

James Allen Callaghan: A Name Missing From Local War Memorials?

by Lauren Gottfried



The crew of the "Dixie Darlin" - James Callaghan is upper right.

(November 9, 2006) James "Bud" Callaghan grew up in Larchmont, joined the U.S. Army and died defending the nation in World War II. But his name does not appear on Larchmont's war memorials - not on the plaque in Town of Mamaroneck's Memorial Park, not on the Kemper monument at Mamaroneck High School, and not on the memorial at his church, St. Augustine's on Larchmont Avenue.



James Callaghan (center) with his family.

"Bud" Callaghan's family moved to their Larchmont Avenue home in 1922, when he was 2 years old. After graduating from Iona Prep, he joined the U.S. Army, becoming a bombardier on a B-29 nicknamed the "Dixie Darlin." In December 1944, his B-29 went down 100 miles west of Iwo Jima and all members of the crew were lost. Because his body was never recovered, he is honored on the "Tablets of the Missing" in Honolulu. However, he is not honored anywhere in Larchmont.

How can this be?

Nobody knows for sure. Perhaps it was because of the year that had to lapse before he was declared officially deceased. Maybe it was because his family had moved from Larchmont to New Rochelle at the time of his death. Maybe it was just "the fog of war" where mistakes happen.

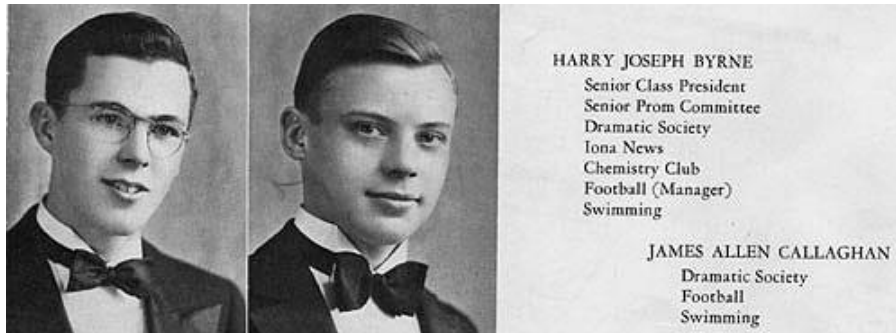
Last spring, however, James Callaghan's family reconnected with Larchmont in an attempt to correct the record.

The Virtual War Memorial Project

The Larchmont Historical Society has been developing the [Larchmont Virtual War Memorial](#), a website that documents the local memorials and honors each of the individuals listed on any memorial with a page about their lives in Larchmont and their service to the nation. After learning about the project, members of Mr. Callaghan's extended family contacted the Historical Society, expressing a desire that he be properly memorialized in his home town.

"With the assistance of his family along with some research of the official records, we put together a complete record," reported Ned Benton, a member of the LHS Board and the webmaster who created the Virtual War Memorial. Recently, the entire board of the Larchmont Historical Society reviewed the record. In response, they passed a [resolution](#) describing Mr. Callaghan's background and asking all of the local governments and organizations maintaining

World War II memorials to "give due consideration to the sacrifice that James Allen Callaghan made in service to his country in World War II."



Harry Byrne (l) and James Callaghan were side-by-side in the Iona Prep 1938 yearbook.

The Virtual War Memorial already includes a [Callaghan Memorial Page](#) with photographs and documents. To support the case that Mr. Callaghan's name should be included on the local "physical" war memorials, the Historical Society has posted a range of documents, including census records showing his residence in Larchmont; family pictures; his enlistment record; and Army Air Force Combat records documenting the loss of his B-29. "It's one of our responsibilities as the Historical Society to get the historical documents together," explained Barbara Newman, the LHS president.

Harry Byrne Remembers "Bud"

As part of the project, Mr. Benton interviewed Harry Byrne, a classmate of Mr. Callaghan's in Iona Prep's class of 1938. "He was called 'Bud' Callaghan. We were good friends. He was soft-spoken, gentle and friendly," recalled Harry Byrne. "Bud's" classmate "Harry" went on to become the Reverend Monsignor Harry J. Byrne, a parish priest who eventually served as the chancellor of the Archdiocese of New York. He is now retired.

"I remember going with Bud down to Janssen's Delicatessen for lunch. We would stop at the 'Brothers' Chapel' on the way back to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Those were pleasant days," Rev. Byrne recounted.

"I also remember him playing football. I was the manager, and I can remember him in his uniform." Bud Callaghan was on the varsity football team. James and Harry were both members of the Dramatic Society, football and swimming. "He had a horse when he was at Iona Prep. I used to go horseback riding with him." Monsignor Byrne explained that the horse was kept at a stable near the end of Pinebrook Drive in New Rochelle.

Tom Fitzharris Hears of the Loss of the Dixie Darlin

Tom Fitzharris was another classmate at Iona Prep. "I was with the Marines 4th Division when we took Iwo Jima. Right after it was secured, bombers landed there. But Callaghan's plane went down before we secured it," Mr. Fitzharris recalled.

In June and July 1944, the United States secured Saipan as a base for B-29 attacks on Japan, and Bud Callaghan's crew was among the first to begin flights to Japan in the fall of 1944. However, the 3,000-mile round trip from Saipan to Japan and back stretched the limits of the new

B-29 bombers. Casualties were high due to mechanical failures. The location where Mr. Callaghan's B-29 went down was about 100 miles west of Iwo Jima.

Mr. Fitzharris observed, "Once we took Iwo ... many planes like Bud's were able to land."

What Happens Next

Ned Benton, the LHS webmaster, explained what the Larchmont Historical Society Board is recommending. "If a memorial lists the fallen heroes, the board recommends that the government or organization maintaining the memorial consider adding Mr. Callaghan's name, " he said. "We realize that it will take some time and some deliberation, but our hope is that by Memorial Day 2007, we can see James Callaghan's name wherever it belongs."