

Highlighting Heroes: Ray Henke

As we reflect on the service and sacrifices of our brave servicemen and women across the nation this Veterans Day, let us not overlook the heroes in our very own communities. Ray Henke, participant of the Clifford Active Living Center, is one such local hero.

Pamela DeRose, Susquehanna County Active Living Center Director, recently sat down with Ray to learn a little bit about his service history and share his story:



Ray (bottom right) and his brothers

Ray had been working fulltime at a local farm from the age of 14. At the age of 19, he tired of hanging around town in the same rut, and enlisted into the Army active Reserves until 1960, when he was discharged at the age of 21. He was the youngest of six boys, all of whom enlisted into different branches of the US Military, with their parents' blessing. During his time in service, he trained to be an auto mechanic, which allowed him to be in the "motor pool" during his service – meaning he repaired and maintained everything from jeeps to tanks, and drove them too. Ray recalls during his last active "trip," he was part of the motor pool that went to Cape Cod, to provide supplies and equipment support to the Army troops there.

When Ray returned home, he joined his dad and brothers working as an interstate trucker, where he remained for the next approximately 32yrs. He met his future wife shortly after returning home, and they remained together for 59yrs, until she sadly passed away six years ago. From 1990 -2000, Ray pulled a double-trailer load, and was a mentor/instructor to new drivers. Ray cited his time in the service as being very helpful to giving him the experience needed to become a trucker, and to maintain his durability.

After retirement, Ray and his wife tried the local VFW, but found it was not particularly their scene. Instead they joined a few of the local senior centers to socialize with others in the community. Since his wife's passing, Ray has had a hard time adjusting, and is just starting to acclimate to being a widower, and believes attending the Clifford and Blue Ridge Active Living Centers, and the friendships he has made there are helpful to him. Ray had stayed in contact with a couple of friends he made in the barracks until a few years ago, when he lost track of them. He hopes they are well.

Overall, Ray is very proud he and his five brothers chose to enlist into the military. He found it to be very fruitful, in terms of both his character as well as his opportunities in life afterward. If he was given the option to go back, Ray said he would do it all over again.

B/S/S/T Area Agency on Aging thanks Ray, the Henke family, and other veterans for their service!