



# A RANSOM NOTE

Clarence Historical Society Newsletter

Spring 2023

### Board of Trustees

- Douglas Larkin, President
- Joan Woodward, Secretary
- Sandra Larkin, Treasurer
- Daniel Gamin
- Yvonne Buyers Hicks
- Jon Rothenmeyer
- Sara Larkin
- Joseph McGreevy
- John O'Hare
- Robert Lenz
- Robert A. Geiger,
- Clarence Town Board Liaison
- Mark Woodward, Town Historian

Board Meetings are held the 1st Thursday of each month.

Meetings begin at 6:30 pm at the Clarence History Museum.

### President's Comments

The museum is now open for the season! The 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month, excluding holidays. We have two new exhibits, J. Michael Hens & Family and The Clarence Press. We continue to work on new signage around the grounds of the Museum, thanks to Legislator Chris Greene and Erie County. We hope to have at least a monthly presence at the Clarence Hollow Farmer's Market and participate more in other town events over the summer. We have started our programs for 2023, with May being presented by Greg Kinal and Presidential Indiscretions. Please watch our Facebook page, our website, and the Clarence Bee for dates and subjects of our upcoming programs for 2023.

As always, we thank you for your support and hope to see you this busy season!

### A RANSOM NOTE In This Issue

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### The Historical Society Visits the Clarence Public Library

We were invited to the Clarence Public Library this year to showcase some exhibits you may find in the Museum. We have a range of topics from Wilson Greatbatch to Old Toys.

The displays will be available for viewing until the end of April. We hope you enjoy!



# J. Michael Hens

## First Clarence Resident KIA in Vietnam

By: Sara Larkin

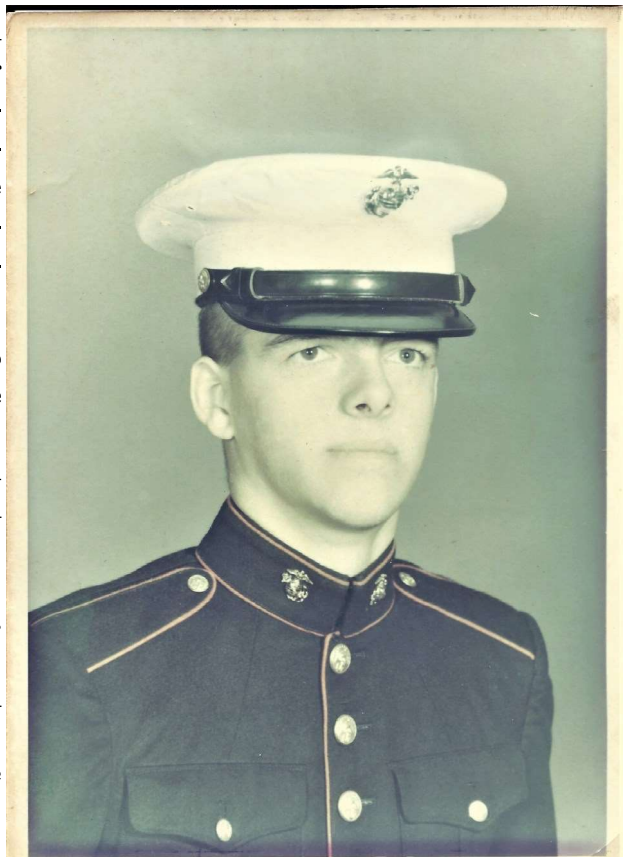
John Michael Hens was born in Erie, PA on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1943 to Edwin Jr. and Marguerite Hens. Michael, as he was known to his family and friends, grew up in Harris Hill with his parents and three brothers; Thomas, David, and Peter. Thomas lives in South Carolina and flew phantom F 4's as a Marine. Peter lives in Maryland and was a clerk in the U.S. Army. Edwin Jr. served in WW2 with the 295<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company and served time at Normandy Beach, France, Belgium Luxembourg, and Germany. As you can see, the military tradition runs deep in the Hens family.

William Bachman, Michael's grandfather, owned a 52-acre horse farm on Conner Road, consisting mostly of Morgan horses. According to Peter and Thomas, the Hens' boys childhood was much spent "on the business end of a pitchfork." The Hens boys all learned to ride at a young age as well as show the horses. All the boys spent a lot of time honing their equestrian talents, but Michael seemed to excel at it, especially with his favorite horse, Plain Jane.

Michael graduated from DeSales Catholic High School in June 1962. Michael went to San Antonio, TX where he spent one semester at St Mary's University. As his brother Tom describes Michael, "he majored in having a good time." Tom recalls his older brother spending more time at the pool hall than inside the school during school hours. "He was the golden boy...he was the person everybody – friend, family, everybody – really liked."

On January 9, 1963, Michael successfully passed the required examinations and was accepted for enlistment in the United State Marine Corps. Michael left college in September 1963 and by January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1964, Michael was fully enlisted to the United States Marine Corps. Edwin Jr and Marguerite received Michael's enlistment letter, showing his new address for Parris Island, SC.

