

FITCHBURG YOUR STORY: City of Service - Jamie LaValley

[“Saxifrage” choral music plays, performed by the Fitchburg State University Choirs]

Prof. Kisha Tracy (intro): Welcome to the Fitchburg State University Perseverantia Podcast network. This is the Fitchburg Your Story series in which Fitchburg State students tell the stories that make our city and university unique.

[“Saxifrage” fades out]

[Classic Big Band music blasts in and plays over the transition]

Jamie LaValley: My name is Jamie LaValley, and this is my podcast called City of Service. On October 7th, 1940, a young man named Michael Addorizzi enlisted in the United States Navy. This decision was the start of a journey that would take him across the world while in service of the U.S. Navy and ultimately to his death.

[Classic Big Band music fades out]

Mike arrived for basic training on October 10th, 1940 in Newport, RI. At this time, Mike was a 20 year old boy from Fitchburg, Mass. who had just left home to fight in World War II.

[simulated wwII radio broadcast plays over the transition, talking about troop movements in Europe]

[slower, more mellow big band piece plays in the background]

Mike would document most of his journey around the world by being in the Navy through letters to his family and friends back home in Fitchburg. These letters were given to me by the Fitchburg State University Archives, and I was able to access them through the Michael Addorizzi Family Collection on their website.

Some of the stuff Mike says in his first letter home is: “Everything's coming along swell. We left Springfield for Worcester at 2.30 p.m. on Monday by train. There from Worcester to Providence and then to Newport by bus. We get up at 5.30 in the morning and go to bed at 9.30 p.m. Boy, our day sure is long. That training starts Monday, so this week don't count.”

[slower, more mellow big band piece fades out]

He then goes on to ask about his family and catch up with what's going on. This letter gives some insight on his day to day and his trip to basic training.

After Mike finishes his training, he was sent out to San Francisco where he became part of the crew of the USS Reed as a gunner mate.

FITCHBURG YOUR STORY: City of Service - Jamie LaValley

Jamie LaValley (cont'd): The USS Reed was a main class destroyer that was captained by Robert B. Carnery and had about 250 Navy men aboard it. For the first bit of Mike's time on the USS Reed, they transported Marine troops from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor.

While making one of these trips to Pearl Harbor, the Japanese decided to attack and the bombing of Pearl Harbor took place.

[Zero planes swooping in, gun fire and sirens plays in the background]

Mike, along with the rest of the USS Reed's crew, tried to fight off the incoming Japanese aircraft and successfully shot down one. On May 22nd, 1942, the USS Reed departed Pearl Harbor and headed north to Alaska to aid troops there by bombing Japanese positions. While in Alaska, the USS Reed sank a Japanese submarine by gunfire along with helping the troops.

On December 6, 1942, the USS Reed departed for the Pacific Theater for the first time, heading to New Caledonia. At this time, Mike sent a letter to his family. He talks about how his family might not get another letter from him for a while because he is being deployed to the Pacific. This letter also tells his family not to worry about him and that he's doing all right.

[planes swooping in]

On Christmas Day, 1942, the USS Reed escorted Army troops to Guadalcanal while also providing support by bombing multiple enemy positions.

On August 2nd, 1944, after about eight months of transportation and support missions, Mike would send his final letter home from Pearl Harbor. In this letter, Mike talks about what was said in the letter that his family sent to him, which were some basic life updates about his friends and family. And then he asks follow-up questions about them.

Mike's last letter home was no different than any of the other letters he had sent because he didn't of the danger waiting for him on his next deployment to the Pacific Theater.

[planes swooping in, intense attack sequence – planes swooping in, gun fire]

On December 11th, 1944, the USS Reed would be sent on its last mission. The mission had the USS Reed sent out to escort Marine reinforcements to Ormoc Bay. During this assignment, the USS Reed was attacked by a squadron of Japanese kamikaze pilots.

During this battle, the USS Reed managed to shoot down seven airplanes before being mortally wounded and eventually sinking.

Throughout this battle of the sinking of the U.S.S. Reed 103 sailors passed away. Michael Addorizzi was part of that unfortunate group of individuals.

[battle sounds fade out]

FITCHBURG YOUR STORY: City of Service - Jamie LaValley

Jamie LaValley (cont'd): At the time of Mike's death, he held the rank of GM-1, also known as Gunner's Mate First Class Petty Officer, which is responsible for the operation and maintenance of guided missile launching systems and gun mounts. Petty Officer First Class is the sixth rank a member of the United States Navy can receive. This allowed Mike to outrank and be in command of three ranks of seamen and the ranks of Petty Officer Third Class and Petty Officer Second Class. For Mike to have achieved this rank throughout his time in the Navy is very impressive and a credit to Mike's character and work ethic. Along with that rank, Mike was given four awards by the time of his death or after his death.

The first one is a Purple Heart Award, which is given out to all the U.S. military members who are either injured or killed while in service. The second medal Mike received was the Pacific Campaign Medal. This medal was awarded to any U.S. military member who served in the Asiatic or Pacific Theater from 1941 to 1945.

The third medal Mike was given is the World War II Victory. This medal was given to any members of the United States military who served in World War II. The fourth and final award Mike received from his time in the Navy is the Combat Action Ribbon. This ribbon is awarded to any U.S. Navy Coast Guard or Marine who has actively participated in ground or surface combat.

[slower, more mellow big band piece plays in the background through the end of the narration]

All of these and awards that Michael Addorizzi received are examples of his bravery and sacrifice.

That story about Michael Addorizzi's life and death makes up a small part of a much larger story of the city of Fitchburg's cultural heritage.

Fitchburg's cultural heritage is impossible to pinpoint with one or two words. This is because it is made up of the heritage of all the people who live here. As individuals, our cultural heritage is made up of so many different things, like our different backgrounds and histories. Along with those traits and more, as a community, we have developed a culture of camaraderie, hard work, and service.

This story of Michael Addorizzi falls under the category of service because his story is about how a kid from Fitchburg went and served his community and country.

I feel that Fitchburg's culture of service throughout all its inhabitants and all their different heritages is a foundational piece of cultural heritage as a whole for the city of Fitchburg.

There are countless other stories like Mike, where men and women from Fitchburg have gone out and served their community and country. In some of these stories, those men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice similar to Mike. It is important to learn about these stories

FITCHBURG YOUR STORY: City of Service - Jamie LaValley

Jamie LaValley (cont'd): because it helps keep the memory of those men and women alive, along with helping us not forget a vital piece of who we are as a community and as individuals.

[mellow big band theme swells to a conclusion]

[Perseverantia Network theme fades in]

Tori Kiolbase: You're listening to Perseverantia, the Fitchburg State University Podcast Network.

[Perseverantia Network theme fades out]