

MERLI MESSENGER

Gino J. Merle Veterans' Center

401 Penn Avenue, Scranton, PA

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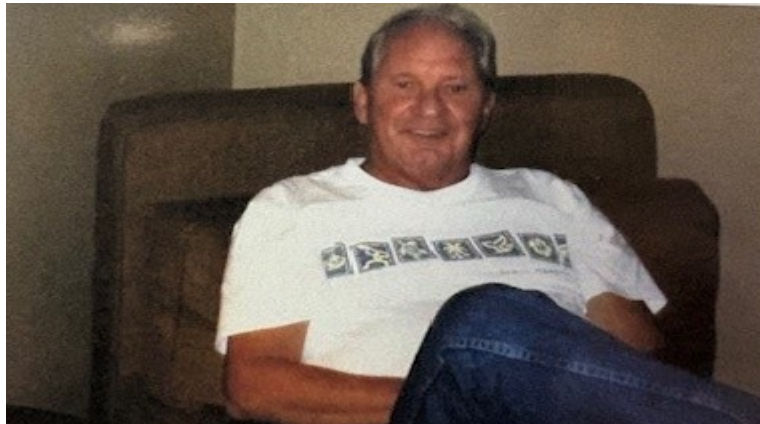


SEPTEMBER

As summer gently fades into autumn, September arrives bringing a fresh sense of calm and new beginnings. For many of us here at the Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, this month offers a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the beauty of nature's changing colors, reflect on memories, and look forward to cozy days ahead. September is often called the gateway to fall, a season of peaceful change. The leaves slowly turn brilliant shades of red, orange, and gold, creating breathtaking views right outside our windows. It is the perfect time to take go outside and breathe in the crisp air or simply enjoy watching the world prepare for the cooler months.

Meet the Heroes: Getting to Know Your Veterans

By Anthony Santos and Annie Shaw, University of Scranton Students.



In life we all have choices to make. For Ralph “Randy” Layland, 84, he makes the choice to walk through life with a smile on his face and a joke in his back pocket every day.

Early Life

Growing up, Randy spend most of his time playing sports. He was short in stature but had remarkable speed. He would run to school, then run back home, then run to the Boys and Girls Club, and run back home again every day. “All I knew was sports. It was all I cared about. I did not care about the girls or anything else,” Randy said. His favorite sport to play was baseball. His father, who was born in Wales, had no idea what baseball was, so Ralph used a wooden stick and a rock teaching himself how to play. Cont....

He spent hours at the park tossing a rock in the air and hitting it with a stick. Years later he received a one-year scholarship to play baseball at Penn State University. He was a natural center fielder, thanks to his exceptional speed and ability to cover a lot of ground. Even though Layland was a great player, after his freshman year he decided to join the Army, because of a lack of baseball scholarships being given out the following year.

Military Service

Randy was in the Army from the ages of 22 to 28, serving in both Vietnam and France. Despite it being an incredibly difficult time in his life, he maintained his positivity and his jokester personality. He had many adventures which gave him opportunities to look back on his time in the service with a smile. “On New Year’s Eve my two friends were drunk, and they threw bottles out in the street. They thought if they ran the police would not know who did it, so I ran after them. The police chased us and I thought they would never catch me, so eventually I hid under a car. The cop tapped me on the shoulder, I got taken in a paddy wagon to jail and stayed the night to make sure my buddies were okay,” Layland said. This is one of his favorite memories of his time in the service, one that he looks back on with a smile, reminiscing about a joy-filled time with his best friends. Cont.— — —

It is not only his off-duty times that provided him with positive memories, but times when he was actively serving. “When it comes to my first confirmed kill, I was helping two orphans who were about 12 or 13. I heard screams and the one girl pointed at my rifle, so I picked it up because the noise was still there, I fired and it turned out to be a water buffalo,” Layland said. Layland chooses to look back on his years in the service and focuses on the best moments, even if they were few and far between. This is just a small example of the extraordinary ability Layland has to make lemonade, even if he has to pick the lemons himself.

