

In this Newsletter I'd like to include a brief profile of one of our Ladies Auxiliary members who has contributed so much to our organization and has deep roots to our history.

CLARA MAE BUCKMASTER

Interviewed December 9, 2014

Clara Mae Stallings was born in North Beach on February 24, 1937, the daughter of Wallace and Sadie Stallings. As a child she remembers the air raid sirens and drills that took place during World War II and how they would have to put up black curtains in the windows during the blackouts. Her father was stationed at Fort Meade during the war. She clearly remembers the grieving that accompanied the death of her uncle, Private James. F. Stallings, who was killed when his aircraft was shot down over Holland in 1944. Clara Mae is very proud of the role her parents played in 1946 as charter members of Post 206, and in the naming honor bestowed on her uncle for his ultimate sacrifice. Noting that her parents were very active in Post activities, she said she often babysat so they could participate.

In 1955 Clara Mae married James Buckmaster and they had six children. Today she has six grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Her husband was the Fire Chief of North Beach Volunteer Fire Department and in her 56 years of volunteering for the NBVFD, Clara Mae has held many of the offices including that of Chaplain several times. She is most proud of her time as the Maryland State VFD Ladies Auxiliary President, in which role she traveled throughout Maryland, meeting other fire department volunteers.

Her husband, who then worked at the Naval Research Laboratory at Randle Cliff, died of a heart attack in 1970, leaving Clara Mae with six children aged 19 months to 14 years old. She somehow managed to raise the children and still be involved in volunteer activities throughout the community. Clara Mae said she tended bar, was a waitress, and even cleaned Post Offices on weekends to make ends meet. She also worked for the Calvert County Health Department for more than 20 years. Having quit school in the 11th grade to get a job to help her family, she proudly earned her GED at the age of 36.

Clara Mae is full of stories about the beach communities. She noted that back in the 40's and 50's the area was packed with tourists from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The dance halls, boardwalks, bars, and slot machine parlors attracted crowds, as did the amusement park on the hill above the Rod 'N Reel. She remembers the steamships docking in Chesapeake Beach and the motorcyclists that always seemed to be in the area. One story she told me was about the large Christmas tree that would be placed at the intersection of Third Street and Bay Avenue (Route 261) in North Beach each holiday season. The power for the tree was provided by Mama Franchi's Restaurant which was on the first floor of the Miramar Hotel. (Clara Mae loved the chicken cacciatore at Mama Franchi's). One of Clara Mae's relatives, she sadly relates, drove into the Christmas tree one year after having one too many at a local watering hole.

We at Post 206 are most grateful for Clara Mae's 26 years of service to the Ladies Auxiliary. In that time she has served in many capacities, including as President for a term of five years, and as Chaplain several times, including her current stint in that position. She says she is most proud of the 50th Anniversary of the Post 206 Ladies Auxiliary which was held in 1996 when she was President. Clara Mae said the Post didn't have much money back then, but due to the dedicated volunteers they were able to put on a great event that was attended by most of the former Auxiliary presidents. There wasn't enough money to provide real corsages for the guests, so one of the ladies made beautiful paper napkin corsages.

Clara Mae reminds me of the Energizer Bunny. Most who know her are amazed at her capacity to juggle multiple volunteer jobs and seemingly never have the need to come up for air. Her enthusiasm is infectious and she is a treasure to those who are fortunate enough to be in her orbit. As we ended our talk, she said she had just finished serving as the Grand Marshall for the North Beach Christmas Parade. You go girl !