By March 1964, Michael was at the Marine Corp Recruitment Depot, Parris Island, SC where he graduated as Private First Class with the First Recruit Battalion, Platoon 106. May 1964, Michael was well into the Marine Corps Basic Training. In August 1964, Private First-Class John Michael Hens was certified for completing the course for Infantry Weapons Armorer from Marine Corps School, Quantico, VA. On December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1964, Private First Class Hens received another certification for Demolition and Landmine Warfare School, given at the First Engineer Battalion, First Marine Division (Rein) FMF.



September 11, 1965, Michael was on his last leave before heading to Vietnam. In December 1965, Michael was at Chu-Lai South Vietnam. On April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1966, Private-First Class John Michael Hens was promoted to Corporal in the United States Marine Corps. In June 1966, Michael received a letter from the NYS Police, acknowledging his interest in an appointment to the NYS Police after his military career was over. Michael's name would be added to the mailing list so he could receive information and the proper paperwork needed once the next Trooper Candidate Examination was held.

October 1966 would be a time his family would never forget. Michael was stationed in Quang Ngai Vietnam. On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1966, 15 Marines of Mag-12 were set to be delivered by helicopter to a small village to deliver medical supplies. We learn from the death report what took place – Corporal John M. Hens, U.S. Marine Corps, died on this day in the vicinity of Quang Ngai Province, Republic of Vietnam as the result of an explosion by a replanted Claymore anti-personnel mine while guarding a medical assistance mission. A fellow Marine in Michael's unit described the village they were approaching, as a "classic Vietnamese village." As they approached the village, an eerie calm washed over the tropical environment. The fellow Marine remembers that time almost stood still in one, momentary paused...then an explosion erupted behind him. MAG-12 had been ambushed by a Viet Cong company.

John Michael Hens received an Honorable Service Award in Grateful Memory for his ultimate sacrifice. On December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1966, the Department of the Navy notified Mr. & Mrs. Hens of more awards in the memory of their son:

- Vietnam Service Medal and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon Bar for his service in the Republic of Vietnam
- Two gold star lapel buttons authorized by Public Law 89-534 which can be worn by the Hens in memory of their son
- Citation folder for Purple Heart Certificate

The Veterans of Foreign Wars named the J. Michael Hens Memorial Post 7870 Veterans of Foreign Wars at 9415 Tonawanda Creek Road in Clarence Center. The flagpole that once stood outside the VFW Post 7870 is now homed and standing outside of the Clarence Historical Museum. Edwin Jr was commander of the J. Michael Hens Post and Marguerite was a member of the Auxiliary and a Gold Star mother.

It's hard to sum up someone's life in a few paragraphs. When we were first contacted by Peter about his brother's belongings, we didn't know what to expect. When the first box arrived from Peter, we knew we had a special task ahead of us to tell this young mans story. After many emails, a couple packages, and lots of questions being answered, we were able to create the J. Michael Hens Exhibit. We hope you will come visit us at the museum to see this young man's personal effects, awards, medals, and ribbons and learn more about his story and life.

We cannot thank Pete and Thomas Hens enough for all their help and the information they provided us with.

Sources:

Peter and Thomas Hens

Clarence Bee Edition September 26, 2016

## Welcome Trustee Bob Lenz



The Historical Society would like to welcome Bob Lenz as our newest Trustee! Bob was a long time owner of the Asa Ransom House. Bob has been involved with many committees for the town and you will find him in the country store at the Farmers Market on Saturday mornings. We are very happy to have Bob as part of the Historical Society as a Trustee, Volunteer, and Member.

## Arthur the Great

We have a fun new addition to the museum for kids this year! Everyone knows the ever popular Arthur the Squirrel! He keeps an eye on the outside grounds. We now have Arthur coming inside to play hide and seek with the kids. During open hours, Arthur will be hiding around the museum at different spots. When the kids find him and let a volunteer know, they will have a prize to choose from! We checked with Farmer Brown at the Farmer's Market and he liked the idea!



## Membership Corner

We would like to welcome our new life members, Donald Dussing Jr and Sara Larkin .

You can renew your membership or become a new member on our website or in person.

We have different tiers to choose from:

Individual—\$15

Couples—\$25

Family—\$30

Business—\$50

Individual Life Member—\$150

You can also notate if you would like to volunteer by helping during open hours, giving tours, working on exhibits, and office help! We can always use an extra pair of hands!

**We**  
**our**  
**MEMBERS!**



## “The Good Old Days on the Farm”

### By: Mildred Hoehman Kamner

We recently came across this article by Mrs. Kamner about farming in the old days. Mrs. Kamner was a 6th grade teacher at Parker High School for more than 20 years. Her and her husband maintained a sheep and hog farm in Clarence until his death in 1967. Mrs. Kamner was a life member of the Historical Society and very active in the Erie County Historical Federation and the Erie County Fair.

“I find I am living in a highly computerized, mechanized world, and I must accept it— like it or not. There is, however, nothing or no one to keep in my mind from going back in memory and reliving those days in the early 1900’s. Life was slower, simpler, and the pressure was not so great. Whether it was a better way or a more difficult one rests in individual opinion. I had fun then and I have fun now. I worked then and I work now.

