



Atlantic Beach's Fallen Wartime Military Veterans



World War II

2LT John J. Ahern Jr. (top left)
LTJG Richard Bull (top right)
PFC Solomon C. Sturdivant
(Middle Left)
SSG Robert B. David (Bottom
right, with his sister Raybon)



Vietnam War

SFC Leroy Everett (Bottom Left)



World War II

2LT John J. “Jack” Ahern Jr. – Fletcher High School graduate, Class of 1940 and manager of the 1937 Fletcher High School Inaugural football team. Having dreams of being a pilot, Jack enlisted in the United States Army, July 20, 1942, and in March 1944, he became a flight officer, thus fulfilling his dream. He received his commission as a second lieutenant in September of that same year.

A few days before Christmas 1944, during the second World War, Lieut. John J. Ahern, Jr., a 22-year-old U.S. Army Air Corps pilot found his B-17G Bomber (ser. #44-8275) had got into difficulties. Ahern ordered his crew to bail out, saying he would follow. He never did. He managed to steer the fully armed aircraft away from the village but apparently was not able to parachute out before the plane crashed in a field beyond Red Gables Farm, exploding on impact. The farm buildings were damaged by the blast, but the farmer's family were unharmed. Lt Ahern's actions averted a major disaster; the result, had the bombs exploded in the village, does not bear thinking about.

In gratitude to 2LT John Ahern, who thus gave his life for Bozeat, the villagers made a house-to-house collection for his mother in America, organized by the members of the Women's Voluntary Service. The Village of Bozeat acknowledges his sacrifice every year on Remembrance Day.

On August 7, 1945, the Town Council of Atlantic Beach passed an ordinance to change the name of “Atlanta Street” to “Ahern Street” in honor of 2LT John J. “Jack” Ahern Jr.

~Refs: American Air Museum in Britain; Veterans Memorial Hall;
<https://sites.rootsweb.com/~aherns/ltjahern.htm>; COAB Commission Meeting Minutes

Sign Sponsor: Florida TransCor – Special thanks to John Graham, Operations Manager, Kyle Dzina along with the entire crew of Florida TransCor who were instrumental in making this project a reality!

LTJG Richard Bull – Richard Bull enlisted in the Navy on 16 July 1938 and underwent flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, FL, before earning his flight wings on 12 October 1939. Richard Bull was assigned to Patrol Squadron 22 and appointed as an Ensign on 21 November 1939. One year later, Ens. Bull was designated a patrol plane commander. On 21 January 1942, a temporary appointment as Lieutenant (junior grade) was sent to Bull, but no record of his execution of the oath of office has been found.

While on air patrol off the coast of Borneo on 23 January 1942, Bull discovered a transport and two destroyers. Driven off by antiaircraft fire, he persistently remained in the vicinity and, as a result, sighted 26 enemy ships a short time later.

During another reconnaissance flight in the vicinity of the island of Ambon in the Netherlands East Indies on 5 February 1942, Bull searched for an enemy aircraft carrier group reported to be nearby. He ran afoul of enemy fighters and was never seen again.

For his "extraordinary flying achievement, courage and devotion to duty" in carrying out this mission, Bull received the posthumous award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

On March 2, 1943, the Town Council of Atlantic Beach unanimously voted to dedicate the town park as The Richard Bull Memorial Park in honor of LTJG Richard Bull. On May 28th, 1944, the Richard Bull Memorial Park was officially dedicated and named.

~Refs: COAB Commission Meeting Minutes,
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Bull_\(aviator\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Bull_(aviator))

Sign Sponsor: The Bull Family

PFC Solomon C. Sturdivant - Private First Class Solomon C. Sturdivant (1914-1945). Solomon Sturdivant married Dorothy Ann Simpson in June of 1937 and settled in Atlantic Beach, FL. PFC Sturdivant was drafted into the U.S. Army at the age of 28 on December 29, 1942.

During World War II, he served as a member of the 231st American Antiaircraft Artillery Searchlight Battalion. He was reported Killed in Action (KIA) in France on March 5, 1945. Specific details of his death are unknown, although reports state it involved a vehicle crash. He is buried at Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial in Dinozé, France.

