

## University at Albany War Memorial Plaques Rededication Ceremony at Draper Hall (from UAlbany web site and supplemented by the script supplied by the Alumni Office)

**ALBANY, N.Y. (May 23, 2017)** — On a sunny spring morning, veterans of conflicts ranging from World War II to the ongoing war in Afghanistan gathered on the Downtown Campus with a singular purpose: to rededicate three veterans memorial plaques.

The event, hosted by the UAlbany Alumni Association, was held near the new Garden of Remembrance outside of Draper Hall. Joining the veterans were University leaders, staff and faculty, police and a military color guard.



**Glenn Phillips:** Student Veteran, and psychology major who graduated just last week, opened the program by recalling the men and women whose service helped “define the character of our nation.”

Good morning. I am Glenn Phillips, a 2018 graduate of UAlbany with a bachelor’s of arts in psychology. Before my time at UAlbany I was a combat infantryman assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry division and deployed to Afghanistan in 2012. While at UAlbany, I served as president of the UAlbany Veteran Student Association from 2016 to the present.

I am deeply honored to be here this morning for the rededication of the veteran memorial plaques and to remember the men and women who fought bravely and distinctly in wars that were central to our nation’s history and defined the character of our nation. Today, we honor those veterans ---our alumni veterans ---who fought bravely so that racial equality can be achieved, freedom can be enjoyed and the guiding principles of democracy can be preserved. Those veterans have long been gone, but not forgotten. Those veterans, like Edward Eldred Potter from the Class of 1919 who fought in World War, have left a legacy that today continues through the generations of alumni veterans who have joined us this morning to commemorate the service and the sacrifices of these brave souls.



I am humbled, because today, I am amidst the spirits of the patriots. And at this very moment, I stand before heroes and the loved ones of those who have been called to serve. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your courage and for rising to this nation’s call.

“Today, we honor those veterans — our alumni veterans — who fought bravely so that racial equality can be achieved, freedom can be enjoyed and the guiding principles of democracy can be preserved,” he said.

Phillips is a former conflict veteran who was deployed to Afghanistan in 2012. At UAlbany he received the Presidential Medal Award for Veterans as well as the President’s Award for Leadership, and served as president of the UAlbany Veteran Student Association for the past two years.

## Presentation of the Colors: National Anthem; Placing of Flags at Plaques



**Lee Serravillo:** Thank you, Glenn. What Glenn did not tell you when he introduced himself is that he received the Presidential Medal Award for Veterans as well as the President’s Award for Leadership. And may I add that while in Afghanistan, he ran patrols in areas of combat, a highly dangerous duty. So Glenn, thank you for your service.

On behalf of our 180,000 + alumni, I welcome you to this memorable occasion. Your presence here today is a testament to the fundamental values that we all try to uphold – selflessness, pride in country and dedication to the ideals of peace and democracy. Not only are we here to honor the fallen; we are here to also pay tribute to those who have survived the ravages of war and conflict so that we may enjoy freedom; we also are here to recognize those who continue to serve and defend our country. Our veterans are not just alumni - they are students, they are faculty, they are staff. All of them are bound together by one shared cause – love of country. They are ordinary, but have done extraordinary things in moments of dire need, in places of insecurity, in times of peace, in times of war.

And so, I would like to have you join me to honor them as I ask our veterans and service members to stand and be recognized.

### **Veterans and service members are recognized.**

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank those who made the reinstallation of the memorial plaques possible: Professor Emeritus and veteran, Dr. Paul Ward; Archivist Emeritus Geoffrey Williams; Associate Vice President for Facilities Management John Giarusso; Architect David Ono; and Scott Laranjo, the downtown facilities supervisor. Thank you for your efforts.

I now I would like to welcome Dr. James Stellar, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs.

**Provost James Stellar** spoke for the University “family” – the 20,000 faculty, staff and students who together “have the characteristics of a family – we come together and sacrifice for the common good,” he said. “In this country, the veterans are our family.”



Glenn then introduced Geoff Williams, the University’s archivist emeritus and a longtime advocate for bringing the memorial plaques out of storage and back to the Downtown Campus, spoke about the Veterans Wall of Honor in the University Library.

As UAlbany’s University archivist emeritus, Geoffrey Williams was the custodian of historic and highly significant records of the University. I’d like to welcome him to give a brief history of the war memorial plaques.



