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Alfred Grella

May 11, 1923 - Sept. 21, 2016

By Star Staff | September 22, 2016 - 1:29pm

Alfred Grella, a Marine Corps veteran who was awarded the Purple Heart after being wounded in World War II, and who had been a professional baseball player with New York Giants farm teams, died at home in Springs yesterday. He was 93.

Mr. Grella was born in Greenvale in Nassau County on May 11, 1923, to Michael Grella and the former Vincenza Petruzzello, both immigrants from Sturno, Italy.

He grew up in Greenvale and attended Roslyn High School. After high school, he worked for Columbia Aircraft Corporation, a manufacturer of amphibious aircraft for the military.

Mr. Grella enlisted in the Marines on Jan. 13, 1943, and served as a sharpshooter in the Fourth Marine Division, which was part of the V Amphibious Corps.

He was a veteran of the South Pacific invasions of Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands, Roi-Namur, Saipan, and Tinian. His final combat assignment was on Iwo Jima. While in combat there, he was struck in the head by artillery shrapnel, for which he received the Purple Heart.

While still overseas in the South Pacific, Lefty Grella, as he was known in his athletic career, received a baseball contract from the Jersey City Giants, a minor league team affiliated with the New York Giants. He played for the Johnstown Johnnies and the Erie Sailors in the Middle Atlantic League, but a hand injury brought an early end to his dreams.

While playing baseball, he fell in love with and, in 1947, married the former Alma Bonardi Colton.

Soon after, the couple settled in Hampton Bays, where they raised their family. His family said Mr. Grella loved living on eastern Long Island, where his favorite pastime was clamming in local waters.

Mr. Grella worked for the New York State Department of Transportation as a heavy equipment operator. He retired in 1993 after 21 years.

He spent his retirement between Long Island, with family and friends, and Florida in the winter, with his wife.

In 1987, he and Mrs. Grella moved to Springs to live closer to their daughter and son-in-law, Patrice and James



Zaborski, and a granddaughter, Jaclyn Zaborski.

In addition to his daughter and granddaughter, Mr. Grella is survived by a son, Gary Grella of Melbourne, Fla. His wife and a stepson, Robert Colton, died before him.

Visiting hours will be on Monday from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Yardley and Pino Funeral Home in East Hampton. A funeral Mass will be said on Tuesday at 11 a.m. at Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church in East Hampton, with burial in the church cemetery on Cedar Street to follow.

About the Author

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