On January 8, 1946, the Town Council of Atlantic Beach passed a motion to change the name of "Lakeview Ave." to "Sturdivant Ave." in honor of PFC Solomon C. Sturdivant.

~Refs: <https://richesmi.cah.ucf.edu/omeka/items/show/9326> ,
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56375799/solomon-c-sturdivant>
COAB Commission Minutes

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SSG Robert B. David – A Duncan U. Fletcher High School graduate and a member of the 1937 Fletcher High School Inaugural Football Team. Robert David grew up on Sherry Dr and enlisted in the Army on the 8th of July 1941 at Camp Blanding, FL.

SSG Robert David was a member of the famed 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment that conducted the U.S. Army's first combat jump in WW II on 8 November 1942 (Operation Torch), during the invasion of North Africa. He was awarded the Purple Heart when wounded in action against an armed enemy during the Fifth Army campaign in Italy on 11 November 1943.

On 15 Aug 1944, (Operation Dragoon) SSG Robert B. David along with 16 other members of the 509th lost their lives during a combat jump in support of the liberation of France, when navigational error led to the miscalculation of the drop zone. They jumped from a C-47 into the waters of the Gulf of St Tropez during the invasion and were never found.

The 17 US paratroopers of the 509th Airborne Infantry Battalion killed on 15 August 1944 are memorialized on a stone plaque at Tablets of the Missing at Rhone American Cemetery, Draguignan, France.

On January 8, 1946, the Town Council of Atlantic Beach passed a motion to change the name of "Park Ave." to "David Ave." in honor of SSG Robert B. David.

~Refs: <https://www.509thgeronimo.org/> , Johnny Woodhouse (Beaches Leader articles), Beaches Museum, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/509th_Infantry_Regiment_\(United_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/509th_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States))
COAB Commission Minutes

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Vietnam War

SFC. Leroy Everett – Leroy Everett was born on December 10, 1942 to Noah and Viola Everett of Atlantic Beach.

Leroy and his friends played together off Church Road, they would hunt, fish and swim off "Girvin Island", now called Dutton Island Preserve. They would often practice for upcoming swimming meets as members of the Douglas Anderson High School Swim Team by jumping off the bridge at "Girvin Island".

Graduation came in 1960, the Vietnam War was escalating, Leroy enlisted in the United States Army and became a paratrooper with the famed 101st Airborne Division.

During his first tour in Vietnam, his platoon took enemy fire during an assault jump where many died, and Leroy was wounded. His first enlistment was coming to an end and several of his friends encouraged him not to reenlist and to stay in Atlantic Beach, especially after what he encountered. However, he had a sense of loyalty to his men back in the 101st and decided to reenlist. Leroy had aspirations of being an "Army General".

On Dec 19, 1967, 25-year-old Sergeant First Class Leroy Everett, while serving as a member of famed 101st Airborne Division lost his life along with 9 other crewmen when their helicopter crashed in South Vietnam.

It was 5 days after he sent his last letter home, nine days after his 25th birthday, and 15 days after he got back to Vietnam on his 2nd tour.

Sergeant First Class Leroy Everett is forever remembered on Panel 32E/Line 21 of the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

In August 2019, Atlantic Beach City Commission unanimously adopting a resolution naming the main road in Dutton Island Preserve "U.S. Army SFC Leroy Everett Memorial Parkway" in honor of SFC Leroy Everett.

The Atlantic Beach community celebrated a fallen native son with a special event on Feb. 15, 2020, which was proclaimed "Leroy Everett Day". During a dedication ceremony, the City unveiled a road sign designating the road in Dutton Island as SFC Leroy Everett Memorial Parkway.

Refs: Johnny Woodhouse, Matt Soergel, COAB Commission Meeting Minutes, Florida Times Union, Coffeldt Database, Beaches Leader

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photo by Tooley-Myron Studios

Fletcher High's inaugural football team of 1937 included 11 eventual World War II veterans, including paratrooper Robert David, seated third from left, and Army pilot Jack Ahern, back row far right, a team manager.

Many thanks to Johnny Woodhouse for his sharing his amazing stories he wrote for the Beaches Leader and for keeping the memories of our local veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice alive and never to be forgotten. Thanks to Matt Soergel and Brittney Donovan for their coverages of our veteran's stories in our local news outlets.