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“On The Town”

Richard Martorano Ed.

PFC Emory L. Bennett - Volusia County's only Medal of Honor recipient. Namesake of Emory L. Bennett Memorial Nursing Home

Sheltered off of a four lane highway in downtown Daytona Beach, and not really known to the community, the Emory L. Bennett Memorial Nursing Home is a Florida State Veterans' Home. It was named in honor of Private Emory L. Bennett who died in the Korean War. Private Bennett is Volusia County's solitary Medal of Honor recipient. Just 21 years of age at the time of his death, Emory was posthumously awarded the nation's highest honor.

Born in New Smyrna Beach on December 20, 1929, Emory and his parents moved to Cocoa Beach in 1937. His Mom and Dad owned “Bennett's Fish Market” and supplemented their income by duck hunting. Emory proved to be an astounding crack shot. He joined the Army in 1950 and served in Korea as a Pfc. with Company B of the First Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, Third Infantry Division.

According to the Medal of Honor Citation:

“In the early morning hours of June 24, 1951, two enemy Chinese battalions launched a human wave attack against his Company's defensive position. Bennett left his foxhole and stood exposed to the hostile fire in order to attack with his automatic rifle. Although wounded, he maintained his position long enough to momentarily halt the enemy advance. Private Bennett, while under heavy fire and greatly outnumbered by the enemy, was providing support fire for his unit when he was killed. Bennett is credited for saving many of his fellow soldier's lives. Severely wounded, he was nevertheless able to kill fifty of the advancing Chinese Communist troops. The assault continued and his company was forced to pull back. Bennett voluntarily stayed behind to provide covering fire while the rest of the unit withdrew, during which time he was mortally wounded. His body arrived home on November 23, 1951. For his brave actions, PFC Bennett was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on July 1, 1952.”

In 1988, Florida citizens endorsed a constitutional amendment to create the Florida Dept. of Veterans' Affairs as a separate agency charged with providing advocacy and representation for Florida veterans, and to intercede on their behalf with the U.S. Their advocacy was to increase

federal benefits for Florida veterans, improve the quality of life for veterans with service-connected disabilities, and provide access to federally funded medical care for eligible veterans.

Florida has since created a network of six state regulated veterans nursing homes, and has garnered the notable distinction of having all of its skilled nursing facilities rated at Five-Stars by the **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services**. CMM created the Five-Star quality rating system in 2008 to help residents, their families and caregivers compare nursing homes more easily, and to help make meaningful distinctions between high and low performing nursing homes.

Emory L. Bennett Memorial Nursing Home was opened December 27, 1993. It has 120 beds and a staff of 140. State inspections by CMM are unannounced and broken down into deficiency types that include; pharmacy services, administration, resident rights, nutrition and dietary, resident assessment, environmental, and patient mistreatment. According to CMM, nursing homes with five star ratings are considered to be in the top 20% with above average quality compared to other nursing homes in the state. Emory L. Bennett Memorial Nursing Home has consistently been considered in the top 20%.

My association with Emory L. Bennett is as a volunteer. I bring Cody, my Labradoodle who is a Certified Therapy Dog, for weekly visits to patients and staff at the nursing home. I am a Navy veteran, so it is a delight for me to watch Cody provide love and affection to our equally well-deserved veterans and staff.

Emory L. Bennett is always looking for volunteers to offer assistance and kindness to veteran patients. If you're looking for something to do to fill your life, check it out. Call Vicki, the activities director at 386-274-3460. Good luck and enjoy.

Dr. Richard (Rick) Martorano recently retired. He is the owner of R. Martorano Productions LLC and Music, Etc. Inc. He is a prominent musician, producer, composer, music director and adjunct university professor residing in Port Orange, Florida. He can be reached at rjaem222@gmail.com.