

# Remembering World War II Veteran, Bill Musilli



By Linda Cunningham Fluharty, with Cindy Musilli Vargo.

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For a few years in the late 1950s, Bill Musilli had a 'beer joint' on Boggs Run. Across the road and just down the run from the grade school, the bar was on the first floor of a white frame, two-story building, two doors up from the John Regan home. The upstairs was home for Bill, his wife, Blanche (Sadaly), and the two children they had at the time, Cindy and Paul.



**Location of Bill Musilli's Bar on Boggs Run**

Bill Musilli, born and raised in Benwood, was a personable guy and a friend to many. When he opened his bar, even some long-time patrons of Dragan's, further down the run, spent time at Bill's because they wanted his business to do well. But he was only there for a few years and was back in Benwood before his second daughter, Sue, was born in 1959.



When Bill owned the bar, he looked just like this photo, used by his family in a 2010 Father's Day Tribute in the Wheeling paper.

Born in Benwood on June 18, 1920, William J. Musilli was the son of Italian immigrants, Rafaelo/Rapheal/Rafael Musilli and Christina Marie Maddamma. They came to the United States in the early 1900s and opened a bakery-grocery store in Benwood.

### **1910 Census, Benwood, Union District, Marshall County, West Virginia**

Main Street

Rafael Mussilli, Head, 29, Married x1 9 yrs, Keeper Grocery Store, b Italy, Immig 1903

Madama, Wife, 29, Married x1 9 yrs, 6 children/4 living, Helper Grocery Store, b Italy, Immig 1904

Louie, Son, 8, b Italy, Immig 1904

Henry, Son, 3, b WV

Fannie, Dau, 2, b WV

Lucy, Dau, 2? mos, b WV

### **1920 Census, Benwood, Union District, Marshall County, West Virginia**

739 (Main Street)

Raphael Mussili, Head, Owns home, 35, Store Proprietor, b Italy, Immig 1904, Naturalized 1915

Christina, Wife, 35, b Italy, Immig. 1905

Louis, Son, 18, Store Clerk, b Italy, Immig 1905

Henry, Son, 12, Errand Boy at Store, b Italy, Immig 1904?

Fannie, Dau, 11, b WV

Albert, Son, 9, b WV

[Illegible; must be Octavius], 8, b WV

Mary, Dau, 6, b WV

Virginia, Dau, 4, b WV

Earl, Son, 2 yrs 8 mos, b WV

Mary Madam [Madamma], Mother-in-law, 78, Wd, b Italy, Immig 1915

Rafaelo/Rapheal/Rafael Musilli, born in Italy April 15, 1881, was the son of Gennaro and Filomina (Feranti) Musilli. On September 5, 1925, at the age of 44, he died from complications following an "accidental explosion of natural gas in oven." He left a widow and nine children.

Four years later, on April 17, 1929, Christina Marie Musilli died of liver and kidney disease at the age of 45. Born in Italy April 13, 1884, she was the daughter of Loreto and Marie Scharneccchia/Scarnecchia.

At the time of his father's death, Bill Musilli was five years old. He was not yet nine when his mother died.

### **1930 Census, Benwood, Union District, Marshall County, West Virginia**

739 (Main Street)

Louis Musilli, Head, Owns home, \$4000, 28, Single, Music Salesman, b Italy

Henry, Brother, 23, Laborer Steel Mill, b WV

Fannie, Sister, 21, b WV

Albert, Brother, 19, Pipe Cutter Steel Mill, b WV

Arthur, Brother, 17, b WV

Mary, Sister, 16, b WV

Virginia, Sister, 14, b WV

Harold [Must be Earl], Brother, 13, b WV

William, Brother, 9, b WV



**Bill Musilli, right.**

Photo provided by Cindy Musilli Vargo.

During World War II, Bill served in the U. S. Army as a Tech Sergeant. He was among the 160,000+ troops that landed on the beaches of Normandy, France on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

*"He was one of 4 brothers who served during WWII but he was the only one deployed. His brother and guardian, Henry Musilli, was given an emblem of honor medal for having 4 or more sons to serve. It was presented to families in Benwood and Boggs Run - Gordon, Raymond, Millhouse, Lappert, and Musilli. My cousin, Henry, also has a small Paul Revere cup engraved "Thanks-1569 Club WWII"..." - Cindy Musilli Vargo*

On May 15, 1950, William J. Musilli and Blanche Sadaly applied for a Marriage License at the Marshall County Courthouse in Moundsville. Two children, Cindy and Paul, were born before they moved to Boggs Run.

