

Soldier surprises mom with help from Strasburg eatery

By Josette Keelor The Northern Virginia Daily
Jan 31, 2020



Haley Harley, left, a soldier stationed in Fairbanks, Alaska, surprised her mother Katie Harley, right, at the Old Dominion Doggery & Burger Shop in Strasburg on Wednesday evening. The restaurant helped plan the surprise with the Harley family.

Josette Keelor/Daily

STRASBURG — On a quiet Wednesday night at Old Dominion Doggery & Burger Shoppe, Jason and Katie Harley sat talking near the front window waiting on their food.

Though he would cast occasional expectant looks to the swinging kitchen doors at the back of the restaurant, his wife, facing the window, did not seem to notice. Any minute, when their food was ready, Jason Harley Sr. knew his daughter, Haley, an Army private first class stationed in Fairbanks, Alaska, would be the one to deliver the food to her parents.

Haley Harley's visit home was a surprise for her mom. The rest of the family — her dad; her brother, Jason Harley Jr., and his fiancée, Laney Sours — were all in on it.



"We've had a lot of stuff going on and a lot of hard times recently," Harley Sr. said of his motivation for planning the surprise for his wife.

His daughter, 19, a Strasburg High School graduate, was only 17 when she enlisted.

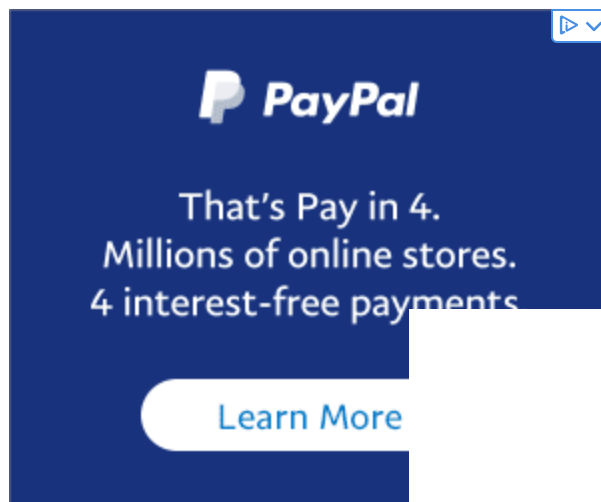
"She graduated a year early just so she could enlist," he said. "She loves her country."

Stationed at Fort Wainwright Military Base in central Alaska, about 365 miles northeast of Anchorage, she had not been home in about two years.

"I've been working with her," her father said before the surprise, "and she's finally coming home tomorrow."

To help keep the secret, he picked up his daughter from Dulles International Airport on Wednesday, then dropped her off at her brother's home. That evening, he and his wife arrived for their dinner, and their children sneaked in the back door to the kitchen.

A little after 6 p.m., Haley Harley stepped through the swinging doors, made her way through the restaurant with two plates, and stopped at her parents' table.



Her mother immediately stood and hugged her, too surprised to say or do much, other than hold on.

“My heart dropped,” Katie Harley recalled a few minutes later as she sat beside her daughter.

Haley Harley will be home until Feb. 17.

The family moment had an effect on others at the restaurant too, as cook Josh Allen, owner John Hooser and server Kerigan Bly were also in on the surprise.

“It was super sentimental,” said Bly, who admitted the reunion brought tears to her eyes.

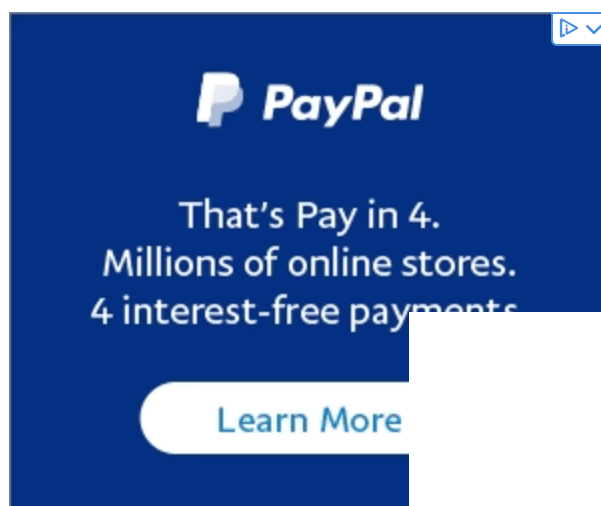
“I was able to relate,” Bly said, explaining that she has a brother in the Navy. “I think that’s why I was so emotional.”