**Geoff Williams, University Archivist Emeritus:** I am delighted to be asked to speak at this re-dedication ceremony. For 14 years, from 2000 until my retirement as University archivist in September 2014, I stored the memorial tablets in the University Archives. I advocated, without success, for their remounting somewhere on the Uptown or Downtown Campus. When I retired I turned the task over to Paul Ward, from the Class of 1953, and probably, if not more importantly, a former US Marine, and he got the job done.

Included in your program is a history of the Tablets and the Veterans Wall of Honor in some detail, so I won't go into the particulars about the creation of these. The Tablets/Plaques, reflect the honor that the school, under its various names, and its alumni, felt for the students, graduates and faculty who lost their lives in service to their country from the Civil War through World War II.

The Veterans Wall of Honor was mounted in the President's Lounge on the second floor of University Library on the Uptown Campus in 2001. The Veterans Wall of Honor serves a different function from the Memorial Tablets. It honors all students, graduates, faculty and staff, living or dead, who served their country. The mural was intended by its Alumni Association leaders, Eunice Whittlesey '44, Helen Brucker Martin '44, and Eleanor Allard '48, to revive the connection between the University and all who have served in the armed forces of the United States, a connection unfortunately lost during the 60s and 70s. (No memorial tablet/plaque could be created for those who died in service to their country because, fortunately, though many individuals served, we were unable to find the names of any who had died.) Eunice and Helen have since passed, but Eleanor Allard from the Class of 1948 is here and I would like her to stand so that we could thank her for her steadfast commitment to ensuring the completion of the Veterans Wall of Honor.

**Eleanor Allard is recognized.** Shown here on the right with Ann Holcomb Fairbank, '67; '71



The Veterans Wall is a 36-foot long mural and has a list of every single U.S. service person we have identified, from the Mexican-American War to the present, who was connected with our school. That list is updated once a year as new information about service members is received by the alumni office.

I have brought a number of binders with letters and photos of service members that are kept in the University Archives. We would be happy to add to those binders if you would care to donate additional photos or letters. For your viewing, the binders will be inside Husted Hall along with a small version of the Veterans Wall of Honor.

Let me just say a word about the appropriateness of this location for the Tablets/Plaques. The entrance hall of Draper Hall, to your right, is where the Tablets/Plaques were hung from 1910 through 1966. So they are returning to their original home. Husted Hall, on the left, is named for Albert N. Husted, from State Normal School's Class of 1855, and mathematics instructor from that time until his death in 1912. Husted left the school between 1862 and 1865 when he served first as lieutenant and then captain of the Normal School Company. During



those three years the Company fought at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Wilderness, Spottsville, and Cold Harbor, some of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. At Gettysburg, the Normal School Company helped hold Little Roundtop, the critical high point overlooking the battlefield. There is a monument on Little Roundtop with a plaque honoring the Normal School Company. In addition to leading the Normal School Company, Husted was a very active alumnus. He led the Alumni Association fundraising campaign that paid for the first memorial tablet hung in the Normal College's Willett Street Building in 1900. After that building burned in 1906, destroying the tablet, he led the second alumni campaign to create a new Soldiers Memorial Tablet, hung on the new Western Avenue Campus in 1910.

Let me make one final comment. The Alumni Association has played a critical role in erecting all of the Memorial Tablets/Plaques and the Veterans Wall of Honor. Only once did the Association need a bit of prompting, and that was after WW II when the Student Association suggested the Alumni Association create a new Memorial Tablet. Nevertheless, the Alumni Association provided the funds and leadership for that project as well.

Without further delay let me turn the program to Glenn so he could introduce the alumnus and Marine veteran who got the project going.

**Glenn:** Dr. Paul Ward from the Class of 1953 and 1954 is professor emeritus and former director of the International Student Program of UAAlbany. He was Potter Club president, 1953, and Potter Club Man of the Era. He served in the Marines with the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet in the Mediterranean. A veteran of World War II, he belongs to the "Greatest Generation!" It is my great honor to introduce Dr. Paul Ward.



**Paul Ward,** I would like to thank the University for determining to re-dedicate these historic Memorial Plaques. It is most appropriate that a Memorial Garden was chosen for the Plaques' site. The Plaque preface notes the site is dedicated to all veterans augmenting the "Role of Honor" at the main library.

