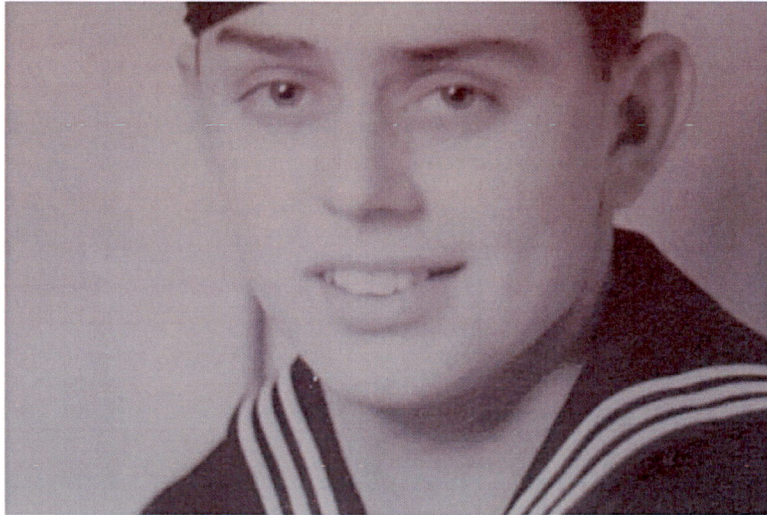


## OPINION

## Local veteran comes from large family devoted to serving in military

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*Opinion by Bob Lind*

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Howard Bellmore has had some kind of life. He fought in World War II, was an engineer for a railroad and he shoveled coal as a railroad fireman. And along the way, he became the father of seven children.

Howard lives in an apartment in Fargo. He lives alone; his wife Irene died in 2015. They'd been married 67 years.

On his wall is a framed picture of him and his six brothers. He's proud of it. Because he and all of his brothers served in the military

Fighting in Europe

Howard knows about large families; he was the oldest of 14 kids.

He was born on a farm near Kent, Minn., but his family moved to Breckenridge, Minn., where he grew up.

He only went through ninth grade, but was given a high school diploma anyway.

Then the war came along, and Howard, 18, and all six of his brothers enlisted: Lyle, in the Navy; Howard, Leon, Marvin and Ronald in the Army; Benjamin, in the Marines; and Gary, in the Air Force. All of them made it through the war without being injured.

Lyle has since passed away. Leon lives in Valley City, N.D.; Marvin, Fergus Falls, Minn.; Ron, Oregon; Ben, Kansas; and Gary, Minneapolis.

As to Howard, he served from 1944 to 1946 in Europe as an Infantry rifleman. He's a humble guy who doesn't like to talk about his wartime

experiences. But his daughter Cathy, of Fargo, is proud of her dad and sent Neighbors a few of his stories.

Obviously, being in a war is a frightful thing. Cathy says her dad was scared going overseas and he remained scared until he got safely home.

Howard told his daughter about the time he was fighting in Cologne, Germany. His unit had to flush out a sniper firing from a church steeple. That sniper turned out to be a 14-year-old boy.

"Dad remembers seeing children and parents scrambling and crying frantically for each other," Cathy says.

Howard, who spent many days and nights in foxholes, crossed the Siegfried Line with his unit right after the Battle of the Bulge; he recalls how bitterly cold it was.

After crossing the Rhine River, Howard received a battle star.

He and his outfit marched and crawled all the way to Czechoslovakia, where they met the Russian armies pushing in from the east.

The men then were shipped to a camp near Paris. After a few weeks there, they got their dreaded orders: They were going to the South Pacific to prepare for the invasion of Japan.

But then the atomic bombs were dropped, the war ended, and Howard's division was deactivated while he was on furlough in the States.

Honest, hard-working

After his discharge from the Army, Howard returned to Breckenridge and enrolled at the North Dakota State School of Science in Wahpeton. He met the love of his life, Irene.

And in 1948, a really big event occurred. He and Irene were married. He was 21. Irene, of Wahpeton, was 18.

Remembering his wedding day brings a big smile to Howard's face.

Then the kids began coming, including Cathy, who tells Neighbors, "I admire my dad so much. He is one of the few men who has such integrity and has always been such an honest, hard-working man.

"He worked two jobs for many years to support us seven kids," she says, "until he finally was able to get on full time with the Burlington Northern as an engineer."

Howard, as is his style, plays this down. But he does say one of those jobs he had at first was as a fireman with the old Great Northern Railway, which later became the Burlington Northern.

"I was a fireman and shoveled coal in the old steam engines," he says. When diesel engines came in, he says, "I liked them a lot better; no shoveling coal."

But when he was an engineer, "They (someone from the railroad office) would call me in the middle of the night to make a run-midnight or 1 in the morning. They'd call me because they'd know I'd do it, while a lot of the other guys wouldn't."

Howard has moved around quite a bit. Besides Breckenridge (where he and Irene bought a house with monthly mortgage payments of \$48) he and his family have lived in Moorhead and Dilworth and, after he retired, he and Irene lived in Florida for 15 years, then came to Fargo.

In Florida, he had time for one of his great loves: golf. At age 90, he still golfs. And he watches golf tournaments on TV.

Howard also tells of the tough days years ago when Irene developed breast cancer. Then it went into her bones. But she had treatment and was cured.

Cathy says it was pneumonia that eventually took her mother's life, to which Howard snorts, "I don't believe it. It was cancer."

He has many reminders of Irene around his apartment. Pictures, of course. But also, she did cross-stitching, and two of her framed works are on the bedroom wall; they are so finely done they look like paintings.

Irene created another special display, which also hangs on a wall; it's a framed collection of Howard's war ribbons and medals.

And she left him with seven children which led to 11 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

He's a walker

What does Howard do these days to keep busy?

Well, he says he gets up, makes his bed, showers, then goes downtown to have coffee with his friends.

And he walks. And walks. And walks some more, on the downtown Fargo skywalk a full hour, five days a week.

But then, he's a walker from way back. When he was with the railroad, he'd often walk from his home in Moorhead to Dilworth.

That's Howard Bellmore: soldier, a hard-working guy, a railroad man, husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. And golfer. And walker.

If you have an item of interest for this column, mail it to Neighbors, The Forum, Box 2020, Fargo, ND 58107, fax it to 241-5487 or email [blind@forumcomm.com](mailto:blind@forumcomm.com)(mailto:blind@forumcomm.com) .



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