

Have you ever sat in Lodge with a famous person?

My father told me that his brother-in-law, Floyd Sloan Sr. once sat in Lodge with General Douglas MacArthur. Since my Uncle Floyd was a civilian welder and engineer in the Philippines during WWII, I presume that this occurred in a Lodge in the Philippines.

While stationed in the Philippines, MacArthur was made a Mason "at sight" by the Grand Master of the Philippines, an incredibly high honor reserved for exceptional cases. He was raised a Master Mason on January 14, 1936 and had received the 32nd degree of Scottish Rite by March 28th of that same year. Despite his numerous duties MacArthur managed to maintain an active Masonic career.

In the mid-1970's, I was a junior officer and as such, attended Las Palmas Lodge every Thursday evening. I clearly remember the Sr. Deacon frequently introducing a man who always sat on the north side of the Lodge Room. His name was Victor Maghakian. In March of 1975, Brother Maghakian petitioned Las Palmas Lodge for dual membership. Prior to that he was a visiting brother from Daylite Lodge No. 44 in Las Vegas where he was raised in 1962. In his application to Las Palmas he indicated that he was a retired Captain in the United States Marine Corps.

Unbeknownst to some of the members of Las Palmas Lodge at the time, Brother Maghakian was the most decorated US Marine in WWII and one of the most well respected soldiers in that war.

A native of Chicago, Brother Maghakian moved to San Diego with his family in 1930. Nine years later, he moved to Fresno. He first served in the U.S. Marine Corps in the Philippines and throughout China and was familiar with foreign bases throughout the Pacific. After Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941, he re-enlisted in the Marine Corps and was selected to work with the so-called suicide unit of crack soldiers. These tough Marines were known as Carlson's Raiders.

As a gunnery sergeant, Maghakian led his troops through what was believed to be some of the bloodiest fighting in seven South Pacific campaigns. During one mission, he even made himself a human target so that a sniper, who had wounded one of his buddies, would give up his hiding spot. The enemy was shot, but not before Maghakian was wounded by the sniper's gun-fire.

Maghakian's bravery allowed him to continue undaunted through numerous battles. In 1944, during the battle of Eniwetok, he eliminated the last four Japanese soldiers on Mellu Island and went on to rescue a platoon by destroying the enemy flank with

grenades. In the battle, he saved the life of a young man who went on to be one of Hollywood's best known actors--Lee Marvin. He also became the first officer to raise the American flag on Tinian Island.

After leaving active duty in 1946, Maghakian retired as a captain, with full honors. He received the Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, a Bronze Star, and two Purple Hearts. He returned to Fresno where he owned and managed the Mid-Valley Beer and Wine Wholesale Distributing Co. and the Victor Mobile Service. He later joined the State Department as a security officer in Morocco before settling in Las Vegas. He eventually moved back to Fresno.

Brother Maghakian died in Fresno on August 17, 1977 at the age of 61.

When I first heard of Brother Maghakian's military achievements, I thought they were more folklore than the truth. Now I wish that I had gone up to him while at Lodge, introduced myself, and thanked him for his service to our Country.