



In the Spotlight

Raymond Hassel

**U.S. Marine Corps
Veteran &
YMCA Member
for 20 Years**



Mr. Hassel strikes a pose with Community Y's Dawn Hobbs

In the summer of 1950, the United States entered the Korean War on South Korea's behalf, considering it a battle against the forces of international communism. Under President Harry Truman's command, Ray Hassel was part of an elite group, the first U.S. Marine Corps soldiers to enter the war zone.

The 89-year-old, who has been a loyal Community YMCA member for two decades, and Glenolden resident for 60 years, recalls his days in the service.

"After we were deployed to Korea, we moved all over the place," he says. "It was beyond cold, with temperatures 35-below, plus bombs flying over our heads. It was something else."

Once our war hero fulfilled his military commitment, Ray built a career in life insurance. For 28 years, he worked for Provident Mutual Life Insurance in Philadelphia. Not long after he retired, he says it was time to explore other interests.

"After I retired, I was just sitting around doing Mickey Mouse things, nothing important," he laughs. "My wife, Betty Jane, told me, 'Ray, you're going to the Y. So, here I am!'"

Sadly, Betty Jane passed away in 2010, but Ray remembers fondly the days the couple would work out together.

"We'd swim together all the time. Well, I'd swim, she'd talk and swim a little, and talk to her friends some more," he chuckles.

Though no longer with us, Ray says Betty Jane's spirit is always with him.

"My life gets lonely sometimes, but I know she'd want me to come here and be with my friends, and that's exactly what I have here," he says. "It really is like Cheers. Everybody knows my name, and I have found a wonderful community of friends. It's a great outlet."

The self-proclaimed early bird arrives shortly after the Y doors open in the morning. You'll find Ray working the machines in the Wellness Center five times a week, and Water Walking three days a week.

"It wakes me up, and gets me going. I love it!"

Ray has two sons, seven grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren, many who attend the Community Y.

"I have eight school teachers in my family," he says. "From kindergarten through college, and I'm just so proud of them."

And proud he should be.

**Thank you, Ray, for your service to our country,
and for being such a loyal member and integral part of our Y family!**