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## Long Valley hero is laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery

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Martin Fleisher, left, was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on August 13. He is with Dominic Puleo, another World War II veteran, during an event in Long Valley in 2017.

Photo by Mark Kitchin

**WASHINGTON TWP.** – Martin Fleisher is resting with heroes just like him.

The World War II veteran, who lived in Long Valley and died in 2017, was laid to rest with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., on Tuesday, Aug. 13.

A spokesman for the cemetery said the ceremony included a casket team, firing party and bugler when his cremated remains were laid to rest.

Fleisher was 97 and commander of Long Valley's American Veterans Post 1776 at the time of his death. The Queens, N.Y., native moved to Long Valley in 1976 with his wife, Felicia, and their children Ben, Mark and Susan.

Fleisher was an enthusiastic talker with a ready smile and a sharp mind. Even in his later years, he related stories from years past with surprising detail and became a local celebrity.

In a nine-month span between 1944 and 1945, Fleisher flew 65 combat missions in Europe and earned 12 air medals for his actions during World War II. After his wife died in 2013, he opened up more about his experiences and excelled in speaking with school groups and encouraging students to stick with their studies.

No members of the American Veterans Post 1776 were able to attend the burial but they were proud that Fleisher was finally laid to rest with other heroes.

"Marty is very much deserving," said American Veterans Post Commander Robert McBride. "It's a big deal. We feel proud of our former commander. We had very little notice. We are glad Marty finally got his recognition. We were told the ceremony was quite respectful."

Fleisher's fascination with flying began when he was 5 and he saw his first airplane. He could never raise enough money to go to flight school and was attending airplane mechanics school when he was drafted. That was his opportunity to become an Army pilot.

"How I made it, I don't know," Fleisher said in a 2015 interview. "The only thing I can figure out is that maybe it is what my mother used to tell us all when we were kids. She said to be content with what you've got. As long as you are content, you don't envy other people. You don't aggravate yourself over what you don't have. I had a life that was not

too stressful because I let it be. Fortunately, I made the proper choices in all of my endeavors.”

Fleisher’s grave site is in the cemetery’s Columbarium at Section S11, Column 9, Niche No. 3. It typically takes 60 to 90 days from the date of interment to receive a grave marker at Arlington.

Between 27 and 30 funerals are conducted each week day and six to eight services on Saturdays at the 624 acre Arlington National Cemetery. It is the final resting place for more than 400,000 active duty service members, veterans and their families.

Among the individuals buried there are President John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and former astronaut and statesman John Glenn. The cemetery is also the home of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Although waiting 18 months for burial is a long time, it is not unusual for Arlington which over the years has developed a backlog of individuals wishing to be buried there. A Fort Myers News Press article from 2013 noted that the average delay for a veteran’s burial in the national cemetery was six months and that the organization receives 35 requests for burial a day.

Other individuals with Long Valley ties who are buried at Arlington, include Ray Ferrante, a Vietnam Veteran who lived in Long Valley and once served as a pilot for Donald Trump before he became president. Ferrante was killed in an auto accident in 2015.

Jack Brahney and his wife, Dorothy, who both died within a span of three weeks in early 2011, are also buried at the national cemetery. Brahney served during World War II.

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By Mark Kitchin