As a youngster I never heard of a supermarket. We prepared our own jams, jellies, and relishes—we had yearly apple butter cooking—we had butchering days. Early in the morning until late at night the big iron cauldron kettles were hung on a pole over an open fire. On apple butter cooking days the materials were ready. Sweet apples had been taken to the cider mill to be pressed. The apples were pared, cored and quartered and placed in tubs of water. The early morning found a couple good neighbors outside the door, ready to help. Fire was going nicely under the kettle—cider was cooked down—apples were added as well as the spices. The odor of the cooking plus the odor of the wood smoke was something to always remember.

Water didn’t come from a faucet. I remember the chain hoist to which a bucket was attached. I remember our valuable windmill. Later a gasoline engine did the work. Water supply from a spring-fed well not only supplied our family but served as the cooling agent for three to five cans of milk (ten-gallon one) which came from our dairy and were sent by train into our neighboring city of Buffalo. Many a time I rode the milk wagon drawn by one or two horses to the Clarence Center Train Depot.

Mother also made from fifty to one hundred pounds of butter twice a month which Dad and his six-year-old daughter—Me—delivered to customers in the city in a horse drawn wagon—so I held the horses while Dad delivered the butter and farm produce to his customers in Buffalo.

Waves of nostalgia sweep through me, and I do often think of a way of life that is gone forever—life on my father’s dairy farm, known as Forest View Dairy Farm on Hochman Road, which today is known as Greiner Road. My oldest brother, Norman, was born in 1892 in a log house across the road from my present home, which was built in 1894.

I could go on and on with stories of my young life when there was but little mechanized agriculture. I drove a four-horse team many times. Today this power structure is seldom seen and is considered a novelty. One thing I must mention before I end my few reminiscences. I again see “evidences of the good old days,” both on the farm and in my neighboring villages, of firewood split and neatly piled by the side of the buildings. My brothers and I carried it in to the proverbial “woodbox” every night. It was used as fuel for preparing meals and baking and to stoke the potbellied stoves and fireplaces that heated the other rooms. Today it is serving the same purpose it did seventy-five years ago.

Nostalgia is a great nerve tonic—perhaps that’s what keeps me going. I do hope it provided a bit of information or revived some romantic or pleasant memories of days before computers, water, and energy shortages, and waste water disposal problems.”

# **2023 Program Schedule**

Free and Open to the Public

All programs are held at the Town Park

Clubhouse - 10405 Main Street, Clarence

Doors Open at 630pm—Program starts at 7pm

## **Tuesday May 09, 2023**

“Presidential Indiscretions”

Presented by Greg Kinal

## **Tuesday September 12, 2023**

“The Erie Canal”

Presented by Greg Kinal

## **Tuesday October 10, 2023**

“The Historic & Influential People from  
Buffalo and WNY—The Early 1800’s”

Presented by Rick Falkowski

## **Tuesday November 14, 2023**

“Post Erie Canal In Clarence”

Presented by John O’Hare P.E.



HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF THE TOWN OF CLARENCE

Founded in 1954

10465 Main Street

P.O. Box 86

Clarence, New York 14031-0086

Phone: (716) 759-8575

Email: [museum@clarencelhistory.org](mailto:museum@clarencelhistory.org)

[www.clarencelhistory.org](http://www.clarencelhistory.org)

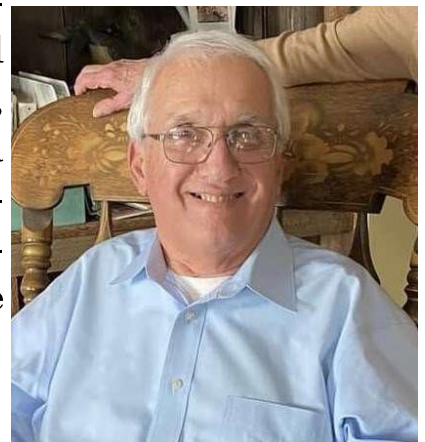
Facebook: Historical Society of the Town  
of Clarence

**“To collect, preserve, and share the history and heritage of the Town of Clarence”**

The Historical Society of the Town of Clarence Inc is formed for the following purposes:

- To identify, preserve, and display materials of historical significance of Clarence
- To encourage historical research, analysis, and study for the publication of historical papers, articles
- To educate the community through lectures, tours, online resources, school field trips and research opportunities

We would like to take a moment and extend our deepest condolences to the family of Don Holmes, the Newstead Historical Society, and the Town and Village of Newstead. Don was the Town and Village Historian and past president of the Newstead Historical Society. We started working closely with Lancaster, Alden, and Newstead for the County Bicentennial a few years ago. Don was apart of our group for Newstead. Don was a wealth of knowledge and very committed to his community and the history. Don will be missed by so many.



The Historical Society of the Town of Clarence deeply appreciates the support of the County of Erie, the Town of Clarence, our members and the community as a whole.

