
Staff Sgt. Dain T. Venne

Gave his life in the service of our county.

No Man Is An Island

No man is an island
Entire of itself.
Each is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thine own
Or of thine friend's were.
Each man's death diminishes me,
For I am involved in mankind.
Therefore, send not to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.
John Donne (16th-17th c.)

Nowhere does the "bell" sound more surely and truly than in a small village such as Port Henry, particularly when it is for one so young.

On earth, death is the ultimate fact and, as such, receives the honor it deserves, by grieving and by ritual. The Fact Finder's editor does not feel equipped with the knowledge necessary to properly honor the death of Dain Venne and so turns to others' words to fill this need.

Dain Venne much more than a hero

From the Editor's Desk

By [Fred Herbst](#)

It's strange what comes to mind when news of a tragedy arrives. When I was awoken early Sunday with the news Dain Venne of Port Henry had been killed in Afghanistan, I immediately thought back to a winter day 20 years ago.

My daughter, Meaghan, and I had been invited to the town of Moriah sledding party by Brian Venne, Dain's father, at the Moriah Country Club. Parents visited at the top of the hill as children flew down the slope.

That day, even at a tender age, it was obvious Dain Venne was special. He was fearless, constantly trying to go faster and faster in an attempt to make it to a small brook at the bottom of hill that parents were confident was out of reach. Also, he was kind, helping pull younger children back up the hill after each trip. And, he was fun.

Time-after-time Dain challenged his father and myself to a race down the hill. Finally, against better judgement, the old men — we're much older today — could no longer tolerate the taunts. We raced.

With the snow packed down to almost ice thanks to hundreds of earlier trips, we flew down the hill — reaching the brook and crashing into it. While Brian and I tried to gather ourselves, Dain was declaring victory. He had won.

It turns out Dain almost always won. He grew into a top student and an outstanding athlete — he was an all-state linebacker and led the North Country in rushing as a tailback his senior year at Moriah. Coach Don Tesar called Dain the smartest and best linebacker he's ever coached. He went to St. Lawrence University after graduating from Moriah Central School in 2001.

The world changed Sept. 11, 2001, for Dain and thousands of others. The 9-11 terrorist attacks called Dain to military service.

It was a decision that was hard on his parents, Brian and Laura, but they supported him — as they always did. That support came easier with the knowledge that Dain truly believed he was doing his part to make the world a better place.

Even when Dain came home to Port Henry, he did his part to help others. A member of the Port Henry Fire Department he was honored last year for heroism after he rescued several stranded victims during Tropical Storm Lee.

Dain served a tour of duty in Iraq, which only made him more determined to continue his service. At every step family and friends were proud, but nervous — knowing Dain would never back down from doing the right thing regardless of the consequences. Those same traits displayed while sledding as a child — fearlessness, kindness, humor — made Dain a role model for his community and soldiers under his leadership.

He was actually scheduled to be home on leave Nov. 3, but Dain decided to stay in Afghanistan rather than have his unit short-handed. That day Dain was killed along with Specialist Brett E. Gorniewicz and Specialist Ryan P. Jayne by an improvised explosive device in Paktiya Province, Afghanistan.

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the men were combat engineers protecting comrades by conducting "route-clearing" duties for a convoy when an IED blasted their vehicle.

Since the Afghan War began in 2001, 2,146 American soldiers have died there, 282 this year. Every one has been a son, daughter, sister, brother, friend. Every one has been a hero.

Tributes are pouring in for Dain. The governor, elected leaders, community leaders, former teachers and coaches — everyone has something good to say about Dain. Those who knew him best speak in broken voices, wiping away tears. That's the way it should be.

Those accolades will soon be gone, though, and family and friends will be left to deal with the grief and loss. Fortunately, Dain left an amazing legacy to comfort his family and community. Others talk about service, Dain lived it. While the pain of his loss may never fade, neither will the love and pride he generated.

May God bless Dain and his family.

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A Tropical Storm named "Sandy"

As editor of the Port Henry Fact Finder, I became cast as a roving reporter when I found myself unable to return home from Glen Cove, L.I. due to hurricane Sandy.

I had planned a trip Downstate to attend a book signing by my younger daughter. I would drive down Friday the 26th, attend the book signing the 27th, visit on the 28th and drive back home Monday the 29th. By Saturday it was obvious that I would not be able to drive back on Monday and had to consider one of two different options, drive back Sunday or wait out the storm. Sunday was my choice, but the wind began to blow and I really dislike driving on windy days, then thinking about driving 300 miles left no choice but to wait out the storm.

