Local soldier laid to rest

Ahlmeyer's remains placed in Arlington 38 years later

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New Paltz — On May 10, 38 years ago, Heinz Ahlmeyer, a star athlete at SUNY New Paltz, died in a bloody battle on a hill in Vietnam.

Yesterday, his remains were placed in the hallowed ground of Arlington National Cemetery as family, friends and college officials looked on.

Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Ahlmeyer, a native of Pearl River in Rockland County, was 23 at the time of his death. Two others who died with him on that hill were also buried yesterday with full military honors. A fourth Marine in Ahlmeyer's unit was buried previously.

At SUNY New Paltz, Ahlmeyer starred in soccer, swam backstroke for the swim team and played baseball.

“He was the epitome of a team player and what a team player should be like,” Gene Ventriglia, one of Ahlmeyer's soccer teammates at SUNY New Paltz, said in February. “It was always about the team.”

Because of his impact on the New Paltz community, an award was created in his honor.

“The New Paltz college community was clearly enriched by Heinz Ahlmeyer’s presence on this campus,” Steven Poskanzer, president of SUNY New Paltz, said previously. “He touched so many lives here and is remembered with great affection and honor.”

This fall, the college plans to honor Ahlmeyer with a ceremony during Alumni Weekend. Members of his soccer team, which won a championship in 1965, will join the ceremony. Those team members were instrumental in setting up the Heinz Ahlmeyer Award in 1967.

Since then, 37 names have been added to the award.

“It's given to the person that gives ... all he possibly can in whatever he tries to do,” said Ahlmeyer's sister, Irene Healea of Watertown, Tenn. “He was that way.”

It was that spirit that took Ahlmeyer into the Marines. On May 10, 1967, he was on a long-distance reconnaissance mission behind enemy lines. North Vietnamese soldiers caught his team. Under heavy enemy fire, commanders had to call off efforts to bring them out. Ahlmeyer was 23.

The search for the remains of Ahlmeyer and the others never really stopped.

Earlier this year, Healea learned that officials had identified the remains of three of the four men who were found in a foxhole, including her brother.

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