

WWII-era flagpole has a new mission

Rededication for Afghan war victim

BY ALISON SHEA
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PLYMOUTH — Six years after a helicopter crash killed a Terryville soldier, a steel flagpole will be dedicated to his memory this weekend.

The flagpole will be rededicated in the name of Sgt. Maj. Phillip R. Albert on at 11 a.m. Saturday at the Quail Hollow Village senior housing complex, 144 N. Main Street in Terryville.

Like the man it's being dedicated to, the flagpole, too, has connections to a war half a world away.

In 1943, Amel Redman, a Bristol dairy owner and Plymouth builder Timothy Bobroske's grandfather, wanted to show his patriotism outside his shop on Farmington Avenue. He wanted to fly the U.S. flag.

"He wanted to have a really nice flagpole, but it wasn't like today where you can just go down to Home Depot and get a flagpole," Bobroske said.

He went down to a friend in town seeking steel for a sturdy flagpole, but because of the war effort, all the good steel was being shipped overseas. One 50-foot pole, however, was not going to be shipped. It was too warped, and in poor condition to create military equipment. It was, however, in good enough condition to fly a flag.

The bent flagpole stood for



Albert

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Memorial honors Terryville soldier

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years in front of Redman's dairy, before the shop was closed more than a decade ago. After the shop closed, Bobroske moved the flagpole to a senior housing complex he built in Terryville, Quail Hollow Village. Several residents there restored the flagpole.

And recently, Bobroske heard the story of Albert's death. Albert and four soldiers were killed when a transport helicopter crashed in a remote part of Afghanistan on Nov. 23, 2003, after a mechanical failure during a combat mission. Eight soldiers survived the crash.

After Bobroske heard Albert's story, he couldn't think of a better way to honor Albert than by dedicating a flagpole, so people would think of him for more than one reason when they see the American flag waving.

"Every time I look at that flagpole, I'll be thinking of him and what he did for my freedom," Bobroske said. "I just hope his family appreciates it."

Albert's family members are proud to see their brother, the youngest of eight siblings, honored in his hometown, this time in perpetuity.

"On the first Memorial Day after he was killed, they flew the flag from his funeral over the Terryville Green," said

ALBERT PROFILE

Army Sgt. Maj.

Phillip R. Albert

■ Born Aug. 21, 1962, in Southington

■ Joined Army at 18

■ Gulf War veteran, 1991

■ Two tours of duty in Afghanistan

■ Recipient of two Bronze Star awards, Purple Heart medal

■ Last assigned to 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division stationed at Fort Drum, N.Y.

■ Died Nov. 23, 2003, in Kapisa, Afghanistan, in a helicopter crash.

■ A fort in Afghanistan, Fort Albert, was named for him after his death.

Nancy Rama, Albert's older sister.

Rama says her family members are always thinking of Albert. "We still miss him a lot," she said. "He was our baby."

Rama, the second of the eight children, was 18 when Albert was born. Eighteen years later, when Albert went off to basic training after joining the Army, she said she was astounded when her brother came home a different person.

"I was so surprised to see this big guy come home and tell me all these things" about training, she said.