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was in the World Series that fall, anyway? What about Ingrid Bergman — damn, what a dish. Are we going to win this war? How, and when? Small talk was driven by uncertainty and the shadow of ever-present danger.

Return to Belgium

Anderson might have avoided the conflict. After being drafted, he was chosen for the U.S. Army Marching Band, a safe job during war time. He played a fine tenor sax.

One day the master sergeant said: Boys, the Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson is going to be here, and you are going to play absolutely picture perfect. There will be no false notes. And there will be no leaves until then.

Well, several of the musicians protested, including Blaine. Next thing he remembers is being sent to Europe, posthaste, a soldier in Patton's Third Army.

Blaine hadn't yet met his lovely wife of 62-years. Her name is Vivian, and she shares many of these stories. She is forever his partner.



Vivian and Blaine Anderson (90 and 96, respectively) have been married for more than 50 years.

A few years ago, the couple headed back to the village of Herderen in Belgium, and managed to find the children (Danielle and Josli) of that

same family. The Belgians treated Anderson as a returning hero. Josli now owns the tavern that once belonged to his father. When the story

got around, the whole town came out to see Andre, their nickname for Anderson. Joy can overcome pain.

The SS was ruthless in those war years. To jeopardize one's own family is an act of bravery that remains deserving of private honor. But civilians weren't given bronze stars, though, god knows, many suffered as the soldiers suffered.

Near the war's end, Anderson remembers trading for a bottle of whiskey with a German resident. Anderson offered fresh coffee for the prize, and the coffee was delivered in a sock. Anderson couldn't pilfer quite enough fresh coffee from the PX, so he stuffed used coffee grounds into the bottom of that sock. Turns out that Anderson got screwed on the other end of the transaction: The whiskey was watered down. Blaine felt that he deserved the turn of events — he was an honest man, after all, and

had crossed the line. So go the winds of war.

At home in Seattle

All these years later, that is what he talks about: that funny and insignificant ruse. Not the fear and death that surrounded soldiers on both sides of the Great War. Not the Battle of the Bulge or the terrible losses at Metz, just months later. Soldiers don't generally go there. They are not normally revealing about loss and attrition.

Talking with veteran friends who fought in Vietnam, I was surprised that only a few choose to watch Ken Burns' brilliant documentary on that war. Tremors remained too close to home.

Blaine happens to be my wife's uncle, her dad's twin brother. As far as the conflicts that maimed and killed so many of Blaine's compatriots, within the family and elsewhere, mum has remained the word.




A plate of cookies placed before him is as much a delight as it ever was for 96-year-old Blaine Anderson, a World War II veteran.

I thought of asking Blaine how the neo-Nazi movement in Charlottesville struck him. But I already knew the answer. His buddies had died fighting Nazis. What else could he feel but anger? I went on to other stories, pulling pleasantries out of a sock.

Now, in the final years of his life, Blaine reminisces about the good times. Within the next decade, few, if any, of these brave young men of yesterday will be alive to tell the stories about this war.

I remember standing behind three veterans of this same conflict. They talked in the yard of my father's house. They belonged to another club, the foot soldier's club. They were then in their early 40s, and I was a young man, a boy really. I thought of those men as pillars of my community, as both vital and strong. I never imagined them as survivors. I never imagined their secret pain, and the trauma they had to overcome. The shadows that lingered.

The Great Generation, they are called. Well deserved, I say, and wonder how much we all owe Blaine Anderson and the millions of soldiers of that war. 

LAURIE ANDERSON PHOTOS



Lucia Bride 2017
Kara Dowaliby

Santa Lucia

Festival of Lights

Friday, November 24th

Astoria High School

1001 W. Marine Drive

Holiday Music 6:30pm

Santa Lucia Festival of Lights Program 7pm

Program

- Santa Lucia Bride & Attendants
- Star Boys
- Introduction of the 2018 Scandinavian Court
- Lighting of the Christmas tree

Featured Entertainment

- North Coast Chorale
- Holiday Sing - Along with Chris Lynn
- **Refreshments:** Sons of Norway
- **Public Dancing:** Scandinavian Music - Entrainers TBA

Admission \$1 per individual or \$5 per family

Proceeds will go to the Festival Scholarship Fund

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