The first time I viewed two of these plaques, then located in the foyer of Draper Hall, was 69 years ago while registering as a freshman in mid-September 1949. I remember that I was pleased they honored those who served and died in past conflicts. Just two months before I had completed a three year enlistment in USMC –"Semper Fi".

This year we commemorate the centennial of World War I, "The Great War" - April 1917- November 1918. The WWI plaque shows that 6 of those students and one female faculty member died in service to their country. One of these students who lost his life in that conflict, was Edward Eldred Potter. His name was to be remembered and honored on campus for 100 years!

Edward, the youngest of 4 children, was born in 1891 at Windfall, NY. His early childhood was spent in rural St. Lawrence County. The family being poor led to marital strains on his parents' marriage leading to a separation with his mother and three siblings moving to Plattsburgh, NY, in 1907. There Edward successfully graduated with a major in "Manual Arts" at the Plattsburgh Normal School Campus. With this training he taught industrial arts for a year at Glens Falls, NY. Following this experience in the spring of 1915 he enrolled as a

freshman at the newly named NYSCT after attending a semester at Union College. His life goal was to obtain a position in educational administration. At Albany he excelled in his studies and demonstrated an exemplary character.

In order to pay for college expenses and living costs he and another classmate lived in a tent in Washington Park during clement weather. He was an excellent carpenter and made book cases and other furniture for faculty and others. He also worked a night shift at a local newspaper.

In May 1917, Edward enlisted in the army. Sent to the Madison Barracks, Sacketts Harbor, NY, for basic officer training, he chose to join the aviation branch of service then under the Signal Corps. In August he left for Cornell University to undergo pre-flight training. His unit was sent to France in October where they would obtain their flight training. After intensive training he was commissioned a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. In May 1918 and was selected to ferry planes from England and other French stations to various airfields needing replacement aircraft.

August 1, 1918, while ferrying an aircraft DH – 4 to Orly Field, Paris, when his engine quit; requiring him to make a forced landing. Seeing civilians on the tarmac he made a sharp turn causing his plane to crash mortally injuring him. He was a month shy of his 27<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was interred at Suresnes, France along with 1,500 other Americans.

Eleven years later in the spring of 1931, the memory 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Potter was to be honored in a unique way. That Spring a number of men students sought to establish a more open social group to enhance friendship. At the time there was only one fraternity on campus. It was a national frat pledging only white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant men. Thus there was a definite need for a more open social organization. The group devised a working name of the “Student Union Club”.

While seeking authorization from the administration, the then President Brubacher suggested they might consider naming it after Lt. Potter. He stated that “the use of his name as a permanent memorial to Edward’s brief life; and his outstanding qualities [would be] a constant challenge to the members of the Club”. Thus the Edward Eldred Potter Club came into existence.

The Club was active for 50 years (1931-1981). However with over 900 alums from the Club an Alumni Association was formed to continue the fellowship they enjoyed during their college years. Annual reunions and member group luncheons have been held regularly for the past 37 years to share their past/current activities. In 1996 an Edward Potter Memorial Room at the University Alumni House was dedicated with funds donated by Potter Club Alums. The room contains Edward Potter and Club memorabilia.

As we rededicate these plaques honoring fallen alumni, it comes to mind the words of the late Joseph Persico, '52; eminent historian and Potter Club Alum. Commissioned by the national WWII memorial in Washington, these words were to be engraved on the Memorial in part to justify the 400,000 Americans who lost their lives during that conflict. It seems to me these words could be used for any war memorial, “Here We Mark the Price of Freedom!”

## Unveiling of the Plaques



**Civil War Plaque:** Provost Stellar assisted by Crystal Wilson, Class of 2019 and staff sergeant, U.S. Army National Guard.

**World War I Plaque:** The World War I plaque was unveiled by Susan Mintzer, great niece of Edward Eldred Potter assisted by Patrick Corcione, Class of 1973 and 1974 and former Green Beret who served in Vietnam.

[N.B. No photo available.]

**World War II Plaque:** The World War II plaque was unveiled by Eugene McLaren, Class of 1948, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in the Army Air Corp during active duty in WWII, and retired with rank of major in the Air Force Reserve, and Richard Fairbank, Class of 1966 and 1973, and army Vietnam veteran. Both are members of the Edward Eldred Potter Club.

[N.B. No photo available, however, Gene McLaren looks at the plaque below.]



**Conclusion:** Following the plaque unveilings a bugler played Taps.