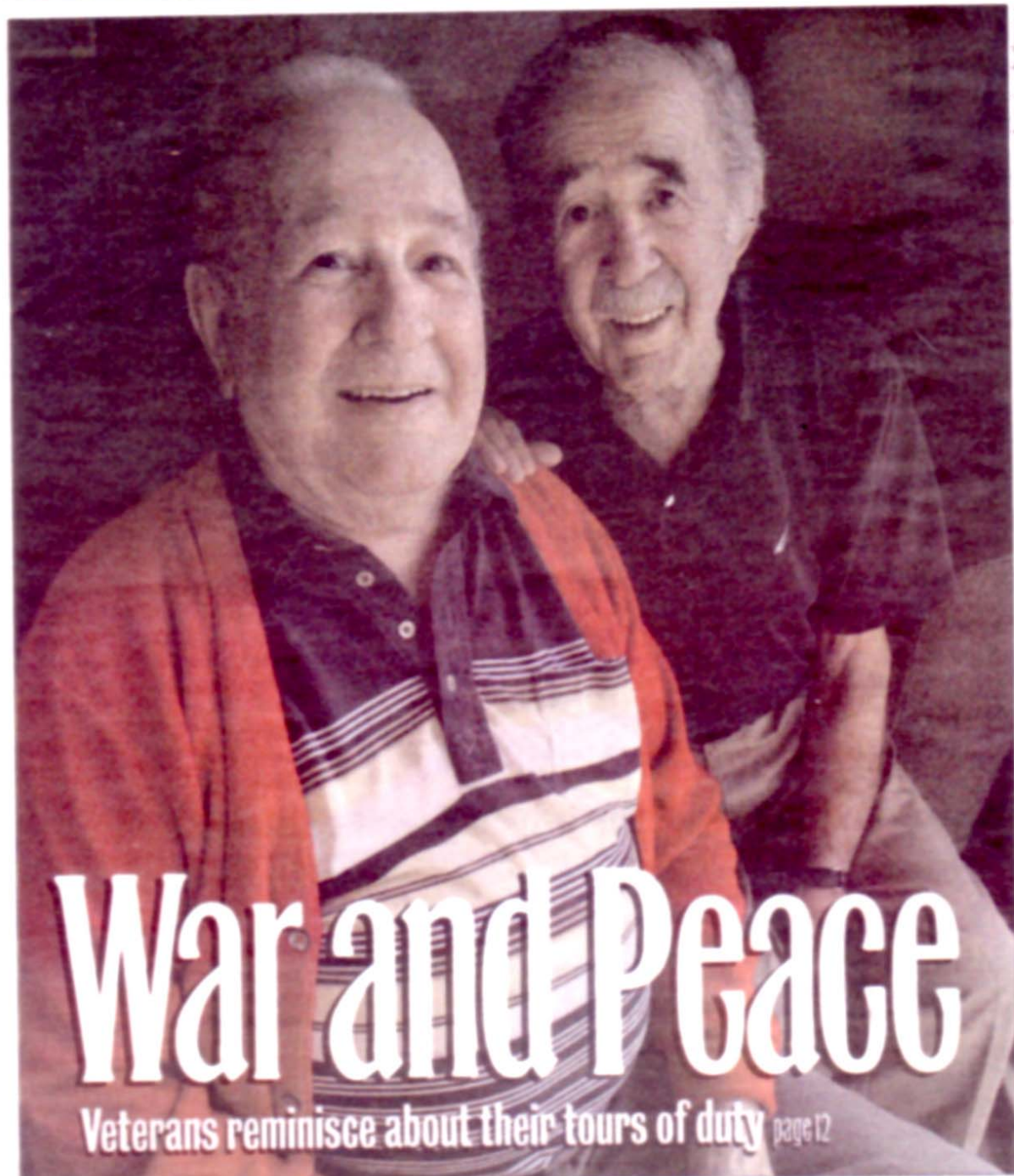


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Photograph by Jacqueline Korman

War and Peace

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Sunnyvale residents and brothers Al Arellano, 83 (left) and George, 84, both served during World War II, Al in the U.S. Navy and Merchant Marines and George in the Merchant Marines.



Cupertino Electric employees work around the area where a statue is being placed at the Cupertino Veterans Memorial, which opens on Veterans Day, Nov. 11.

War and Peace

Veterans reminisce about their tours of duty

By CODY KRAATZ

Photographs by JACQUELINE RAMSEYER

With rising casualties and the continuing trauma to soldiers and civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, this Veterans Day is both poignant and personal.

The unpopularity of the Iraq war also illustrates the challenge of honoring troops for their service and sacrifice to their country

while opposing the war they are fighting.

