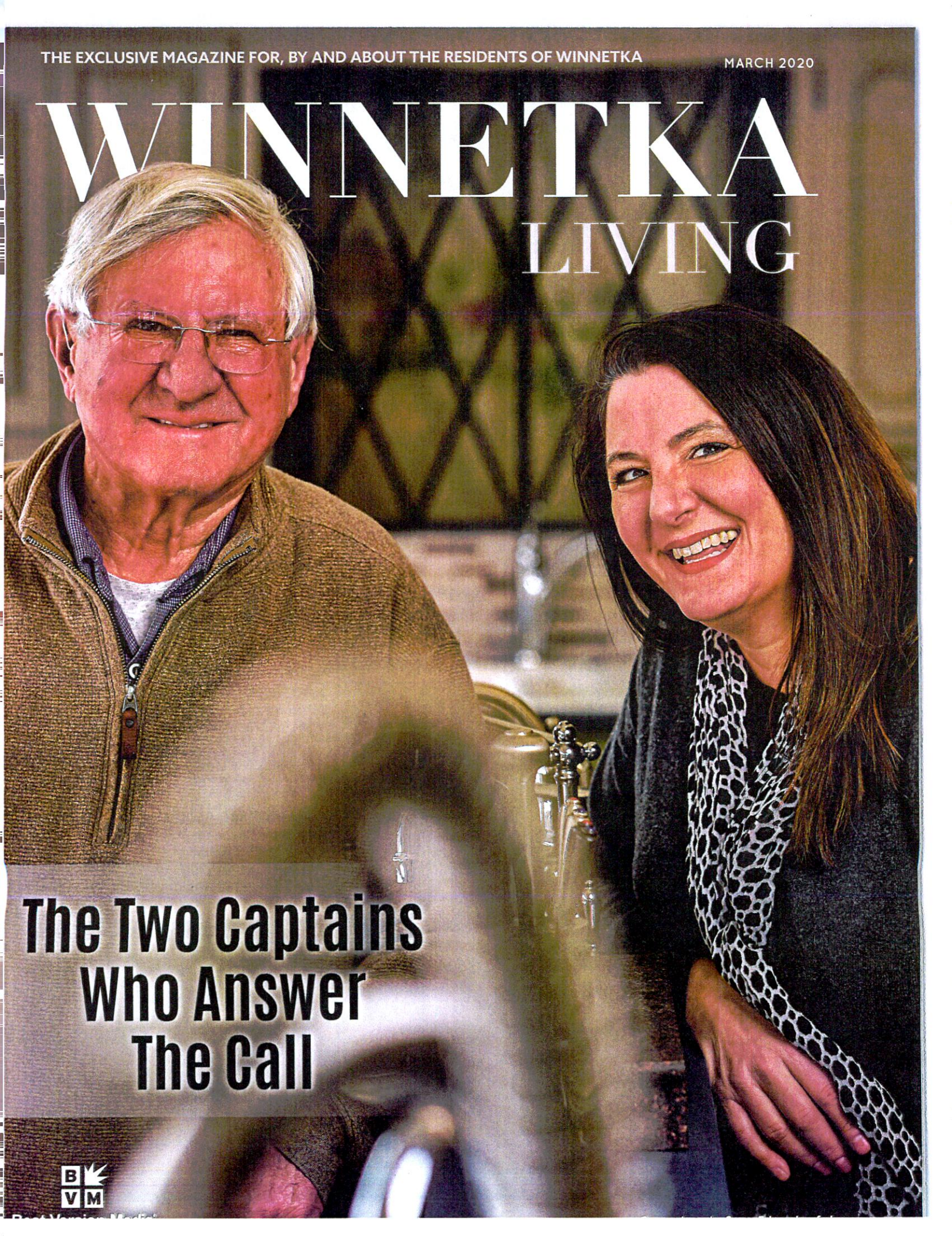


THE EXCLUSIVE MAGAZINE FOR, BY AND ABOUT THE RESIDENTS OF WINNETKA

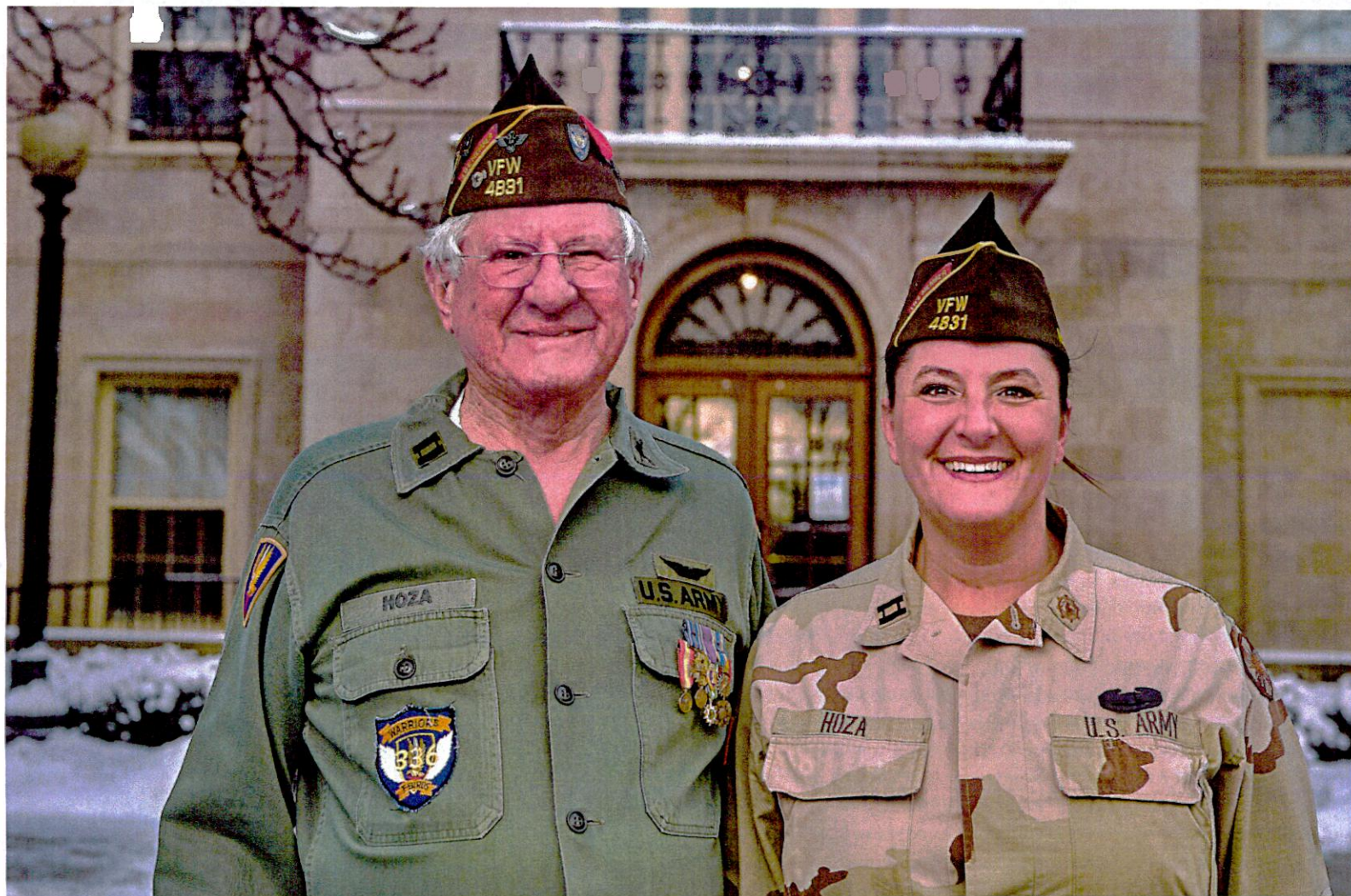
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WINNETKA LIVING



The Two Captains Who Answer The Call





The Two Captains Who Answer The Call

By Paul Clements | Photo by Scott Edwards, efg image

When Walter Bratschi moved his family from Chicago to Winnetka in 1924, the town was still so small he could build a home on Cherry Street without having to do a teardown. And from that home, Bratschi Plumbing was founded in 1937 with the following announcement:

"After 22 years of service on the North Shore with Jacob G. Weber Company, I have decided to establish my own plumbing contracting business at 688 Cherry St., Winnetka, Ill. — Telephone Winnetka 1421. Hoping I may have the pleasure of serving you in the future."

