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For Immediate Release

***Honoring Veterans in Hospice:
Delaware Hospice proudly cares for U.S. Navy and WWII Veteran William
Middendorf and his family***

By Beverly Crowl

U.S. Navy veteran and Bethany Beach resident, William Middendorf, is a wonderful character, who has lived quite a full life. He and his wife, Marian, have been married for 67 years and have raised 12 children.

They remain a close and loving family, caring for Bill through declining health in the comfort of his home with the help of Delaware Hospice's staff. Marian has become a strong advocate for hospice care, and said, "It's just a shame to imagine that people miss out on all the benefits and support they could have—just from a fear or misunderstanding of what it's all about."

Marian and Bill met in 1941 as students in Indiana, where Bill was attending the University of Notre Dame and Marian was a student in nearby South Bend. It was love at first sight, but any long-term plans they had for the future were disrupted in December.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked. On Monday morning, when the recruitment office opened on campus at University of Notre Dame, 3,300 young men were in line to sign up, including 19-year old Bill.

"It was fantastic to see so many young men step up to defend their country," Bill said. He also registered, then completed his degree, married the love of his life, Marian, and was accepted in officer's school for the U.S. Navy.

Studies were intense at the officer's training, Bill remembers challenging classes in advanced algebra and trigonometry, and not everyone was able to complete the training.

Bill, however, finished in the top percentage of his class, and was appointed as the Navigator for the USS BURNS (DD-588), a new destroyer launched on August 8, 1942.

His new home was an exciting one. The Office of Naval History reports, “The history of the USS BURNS reads like the story of the American offensive in the Pacific. From the first major carrier raid on Wake Island in October 1943, to the final Japanese surrender, BURNS participated in almost every major operation. She earned for her officers and men the right to wear ten battle stars on their Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Ribbon, and two on the Philippine Liberation Ribbon, plus 30 awards and decorations including one Navy Cross and two Silver Stars.”

Bill has stories of his own—not necessarily recorded in official records—like when one of the USS BURNS’ crew members lost their anchor in deep sea. Bill said, “Can you imagine being without an anchor? We had to keep tying up to other ships, which they were not thrilled about. Finally we were able to acquire another anchor, by trading a couple bottles of Scotch Whiskey that I managed to find in my additional role as the ship’s Commissary.”

His most frightening experience was during the battle of Iwo Jima, where nearly 7,000 Americans lost their lives. He said, “We were under a very heavy fire, and we were like sitting ducks, holding our ship’s position near the coast. One of my closest friends, who was also from the University of Notre Dame, was shot and killed. The interesting thing about it was that I did witness the Iwo Jima flag-raising while we were there.”

Bill navigated the USS BURNS and its remarkable crew with the famous Task Force 38/58 through some 20 operations. The Naval History records, “during ten months of nerve-wrecking activity, the USS BURNS acted as an anti-submarine escort, picket ship, fighter-director ship, and aircraft rescue vessel , while the task force struck by sea and air against nearly all major Japanese bastions in the Pacific—the Marshall Islands, Truk, the Marianes, Iwo Jima, Yap, Palau, Ponape, New Guinea, Okinawa, Formosa and the Philippines.”

Bill remembers sinking a Japanese sub-chaser on patrol near Truk. He said, “We managed to rescue some Japanese prisoners, and I kept a Japanese flag as a souvenir of the experience.”

The USS BURNS also earned recognition as a rescue vessel, speeding to save pilots forced to make water landings or picking up survivors of damaged ships in the face of heavy fire.

Finally, after a couple years of intense and heroic activities, Bill was relieved from duty and completed his service.

Marian and Bill settled in Washington D.C., where Bill established a career with a candle business and where he and Marian raised their impressive family of 12 children. When the nest eventually emptied, Bill and Marian chose to retire in their home at Bethany Beach.

In December of last year, Bill was admitted to Delaware Hospice with congestive heart failure. He and Marian are very grateful for their hospice care. Marian said, “I don’t know how we’d manage without them. It’s so important to keep Bill here at home, and Delaware Hospice helps us to do that.”

Bill agreed, “Every single person we’ve met from Delaware Hospice has been kind and just wonderful. “

Delaware Hospice’s nurse, Rita Schrider really enjoys caring for the Middendorf family. She said, “Bill and Marian are a delight. Bill enjoys life so much and continues to live in the present, loving his family, people and God. He’s a very humble man, perhaps not even aware of what a great positive influence he has on others, not to mention the significance of his service in World War II.”

Hospice allows its patients and families the gift of choice. For Bill’s 89th birthday on Monday, November 8th, Bill chose to attend a Church service in the morning and enjoy dinner at a favorite restaurant in the afternoon. Marian said, “Delaware Hospice helps Bill and me to enjoy each day the best that we can, and we’re so grateful for that.”



Bill and Marian Middendorf display the souvenir Japanese flag which Bill acquired with the surrender of Japanese soldiers. (Photo by Beverly Crowl)



U.S. Navy Lieutenant William B. Middendorf in the early 1940's.



The USS BURNS (DD-588)

About Delaware Hospice

Since 1982, **Delaware Hospice** has provided exceptional care and support to 36,000 patients and their families. Its mission is to help each patient, each day, live the fullest, most comfortable life possible. Delaware Hospice is the largest and only licensed, nonprofit, community-based hospice serving New Castle, Kent and Sussex counties in Delaware and southern Chester and Delaware counties in Pennsylvania. Delaware Hospice is honored to be accredited by the Joint Commission, the nation's leading health care standards-setting and accrediting organization. For more information about Delaware Hospice's programs and services, upcoming events, or employment opportunities, call 800-838-9800 or visit our website, www.delawarehospice.org.

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