



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

Jim Greenfield Town Historian 283-6384

Harold Rowe

It all started with a photo. It was the beginning of World War 2. Harold Rowe saw a picture on the front page of the Daily News. It showed a young Chinese girl in a rickshaw with an arm and leg blown off, held by her crying mother. Harold thought if that could happen overseas, it could happen here too.

At the time, North Greenbush didn't have an ambulance service. Residents, especially in Wynantskill had to rely on services from hospitals in Troy.

When Harold approached the Town for funding, they turned him down. Undaunted, he decided to do something himself. He outfitted his dry cleaning delivery truck into a vehicle which could serve a dual purpose as an ambulance. He provided a cot, sheets and blankets, flairs and a first aid kit for the vehicle. To bystanders the truck must have looked strange: containing dry cleaning in one half and ambulance equipment in the other half.

Two weeks after the ambulance service was officially formed, Harold got his first challenge. In the early morning hours of August 15th, 1942, McLoughlin's Bar & Grill on Main Avenue blew up. The building was obliterated and Harold had to clear timbers from the bridge near his home on Brookside Avenue in order to get his ambulance to the scene. Harold transported McLoughlin to the hospital but he died from his wounds. However, the new ambulance service was born.

Harold continued his work for many years, always on call and saving many lives in the process.

His hobby of photography served him later in life. For many years he took portraits for the offices of the Troy Elks Club. His pictures of town scenes adorn Town Hall today.

His second career as a criminal photographer and Deputy Sheriff with the Rensselaer County Sheriff's Department lasted many years. He took part in hundreds of autopsies and worked with the North Greenbush Police when they investigated murder cases.

Harold summed up his life by saying he tried to do things for the town and be a "halfway decent citizen". I think we can all agree he accomplished this. And it all started with a war photo in 1942. Harold died September 17, 2011. May he rest in peace.