



Of the 47 veterans being added to the Amherst Veterans Memorial Wall in 2025, the Leising-Schlosser-Bogan Family has four members being honored. Many thanks to Heidi Roth and Valerie Luksch for sharing their family's story and archives with Deputy Supervisor Shawn Lavin ahead of the August 17 Ceremony.

Some families are lucky to have a single photo of their loved one's military service and others have volumes of information. Earl A. Leising, Sr.'s family is the latter. His pristine collection of photos, letters and documents has allowed his family to pass down the legacy of his military service and honorable life to the next generation.

Earl's granddaughter, Heidi Roth, shared his story, along with the stories of three other family members, with Deputy Supervisor Shawn Lavin in anticipation of the Town of Amherst Veterans Memorial Wall Ceremony planned for 2 PM Sunday, August 17 at the Memorial Wall. In all, the family has 4 members who will be honored and permanently inscribed on the wall:

- Valentine Leising - Army
- Earl A. Leising, Sr. - Army
- Gerald (Jerry) F. Schlosser- Army
- William Bogan (POW) - Army

Earl's father is Valentine and that is where the family's journey starts. **Valentine Leising** was one of nine children and grew up on a farm in the Transit/Klein Road area. The family faced



**Valentine Leising, Army, WWI Veteran**

tragedy and when Valentine was 2 years old (February 1896), he was presumed dead and put out in a shed with four other siblings who had all died of black diphtheria. They realized he was alive when he cried out from under a sheet. He ended up living the longest of all of his siblings, dying of an allergic reaction to penicillin that was prescribed for pneumonia.

Prior to joining the Army, he was a machinist for Pierce Arrow Motor Co. Valentine enlisted in the Army at age 23 and served during WWI as a Private First Class. While on a transport, they were torpedoed by a German submarine on the way to France. He was rescued by an American destroyer, along with his comrades. During WWII, he worked at the Cayuga Street Modification Center.

Valentine married Ida M. Leising and they had two children, Earl and Ruth (married to Gerald Schlosser). They lived on Los Robles in Williamsville, in a house he and his father built. Valentine died in 1970 at the age of 76 just two weeks before their 51<sup>st</sup> Wedding Anniversary but Ida went on to live to the age of 103, passing away in 2003.

**Earl Leising** followed in his father's footsteps, enlisting in the Army and served as a Staff Sergeant. He grew up in Amherst and graduated from Bishop Neumann High School. In September 1942, he reported to Fort Niagara before going to the Army Air Force Technical Training Squadron No. 987 in Florida. In October 1942, he began Air Corps Technical School in Gulfport, Mississippi. After that, he went to Columbia, SC, for the 378<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, 309<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, at Columbia Air Base. In October 1943 he was sent overseas. During WWII, he was Assistant Crew Chief of the "Idiot's Delight," a B-25 Mitchell Bomber, in the 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force. He was stationed in Italy for 3 years, working as an ariel engineer and gunner, as well as airplane and engine mechanic.

He also painted the pictures on the side of the airplane. His family believes this hobby helped him tremendous during his service. He was also an avid writing, sending letters home nearly every day, journaling his experience. His family has a binder full of his letters, archives that are hard to find these days.

He was well regarded for his service. President Franklin D. Roosevelt cited his unit as a Distinguished Unit for outstanding service in the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns, bombing German community targets in Italy. He was also honored with the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal and Good Conduct Medal.

As a member of the Army Air Corps, his work and service helped lay the ground work for the establishment of the Air Force, which was founded in 1947.

After his service he returned to Amherst and worked as a masonry contractor with his father. He married Jean and they had 6 children, including Valerie Luksch, who along with her husband, Richard, also sat down with Supervisor Lavin to talk their family's rich military history. Valentine helped Earl build a house on Lafayette Boulevard.

Unfortunately, Earl passed away in 1974 at the young age of 53 from colon cancer. The family learned that at least two of his comrades that he served with also died from colon cancer. In his letters, Earl



**Earl A. Leising, Sr., Army, WWII Veteran**

would refer to his comrades as “swell fellows,” and despite the circumstances, he always had a beaming smile in his photos from Italy.

Valerie, named after her grandfather Valentine, was young when her father died, and wishes she had more memories of his life and service, but he left behind dozens of photos and piles of letters that help share his story. Heidi agreed, saying she has never heard a negative thing said about him. He was just an amazing person who found a way to live happily with his family after his service. He was known as a great family man.

The family is very proud to have them both added to the Veterans Memorial Wall in 2025 in tribute of their service.

Also being honored is **William Bogan**, who has an incredible story. He was the brother of Jean Leising, he was the brother-in-law of Earl.

Mr. Bogan grew up in Williamsville and attended Bishop Neumann High School and went on to attend the University of Notre Dame and was a member of the track team. Soon after graduating college, he was sworn into the Army. He completed Officer Candidate School and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army Medical Service Corps.



**William J. Bogan  
(POW), Army,  
WWII Veteran**



He was sent to England and then to the European continent. On several occasions, he evacuated patients from Army field hospitals while under direct enemy machine gun fire.

According to his obituary, William was awarded the Bronze Star for exposing himself to enemy fire while treating and evacuating a wounded officer during the Battle of the Bulge. He also was awarded the Silver Star for heroism in combat, and the Purple Heart for being wounded while a prisoner of war.

