

Region

Veterans memorial dedicated

by Teri Klassen
Sunday Herald-Times

BLOOMFIELD — The sun shone. The flag waved.

Hundreds of people sat in lawn chairs or stood on the Greene County courthouse lawn Saturday as the first county veterans memorial was dedicated, 70 years after World War I and almost 20 after Vietnam.

"If we don't do it now in our time, who's going to do it?" queried Bill Elkton, a World War II veteran who helped supervise the project. "The

money wasn't easy to get, \$10 or \$20 at a time."

As they saluted the county's 159 war dead whose names are on the granite monument, veterans in the crowd were apt to count their blessings.

"They gave something that no one else can give for us to have what we have here today," said Vietnam veteran John Burris, an Eastern High School graduate. "It's not my memorial, it's for them, and I'm proud to have helped them."

As the Bloomfield High School

band played "The Star-Spangled Banner," James Baukat, the nephew of one of Burris's classmates, saluted, then put his left hand on his chest, and then his right hand. The 7-year-old never knew his Uncle Kenneth L. Walters, whose name is among 12 listed on the memorial under Vietnam.

Nearby, as bird droppings spattered off the lawn chair in front of him, James Letsinger barely smiled.

"That's just like on D-Day," he said. "I was lucky all those bullets

missed me."

Letsinger "scrounged around in three or four trunks" to find the World War II soldier's uniform he modeled Saturday, consisting of olive-drab, slightly moth-eaten wool Eisenhower jacket and overseas hat, and tie and shirt.

"This shirt belonged to my wife's first husband, a flyer who was lost in World War II," he said. Capt. Doyle Dugger, a B-17 flyer who died in Germany in March 1943, is among the county's 100 World War II dead.

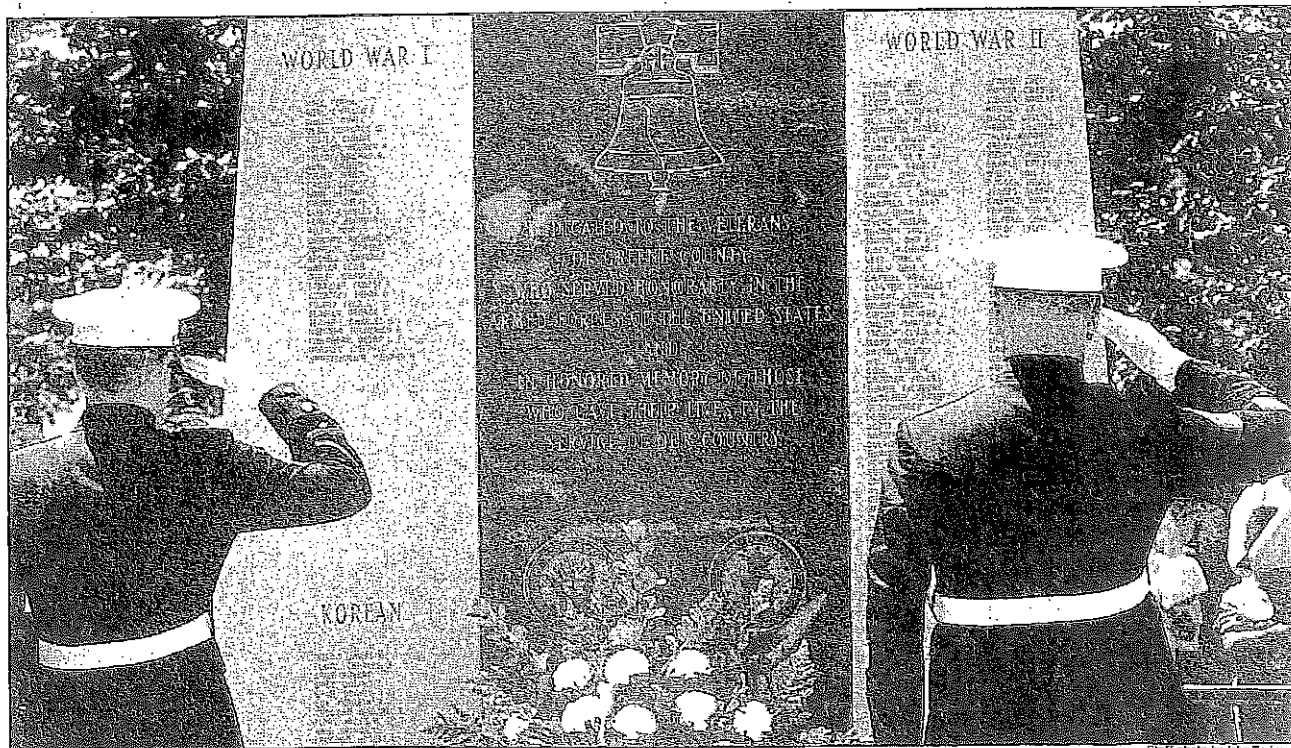
Letsinger himself was in the Sixth Engineers Special Brigade, an assault group that landed at Normandy, France, on D-Day, June 4, 1944.

Of about 3,600 living Greene County veterans, close to 75 percent served in World War II. In addition to the 100 World War II dead and 12 Vietnam dead, the memorial lists 29 for World War I and 18 for Korea.

"The price of freedom is high," said Crane Naval Weapons Support Center Executive Officer Ralph

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Staff photo by John Terhune

BLOOMFIELD — Taps are played as Marines salute the 159 war dead listed on Greene County's first veterans memorial during dedication

ceremonies Saturday at the Greene County courthouse. The monument was paid for entirely through private donations.

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Darling in his dedication speech. "We must accomplish the mission that the dead have assigned us. . . . Above all, remember their names. They were killed once. They must not be killed again by forgetful-

ness."

The monument was paid for entirely through private donations. About \$20,000 had been raised before Saturday, of which about \$16,000 was for the monument itself, and about \$4,000 for the fence, landscaping and maintenance costs. Additional donations were rolling

in Saturday.

Felton, of the Greene County Veterans Council, said there is talk now of adding names of Civil War and Spanish-American War dead to the monument. There should be room for them on the blank east side of the memorial's gray pillars, he said, and for any who might fall

in future wars.

For the notion that fear of nuclear war has put an end to war is "a wrong assumption," said Greene County historian Gene Combs, who spent five years with the American Red Cross during World War II. "Well, the millenium has not yet come."

Greene County Veterans Memorial List of Names for WWI

Allen	Alva		
Bashaw	Clarence		
Beasley	George	C.	
Bradley	Joseph	W.	
Coster	Claude		
Courtney	Frank	O.	
Cross	George	E.	
Dixon	Charles	E.	
Hall	Perry		
Hauser	Lewis		
Holder	Fred	L.	
Hout	Herman		
Huffman	Frederick	R.	
Johnson	Helmer	H.	
Johnson	Gleason		
Mason	Joseph		
Miller	Hiram		
Miller	Warden	D.	
Mullis	Myrel		
Pearcy	Henry	A.	
Phillips	Van	C.	
Ridenbark	Oscar	L.	
Roth	Charles	E.	
Ruth	William		
Strauser	Ernest	F.	
Strietelmeier	Herman	H.	
Talbot	Howard	R.	
Terhune	Charles	W.	
Vest	Clarence	W.	
Wingate	Richard	H.	