Post Service

After his time in the service ended, Layland continued to be the same cheerful jokester he was before. While in line at a grocery store one day, he noticed a woman purchasing a lottery ticket, prompting him to play a prank on her. “I told her I work for the lottery commission and that one is a loser. Give me that one and the next one is a winner,” Layland said. The woman believed Layland, and it turned out he was right. The first ticket was a bust and the second was a winner. The woman came back the next week looking for the Lottery Commissioner (Layland) to help pick tickets again. Continued....

A couple years later, Layland met another woman, Joan Layland, the love of his life and wife. At 65, he walked into a Sheetz in Scranton and his life was forever change. “I was just fooling around. I was actually going with somebody else at the time. I just talked to her and next thing you know I asked her out and we went.” They have now been married 14 years and spend their days laughing and loving at the Gino J. Merli Veterans’ Center. Joan Layland visits Randy Layland every day. She loves Layland for a multitude of reasons, one of the greatest being his unwavering sense of humor.





PURSE BINGO

JOIN US FOR A FUN-FILLED BINGO EVENT!
BENEFITING THE GINO J. MERLI VETERANS' CENTER - RESIDENT
WELFARE FUND

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2025
DOORS OPEN: 12:00 PM | GAMES BEGIN: 1:00 PM
LOCATED AT: 401 PENN AVENUE, SCRANTON, PA

COME ENJOY A GREAT DAY OF BINGO, PRIZES, AND COMMUNITY –
ALL IN SUPPORT OF OUR VETERANS!

Admission - \$35

Includes 12 Bingo Games and 1 Door Prize Entry

♦ **EXTRA BINGO CARDS - AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE**

🎉 **50/50 & BASKET RAFFLES - JOIN THE FUN!**

🍔 **CONCESSIONS AVAILABLE - NO OUTSIDE FOOD OR DRINKS**

💵 **CASH ONLY - ATM ON SITE**

Contact Janice McAllister to register:
(570)-961-4380

Limited spacing available!



September Word Search

K P Q U X Q T S E R O M S U J F E A S A U T K B
A B L A K I G K C N C B V B L X X A A L V T X N
P Y J G W O F R C H Z W C Q U M T B Q Z D W T R
G D T S N G A A X R A R J O H W S J G M T T R B
Y R D O Q E G A O H K B A D L T C X P W N D E B
W A C B W D M Q F F O X M X U O Q X I W A A D A
Z L G O F F R O O A L I P N J P R N C A R R O P
Q E V C K E Z O O G Z D Z U V B J Y O G B Y R O
J R T Y E T T C K D O O H D C K C K T P I F A A
E I Y A R B O T O R W U J F B Q K R T A V W U S
L F C J A C F Q F E G I A W N B J K G I W C E B
R N X L T H A E H P W N G T E R B M Q E U P J Y
V O L O E A V J L H Q M Z I K B T O P W T O X Z
Y B H O Q S O E K M I N V M A Z P L S E D B S M
I Q R S Y L A D X A U T U M N H F H M R R O E U
H O F U M V N B V E Y W D S P J Y B W I A L P E
X Y S Z E Q F S L T L L F U Y V E D L T C R W T
A T B S J P X S I D W T L O G R R V F Q S Y G E
N W E D N H S Q G N Y C O I M W I W Y B B T O R
M Y Z Q Z V X O C H A N G E H Q Y D F V T D P W
N L D F A I R L S D K C B E W C W D H L U F J X
T W D F I X S B N E S B L U T N L F K V O Y F Z
U F H C L M H M M T V X C V D P T C V G N Q W H
L O T T N T L T S K X J E N F K S G G R I I S U

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|----------|
| hot cocoa | september | football |
| vibrant | bonfire | change |
| autumn | leaves | smores |
| chilly | color | fair |

