



# Who's On The Wall



John Drop — Navy



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John Drop served as a cook on the light cruiser U.S.S. Providence, which was sailing toward battle duty in the Pacific when the Japanese surrendered in September 1945. Instead, Drop and his shipmates finished out their tour in the Mediterranean Sea.

## John Drop: A life of service

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John Clemence Drop continued in a life of service following a two-year tour in the U.S. Navy at the end of World War II, working for the Belleville, N.J. Police Department until his retirement in 1981.

Although Drop enlisted at the age of 16, he was not able to begin naval training until he turned 17. He left for basic training on his birthday, Nov. 26, 1944.

"They sent him to Sampson Naval Training Camp in New York," said his widow, Patti Drop. "John's civilian work in meat cutting proved a plus for him early on, so he was assigned to food service, where he worked himself into a rank. Then he was in charge. He had worked in Kearny, N.J., as a meat cutter. Later we lived in Belleville. After basic training he was assigned to the newly christened ship, the U.S.S. Providence. It was a light cruiser," Mrs. Drop continued. "They sailed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for their shakedown cruise. They did the testing to see if the Providence was ready for Japan. The cruise proved positive for the ship to join in battle in the Pacific. It was sailing to the Pacific on the 12th, and Japan surrendered on the 14th. They were at the Panama Canal, so they returned to port. Later they sent them to the Mediterranean to be part of a task force between Italy and Yalta. The home berth was in Naples, Italy. John saw France, Italy, Turkey and all that, but he was not in the battles there."



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After his Naval tour, John Drop served in the Belleville, N.J., Police Department for 25 years. He retired in 1981 to run a farm in Stoney Creek.

Drop was discharged in July 1946, rated a ship's cook second class. He married the former Patti Myers in Harrison, N.J.

"Our married life was great," said Mrs. Drop. "John was a hard worker. He worked in meat management at A&P and then joined the police force in 1956. He was on patrol and then he was a firearms instructor for Essex County. He was always the first one on the job. John helped a doctor with a man who was in a real bad accident and had gone through the windshield," she recalled. "John stayed and helped him. The man, who was from Pennsylvania, sent him a letter saying 'How do you thank

someone who saved your life?' He said he never had a chance to meet him and thank him. But John didn't put his chest out at stuff like that. He took his job very seriously."

While in N.J., Mrs. Drop worked in retail sales for Macy Corp. in Newark for eight years, in the children's department.

"It was called Bamberger's on the Jersey side," she noted.

Mrs. Drop said the area where they lived was known as a Mafia haven.

"The Silver Lake section of Belleville was where they filmed the Sopranos," she said. "Belleville is about 70-80 percent Italian."



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John and Patti Drop are pictured sharing a happy moment.

Drop retired from the police force in 1981 following 25 years of service, and he and his wife moved to Tennessee.

"He had bought a farm in Stoney Creek in 1971. He thought he was going to be off the department after 20 years but it didn't work out that way," Mrs. Drop recalled. The couple commuted to Tennessee for a while until he was finally able to retire.

"He had his farm; that was his dream. He loved Tennessee," said Mrs. Drop, who was born in Johnson City. "He was familiar with my family and this area, and he wanted to buy land and have a farm. We saw the property there and we took a chance. He enjoyed working on his farm. He was there

every day. That was his love, going there every day as if it was his work. There in the Dry Hollow community, they accepted John. They told him 'You've moved uptown now.'"

For several years before moving to Tennessee, the Drops had rented their farmhouse to Moody Aviation students and their families.

"It was a good place for them, and we were out of state," said Mrs. Drop, who still owns the farm but now lives in the Biltmore community.

Although the couple had no children, they embraced their nieces, the daughters of Mrs. Drop's sister.

"We always used to gather at

our house," she said. "We had a full life. We liked to be active, and we both enjoyed home."

Drop experienced a stroke in 1997, losing his speech along with control of the left side of his body.

"He was in the hospital a long time, in a nursing home and then I brought him home," she said. "I had him here at home for eight years. We were here when they struck the World Trade Center. I saw it happening and ran to him in the bedroom. I said 'John, look at the TV, what's happening.' He wanted to get ready and go help them. He said 'We can do something.' That shows what he was made of."

John Drop passed away in June 2005.