



PHOTOS: BRIAN DUMONT

# THE LONE BUGLER'S FUNERAL & CHAPTER 899'S HONOR GUARD

BY MICHAEL KEATING



In laying to rest one of its most beloved members, Bordentown, New Jersey, Chapter 899 also celebrated “one of the chapter’s finest hours,” according to chapter member Wally Noonan.

“The Honor Guard deserves the respect of every member for what it did for First Sergeant Dick Pinter. Many arrived at 8:30 a.m. at the First Baptist Church of Bordentown to accord Dick his final watch until 1:30 on Saturday, February 21.

“They waited at the church,” Noonan said, “till after 4:00 p.m. in order to carry Dick’s casket out of the church into a snowstorm, then down eight precarious, slippery steps. They elevated Dick’s casket chest high and placed it on a horse-drawn caisson. Every one of Dick’s wishes was carried out by Chapter 899.”

Richard J. Pinter had been known as the Lone Bugler. In fact, so deep was the community’s respect that the street he lived on had been renamed Lone Bugler Way. He had played “Taps” at the funerals of hundreds of New Jersey veterans, and every Memorial Day he traveled to eighteen separate cemeteries to play his haunting bugler’s lament. He carried the firm conviction that his fallen comrades deserved this final honor.

Pinter had the gift for relating to people, and people were drawn to him. He gave patriotic talks at schools, veterans’ homes, and hospitals. He also worked with Chapter 899 and its Honor Guard.

Although the chapter dates to 2002, the Chapter 899 Honor Guard was only formed “two or three years ago,” said Brian DuMont. “The guard appears at chapter functions and also works with New Jersey’s Mission of Honor, which has taken on the task of burying with honor the unclaimed cremains of New Jersey veterans.”

Working closely with Chapter 899 Chaplain Jerry Skorch at funerals, the Honor Guard is primarily charged with flag bearing and rifle salutes. People have come and gone as the group has formed and developed: Honor guard duty can be time consuming and demanding. Bill West, Leo Ethier, Don Smieszek, Don Mohr, John Lesko, Louis Kocsis, Ron Olschewski, Bill Carlin, Bob Lecato, Richard Beswick, and Ken Bowker made up the Chapter 899 Honor Guard on February 21. Charlie Davies was the captain.

At Dick Pinter’s funeral, the Honor Guard shone. After standing for several hours they carried the casket through the driving snow onto the caisson. All was performed with elegance and respect.

“It was,” DuMont echoed, “the Honor Guard’s finest hour.” ■