September 2025 Activity Events

TRIPS & DINE-IN LUNCHES

9/2 PERKINS LUNCH

9/4 VFW DUPONT EVENING

9/11 LENOX FISHING & LUNCH

9/12 WALMART

9/14 RAILRIDERS GAME

9/15 CHICK-FIL-A DINE-IN MPR

9/16 DENNY'S BREAKFAST

9/18 HILLSIDE PARK FISHING

9/22 BURGER KING DINE-IN MPR

9/23 LONG HORN

9/24 BOWLING IDLE HOURS

9/25 COUNTRY RIDE & ICE CREAM

9/26 VETERANS PROMISE LUNCH



SPECIAL EVENTS

**9/1 LABOR DAY - ASSORTED ICE CREAM SOCIAL WITH MUSIC ACTIVITY
COURTYARD 2PM**

9/5 FIRST FRIDAY WITH HORS-D-OEUVRES 7PM MPR

9/6 NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL READING WITH COFFEE 9AM 3RD FL D.R.

9/7 MOVIE AND POPCORN DAY 2PM MPR

9/8 JEFF LEWIS COUNTRY MUSIC 2PM MPR

9/9 AFTERNOON PAINT AND SIP 2PM MPR

9/12 BIRTHDAY BASH WITH BRIAN G PERFORMING 2PM MPR

9/15 THROOP CIVIC CENTER KARAOKE DAY 2PM MPR

9/16 GEORGE RITTENHOUSE 2PM MPR

**9/19 POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY- CEREMONY WITH GMVC HONOR GUARD/
PIZZA AND COLD BEVERAGES WILL BE SERVED 2PM MPR**

9/22 RODEO ROY AUTUM HARVEST CAMP FIRE SING-ALONG 2PM MPR

**9/23 VETERANS AND FRIENDS TEA DISCUSS WWI VETERANS IN LACKAWANNA
COUNTY 2PM MPR**

9/24 STANKY AND THE CADETS 2PM MPR

9/28 RETRO ALLIANCE 2PM MPR

**9/29 CASINO EVENT ROULETTE TABLE, BLACKJACK TABLES, POKER TABLE,
CRAPS TABLE, 4 SLOT MACHINES AND MUCH MORE 1:30-4PM MPR**

**9/30 OKTOBERFEST WITH JOHN STEVENS PERFORMING, POTATO PANCAKES,
GERMAN BEER AND MORE 2PM MPR**



Jeffrey Price-09/01

Thomas Surdouski-09/04

Romayne Hall-09/05

Joseph Boeglin-09/11

Thomas Lagoey-09/11

Karen Homisak-09/13

Joseph Nardelli-09/17

Daniel Krolick-09/19

Esther Roberta-09/19

Ralph Christianson-09/21

Walli Kovalski-09/21

Carmen Riviello-09/22

Joseph Saukulyak-09/22

Michael Martin-09/24

Gerald Hunt-09/25

Charles Spillar-09/25

Patrick Calpin-09/26

Marylin Kaczmarek-9/29

Michael Bacumpas-09/30

Frank Kwiatkowski-09/30



MONETARY DONATIONS

\$787-SPD Children's Camp Car Wash

\$50-Donna Marie Stansen

\$30– Redner's Gift Card

\$50-Scranton Running Gift Card

\$50-Synergy Salon and Spa Gift Card

\$30-Minooka Gift Card

\$20-Price Chopper

Memorial Donations

\$2000-Linda Cobb-In Memory of Stephen Bettum

\$100-Barbara Bayne-In Memory of Peter Boyko

\$100-Honesdale National Bank-In Memory of Joseph Sweeney

MATERIAL DONATIONS

Community Donation-Clothing

Jamie Kraycer-Marc Jacobs Purse

Curiosity Shop-Joy Susan Classic Hobo Handbag

Pamela Espositio-Purses

Bernie Bussacco-Clothing

Joan Narcoonis-Books

Throop VFW 7251-Michael Kors Cream Duffle

**Kelly McDonald-Michael Kors Pink Crossbody
Purse and Michael Kors Black Jet Set Travel Purse**

Marie Holland-Patriotic Purse

TAPS

Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center extends its deepest sympathy to the loved ones of the following Veteran who has passed away.

Their presence will be greatly missed.



Joseph Sweeney-8/7/2025