

Honoring veterans MIDDLETOWN

Tank to be featured in vets park

An M4A1 Sherman tank that sat at the Penndel American Legion Post was moved to the Middletown public works complex.

By CHRIS ENGLISH COURIER TIMES

It probably didn't roll up the Normandy beaches or face down a Panzer division, but that's never made Penndel American Legion Post Commander Jack Pashley any less proud of the M4A1 Sherman tank that has sat on the post property for 40 years.

Watching the tank, which was likely used to train American troops during World War II, get hauled away Friday morning, Pashley said he had mixed emotions: He was sad to see the tank leave but happy it's staying close by.

Workers from Scrappy's Auto Service in Penndel towed the tank to the Middletown public works complex, where it will sit until becoming part of the township's planned veterans memorial park in a year or two. The park will be next to the public works complex on Veterans Highway (Route 413.)

"It's been part of [the American Legion post] so long, I'm sentimental about it really," said Pashley, a Vietnam veteran. "We'll miss it, but Middletown will redo it and take care of it, and it will still belong to the area. I'm glad it's not going to Philly or Pittsburgh or some place like that."

The tank is moving because post officials have sold the property on Hulmeville Avenue in Penndel to move into a smaller, less maintenance-intensive building on Business Route 1 in the borough. The Hulmeville Avenue location will become attorneys' offices, Pashley said.

After reaching the agreement to sell, post officials got permission from the federal government and arranged with members of a Middletown Veterans Memorial Committee to move the tank to the township.

Members of the committee are raising money for the veterans memorial park, which they hope can be finished sometime in 2009. A World War II tank will be very appropriate for the park, said committee chairman Jim Remer.

"I think a piece of artillery in a memorial park will remind people that freedom isn't free, and that war is often times the price for peace," he said. "I hope children visiting the park some day, or in classes we hope to hold there some day, will look at the tank and understand the cost of freedom."

Committee member Bill Beadling researched the tank and said it was built in December 1944.

"To the best of my knowledge, it never actually went into battle because it was so late in the war at that point," he said. "I'm pretty sure it was used for training and would have gone over for the invasion of Japan, had there been one."

The tank will be repainted and generally spruced up before being placed in the memorial park, said Beadling.

"I was inside and it's in pretty good shape, considering the age," he said. "The seat and shell rack are pretty much intact. These were the tanks that won World War II for us. We had 50,000 of them over there. The German tanks were more powerful, but I think we overwhelmed them with sheer numbers."

Scrappy's towed the tank for free, Remer said.





Scott Kelly takes a close look at the World War II-era tank that sat on the lawn of American Legion Post 414 in Pennel for 50 years. KIM WEIMER / COURIER TIMES