Walter Bratschi ended up having the pleasure of serving plenty of Winnetkans over the course of his lifetime, passing away in 1970. Today, some 80 plus years after its founding, the company is still going strong under the leadership of third and fourth generation plumbers Phil Hoza III and his daughter Carrie.

Bratschi Plumbing soon outgrew the Cherry Street house and moved into its 801 Oak Street location, and remains the building they are still headquartered in today. The building, which was converted from a blacksmith shop, retains some of its history. The old horse tethers and the original wood floors from the stable can still be seen in the current workroom. The first telephone was also installed at the location in 1947. Prior to that, Walter's wife, Lina, would run important messages from Cherry Street over to Oak Street.

While having a phone made it much easier to answer plumbing-related calls, the family was already well established in answering its country's call to serve even before 1947. Walter and Lina's daughter, Norma, married her New Trier sweetheart Philip Hoza, Jr., in 1940. Four months after the birth of their first son, Philip J. Hoza, III, in 1943, Phil Jr. would enter the Army, be assigned to the 9th Air Defense Unit, land at Normandy and D-Day +25, make his way to Paris, and be stationed in Europe for the duration of his service, returning from the war in December, 1946.

Prior to his Army service, Phil Jr. was a salesman, but upon his return he entered into the plumbers' apprenticeship program and joined the family business. Phil and Norma gradually took over the day-to-day operations of the business until they both semi-retired in 1982, but Norma kept her pulse on the books until her official retirement in 2009 at the age of 90. As we were putting this article together in mid-February, Norma, pictured here, celebrated her 101st birthday, and our photographer, Scott Edwards, was invited to the party to take pictures and preserve the historical legacy of the family in Winnetka. Norma still continues to keep her eye on the business and regularly contributes her suggestions.

"We are a service business built on trust," Hoza III said. "We have a generational clientele and they are like family too. We are a local location with a local warehouse and we focus on local service."

When Philip III was getting ready to graduate from New Trier, class of '61, he really had no interest in going into the family business, but he did have some interest in perhaps going into the military. Meanwhile, he enjoyed the teen culture that emerged in the 50's, hanging out and having fun with his group of friends that called themselves "The Marauders."

"Perhaps my interest in the military began as a Boy Scout in Wilmette's Troop 2 and later as a Squad Leader in Jack Fox's Explorer Post 2," Hoza says of his military service.

When the time to pick a college came around, and in the true spirit of adventure, he chose the University of North Dakota (UND) and headed out to Grand Forks. While there he became the President of his fraternity, which he credits with developing his nascent leadership skills. He also made the football team as a Freshman walk-on and he joined the Reserve Officers Training Corp. (ROTC), which helps young men and women pay for college, but also requires an eight-year commitment after graduation.

"Attending the University of North Dakota required two years of basic ROTC. I chose the U.S. Army and attended four years of ROTC. A requirement was participating in Advanced Training at Fort Lewis, Washington where I placed fourth in my graduating class and first from North Dakota. This placed me as the UND Detachment Colonel, which was an honor."



Getting back and forth between Fort Lewis and Grand Forks required leaving from Wahpeton, ND and heading for Portland, OR. "Another cadet and I hopped numerous Great Northern freight trains from Wahpeton, over the Rockies and into Portland to save our 25 cents per mile ROTC travel expenses. We hopped freights going back to double up. Big money in those days and a great adventure. There is nothing like crossing the Rocky Mountains standing on flat steel in an open freight car with a 360-degree view."

Graduating from UND in 1966 and commissioned as a new Second Lieutenant, Phil attended the Basic Armor Officer courses at Fort Knox, KY to become a U.S. Army tank platoon leader. Upon graduation, he was selected to attend flight school, but when flight school was temporarily put on hold, he briefly remained at Fort Knox as Platoon Leader with a company supporting the Fort Knox Armor School. "We spent our weekends skydiving at Rather Farm in southern Indiana's Brown County, where a jump cost less than \$10. It was a good life."

