

## Soldiers Welfare Committee

By Artie Maglionico

By 1942 the draft board was inducting our young men faster than Lodi High School could graduate them. Aware of what their sons and husbands were about to face, the women of this borough organized what would eventually be known as the Soldiers Welfare Committee. This war time group, which was headed by Mrs. Josephine Branca, saw to it that our boys in service received letters once a month from 'back home.'

The welfare committee was also there to see our boys off and to give them gifts that would serve as a link to the town that they were leaving behind. The group was originally set up at the suggestion of Mayor Cavallo and would soon be reaching out to our service men and woman regardless of where they were or in what capacity they were serving. To bolster the morale of our soldiers, especially those suffering the rigors of battle, members of the group sent gifts to assure them that their wellbeing was of great concern to those on the home front.

Officers of the welfare committee, along with Mrs. Branca , was secretary Rose Galanti , treasurer Mrs Alfred Moran, Hazel Paulison, Theresa Santimauro and Elsie Cavallo. Gift committee included Frieda Bistriz, Ethel Manfred, Carmela De Flora and Henrietta Miller. Visiting correspondence officers were Rosa Stassi, Rose Galanti, Rose Abbate, Frances Galmiche, Doris Maxwell and Carmella De Flora. The farewell committee members were Catherine Micklas, Minnie Golden, Mrs. Frank Schiaffo and Frances Galmiche.

Visiting program committee was made up of Mrs. Santimauro, Ina Hickman, Marie Del Greco, Angie B Gregory, Edith Stark, Sara Mercer, Laura Ryan and Helen Della Penta. That's a lot of names to remember but if you were a Lodi kid far from home sleeping in a fox hole somewhere in France or Italy you knew these names by heart. These women were messengers of love and of hope sent from home. Home...what a comforting yet distant word that must have been for those brave lads.

The committee often made trips to Fort Dix to visit the local trainees who were in boot camp. The delegation was headed by Lodi Mayor Michael "Packy" Cavallo. Yes there was a committee for that as well and it included Mildred Saulino, Christine Russo, Josephine Alesso, Cecilia Passantino and Rose Stassi.

In December of 1942 when the dark clouds of war cast a shadow over our land the women's club of Lodi NJ PRESERVED America's traditional observance of Christmas. The gals of Lodi sponsored a community Christmas Carol sing which took place on Sunday December 20, 1942. Because of the dim out regulations the event was held at 4:00 pm in front of the Town Hall. It was there that the entire community of Lodi gathered around the tall, decorated Christmas tree unlighted of course. Churches, schools, and civic organizations participated in the effort to make that Christmas reach our service men and women near and far. Miss Connie Toronto was in charge of the program which featured solos, instrumentals and group singing. Our Lodi soldiers heard about the event and felt as though they were a part of it all. Thanks to the Women of our Borough they were the most important part.