

EGG HARBOR

TOWNSHIP LIVING

JULY 2023



DECORATED, DEDICATED, AND DRIVEN:

Marco Polo
Smigliani

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Meet the Graduates
- Memorial Day Memories



Best Version Media

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EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP LIVING

PUBLICATION TEAM:



Publisher
Anne Bullen



Content Coordinator
Christine D'Alessandro



Designer
Shannon
Zimmerman



Contributing Photographer
Lauren Adams
Bokeh Love Photography

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Contact: Anne Bullen
Email: abullen@bestversionmedia.com
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*Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer
Those days of soda and pretzels and beer...
You'll wish that summer could always be here*
— "Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer" Nat King Cole, 1963



SONGS OF SUMMER

What is summer without a song? I was born in the years between the easy-listening summertime classics from Doris Day ("Que Sera Sera," 1956) and Nat King Cole ("Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer," 1963). The day of my birth "Rockin' Robin" (Bobby Day, 1958) was #2 on the Billboard Hot 100 as rock 'n roll climbed the charts.

My ancient origins may make my musical influences irrelevant to many, but we can all recall memorable summers marked by grooving to tunes while cruising the causeway, windows down and hair whipping in the wind; ordering lunch to "Wipe Out" (Surfaris, 1963) during Wawa's HoagieFest; or bopping to Classic Rock and Top-40 hits at 4th of July parties.

In my early years "Under the Boardwalk" (The Drifters, 1964), Gidget movies, and the "Good Vibrations" of the Beach Boys (1966) marked the years until the Summer of Love. At 9, I was not quite ready to hitchhike cross-country to the Monterey Pop Festival, but I dreamily sang the John Phillips festival anthem "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)" throughout the Summer of '67.

Eventually boyfriends filled my "Margaritaville" summers (Jimmy Buffett, 1977), marriage paired nicely with "The Power of Love" (Huey Lewis & the News, 1985), and our young sons wriggled joyously to the "Macarena" (Los Del Rio, 1996). We hit a rough patch in 2004 when Nelly's "Hot in Here (Take off All Your Clothes)" and 'grinding' were raging along with the hormones on every Bar Mitzvah dance floor.

The summers of sassy Shakira ("Hips Don't Lie," 2006), and the bodacious Bruno Mars boogie "Uptown Funk" (2015) bring us to July 2023. Barbie the doll is now *Barbie* the movie featuring Dua Lipa's fun and frothy tune "Dance The Night." It might just hit the right note for our first 'post-Covid' summer. "Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer, You'll wish that summer could always be here!" Enjoy!!