*"My dad had a bar in Benwood before the Boggs Run bar, and I remember living in Detroit for about a year. Dad worked at the Ford plant between bars. His brother Al got him a job there but Dad didn't like being away from Benwood, so we came back. Brother Paul was born in Detroit in 1955.*

*"I remember a man who lived right next door to us on Boggs Run - Mario. I can't remember his last name. He had a trumpet and I would go over to visit him and probably drove him crazy. He seemed ancient at the time but he was probably in his 50s or 60s. There was a mud slide behind his house and*

*the newspaper came out to report on it and took my picture with him in front of the slide. I don't remember it happening but I remember the picture...*

*"After the run, we moved to a huge old house at 730 Main Street in Center Benwood. We rented parts of it to other families. It was right next to the Blue Ribbon Club, just north. That was in March 1959, because my sister, Sue, was born that year." - Cindy Musilli Vargo*

Mario, the next door neighbor that Cindy remembers, was Mario Pagliari. At that time, he lived there alone, but at least briefly, his daughter, Frances, a pretty girl with very long, dark, wavy hair, attended Boggs Run School in the 1950s. Mario had been married to Stefena Karp and they also had a son, Mario Robert, born November 12, 1949. At the age of 10 months, on September 21, 1950, the baby fell on a defective electric lamp wire and was promptly electrocuted. The tragedy occurred at their home on Boggs Run, but it is unknown if it was the house next to Bill Musilli's bar. Mario and his wife later separated and he died of lung cancer on June 21, 1959.

### **Photos Taken At Bill's Bar On Boggs Run**

Photos provided by Cindy Musilli Vargo.



**Bill Morris (son of Minnie Morris) with Bill Musilli, Paul & Cindy**



**Louie Oberg, Paul Musilli (1 year), Cindy (3 years) & the Hendershot kids, 1956**



**Bill Musilli & Bar Patrons**

Bill Musilli eventually became employed at the Beech Bottom Plant of Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel. He and Blanche had a fourth child, Mark, but divorced in 1980.

The building that served as a home and business for Bill Musilli and his family burned down long ago. But, although a half century has passed, Bill Musilli is still remembered.

*"My dad, Bill, died on Thursday, June 3, 2004. His viewing was on June 6, sixty years to the day from when he took part in the D-Day landing at Normandy, in the 3rd wave." - Cindy Musilli Vargo*

## OBITUARY



Musilli, William J. "Billy", 83, of Benwood, WV, died Thursday, June 3, 2004 in the Belmont Manor Health Care Center, St. Clairsville, Ohio. He was born June 18, 1920 at Benwood, WV, a son of the late Raphael and Christina Scarneccia [error: Maddamma] Musilli. He was a retired employee of the Wheeling-Pitt Steel Company, Beech Bottom Plant; a member of the St. John's Catholic Church, Benwood and a US Army veteran of WW II. Mr. Musilli was a member of the American Legion, Blake Brothers Post 46 of Benwood, Garibaldi Club, Benwood, the Sons of Italy, Bellaire. In addition to his parents he was preceded in death by five brothers, Luigi, Henry, Albert, Octavius "Perpy" and Earl "Skaggs" Musilli, four sisters, Filomena "Fannye" Ferri, Lucia "Lucy" Musilli, Virginia Kopiwoda and Mary Kirnberger. Surviving are two sons, Paul Musilli of Moundsville and Mark Musilli of GlenDale; two daughters, Cindy Vargo and her husband Joe of Gibsonia, Pa and Sue Elson and her husband Sam of Glen Dale; six grandchildren, Jen, Matt, Joey, P.J., Amy and Dean; three great grandchildren, Aubrey, Dorian and Carson; his former spouse, Blanche Musilli. Billy was a loving dad and an awesome Pap. He will be greatly missed, but will always be remembered for his sense of humor and the memory of him will always be cherished by all who knew and loved him. Friends received from 2-4 and 6-9 pm Sunday and from 10 am until time of service at 11 Monday, June 7, 2004 at the Altmeyer Funeral Home, 214 Marshall Street, McMechen with the Rev. Joseph J. Hayden, S.J. officiating. Entombment in Park View Memorial Gardens Mausoleum, Wheeling. The American Legion, Blake Brothers Post 46 will have services at 7:15 pm Sunday. Memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's Society, 1111 Lee Street, Charleston, WV. [Source: Altmeyer Funeral Home]

*"Dad is interred at Parkview cemetery near Oglebay and they would not let us put dad's military plaque on the wall so we planted a pin oak tree for him on the farm he and his brother owned at the top of Benwood Hill. My sister, Sue, takes care of it and plants flowers there. And we always get on the 4 wheeler and drive out to pay our respects." - Cindy Musilli Vargo*

