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Daniel Rabayda, World War II veteran, will serve as grand marshal of the Summit Hill Memorial Day Parade on Monday, May 25.

A 90-year-old veteran of World War II has been selected to serve as the grand marshal of Carbon County's largest tribute to veterans, the Summit Hill Memorial Day Parade, which will kick off at 11 a.m. Monday.

Daniel "Danny" Rabayda, who served 20 months with the 76th Infantry in the European Theater of Operations, will lead the four-division parade. The traditional Summit Hill memorial service will precede the service at 10 a.m. in Ludlow Park, after which time Rabayda will ring the former Summit Hill High School bell in the park to signal the start of the line of march.

"Oh my Heavens, I feel good about it," Rabayda said about being asked to lead the parade.

"He (Rabayda) is a great citizen of the community, and was the unanimous choice of American Legion Post 316 members and the parade committee," said Thomas Vermillion, chairman of the Summit Hill Memorial Day Parade Committee. "Dan is a proud veteran and we are pleased to have him lead yet another tribute to America."

Rabayda is a son of the late Michael and Esther (Stockmal) Rabayda who graduated in 1941 from the former Summit Hill High School, attended Allentown Business School and then enlisted in 1943, joining four siblings, John and George Bowen and Paul and Helen Rabayda, in the Armed Forces.

"They were all gone (in service) and I wanted to go too," he said about his call to duty.

"War was bad, but I was glad I went. There was a job to do, so, in that situation, you don't walk back, you serve," said the grand marshal. "Thankfully, we (he and his siblings) all came home safe."

During his service, which lasted until his honorable discharge on Feb. 5, 1946, Rabayda was an ammunitions handler in a battalion for 20 months under combat conditions, earning the Good Conduct and Victor medals, the Distinguished Unit Badge, American Theatre Service Medal and the European Theatre Service Medal with three Bronze Stars. He served in front line duty with the 417th Infantry Regiment as it stormed through the Rhineland, Ardennes and Central Europe, attaining the rank of private first class.

When he returned home after his discharge, Rabayda helped his siblings operate a tavern/restaurant and store on Hazard Street in Summit Hill after their father passed away at the age of 55 due to a heart attack.

Later, Danny worked for the former Diamond market, Coaldale, before being employed for seven years on the former PBNE Railroad at Bethlehem Steel, and worked for the last 15 years at Mack Trucks, Allentown, retiring in 1987.

He became widowed upon the death of his first wife, the former Sue Wargo, with whom they had son, Daniel, now of New York City, who was 11 at the time.

Danny married the former Pat Yannone in 1976, who is the mother of Allen Rabayda, and the couple had two other children, Phillip and Lewis. Allen and his wife, Christine, live in Fairfax, Virginia, with their three children, Daniel, Adam and Sarah. He is retired from the Air Force. Phillip and his wife, Vanessa, and their daughter, Angelina, live in Coaldale, and Lewis, who resides in Jessup, will be ordained as a Byzantine priest this coming fall.

Rabayda served as the cantor at St. John's Byzantine Catholic Church, Lansford, for 16 years until 2013, and is a member of the board of directors of the Carbon-Schuylkill Industrial Development Corporation and American Legion Post 316, Summit Hill. He formerly belonged to the Panther Valley Golden Agers, its choir, and the Lansford AMVETS Post.

He was one of the organizers of the former Summit Hill Dart League.

Proudly claiming to have been "the best trumpeter in Summit Hill High School," Danny learned the instrument from Thomas F. Dorsey Sr., father of the famous Dorsey Brothers (Tommy and Jimmy).

In addition to his siblings who served in the military, he is the brother of Margaret and Anna Bowen and Michael, Florence and Basil Rabayda.