On January 5, 1967, he arrived at Fort Wolters, TX to begin flight training and learning to fly the OH-23 Hiller helicopter. "Eight weeks flying, \$2 steaks, rattlesnake hunting and lots of solo flying along the Brazos River. Nothing like being given a solo OH-23 Hiller helicopter and told to go out and fly around for an hour and a half, and 'make sure you bring it back.'"

After living the good life, the adventure became truly real when he was sent to VietNam in September, 1967 with The 336th Armed Helicopter Company Soc Trang, RVN; first being assigned to "The Warriors" lift platoon, and then the "T-Birds" gunship platoon. Lt. Hoza served in VietNam for 4 months, 28 days. He flew 533 combat hours and was wounded in action on February 10, 1968 during the Tet Offensive. Upon being wounded he was transported to the hospital at Dong Tam, where surgery was performed and he was given a spinal epidural. As he recovered and with no ability to walk, the hospital was mortared, but a brave nurse wrapped him in a flak jacket. Ten days after being wounded, his entire T-Bird crew was shot down off the end of the runway at Soc Trang with no survivors. His injury ended up saving his life. He received 19 combat decorations, 1 Purple Heart, 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 1 Air Medal for Valor and 15 Air Medal Decorations for his flights. He eventually retired from the Army after 3 years of flying a total of 1,305 hours and with the rank of Captain.

Returning to Winnetka in 1969, Phil decided to join the family business, raising his own family and putting down "roots that run deep." The spirit to serve has never left him though. From 1973-79 he served on the Winnetka Youth Organization Board of Directors and from 1974-89 he was on the Board of Directors or a Trustee for the Winnetka Historical Society, and he was its President from 1980-83, and is still affiliated with the Winnetka Historical Society today. From 1975-86 he was the Sigma Nu Fraternity, Gamma Beta Chapter Advisor at Northwestern University. Phil was elected Clerk of New Trier Township in 1976 and served two terms, ending in 1985, and from 1985-93 he served two terms as Trustee.

Like father, like daughter, so Carrie too grew up in Winnetka where she attended Greeley, Washburne and New Trier High School, class of '92. She went on to graduate from Carroll College in Waukesha, WI, with a cross-enrollment in the ROTC at Marquette University. Upon her graduation in 1997, she was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army

Transportation Corps. Following her initial officer training, she was assigned to serve with the 2nd Infantry Division at Camp Nimble and Camp Casey in South Korea, where she was a Truck Platoon Leader supporting the troops on the Korean DMZ and throughout the northern part of the peninsula. She returned to the States and was assigned to Fort Bliss, El Paso, TX, where she helped build and run the new 88M Transportation AIT (Advanced Individual Training). At the end of her three-year active duty obligation, she was honorably discharged into an inactive reserve status and began her civilian career at the Harley Davidson headquarters in Milwaukee and also worked towards her Masters degree at Cardinal Stritch University in Fox Point, WI.

Three years removed from her military service and six weeks away from completing her Masters, Carrie was not participating in any type of active reserve training; however, on December 4, 2003 FedEx delivered a letter and everything changed immediately. She was called back up to Active Duty, given less than 4 days to report to Soldier Readiness Processing at Fort Snelling, MN, and by February 7, 2004 she found herself in Kuwait with the 660th Transportation Company where they spent their first month waiting for vehicles to arrive so they could officially deploy into Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

In Kuwait, "we were 12,000 people living in a camp built for 3,000, so there was a two-hour line for everything and 18 people to a tent where we slept. I soon learned that when you are in a war, nothing matters except your support system back home."

The vehicles that arrived and did not have any armor on them as they rode into Iraq, they would later be armored by creative and resourceful members of the 660th and a National Guard unit out of Mississippi. The 660th Company would be transporting JP8 jet fuel out of the LSA Anaconda, a large military base serving the area located near Balad, 40 miles north of Baghdad where she would be for the next 11 months. During her tour of duty, Carrie

was promoted to Captain and served as the 3rd Platoon Leader, known as "3rd Herd", functioning as a Convoy Commander delivering and escorting three to five mile-long fuel truck convoys with gun trucks and eventually up-armored humvees. The "3rd Herd" Platoon traveled daily throughout the Sunni Triangle north, west and south of Baghdad.

