

All military veterans honored Nov. 11

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And Ramos himself still undergoes treatment at the Seattle Veterans Administration Hospital for the injuries he suffered getting ready for war. Still, he counts his blessings.

"One of the greatest moments in my life was when I took my oath, and the judge said, 'Raise your hand. You are now a soldier!' We did our time. You can't imagine what it is like to have a parade, in uniform, and march down the street. It is an experience everyone should go through.

Ramos has few regrets about his service to his country.

"My family has had a farm in Texas since 1806. They have lived there since before Texas was a state. Every once in awhile, I go back to Gonzales, and my brothers and I ride in a flatbed truck and wave," he said. "The only time it bothers me is when someone asks me for my green card."

A World War II veteran

Like Ramos, John B. Farias doesn't regret any of the time he spent in the Army, first Stateside and then in Europe at the end of World War II.

"All I can say is that I didn't ask to go, but I did - some did and others didn't (go), but I didn't mind being drafted," said Farias, proprietor of the Market Cellar Winery on Western Avenue. "It was our duty; being in the service."

A Seattle resident since 1963, Farias was drafted in 1942, while working as a truck driver in Los Angeles.

"The minute I turned 21, I got my letter. The whole neighborhood got letters at the same time, and they cleaned out our block," he said. "They didn't waste any time.

Two weeks later, Farias was headed for Arkansas for six weeks of basic training, and found himself assigned to the 107th Cavalry on duty in northern California. It wasn't very long after Pearl Harbor and there were fears of Japanese invasion or landing.

"We were 24 hours on, and 24 hours off, and spent six hours on post," Farias said. "We spent 17 months patrolling between the Golden Gate Bridge and the Oregon Border."

He remembered one incident, in which an American plane crashed in the deep redwoods near Eureka. A high-ranking American officer on the plane had records of all American submarines in the Pacific with him. There was an all-out effort to find the airplane wreckage and recover the records. It was also good training for the cold and wet weather Farias would experience in Europe.

"We tramped through the wilderness walking in rain and muddy ground without overshoes. The mud was deep," he said. "We were mobilized so fast there wasn't time to equip us. There were no rubber boots or rain gear."

When Farias finally arrived in England, it was time for more training.

"They busted up our outfit, because the things they sent us over to do were not the things we were trained for. I was a sergeant and a radio operator and I didn't know how to turn a radio on," he said.

So instead of serving in the Cavalry, Farias found himself heading into battle as a telephone lineman with the 54th Signal Corps, supporting the 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions. His training ended with the Battle of the Bulge. Part of Farias' job was to restore communications to Bastogne after the divisions were relieved.

"We finished up in Bastogne as it was just about winding down," he said. "Shots were fired around me. Then, we went to Holland to help the British cross the Rhine into

Germany. We established (Allied) communications across the Rhine."

The next combat assignment took Farias to the Ruhr pocket. It seems that General George Patton, who enjoyed taking credit for relieving the surrounded 101st Airborne in Bastogne, had gotten into a jam himself.

"Patton made a run into Germany, all right, but he soon found himself surrounded. The 82nd and 101st Airborne helped him out, and we helped supporting them!" Farias said. "We ended up 75 miles north of Berlin when we ran into the Russians. We said, 'hello,' and shook hands - and then we both pulled back so there was a 10 mile no-man's Land between us."

Although movies like *Patton* played up the notion of hostility between the Americans and Russians, Farias recalls driving in a convoy of 100 trucks to deliver an entire field hospital to the Russians in Czechoslovakia. When the two sides met up in a local tavern,

Farias remembers some pretty good souvenir trading.

"I traded two packs of cigarettes for an American Colt .45 Pistol," he said. "I didn't ask how they got it. The enlisted men were no different than we were - except they carried their weapons all the time and their guards wouldn't hesitate to use them. But still, I made a good trade. I would love to have that Colt .45 back, but I sold it before we left Germany," he said.

He still brought back some respectable souvenirs, including a German P-38 pistol and two German rifles.

"I sold them to get enough money for our honeymoon," he said. "By the time I got back, I was ready to settle down, get married, and go back to a trade I wanted to follow."

He credits his time in the service for that.

(Farias current is now proprietor of the Market Cellar Winery, 1432 Western Ave., and one of the longest-standing merchants in the Market.)



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