

Ed Kelly Biography

Just mention the name Ed Kelly to anyone who has been around Burlington County government, veterans and military circles, or charitable endeavors, and you'll draw a smile.

Such is the far-reaching reputation of this year's recipient of the Lloyd Ritter Community Service Award. By our count, the affable, ever-smiling Edward A. Kelly, Jr. has been involved in more than 70 different service clubs, professional organizations, and fraternal and charitable non-profits over the years. Like the Energizer Bunny, he just keeps going and going and going.

We could just as easily call our tribute to Ed Kelly a lifetime achievement award. Years ago a letter writer to the Burlington County Times summed it up thusly: "From the wearing of the green to waving the Stars and Stripes, (Ed) has a gleam in his eye and urbanity hard to match. A man for all occasions, he gets things done. From a taffy pull to a county or statewide function, you can count on our man to orchestrate a composition of people performing for the betterment of other people, a noteworthy achievement to say the least."

It is more fitting that we honor Ed Kelly on Veterans' Day. He is not only a veteran himself, but since he retired as Burlington County Clerk in 1994 (after 25 years of service), much of his volunteer activities have been directed to serving veterans as well as the active military at Fort Dix and McGuire Air Force Base.

He has booked countless hours as a volunteer in the County's Veterans Affairs Office, served on past and present Save McGuire & Fort Dix Committee, and is a highly regarded member of the Burlington County Military Affairs Committee.

That's just the tip of the iceberg, for his military and veterans affiliations abound. Count Ed as a lifetime member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and the Burlington County Detachment of the Marine Corps League.

His credentials also include the New Jersey Veterans Service Council, the Combat Veterans Association – USCG, the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Association, and the Military Officers Association of America.

We've barely begun to tell the Ed Kelly story. Because once you get beyond his military interests, there is a whole new world to explore.

For example, you will find that Ed has past and present affiliations with familiar organizations like the Burlington County Special Services School Foundation, County chapters of the American Red Cross and the American Cancer Society, the Mount Holly and Willingboro Rotaries, the Willingboro Jaycees (Honorary Member), and the Knights of Columbus.

His lengthy resume also includes a couple dozen less publicized activities of years gone by, including the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick (how Ed cherishes his Irish heritage – he founded the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Philadelphia), the Morris Hall Home for the Aged, the Carl Lewis Day Committee, and Operation Warm Heart.

Community Service? Ed has been there, done that, many, many times over. He's even done time in the soup kitchen and brightened the faces of nursing home residents in a Santa suit. For the record, Ed was born March 5, 1927, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was the second eldest in a family of six boys and one girl. His Irish-born parents, Edward and Catherine, came to the United States while in their 20's.

He played basketball and football while growing up, and played tackle for a Pop Warner football team, the Kingsessing Shamrocks. During World War II, Ed served in the Coast Guard in the North Atlantic, and later, in the Pacific Theater of Operations. He spent 22 years in the Army Reserve and was stationed at Fort Bragg for 13 months.

Ed married the former Mildred Hansberry, also