



Anthony T. Ferrelli

November 26, 1927 - February 3, 2016

“No Mission Too Difficult. No Sacrifice Too Great. Duty First!”

Few men epitomized the spirit of the United States Army’s First Infantry Division, known as “The Big Red 1”, more than Anthony T. Ferrelli.

Mr. Ferrelli, 88 of Aurora, passed away Feb. 3 at Presence Mercy Medical Center surrounded by his loving family.

Born Nov. 26, 1927 in Burlington N.J. to first generation Italian immigrants Vincenzo and Venanzia Ferrelli, “Tony” volunteered for the United States Army upon graduating from High School. As a member of the First Infantry Division and 26th Infantry Regiment, he would go on to serve the country he so loved for 21 years and become a highly decorated soldier, retiring as a Sergeant Major in 1967.

During his Army career, he served in many locations including Germany, Japan and Korea overseas; and Ft. Benning, Ft. Leonard Wood, Ft. Bragg, and others in the United States. He was twice stationed at Marmion Academy where he taught ROTC. Many of Aurora’s citizens still remember him as a knowledgeable, tough, but always fair instructor.

In 1966 before retiring from active service, Anthony volunteered for duty in Vietnam. His bravery and gallantry on the battlefield earned him the Silver Star--- the Army’s third highest combat medal---for his actions over a two-day period in March, 1967 when his outfit engaged a Viet Cong base camp and found themselves vastly outnumbered by 2000 enemy soldiers. According to a 1967 Chicago Tribune article, Alexander M. Haig, his Commanding Officer at

the time, said Tony “was all over the battlefield, checking out the positions, helping men with the wounded, and rallying his troops...”

His last act just before boarding the helicopter which would take him out of Vietnam to begin his journey back to the United States and into retirement was to return the medal to his superiors. He enclosed it in a note that read, “The Silver Star is awarded for specific acts of gallantry. I cannot remember performing any such acts. Therefore, I am not worthy of such recognition.” He also insisted that the medal not be reflected on his Army Service Record. His actions, which caught the attention of the media across the United States, earned him the nickname “The Humble Hero”.

During his career he also earned the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and several others.

After his retirement from the Army, Anthony served 23 years as a letter carrier with the United States Post Office where his reputation for toughness and fairness was frequently a point of contention with his supervisors. Capitalizing on his Army experience where he was always prepared for battle, Tony seldom lost the disagreements which earned him honor and respect by both management and his fellow employees. His mail routes were mostly on the City’s West Side where Tony’s familiar whistling signaled the forthcoming deliveries to his loving customers.

Only God and his family were loved more by Anthony than his country. He was a devoted member of Holy Angles Church where he was a popular fixture every Sunday morning at 6:45 mass.

A pivotal moment in his Tony’s life occurred at a USO dance in Chicago in 1951 when he spotted a striking brunette standing across the room. After telling a friend that was the woman he was going to marry, he approached her, asked her to dance, and learned her name was Joan Novak. As he predicted, they married on April 19, 1952, and their dance went on to last almost 64 years. Known as “Tony and Joan” in the neighborhood where they would spend over ½ century, they were the proud parents of four sons: Michael (who preceded him in death), Christopher, Mark (Wendy), and Daniel.

Aside from his wife and sons, Anthony is also survived by his grandchildren, Matthew, Megan (Colin), Anthony (Kate), Celia and Mark; and great grandchildren, Lana, Logan and Giovanni; brother Pasquale; and many nieces and nephews.

He was also preceded in death by his parents; his brothers, Umberto, Daniel, Dominick and Joseph; sisters Edith and Margaret; and daughter-in-law Denise.

Funeral services will be held at 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, Feb. 9 from The Daleiden Mortuary, 220 N. Lake St., to Holy Angels Church, 180 S. Russell Ave. at 10 a.m. Interment will follow at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, 278 Ashland Ave. Visitation will be held from Monday, Feb. 8 from 3 to 8 p.m., at The Daleiden Mortuary. In lieu of flowers please make contributions to the Marmion Academy Fund, 1000 Butterfield Rd., Aurora, IL 60502.