Allen could also relate, saying he has a cousin in the military.

“These are moments you don’t get very often,” he said. “I understand the importance of the surprise.”

Hooser, who waived the family’s dinner bill, said Harley Sr. approached him with the idea a few days ago.

“I would do something like that every day if someone asked,” Hooser said.



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FEATURED

Local crafters sew masks for community

By Josette Keelor The Northern Virginia Daily

Apr 19, 2020



Nancy Shrum sits outside on her porch in Woodstock with an assortment of face masks she has been busy sewing to help battle the coronavirus pandemic.

Rich Cooley/Daily

Asked recently if she would sew masks for health care professionals at Shenandoah Memorial Hospital, 103-year-old Woodstock resident Flora Coffman said it was a definite maybe.

“I’m not too good at it, but maybe I could,” she recalled thinking.

Though she sews at least two quilts a year to donate to the Shenandoah District Church Disaster Auction in Rockingham County, Coffman said sewing masks was new for her.

“I wanted to do something [to help],” she explained. Once starting a project, “I usually keep at it.”

After receiving the fabric on a Monday, the Pine Meadow Assisted Living resident sewed 19 masks over two or three days. She had tried for 20 but said there wasn't enough material.

"They weren't too bad to do," she said. "I was glad I could help out."

North of town, Nancy Shrum, 75, also has been sewing masks and estimates she's almost halfway to her goal of 200.

A former geriatric long-term care nurse at Shenandoah Memorial Hospital, Shrum said sewing masks over the last few weeks is a way for her to help the community.

"We gotta do what we have to do," she said.

"I have enjoyed doing this ... it's good therapy," she said, adding that she's been recovering from some health setbacks, including back surgery last fall.

I'm just so glad to be alive and to be able to do things to help people," she said.

"I would like to donate some [masks] to the nursing homes and the Fire and Rescue and maybe even the hospital. I've been making sure my friends have some."

Shrum and Coffman have sewn and quilted items for the Disaster Auction each year, including quilts, children's clothes and lap robes.

"I haven't sewed for a long, long time," said Shrum, who's more into photography now and had artwork on display at Strasburg Town Hall before it closed to the public.

"I have too many interests," Shrum said, laughing.

Inspired by Coffman's prolific crafting, Shrum said she named her Singer Featherweight sewing machine for her friend.

"This one never had a name, so I named it Flora the Featherweight," she said.

"I love Flora, she always liked to play [bid] dominos with my husband," said Shrum. "She is amazing."

Coffman, a Maurertown native, said she lived in the Washington area for about 40 years before moving back to the valley.

Now a resident of Pine Meadow, she said she tries to keep busy each day.

"I read and I watch a little TV," she said. She also works on occasional sewing projects. "I quilted baby clothes for an auction," she said.

The Disaster Auction, which takes place each spring and collects items for disaster relief, was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Coffman said.

"You know, you hate that because they do such good work and everything," she said.

In recent weeks, since the facility adopted social-distancing practices, Coffman said it's been difficult isolating from the community.

"We can't hardly have anybody in," she said. Activities that used to take place, like dominoes, have been temporarily canceled. "You know, it's kind of rough, but we can manage."

For now, she said she's glad for her health.

"I don't have any pains," she said. "I'm very blessed I guess."

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MORE INFORMATION



Daughter: 103-year-old COVID-19 patient 'holding her own' at hospital

FEATURED

Strasburg resident recovers WWII postcard from father

By Josette Keelor The Northern Virginia Daily

Jun 5, 2020



Lana La Vine, of Strasburg, holds a postcard written by her father beside a bronze bust of him in the backyard of her home on Thursday. La Vine's father wrote the postcard from a Polish POW camp to his football coach at the University of Dayton. She recently found the card through eBay.