It turned out to be a fortuitous forced choice as far as my daughter and I were concerned. Had I left, I would have been worrying about her and, alone, she really would not have enjoyed dealing with the problems caused by having to live five days with no electricity. We were luckier than many. She has a gas stove, so we could cook meals. Her hot water heater is gas, so there was plenty of hot water. Of course the refrigerator was an immediate source of concern. Again luck raised its pleasant head. She has a new refrigerator and it was not, as yet, filled to the brim so it was rather easy to cook things before they went bad and, with a bag or two of ice, the freezer became the refrigerator. She even has a wood burning stove, though seldom used and when used, doesn't function very efficiently, but when it is your only source of house heat you don't let it hear you complain. At first, the real source of

angst was TV withdrawal, but very soon the quiet became relaxing and time seemed to slow down as you played games such as scrabble by soft candle light. Candle light is really very pleasant so long as you don't try to read a novel.

We had a battery-run radio and a land-line telephone and while we were grateful for the communication and information they provided, they were also a source of worry and sadness as we talked with our friends who, besides having no electricity had no heat or hot water or way to cook. Then to hear of the people in lower Manhattan, many floors up and maybe even no water for toilet flushing. Old or ill people dependent on meals being delivered to them. Along the coast, whole towns awash so that many, many people had no home in which to be, without electric or heat. And then there was the irony that on Manhattan everywhere above 34th street, life seemed normal, life went on as usual, people went shopping and to restaurants and, by Wednesday, Broadway and the Metropolitan Opera were performing as usual.

I am writing this late Thursday the 8th and have just spoken with my daughter. Several of her friends are still without electric and one of them lives only two miles from her. Gasoline for cars and generators is still a real problem. One of the reasons I did not return until this past Monday, was I did not have enough gas to get me out of the city far enough to be sure I would be able to purchase it when I needed it. Saturday the 3rd I decided to get into a gas line and just wait. I waited for an hour and a half, listening to a radio show receiving and broadcasting call-ins from listeners from all over the area. All, but one, were calls for help or terrible stories of what it is like to live in a big city when services stop, even just one service. It was my turn to get gas and I was told they were out of gas. Thirty or forty percent of the gas stations still have no electricity with which to pump gas and those with the electricity simply run out of gas. I would still be Downstate if I hadn't gotten up at 4am Monday morning and gone in search of gas. I went to one station on a major road I thought might have gas, but there was a line already, some cars just parked with no one in them. I saw a police car and was able to ask what he knew. He said he had seen a USA gas truck going toward Locust Valley but did not know where it was going. We went to Locust Valley to a little station I thought was a USA station and there were about six cars waiting. One man told us there had *just* been a delivery of gas, that he had seen the truck and followed it to this station. It was 4:30 am. The station was not to open until 6 am. It was cold and we were cold just sitting there, afraid to use the last bit of gas for heat, just in case something happened that would keep us from getting gas at this station. Of course we did get gas shortly after 6 am and life began its slow fall back into the ordinary, at least for me. Downstate on parts of Long Island, Staten Island, Lower Manhattan, the Jersey Shore and I believe some of the Connecticut coast, things are not anywhere close to being back to normal, to the ordinary, the usual. Ordinary, so often confused with dull, boring, something to get away from until something out of the ordinary happens that makes us long for that comforting assurance of the ordinary.

The reprint below is something I think all of us in Port Henry can truly empathize with.

Jennifer Bulone DePalo to:

WABC-TV Channel 7 Eyewitness News

I find it extremely frustrating the lack of news coverage Nassau and Suffolk Counties have received in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. I have been without power for 8 days, with many downed trees and power lines with no LIPA crews in sight. The gas situation has become overwhelming. People trying to buy gas for generators and their cars. Waiting on 6 hour lines to only wind up without any gas. Our schools have been closed for over a week. The small town communities such as Seaford, Wantagh, Massapequa, Lindenhurst, etc. are completely flooded and their homes destroyed. FEMA has declared them uninhabitable. Yet there is no coverage of these towns or those in Western Suffolk where the power has been gone since Sandy first hit. Long Islanders are suffering and it is shameful you are not reporting it so that others can see the devastation that is happening all across the island and get the help that is needed.

Look for the next issue of the Fact Finder on Saturday, November 24th Adirondack Hair Associates, Macs and Moriah Pharmacy; also you may find copies to read at the Sherman Free Library.