Anne

Anne Bullen
Publisher
abullen@bestversionmedia.com

Christine

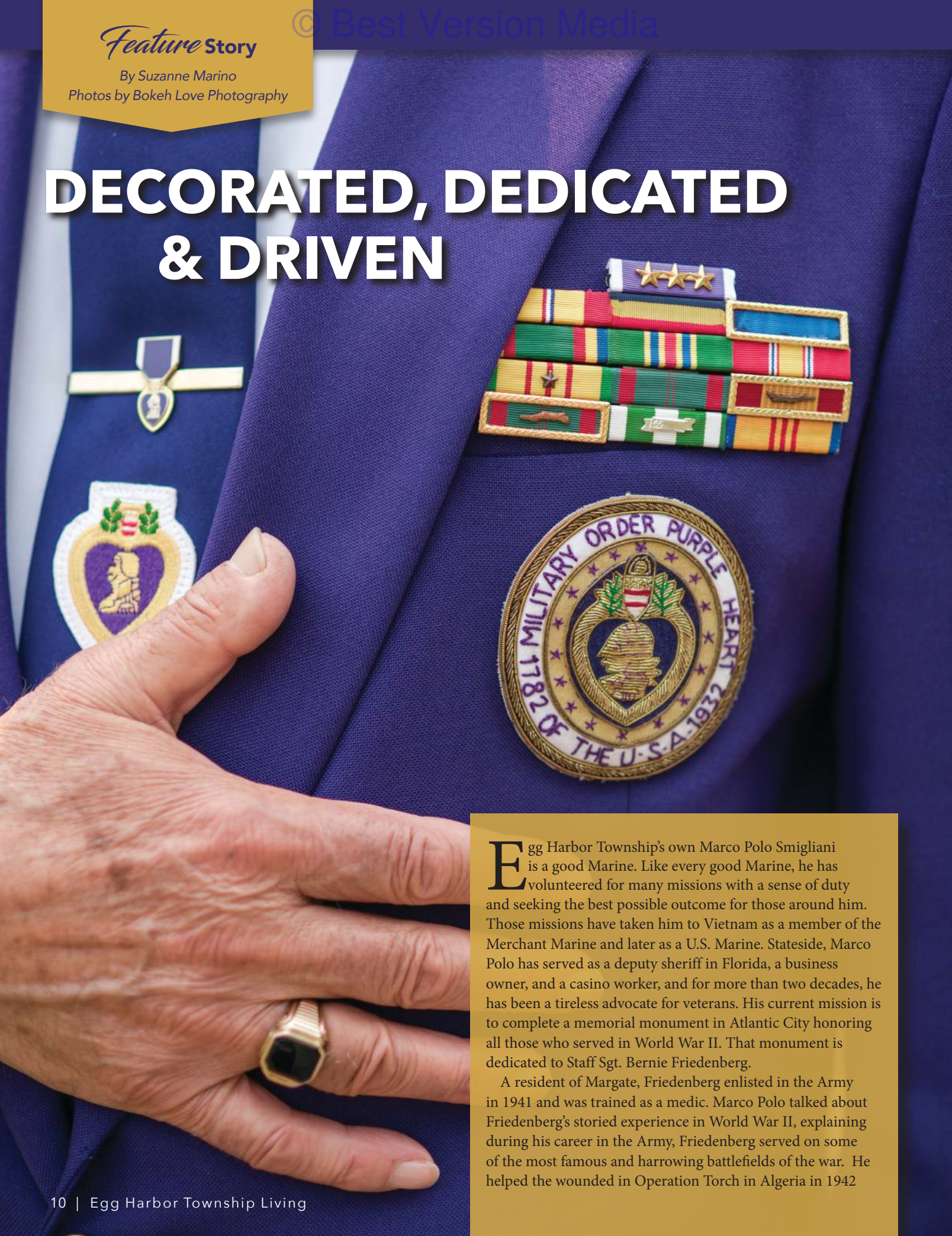
Christine D'Alessandro
Content Coordinator
cdalessandro@bestversionmedia.com

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Thank you to our Feature Family & Expert Contributors...

Egg Harbor Township Living would like to thank our June Feature, Marco Smigliani, and this month's contributors Suzanne Marino, Lynn Wood, student Audrey Ren, Dave O'Sullivan and Greater Egg Harbor Watershed Association.

DECORATED, DEDICATED & DRIVEN



Egg Harbor Township's own Marco Polo Smigliani is a good Marine. Like every good Marine, he has volunteered for many missions with a sense of duty and seeking the best possible outcome for those around him. Those missions have taken him to Vietnam as a member of the Merchant Marine and later as a U.S. Marine. Stateside, Marco Polo has served as a deputy sheriff in Florida, a business owner, and a casino worker, and for more than two decades, he has been a tireless advocate for veterans. His current mission is to complete a memorial monument in Atlantic City honoring all those who served in World War II. That monument is dedicated to Staff Sgt. Bernie Friedenber.

A resident of Margate, Friedenber enlisted in the Army in 1941 and was trained as a medic. Marco Polo talked about Friedenber's storied experience in World War II, explaining during his career in the Army, Friedenber served on some of the most famous and harrowing battlefields of the war. He helped the wounded in Operation Torch in Algeria in 1942

and was part of the campaign for Sicily in 1943. Friedenberglanded on Omaha Beach on D-Day, five times entering a minefield to rescue wounded soldiers. Years later, speaking at a local school about his experiences in battle, Friedenbergl spoke of the horror of war and that he never forgot the voices of wounded soldiers calling for the medic to help them. Friedenbergl served in the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. He earned two Silver Stars for bravery, two Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts for wounds he sustained on the battlefield.

Marco Polo was a friend of Friedenbergl. “He was just a kid when he enlisted, but he knew what was necessary to help his fellow soldiers in the field. Bernie understood the high cost of freedom,” said Marco Polo. Shortly after Friedenbergl passed away in 2018, Fisher Sculpture contacted the family and offered to do a memorial sculpture. A team was formed with Marco Polo serving as co-chair, Robert Turkavage as the chairman, and committee members Brigadier Gen. Douglas Satterfield, Ret, James Eberwine, and Robert Frolow to raise the funds necessary for the monument as well as the grounds surrounding the sculpture. “The monument is impressive. It is Staff Sgt. Friedenbergl holding a wounded soldier in his arms. It is a powerful statement of what our soldiers went through in order to preserve the freedoms we have. When World War II broke out, 16 million Americans left their home and families to serve our nation and protect our way of life. There were 670,000 soldiers wounded in battles, over 400,00 made the ultimate sacrifice, and to this day, there are more than 73,000 soldiers who remain missing in action. Anyone who visits the monument should walk away understanding the meaning of freedom,” explained Marco Polo.