Rich Cooley/Daily

In 1943, Lana Le Vine's father, Leo J. Farber, wrote a postcard from a German prisoner of war camp in Poland to his college football coach at the University of Dayton.

In early 2020, Le Vine, 69, got her hands on that postcard after purchasing it for \$50 on the e-commerce website eBay.

"It's incredible," she said. "It was 1943, he wrote it, and it's just really kind of cool to actually see my father's handwriting."

The postcard to Coach Don Pincotti from Kriegsgefangenenlager (a prisoner of war camp) is dated Sept. 30, 1943 and reads:

Dear Don,

Very sorry that I was not able to write sooner but letter forms are hard to obtain. Am in good shape playing baseball everyday and basketball twice a week. How is the football season coming along? Hear you are doing okay in everything. Keep it up, it all will come in handy. Say hello to Harry & Jim for me & regards to everyone else at school. Write if you have time.

Leo

Farber was 25 when he was captured by Nazi forces in Tunisia while fighting with the 1st Armored Division at the Battle of Kasserine Pass — his first battle of World War II.

It was Feb. 14, Le Vine said, and her father was sent to Oflag 64 prisoner of war camp in Poland.

Over the years, she learned little from him about his experience as a POW. He never talked about it, she said.

But she later learned that since it was a premier camp for officers, the Red Cross was allowed to offer them amenities like baseball, basketball, musical instruments for a band and a print shop where they produced a monthly newsletter.

“They were ‘afforded’ better amenities than other prison camps,” she said. “That being said, it still wasn’t great.”

In 1945, after nearly three years at Oflag 64, Farber was among thousands of western Allied war prisoners forced by the Germans to march westward to Germany to avoid liberation.

“They left my father because my father was very, very ill,” said Le Vine.

Farber was recaptured by Russian troops but released once they realized he was an American and a former prisoner, Le Vine said. He recovered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

Farber, a lifelong Army soldier, went on to fight in Korea and Vietnam.

He also remained close with other Allied prisoners, who called each other Kriegies — from krieg, the German word for war.

Every five years, the Kriegies would gather for reunions, his daughter said. When they became too old to meet, she said their children took over the club.

It was through those friends that Le Vine and her sister learned of the postcard their father had written.

One of the club's main activities is searching out WWII artifacts that add to the stories of their families' lives, she said.

So when a man in California posted the card to eBay, and Kriegie daughter Elodie Ellsworth saw the card, she contacted Le Vine's sister, who immediately called Le Vine.

The turnaround was so quick that when Ellsworth noticed the card had been purchased, she called back Le Vine's sister to let her know the card had already been snatched up.

"Not to worry, Lana got it," Le Vine recalled her sister telling the woman.

Framing the card turned out to be almost as providential as finding it, she said.

"It's very thin paper," she said. "I don't know how in the hell it ever survived."

She considered various ways of preserving and displaying it, such as laminating and framing it. But framing it would only display one side, she said.

Then her friend Rich Follett posted a two-sided crystal frame for sale on Facebook — and Le Vine happened to see the post.

The two-sided crystal frame is slightly curved and never before used.

"It's an absolute perfect fit for my postcard," she said.

"It's really cool because my dad died when I was 24 years old. And it's just something of his."

Though her father wouldn't talk about his time in captivity, Le Vine said the family learned a lot from the Kriegies and even toured a concentration camp when she was about 9 years old.

"We had a tour in Germany," she recalled.

The family often visited relatives in Italy and would take Sunday drives all over Europe, she said. On one Sunday Drive, they visited Dachau concentration camp, where Le Vine recalls seeing a crematorium, a gallows and mounds of earth that covered mass graves.

“It burned in my memory,” she said.

“It was an important part of history that he wanted to instill in us — the importance of freedom,” she said.

“As I grew older, I remembered making a comment about, ‘Now I understand, Daddy.’”

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