The family wishes to extend its profound appreciation to all of the members of the Aurora Fire Department, especially Paramedic David Christenson; the devoted nurses at Presence Mercy Medical Center including Sammi and Giana; the staff at the Aurora Dialysis Center; his live-in caretakers Helena and Trisha; and neighbors Gary and Sarah for making Anthony's journey into eternal rest so much easier. A special thank you is extended to Steve Gustavson for his unending devotion to making sure Anthony's spiritual needs were addressed in his last weeks.

Cemetery Details

Mt. Olivet Cemetery

278 Ashland Avenue
Aurora, IL 60505

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 8. 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Daleiden Mortuary
220 N. Lake Street
Aurora, IL 60506
(630) 631-5500
daleidenmortuary@gmail.com
<https://www.daleidenmortuary.com>

Funeral Mass

FEB 9. 10:00 AM (CT)

Holy Angels Church
120 South Lancaster Avenue
Aurora, IL 60506

Tribute Wall

KP

“ Thoughts and prayers to the Ferrelli family as it copes with such a great loss.

Karen E. Pride - February 14, 2016 at 07:18 PM

RR

“ So saddened to hear of the death of my dear friend and golf buddy. He was truly a giant among men. I think of him often since moving away and will miss him .
Rich

Rich Ruffalo - February 09, 2016 at 09:48 AM

YE

“ Your Friends and Family at Fresh Express purchased the Classic Sympathy Dish Garden for the family of Anthony T. Ferrelli.



Your Friends and Family at Fresh Express - February 08, 2016 at 01:13 PM



“ Healing Tears - Lavender and White was purchased for the family of Anthony T. Ferrelli.



February 08, 2016 at 10:26 AM

DH

“ Deepest sympathy to you and your family DF-
-- DH



Dee Hakala - February 08, 2016 at 09:04 AM

JF

“ Dear Ferrelli family:

I wish to convey my sincerest condolences to your entire family. Losing a loved one in death is one of the hardest things that anyone will ever have to deal with. There is a great hope held out to us for the future because God promises to bring those we lost back to life by means of a resurrection to a paradise earth, where sickness and death will be no more. I hope this brief message will bring you a measure of comfort in this difficult time.

Johnson family - February 07, 2016 at 03:20 PM

 Robert
Hahn

“ As a MMA cadet from the class of '58 I have fond memories of
Sargent Ferrelli. He had a profound affe

Robert Hahn - February 06, 2016 at 09:52 PM

 Robert
Hahn

*affect in shaping my teen years for which I will always be grateful. RIP
Sarge.*

Robert Hahn - February 06, 2016 at 10:03 PM

LM

A Marmion graduate class of 58 Sarg always remember us-- good memories

Larry Malaker

Larry Malaker - February 07, 2016 at 11:33 AM

EP

To the Ferrelli Family, My God keep his arm around you through this difficult time..Elaine, Wendy's mother.

Elaine Pagliaroli - February 09, 2016 at 05:16 PM

DM

“ *My Condolences to all the Ferrellis.*

Anthony Farrelli was a friend and a man I greatly admired. He was compassionate, intelligent, hard working, and a sparkling conversationalist. I remember fondly the many evenings I sat in his garage or basement discussing the issues of the day. Not many adults would sit and listen to the ideas and opinions of bunch of wet behind the ears recent college graduates, but Tony did. He welcomed me and many of his son's other friends, and engaged us in thought provoking conversations that frequently erupted with bouts of laughter and always left me feeling that I had learned something important. He was a natural born practitioner of the Socratic method.

But in addition to being a great conversationalist, Tony taught me by example. He was decent and kind to everyone, Yet you always knew he was tough as nails. He loved his wife, Joan, and his four boys dearly, and you could feel that. He was conscientious and caring in all that he did, and I truly admired him. His example made me a better man.

I will miss you Tony Farrelli.

Your Friend, Don Meister

Don Meister - February 06, 2016 at 01:31 PM

MG

As one of his son's other friends who also participated in those garage and basement conversations, I too have the same feelings toward Tony. Those are wonderful memories I will always appreciate and cherish. Tony made the world a better place and made all of us who knew him better persons, for which I will always be grateful. Our thoughts and prayers are with the entire Ferrelli family.

