



Presented by



2015 Honored Veteran Joe Roman

When Joe Roman landed on the island of Guam on July 25, 1944, part of the 3rd Marine Division and among the first few waves of Marines to hit the island at the apex of World War II, his main concern was ensuring he could adequately perform his duties as a radio operator, helping the United States to secure the island on its way to victory over the Empire of Japan.



Joe Roman, 1945 and 2013

Little did he know of the obstacles – and human loss – that faced him ahead.

“We followed the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions onto Guam, and as part of the Third Joint Assault Signal Company my job was to help provide shore to ship and shore to front line radio communications,” says Roman.

It wasn’t long before Roman found himself in the middle of hell.

“I was in the thick of it. At one point I was on the front lines and there were two of us together, one to operate the radio, that was me, and one standing guard,” he recalls. “We were out in the open field and there was quite a bit of firing.

“My partner guarding me was doing a good job, but unfortunately he took a bullet right through his helmet and his head. He was killed on the spot. That was August 3, 1944.”

Was Roman scared for his life? Without hesitation, he answers, “We didn’t have time to be scared.”

Such is the credo of the Greatest Generation – keep your head down, follow orders, do your job. The humble Roman, a New Britain native now 92 years young, fits this bill to a “T”.



Guadalcanal

DAV Hardware City Chapter 8 PO Box 266 New Britain, CT 06050 www.goldenkielbasa.org

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“It was all in the line of duty,” he says. “It was what was expected, we did what we had to do.”

Roman would go on to serve in the Battle of Iwo Jima, where he performed vital radio operations just offshore during February and March of 1945. Iwo Jima is recognized as the bloodiest battle in Marine history with nearly 7,000 American lives lost and another 20,000 American casualties.



PFC Joe Roman, 1944

When the Battle of Iwo Jima concluded, Joe and his unit began preparations for the ultimate invasion – Tokyo. The United States’ decision to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki made those plans unnecessary.

Roman was born in New Britain in April, 1923. His father passed only a month after his birth, and his mother died five years later. Roman was raised by Catholic nuns during his formative years at Polish orphanages in New Britain and New York City before enlisting in the Marines in December, 1942.

Roman trained at Parris Island, South Carolina, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and Camp Pendleton in San Diego before shipping out to the South Pacific in the spring of 1944.

Roman was honorably discharged from the Marines in December, 1945. He went on to attend college at St. John’s University and New York University, studying transportation, and after moving back to New Britain with his wife Margaret, enjoyed a long career in the transportation industry working for a transport company and the Connecticut Motor Transport Association.

Joe and his wife Margaret raised three boys, John, Joe and Mike Roman. Margaret passed away in 2012 and Roman now lives at Arbor Rose in New Britain. He has seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Not one to join many veterans organizations, Roman did join the Iwo Jima Survivors Association years ago and remains active with the group, attending many events and ceremonies at the National Iwo Jima Memorial in New Britain and Newington.



National Iwo Jima Memorial

It has only been in recent years that Roman has been able to speak about his war experiences. "I rarely spoke about it. We were busy raising three boys," he says. "But it was all quite an experience, of course."



National Iwo Jima Memorial, 2015

"I'm grateful for all the blessings I've had through the years: A wonderful family, a grand life with my wife for almost 65 years, and beautiful grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

Asked if his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were proud of him, Roman answered in his typically humble way.

"I think I'm more proud of them than they are of me."