William was captured by the Germans during the battle and spent nearly six months in a POW camp in Hammelburg. The camp was liberated by Allied forces, but during an attempt to return to American lines, the prisoners were recaptured. He would later recall that he experienced a starvation diet and, in addition to being wounded, witnessed the deaths of many fellow prisoners. He recalled the experience of spending several days locked in a boxcar while the surrounding area was being bombed. He was finally liberated about a week before the war in Europe ended.

In 1962, William was recognized by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller with the presentation of the Conspicuous Service Award.

After his service, he married his wife Mary and they had three children. He also raised his family in the Royal Parkway neighborhood near Jerry’s and Earl’s homes. William worked as a Supervisor for American Airlines for 25 years. He was also a member of Amherst Township Post 416, Veterans of

Foreign Wars; George F. Lamm Post 622, American Legion; American Ex-POW Organization; and the Purple Heart Club. He volunteered at the Friends of Night People Drop-In Center and was an outspoken advocate for military veterans.

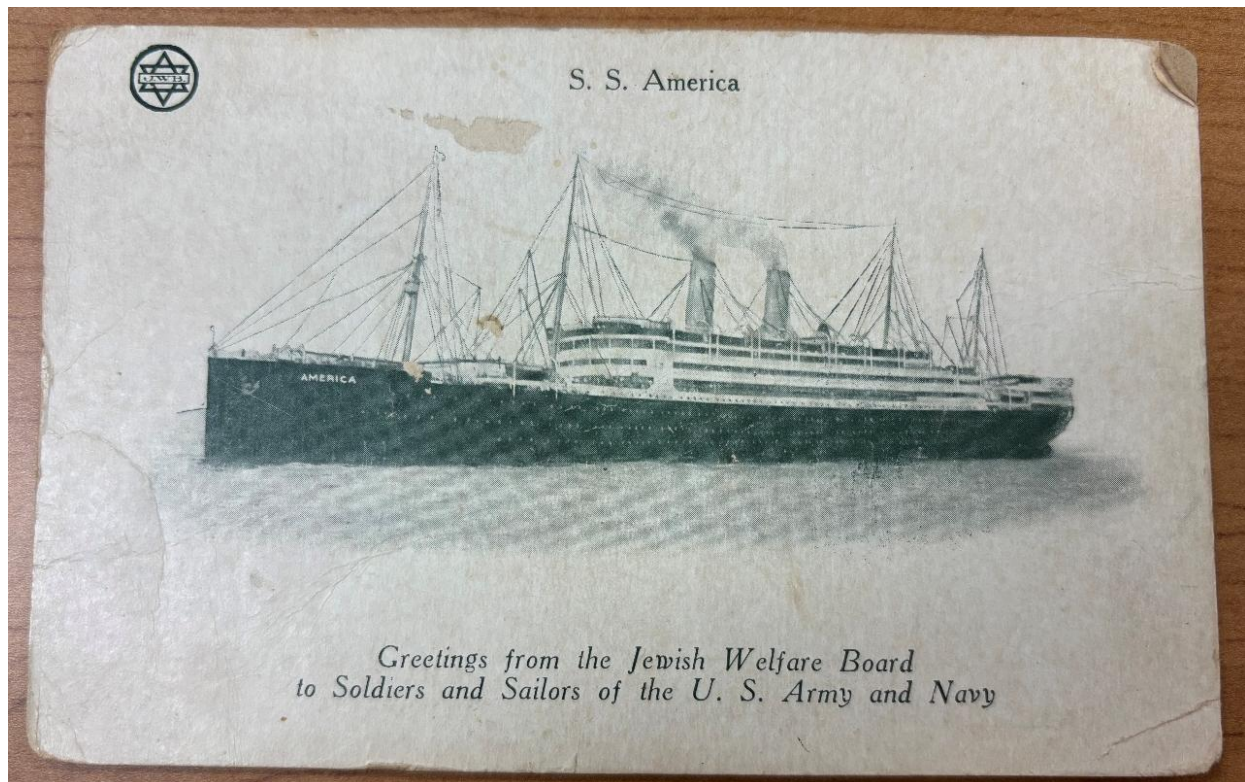
William's son, Vincent, followed in his footsteps and had a long and distinguished military career with the Army, dedicated to service his country and people in need.

Heidi reflected that she was fortunate enough to know William as a child and remembers him being very kind and soft-spoken, which in retrospect is amazing after everything he lived through and survived as a young adult in the war.

The fourth family member being honored is **Gerald (Jerry) F. Schlosser** who is Earl's brother-in-law. Jerry served as a Corporal in the Army during the Korean War. Soon after being discharged, Jerry met Ruth, Valentine and Ida's daughter, at a dance at St. Boniface Church in Buffalo. They married in 1959 and raised three children in the Royal Parkway neighborhood in a house that was built by Valentine and Earl. Jerry worked for the local telephone company Verizon, formerly Bell Atlantic, for more than 40 years as a frameman, retiring in 1989. Sadly, he passed away a year after retirement. Ruth was very active in the Amherst community and lived to be 92 years old.



**Gerald (Jerry) Schlosser,  
Army, Korean War Veteran.**



**A postcard sent by Valentine Leising to Ida Beiter during WWI.  
They married in 1919 after he returned to Amherst**