Organizers of the \$650,000 Cupertino Veterans Memorial, set to be unveiled on Nov. 11, designed it to honor veterans of all wars, not necessarily the wars themselves. A statue of Cupertino native Matthew Axelson and a fellow Navy SEAL, James Suh, both

of whom died in Afghanistan in 2005, is the focal point of the memorial.

When it comes to speaking about the war, there are no more immediate and relevant voices than from those who have lived through it—even if it was more than 60 years ago.

World War II veterans, who are

dying at a rate of 1,000 a day by some estimates, have strong and diverse opinions on war, including the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We're dealing today with a different kind of enemy," says George Arellano, a Sunnyvale resident and former merchant mariner who worked on troop

transports and cargo ships in World War II.

"[In World War II] it was a donnybrook kind of boxing match. You're in that corner, and I'm in this corner. This is different. They've gone more underground, and there's no uniform," says Arellano, 84, who says that the basis for invading Afghanistan

ology.

"If you're attacked and you don't fight back, you ought to leave the country," says John Gawienowski, 84, a Sunnyvale resident who flew fighter planes in the Army Air Corps, which later became the U.S. Air Force, during World War II.

Ted Brown, a Cupertino resident, sailed on several ships during World War II, including the battleship *USS Arkansas*.

"I couldn't get in the Navy band, so I joined the Naval Reserve in Detroit," says Brown, 87, a prolific trombonist who played in the Cupertino Symphonic Band's Veterans Day concert on Nov. 4. "Right after Hitler attacked Poland [in 1939], I went down and joined the regular Navy."

Brown has vivid memories of going down the hatch as a radio operator on a submarine.

"It was a miserable environment. The air smelled bad, and it was awfully cold or awfully hot depending on where you were," says Brown. "But it kind of grew on me and I didn't want to get transferred off a submarine because I thought I was doing an important job."

His grounding for a career in electronics came from the Navy, and he echoes those veterans who are grateful for the education and opportunities military service provided.

"The Navy gave me a lot of good assignments that challenged me and expanded my horizons."

Some consider the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, an appropriate catalyst for the current conflicts, just as Pearl Harbor was the impetus for United States' entering World War II.

"I was shocked. Prior to [Pearl Harbor] there was no indication that we were going to war," says Gawienowski, remembering a drizzly Sunday afternoon in December 1941. He was scraping down his bamboo fly rod when the news came over the radio, and along with many other young men, he signed up quickly.

Now, he still has some contempt for military restraint that seems out of line with American popular opinion.

"You can't fight a war with 1 1/2 hands tied behind your back. Blast the hell out of them," he says of the enemy he perceives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Close to home

The conflict in Afghanistan has directly touched Donna and Corky Axelson and other members of the Cupertino community.

"I think it's been healthy for my husband and myself to be part of a project that remembers not only



Brothers Al Arellano, 83 (left) and George, 84, go through their individual scrapbooks while reminiscing about their service in the U.S. Navy and Merchant Marines during World War II.



Ted Brown, pictured in 1939 aboard the U.S.S. Dubuque in Chicago, held a special assignment as the ship's bugler along with his regular duties. He also served during World War II on a destroyer and a submarine.

Matthew's life and death, but also all veterans," says Donna Axelson. "It's not all about Matthew. It goes beyond one person."

The design of the Cupertino Veterans Memorial centers on a slightly larger-than-life bronze statue of Axelson and Suh, poised

for combat. Suh, whose family lives in Benecia, died in a helicopter in the same incident.

A low, sweeping "Wall of Honor" flanks the statue, and will feature the names of people from the Cupertino community or those who attended Cupertino schools

who died during military service.

A "Walk of Remembrance" will carry visitors through the monument, paved with bricks engraved in honor of anyone that served or is serving in the U.S. military. They were sold to raise funds for the project.

"What a wonderful history of the resolve, of the patriotism of men and women throughout the history of the United States," says Axelson, noting one paver that recalls the Revolutionary War.

However, she is careful to clarify that this is not a war memorial, but a veterans memorial.

"It's not at all about the war. It's about the men and women... who will answer our country's call."

In an interview with the Courier shortly after her son's death, Axelson said it was his love of adrenaline and adventure that motivated him to join the SEALs. Trained as a sniper, he was on a special mission searching for a Taliban guerilla leader in Kunar Province, in eastern Afghanistan, when he was killed.

While he and his four-man reconnaissance team were hunkered down watching a town, three goat herders stumbled upon them. They decided to release the herders, but 45 minutes later the team was overrun by Taliban fighters. Three SEALs were killed, including Axelson.

Asked about the importance of linking the battles fought today with those fought in the past, Axelson says, "if you don't want history to repeat itself, you need to look back."