



Italian American Heritage Club Of Hunterdon County

KEEPING OUR *Pride*, CELEBRATING OUR *Culture*, REMEMBERING OUR *Past*

The Ballad of Basilone

By Rosa Cirianni

World War II Hero John Basilone is widely regarded as Raritan's favorite son. A larger-than-life-size statue stands downtown, the local high school football field bears his name, and each September, the town's well-attended parade pays homage to the only Marine in World War II to receive both the Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross.

On November 4, Basilone's birthday, the memory of the gunnery sergeant killed at Iwo Jima will be invoked again when Piazza Basilone is unveiled in San Diego. The plaza, in the city's Little Italy section, will feature a bronze bust of Basilone, whose battlefield heroics also earned him a Purple Heart. He's credited with fending off a fierce Japanese assault in Guadalcanal, wielding two machine guns and a Colt .45 in a three-day battle that left scores dead. "It's really amazing that they remember him", says Carlo Basilone, 88, the soldier's older brother and one of the many relatives still living in Raritan. "They never forget him."

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