.

He was born March 12, 1926, in New Bedford as Octavio Pragana. He joined the service as a young man, enlisting in the United States Navy in 1943 during World War II.

On Oct. 13, 1944, he was aboard the USS Canberra, 90 miles off Formosa, now known as Taiwan. The ship was struck by an aerial torpedo, killing 23 crew members instantly. He was uninjured and stayed on the ship, which was repaired and traveled on her own power via the Panama Canal to Boston.

Before the Canberra was struck, Pragana earned seven battle stars in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater and two battle stars for

the liberation of the Philippines. He later served in the Korean conflict era on the Seventh Fleet of the U.S. Navy from 1950-1952 and was honorably discharged from the military in 1952. He eventually became a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary in 1982 and is a member of the auxiliary to this day.

When his full-time military service ended, Pragana returned to New Bedford and eventually became a New Bedford Police officer. Through the years, he worked for the department in a variety of roles, including detective, motorcycle officer and firearms instructor.

Pragana retired in 1988, but he never really left. Nearly every day, he grabs a cup of coffee and heads to police headquarters. He chats with officers, volunteers at events and works out at the gym in the basement of Station Three, at 781 Ashley Blvd. in the North End. He is such a familiar and beloved figure doing his workouts that the New Bedford Police Union named the gym in his honor.