

Norwood veteran continues to serve

By Julie M. Cohen/Wicked Local Norwood
GateHouse News Service
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Members of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts visited the Tomb of Unknown Soldier in Sofia, Bulgaria, in October. The company is lined up in front of Alexander Nevsky Cathedral after laying a wreath at the tomb, which is to the left of the church, but not pictured

NORWOOD —

Long after he was done in the Air Force, Capt. Jack Moynihan decided once again to serve his country, this time as a member of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, which has been chartered since 1638.

After Moynihan graduated from Norwood High School in 1956 at age 18, he and a few friends enlisted in the military, where he earned the rank of airman 1st class. Little did he know that in 1983 he'd don a uniform again as a member of the centuries-old, patriotic institution and travel the world.

Over the years, Moynihan, 72, has worked in many fields and is now at Nantucket Companies in Mansfield that develops, owns and operates hotels.

Moynihan and his wife, who died two years ago, have two kids: Christine, a hotel manager and John, a Boston Police officer.

Moynihan, who has lived in Norwood since 1950, was elected captain, the highest-ranking position in the artillery company, this year. With that comes the responsibility of planning a Fall Field Tour of Duty. Previous trips took the group to South Africa, China, all over Europe and other locales on goodwill missions to honor the U.S. military, visit embassies and more.

The purpose of the trips is "to recognize servicemen and commemorate servicemen," he said.

Several years of planning went into Moynihan's trip to Sofia, Bulgaria, and several cities in Turkey.

He picked Sofia serendipitously when on another artillery company trip to Romania in 2007. The group stopped and explored Sofia and felt it would be a good candidate for a tour of duty.

“It’s a beautiful, old city. The people are terrific,” he said.

During his initial visit to Bulgaria, he learned the U.S. embassy had nowhere to celebrate U.S. holidays in Sofia. He also discovered at least 120 servicemen died in Bulgaria during World War II. This inspired him to start a fund drive to build a monument in their honor at the U.S. embassy in Sofia.

The group raised \$16,000 to complete the structure that “weighs about 4,000 pounds and is 7-foot high. It’s a white granite from Vermont and built locally (in Massachusetts),” Moynihan said.

“Shipping something like that’s not easy,” he said, so the group was able to get assistance from the Air Force to take it to Sofia.

The artillery company has donated three other monuments around the world in Reykjavik, Iceland, Bucharest, Romania and Bangkok, Thailand.

“It was a tremendous feeling,” to donate the memorial at the embassy ceremony, he said.

The slab in Sofia has an eagle on the top, is decorated with the five military service insignias and patriotic sayings.

Ninety members of the company went on the trip.

According to Sofia’s U.S. embassy website, “At a solemn event on Monday, October 4, U.S. Ambassador James Warlick, dignitaries from the government of Bulgaria, and invited guests joined the Bulgarian military Honor Guard, the Bulgarian Ceremonial Military Band and the United States Air Forces in Europe Band to honor those who gave their lives from both the U.S. and Bulgaria.”

In an unusual twist for their Bulgarian hosts, after the ceremony the embassy served up a New England lobster bake, donated by Legal Sea Foods and the Union Oyster House.

Making a new friend in Turkey

The trip also took the company to Turkey, where they visited Ephesus, Izmir, Ankara and Istanbul. While in Istanbul, by chance Moynihan met Patriarch Bartholomew, the leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians.

“He’s a very charming guy,” Moynihan said.

The group’s tour guide pointed out the patriarch, who knows Boston’s Cardinal Sean O’Malley, while they were at a restaurant.

Group member Edward McCabe, an Army colonel and Catholic priest, is also friends with O’Malley, and was able to arrange for 15 men in the artillery company to have an audience with the patriarch. He greeted everyone in perfect English, telling them he had visited Boston recently.

Next up for the group: Observing Veterans Day at the State House with Gov. Deval Patrick.

After all, “we’re the governor’s militia. We’re there for ceremonial purposes,” Moynihan said.