

Patrick Burke: Remembering Bill Cowgill

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Last Sunday, my wife and I toured the [ZERO art exhibitions](#) at the Guggenheim museum in New York. ZERO was a collaboration of young artists in the 1950s and '60s who felt a need to heal post-World War II Europe and create a positive relationship between countries deeply divided by the war.

Many have attributed this collaboration to rebuilding Europe's esprit de corps and opening up trade between former enemies. It demonstrated the power individuals can have on building communities.

On Veterans Day I attended calling hours for [Bill Cowgill](#), who passed away just three months shy of his 94th birthday. I was reminded again about the influence another World War II hero had on our community.

Lieutenant Cowgill served front-line duty under Patton's 4th Armored Division. Bill was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge by German machine gun fire, shattering his right leg. He lay unattended for 14 hours in the snow in front of the German position, sure that he would freeze to death. Fate took a different path when four German soldiers carried him as a human shield back to the American unit, exchanging Bill for their surrender as prisoners of war.

After the war, Bill returned to Rochester and joined Kodak as an engineer. In 1955, Bill left Kodak and started H&C Tool Supply, one of several companies he and his friend VanBuren Hansford had their hands in around our community. In the early days of H&C he struggled and worked long hours assisting Rochester metalworking companies in lowering their costs of manufacturing and improving their productivity, establishing a reputation as an ambitious, young entrepreneur.

Bill had a passion for his community serving in the 1960s as chair of the individual subscribers division of the Rochester Community Chest Fund Drive, which is now known as the United Way. He embraced his responsibility as a business person to lead in assisting others in our community in need.

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Bill didn't limit his businesses expertise to the tooling industry or his community work to United Way. He and his wife, Barbara, converted the old railway station in the village of Pittsford into a fine restaurant known as The Depot. He was also a volunteer fireman and became chairman of the Fire District Officers' Association of Monroe County.

A special Rochester entrepreneur and leading citizen has slipped the loving bonds of his family and his contribution to the betterment of our community should not be forgotten.

So let's get to work.

Patrick Burke 12:12 a.m. EST November 16, 2014