Mic & Kim Greyer - February 11, 2016 at 10:32 AM

J'

“ A wonderful man who molded countless boys into good men. He will remain in our thoughts and prayers forever. Rest in peace Sargent.
Jim LAPOINTE '59

Jim LaPointe '59 - February 05, 2016 at 01:59 PM

P'

“ Sergeant Major Anthony Ferrelli, tactical officer, Company D, Marmion Military Academy, was a man to be admired ... And I do. May he rest in peace.

Paul Reichenbacher, MMA '58 - February 05, 2016 at 01:48 PM

CF

“ I owe my army career of 30 years to SMG Ferrelli. He was my tack sit. in D company where I was one of his platoon leaders who went to bat for me when Father Thomas refused to promote me. Ferrell ignored him. Ferrelli started me on my regular army saga in which I was twice decorated for heroism in VN and commanded six times ending as a brigade commander. The last time I met him was when i gave the speech at Marmion's awards night in 1992. I thanked him for what he had done for me. Today I am a award winner author of military history (historybythecolonel.com)
Sorry to see you go, Sergeant Major, you were the best of the best.

Colonel David Fitz-Enz, regular army retired. Marion 58

Colonel David Fitz-Enz - February 05, 2016 at 12:45 PM

Donald
Hornyan

“ *Donald Hornyan lit a candle in memory of Anthony T. Ferrelli*



Donald Hornyan - February 05, 2016 at 08:01 AM

Donald
Hornyan

TONY WAS A GOOD FRIEND AS WELL AS A GOOD FELLOW WORKER. HAD A LOT OF LAUGHS AND WORKED TOGETHER AS UNION MEMBERS. PRAYERS GO OUT TO HIS FAMILY. HE WILL BE MISSED.

Donald Hornyan - February 05, 2016 at 08:04 AM

MG

Duty, honor, country were not just words to SGM Ferrelli. He lived them and tried his best to impart them to the cadets at Marmion. May God bless him and RIP.

Mike Gallagher, R'59

Mike Gallagher - February 05, 2016 at 04:14 PM

RH

Sgt. Farrelli had a unique talent for judging character, and believe me I was a character. He brought out the best of each of the young men he came in contact with, including me. He took an interest in me and guided me out of some bad habits. He is definitely the one who followed me through graduation by taking an interest and giving me responsibility. Not having good grades, but receiving a promotion had to be his way of seeing that I would change and be a better person. I know he is still watching us from above and expecting us to follow his example, and I will not fail because of him.

Love and above all, Great Respect to a "Maker of men"

Robert Hammortree, Class of 1958

Robert Hammortree - February 07, 2016 at 06:59 AM

DJ

I first met Sergeant Ferrelli as a fledging senior at Marmion in 1956 more concerned about surviving tomorrow. He was tough but he also emitted a true fairness that in a very short time moved him right to the top of the food chain in my world. I soon realized he could sit and listen to the problems a nobody like me would encounter. I must not have been the only one who he impressed because he was invited to the 50th reunion of the 1956 class after only knowing him in school one year. As time evolved I had many opportunities to inner relate with Tony. Either I was building a new building on his mail route or as I came to learn he became great friends with my best friend, Ken Buss. Ken's wife, Marilyn and Joan were volunteers at Mercy Center and struck up a good friendship that shifted forward to their personal life. Another very close friend of mine, Bob Burghardt, was a mailman also so I connected with Tony again. Bob eventually replaced Tony on his route when Tony retired. I connected with Tony again as two of his sons help coach teams in Aurora Boys Baseball. Tony told me once that his son Dan suggested that I was evil or something similar. I understood from Dan that his Dad straightened his thoughts. The last time I saw Tony was when I was receiving Communion at Holy Angels and I passed by him in the center aisle and said "Do you know who I am." In his gruff voice he replied "Of course I know who you are.". Tony Ferrelli is and will continue to be one of my heroes. I love Tony Ferrelli. At my Dad's wake I saw some adults he had touched shedding tears and I wonder how that could be because they weren't related. I now completely understand as I write this I am doing the same. I will include Sergeant Ferrelli in my prayers every Sunday until I die and I will have two Masses said for him in the Traditional Latin Rite.

GOD BLESS TONY FERRELLI

Don Jungels

Don Jungels - February 09, 2016 at 11:34 PM