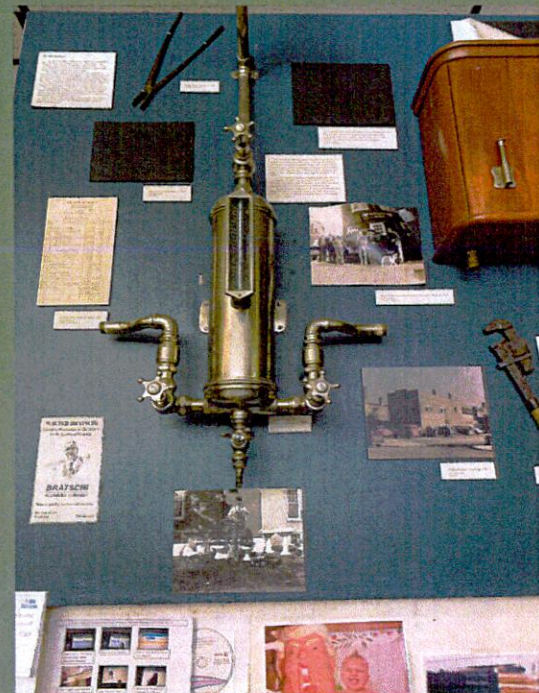
As part of the OIF II, the 660th transported 23 million gallons of JP8 jet fuel and traveled over 935,000 miles outside the "wire," experiencing 130-150° temperatures during the summer months, long hours, harrowing ambushes, roadside bombs and landmines. The 660th lost four soldiers and three contracted American drivers during this time, but earned the reputation as being one of the finest platoons in their battalion.

Carrie received the Bronze Star Medal for leadership and service, and has continued to show leadership in her speeches to schools, nursing homes, churches and civic groups, as well as volunteering with the Chi Omega, Lambda Mu Chapter at Loyola University (2010-2016), the Chi Omega, Xi Chapter at Northwestern, on the board of her church (2013-2019), current commander of the New Trier VFW Post 4831, and as the Chairwoman to former IL Senator Kirk's Veterans Affairs Advisory Board.

She calls her father, "the sole person behind the New Trier VFW Post #4831," and they were both members of the American Legion Post 46 in Wilmette. The two captains lead Winnetka's Memorial Day Celebration, participate in its 4th of July Parade, in addition to hosting the Veterans Day gathering at the Winnetka Community House for the Scouts.

On the business side, like her father, after heroic service to her country, she decided to return to Winnetka, undertake a 5-year plumbers' apprenticeship and join the family business, receiving her plumber's license in 2014.

History Lines the Walls at 801 Oak, including wrenches and showers dating back to the 1920's and a horse tether still seen in the backstop



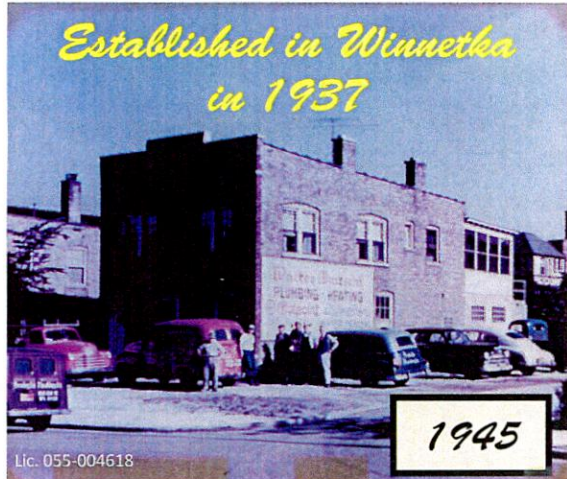
"We not only work in Winnetka, we also live here in the community, have raised our families here, and try to give back as best we can," she says. "We strive to be the best version of ourselves daily and take great pride in where we come from and where we are headed as a company. We cherish our customers, our employees, and our history."



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