

Dale Potts: We are put here on this earth to help others, and we should use our skills for this purpose...

BY REID IFORD, TUALATIN LIFE

For seven years Dale Potts has used the pages of Tualatin Life Newspaper to chronicle the lives, history and exploits of military veterans who at some time in their lives have Tualatin connections. But while our readers probably all know Dale as a writer and reporter, they may not know much about the man himself, and Dale is just as interesting as anyone about whom he has written. His story goes far beyond his years serving in the military, for Dale's service did not begin when he enlisted, nor did it end with his honorable discharge.

Almost his entire life, beginning as an Eagle Scout and junior assistant scoutmaster at the age of 13, Dale has contributed his time and effort to helping others. Today, he does not just write about veterans, he seeks out those in need and does whatever he can to see to it they receive the assistance they require, and the benefits they have earned. Dale believes service to others is at the very heart of living a full and well-rounded life.

"It is what we should be doing," he says. "We are put here on this earth to help others, and we should use our talents and skills for this purpose."

Dale received his commission as an Ensign in the Navy in 1967, and served until 1969. He then spent 27 years in the Naval reserves, retiring as a Navy Captain. A journalism major, Dale knew exactly where he wanted to be, landing the position of public information officer on the legendary aircraft carrier USS Yorktown.

This proved a very interesting time to serve on that ship. When the movie "Tora, Tora, Tora" was being filmed, Yorktown – whose famous predecessor was sunk by the Japanese in the battle of Midway --portrayed the lead Japanese aircraft carrier in the attack on Pearl Harbor. It also was the ship used for an episode of the television show "Get Smart." But it's big claim to fame during Dale's tenure was picking up the Apollo 8 space capsule when it landed in the South Pacific Ocean. The ship then did a public relations cruise around South America and the North Atlantic with a model of Apollo 8.

But USS Yorktown is a warship, and these were turbulent times. Dale saw Western Pacific deployment for Vietnam service, and Yorktown was diverted to the Sea of Japan following capture of the USS Pueblo by North Korea. He received service medals for these actions.

After leaving the active military, Dale earned his Master's in Mass Communications and went to work for the Internal Revenue Service, working in public relations. In 1971 Dale married Marianne, with whom he has two daughters, Janet and Diana. Marianne proved the perfect match for Dale, as they both share the same drive and commitment to helping others and serving their community.

"Marianne is very much involved with Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAP)," explains Dale. "She is a charter member, having been there since it formed at St. Anthony's Church in Tigard 25 years ago. She is very involved in helping people, and without her support I could not have done all the volunteer projects I have taken on over the years."

"Dale is an active and important member of our community," says Tualatin Mayor Lou Ogden. "He is what I call a true patriot. He does not just talk, he gets involved and makes things happen. He is instrumental in putting on numerous events in the city, like the annual Memorial



At age 11, attending Coos Catholic in North Bend, OR.

Day event at the Winona Cemetery and Veterans Day Appreciation Breakfast at Juanita Pohl Center, and is very active with our Chamber of Commerce. At special events Dale is often invited to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

"Dale serves everyone in our community, but is very focused on veterans. He not only serves them, but he actively takes care of many," Mayor Ogden adds.

People who knew Dale as a teenager would not be at all surprised by his many accomplishments. In high school, he was elected Student Body President. An athlete, he broke several track records, including the 440-yard dash, beating the previous record set 15 years earlier by his high school football coach. In college, he was active in school government, lettered in track, edited the college newspaper one semester (winning several awards), elected to the school's Honor Society, and named "Senior Man of the Year".

"I really put myself into things," he says with a laugh. "When I decide to do something, I do it!"

Dale enjoys a wide variety of volunteer activities. Today he might be collecting bulk refundable bottles and cans for the Caring Closet which provides clothing and personal care items for local needy school children; he and two others raised \$4,200 last year. This month the Santa team he manages, where he is Rudolf, is visiting military and low income families. Tomorrow he could be working on a project for the Tualatin Chamber of Commerce or the Tualatin Area Aging Task Force. At St. Anthony's Catholic parish in Tigard, he and Marianne do laundry for the Severe Weather Shelter for homeless and help with hospitality. Dale serves as a Eucharistic Minister at Mass. Marianne teaches religious education classes for children preparing for First Communion.

When it comes to helping veterans, Dale finds that many who need help from the Veterans Administration find the paperwork overwhelming. Or do not even know about VA or other beneficial programs. Quite often veterans do not receive the help they need simply because they do not know where to find it, Dale says. A lot of what I do is directing them to the right person or place to get help."

Asked if there is any particular accomplishment in his decades of volunteer work that stands out or was especially rewarding, Dale thinks for a long time, then recounts an incident involving a World War I combat veteran he came to know, Howard Ramsey.

"He was America's last surviving combat veteran from World War I, and would tell us so many stories about life in his earlier days" Dale says. "When he died at age 108, there was no media coverage. So, the day before his funeral service, I put a story out on the wire services. Newspapers nationwide used that story. Our local radio news and television stations covered the funeral, and sent reports to their network affiliates. Because of that wire service story, the Vice President, Secretary of Defense and Head of VA sent notes to his family. An Oregonian columnist wrote that without my efforts, the world would never have known. I am very proud of that, and grateful to have the ability to make something like this happen."

Dale has plans for the future, and given his lengthy history of involvement and activism, they may surprise people. "I plan to slow down," he says. "I am gradually phasing out of leadership positions and demanding activities—relaxing and reducing stress—so I can focus more on enjoying my family, especially my grandkids."



Recent Maui vacation with the entire family, Dale and Marianne at right.



In 1969, with Yorktown on Northern European deployment, his Department Head told Dale to have one of his guys shave off his mustache. Navy regs allowed mustaches. With Vietnam winding down, his entire crew was "getting short", getting out of Navy soon. So, Dale, instead, had his entire office grow mustaches.



Starting life's journey together, Aug 27th, 1971. Still sporting his mustache but not for long as Marianne did not like it.



Howard Ramsey joined Tualatin VFW Post in 2005. He is pictured with his great-great granddaughter Cameron and then Post Commander Dale Potts who recruited him.



Named IRS Employee of Year for Oregon. Years later, with added responsibilities, programs and staff, selected IRS Manager of Year



Dale reporting for duty as IRS Public Affairs Officer for Oregon on August 8, 1973



Conducting a seminar for Federal Executives with panel of radio/TV/newspaper reps on how get news media coverage.



At age two, already making people happy.