

On February 25, 2015, the Maryland Blue Star Veterans Memorial Book was officially "dedicated" at the Rawlings Conservatory. It was a beautiful, sunny day and we were greeted at the entrance by Bridget Maginn, looking very stylish in a blue jacket that matched her eyes, a long black skirt and, the finishing touch, a very tasteful Downton Abbey chapeau! The Mt. Washington Garden Club was well represented by Mary Ethel Vinje, Michele Pappas, Karen Lumpkin, Jody Jewell and Mary Louise Snyder.

The program started promptly at 2 PM. Jackie Handley, President, Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, gave a warm welcome and set the mood for the solemnity of the event. Jari Villanueva, Director of the Maryland National Guard Honor Guard led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Next, Pastor Franklin Lance, Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church, gave the Invocation. Pastor Lance's church is only a few blocks from the Conservatory. He mentioned how thankful the community is for the Conservatory and events such as the Blue Star Memorial. I'm still not clear on how he knows Bridget so well, but he does! He told us Bridget had asked him to say a few words and "**when Bridget asks you to do something, you do it!**" It seems Bridget's persuasiveness extends beyond Garden Clubs! City Councilman Nick Mosby's representative presented a Baltimore City Citation of Service to Bridget; followed by Ernest Burkeen, Jr., Director, the Baltimore City Recreation and Parks Department. A Veteran of the Viet Nam War, Mr. Burkeen had words of appreciation for Bridget's contributions to the Blue Star Memorial and the Veterans Memorial Book.

As Bridget approached the podium, everyone was smiling; it was time for our dear Bridget to give her speech. She started with a heartfelt and harrowing description of what it was like living in England during WW 11. She mentioned the horrors and fears as a young person trying to survive the bombings and rations and the gratitude she felt for the actions and support of the United States Military. Her memories and love of the efforts of the United States of America challenged her to pursue a Blue Star Memorial Veterans Book for Maryland as a **Thank You** for all she had experienced. Bridget's speech was thoughtful and educational, with just a touch of necessary humor..... ("*there were some good looking GI's!*"). More than a few in the audience were getting teary eyed. She received a standing ovation!! Well done, Bridget.

The final speaker was Joseph DeVeaux, Jr., MSGT USAF, 1972-2011. He told us his family and Bridget have been friends for over 30 years. He spoke intimately and candidly about the "wars" he'd lived through during his 39 plus years in the Service. His remarks were real and emotional; almost too much to comprehend. One of his most profound statements, and I will have to *paraphrase*, mentioned the sacrifices made by **everyone** who is sent to fight in a War; "**there is always something left behind; it could be a limb, it could be a life, it could be your mental condition.**" He was an excellent speaker. Perhaps we can get a copy of his speech.

In closing, Kate Blom, Supervisor, Howard P. Rawlings Conservatory, with tears in her eyes, humbly "Accepted" the Veteran's Memorial book for permanent placement in the Conservatory.

Jari Villanueva, Maryland National Guard Honor Guard played Taps.....there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

Bridget, we are so proud of you; *without your vision and goal* to Honor American Veterans, especially those from Maryland, with the installation of the Blue Star Memorial and the Veterans Memorial Book, *this never would have happened*. Thank you for your perseverance; you have enlightened and educated many who would not have been aware of the significance of the Memorial.

As a final note, Jody Jewell brought her 88 1/2 year old father-in-law, Thomas G. Jewell, a WW II Veteran, to the event. He listened intently to the program and after the final speaker; he stood and asked to say a few words. He shared with us that he was 18 years old when he served in WW II in Europe. March 9th, 2015 is the 70th year anniversary of his getting shot in the Battle of Remagen Bridge, a railroad bridge over the Rhine River in Germany. The Remagen was the last bridge standing and allowed the Americans to cross over into Germany; thereby cutting off the Nazis' from behind. By capturing the bridge, the Americans were able to move all their troops and vehicles across the bridge in 3 days rather than using boats which would have taken much longer. After crossing the Bridge, Sgt. Jewell was shot as the troops headed north. He laid there covered in 18" of snow, which kept him alive, for 20 hours. He nearly died and was in a hospital in Paris for 3 months. With his dry wit, Mr. Jewell also added, "Can you imagine, I was in Paris for 3 months and didn't see anything except the inside of a hospital room?" Sgt Jewell served from 1944 to 1945.