

Veterans

from PAGE 21

Sgt. Bubba L.H. Russell ...

Sgt. Bubba Russell served in Vietnam from December of 1965 to December of 1967. He was a skytrooper and served as squad leader with Company B, Second Battalion, Seventh Cavalry in places such as Song Mao and Phan Thiet.



He received two air medals for helicopter combat flights over a year's time, received the Vietnam Service Medal, the National Defense Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, three Purple Hearts and the Bronze star "V" for "Valor."



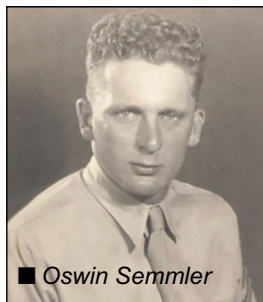
The Bronze Star was given for heroism in connection with military operations against hostile forces. His squad was pinned down

near Song Mao by fire from five enemy soldiers with automatic weapons. Russell exposed himself to heavy fire as he directed bursts of return fire, overwhelming the enemy. He then led his men in an assault on the fleeing enemy, killing one and aggressively assaulting another position, killing three more enemy soldiers and capturing one.

He is the father of the Beacon's Editor Marcy Shortuse.

Staff Sgt. Oswin M. Semmler ...

Served in World War II from 1941 to 1945 in the Pacific Theater and in Germany as an incendiary expert. He was a Purple Heart recipient.



Oswin "Duke" Semmler was the grandfather of Edi-

tor Marcy Shortuse.

Private Aaron Heath ...

Private Aaron Heath of Massachusetts served as a picket guard under Major L. Baldwin and Capt. Luka Drury's Company in Johnathan Ward's regiment in 1775. He was sent to Cambridge Camp, Canada. They attacked the British in Quebec and he was taken prisoner.

According to a letter he wrote, "At Bunker Hill we attacked the Brits and I fired 32 rounds."

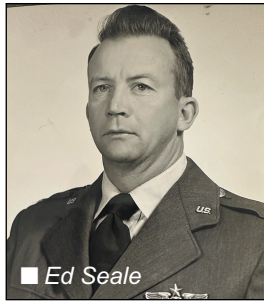
He was also engaged at Bunker Hill under Benedict Arnold.

In all, he was taken prisoner three times during the Revolutionary War. The last time was while he was acting as a scout. He asked them to release him because he pled that he was insane. They agreed with him, and did so.

Private Heath was the grandfather (seven times removed) of Editor Marcy Shortuse.

Capt. James Edward Seale ...

Oct. 9, 1918 - Dec. 9, 2012
Capt. James Edward "Ed" Seale, Lt Col USAF, joined the Air Force in 1942 and was a pilot, serving in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.



He and his family spent time stationed in Savannah, Ga., South Hadley, Mass., Shreveport, La. and Bangor, Maine. He retired in 1970.

Ed was the father of Becky Seale Paterson.

PFC Jack Silcox ...

One island veteran who received the commendation of Silver Star in battle was the late Jack Silcox,

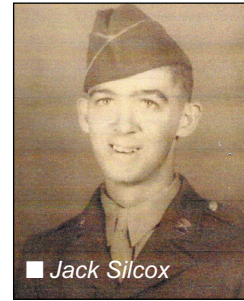
husband of the late Edith Silcox. The letter that came with the commendation was dated July 1, 1945 and reads as follows:

Jack Silcox, Private First Class, Infantry, Company "C," 15th Infantry Regiment, for gallantry in action.

At 1000 hours, March 18, 1945, near Althornbach, Germany, PFC Silcox crossed over 400 yards of exposed terrain to bring up a tank and evacuate several severely wounded soldiers. With bullets ricocheting all about him, he rode the front of the tank, guiding it around craters and other obstacles.

Reaching the casualties, he assisted in loading them in the tank, resumed his position aboard the vehicle, and directed it to the aid station. Returning alone, PFC Silcox carried medical supplies to the front, enabling less severely wounded men to receive treatment.

- By command of Brigadier General Sexton.



An excerpt from Capt. Carey Johnson's book, "Boca Grande, the Early Days - Memoirs of an Island Son ..."

During the black days of World War II, when enemy submarines were lurking in all parts of the U.S. Atlantic coast, in the Caribbean and off our beaches in the Gulf of Mexico, it was very risky for unescorted ships to try to get through the subs without being shelled to pieces. The seriousness of our dire situation in trying to supply our troops and allies in Europe and the South Pacific during World War II is brought back to mind by the memory of those days at Port Boca Grande.

The summer of 1942 was especially critical for Allied shipping in the Gulf, because some ships were operating without the benefit of naval escort. They were trying to get around the coast from port to port (in daylight hours only) in spite of being loaded with critical war materiel and aviation

gasoline bound for the war zone.

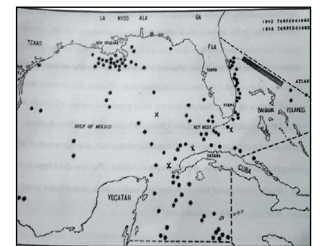
Many of these ships, running without lights, would stop and anchor in any protected cove or harbor where nightfall happened to catch them. The deep-water port and anchorage at Boca Grande, having pilot service, naturally became one of the very important ports of refuge along the Gulf Coast.

One afternoon in June of 1942, just before sunset, a large American tanker came streaming at full speed up to the sea buoy. The pilot, noting "the bone in her mouth" (indicating considerable speed), rounded up ahead of the ship, and while at full speed, drifted back past the Jacob's ladder and boarded on the fly.

Once on the bridge, the pilot was greeted by the life-jacketed master (captain) who apologized for his ship's speed but explained that he had sighted a submarine just 30 minutes before. The pilot immediately ordered to continue "sea-speed," which is about 25 percent above ordinary harbor "maneuver speed."

Before swinging into the entrance channel, the pilot asked the master what the draft of his ship was, and upon

being told that she was drawing 30 feet, he whistled and shook his head. The captain noticed his concern and asked if that was too deep. The pilot told him that shoaling in the channel made it extremely close, without much margin for safety. At this point the captain said, "Well pilot, take her just as far as she will go. I wouldn't stay out there with those damn subs tonight for any damned safety rules - we're loaded with high-test aviation gasoline!"



A map of ships and subs down in the Gulf during World War II.

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