Remembering the soldiers who passed through Camp Reynolds

Produced by Leslie Barrett, Co-anchor/Reporter at WFMJ TV Youngstown, OH.

The following is the script for the video segment that was aired Friday November 14, 2014 on the 6 PM and 11 PM News at WFMJ TV in Youngstown, OH.

REYNOLDS, Pennsylvania:

Jazz was king, Judy Garland graced the silver screen and young men were preparing to fight in World War II.

It was the early 1940's and Mercer County was in the midst of it all.

About a million soldiers passed through Camp Reynolds in Pymatuning Township before most of them were sent to Europe.

Clara Haggerty remembers working in the camp's post office.

"It was nice, we had lots of fun and yet we always felt sad when the boys marched on to go overseas. They'd march past the post office. We'd all go to the windows, you know, and watch them go. It was kind of sad," said Haggerty.

Neal Lineman's position as a young shoeshine boy is just as fresh in his mind today, as it was 70 years ago.

One soldier gave Neal the belt off his uniform for the strap on his box.

"I often thought, many, many times as I got older, just, I wondered how many of those GI's come back from the war that had their foot on that box getting a shine and also that belt, if the guy ever survived in that," said Lineman.

Celebrities including Judy Garland, Louis Armstrong and Joe Louis visited the army facility to lift the soldiers' spirits.

Other residents that started coming to the camp in 1944 were German prisoners of war.

"I was collecting mail in the hospital there and here comes a big prisoner of war walking up and I was scared, but I just kept going. He didn't say anything. I just kept on walking, I wanted to run," remembered Haggerty.

Camp Reynolds closed in 1946 but a group of businessmen turned it into the residential and industrial community that we now know as Reynolds.

"The overall impact is that there is a Reynolds area nowadays," said Art Williams, historian with The Camp Reynolds Project.

A storied history about the greatest generation in our own backyard that laid the groundwork for today.

You may also be wondering where the name Reynolds originated. The camp and school district were named after Pennsylvania Civil War hero; Major General John Fulton Reynolds.

For more information on the history of the camp visit The Camp Reynolds Project web site.