Serving in the military stretches across generations for Marco Polo. His father and grandfather both served in Italy. Marco Polo was born in Italy shortly after World War II. His village had been badly damaged by bombs. Playing outside as a young boy meant sometimes finding unexploded ordinances. He was lucky not to get hurt; some of his friends were not so fortunate. When he was ten years old, Marco Polo came with his parents to America, sailing past the Statue of Liberty on the eve of Independence Day. He recalls it as one of the greatest days of his life.

The sense of duty and giving back to America that had given him so much, as Marco Polo will often say, was never in question. He joined the Merchant Marines at 17. As a navigator on the SS Columbia Eagle delivering explosives and napalm to Vietnam, he was forced to abandon the ship when it was hijacked. After spending two days in the water, Marco Polo and his shipmates



were rescued. Their ship was eventually recovered.

Marco Polo joined the Marines and found himself in Vietnam as a member of Battalion 1/9, the “Walking Dead,” one of the most decorated units and one that lost more soldiers than any other. Marco Polo said more than 800 members of his battalion are among the names on the Vietnam wall in Washington DC. In a matter of eleven days, Marco Polo was wounded multiple times. His unit was ambushed before he could be medevacked out. Marco Polo nearly lost his arm to shrapnel and carries a chunk of metal in there more than 50 years later. Along with his battalion, Marco Polo found the largest cache of enemy weapons in the Vietnam War: more than 1000 enemy rifles and machine guns were destroyed, keeping them out of North Vietnamese hands. His efforts on the battlefield and the wounds he received in combat earned Marco Polo four Purple Hearts. He wears

them with honor and pride. “It is not just the medal that I wear or another Marine wears; it is what it represents.”

After leaving the military, a career in law enforcement in Florida, gaming in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, and owning a pizza shop in Pleasantville, Marco Polo retired and turned his energy to helping veterans full time. Aside from the many hands-on efforts he tackles, Marco Polo has a special talent; he is able to bring different people to the table to work together to improve the lives of all veterans. From taking elderly veterans to the Veterans Administration for care to helping to secure a wing of Meadowview Nursing Home for veterans to helping expand medical care for veterans in nearby Northfield and Cape May, Marco Polo is a good Marine, dedicated to seeing the job done.

When Charles Ingram took his life to protest the lack of care available locally, Marco Polo stepped in as an advocate for the veteran’s family and on behalf of all veterans. He managed to bring state and federal lawmakers and VA officials to the table to find solutions. Along the way, he manages to be a good husband, father, and grandfather. He speaks at schools and events to keep alive the history lesson of what veterans have done to preserve the freedoms we have.

The memorial monument Marco Polo is devoted to seeing completed is Atlantic County’s own hero, Bernie Friedenbergl, but he is quick to add, “This monument represents more than one person; it represents the sacrifice of all of the veterans of World War II and what they did for humanity. It has taken four years, and so many men and women in every level of government, from boards, from businesses, from individuals that have donated \$100 or \$1, each dollar has gone to see this monument come to



fruition. This is not a Democrat or Republican cause; this is a veteran's cause," Marco Polo concluded.

Marco Polo has served as a Veterans Advocate in Southern New Jersey for twenty years, providing advice and guidance to over one hundred veterans and their families on service-related matters. Marco Polo has also served on the Atlantic County Veterans Advisory Board; he and other ACVAB members also formed the South Jersey Veterans Consortium, whose efforts resulted in the creation of the Vineland Veterans Clinic and the Cape May Veterans Clinic. Marco Polo is a member of the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, the Marine Corps League, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Viet Nam Veterans of America, the 1/9 Network (a reunion group of his former battalion in Viet Nam, and the Military and Veterans Board of Stockton University.

In 2007, Marco Polo was inducted into the Purple Heart National Honor Roll Museum, and in 2019 he was the recipient of the Humanitarian Award by the Chapel of the Four Chaplains, a nationally-recognized Foundation that recognizes selfless service to Americans.

The Bernie Friedenberg World War II monument was originally set to be dedicated on D-Day, June 6, 2023, but it was postponed due to delays. More information will be made available when the dedication is set. Support for this monument is still welcome. Find more information at berniefriedenbergworldwariimemorial.com ★.



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