

In April, 1941, a representative of the British government, Viscount Halifax journeyed to City Hall to present the families of the dead and the injured officers, tokens of appreciation. Patrolman Vyskocil received a gold plated cigarette case engraved with the following:

*Presented by
His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom
To
Patrolman Emil A. Vyskocil
in recognition of his gallantry at the
British Pavilion, NY World's Fair
July 4th, 1940.*



The cigarette case as it appears today.

With the awards came membership to the Police Department's Honor Legion. Vyskocil particularly enjoyed the monthly dinners. Brooklyn born vaudeville entertainer Jimmy Durante was a big police supporter during those war years and often appeared at the get-togethers to tell jokes and sing songs. The gatherings buoyed Vyskocil's spirits although he continued to suffer ailments related to his injuries.



In this group photo, Patrolman Vyskocil is seen in the dark suit is sitting on the extreme right between two other members of the Honor Legion.

Soon after America entered World War II, thousands of soldiers began returning home with shrapnel wounds similar to those suffered by Patrolman Vyskocil. He played an important role in perfecting the treatment for their injuries. In 1942, Dr. John Moorehead of the Post Graduate Hospital of New York, known today as New York University Hospital and a young New York City transit engineer named Samuel Berman developed an electromagnetic device, a kind of surgical divining rod. The instrument was in reality a primitive metal detector. When the stainless steel wand was passed over the body and detected a metallic object, electromagnetic waves registered on the instrument's gauge providing the exact location of the hidden fragment. The device was first tested on Vyskocil's injured ankle. Dr. Moorhead was able to locate the fragment causing his pain and extract it. The shard was described as being no bigger than the corner of a postage stamp. A short time later, Dr. Moorehead traveled to Pearl Harbor to treat soldiers who hailed the detector as a "military miracle," totally unaware a New York cop was patient number one.

Years later, Vyskocil thought he had a pimple. It turned out a long forgotten metal shard had risen to the surface of his skin. Ironically, it was shaped like the letter "V." He took it as a sign of good fortune since his last name started with the same letter.

Meanwhile, Vyskocil and his wife celebrated the birth of a second child, Dorothy. But the girl never saw her father in his police uniform. Despite the excellent medical care he received, the fragment in his ankle had caused irreversible damage to his tendons. In November, 1944, Vyskocil was pensioned out with Traumatic Arthritis to his left ankle. He received an annual disability pension of \$2,250, the equivalent of \$26,258 per year today. To show how much police pensions have improved over the years, a cop with the same amount of time on the job as Vyskocil, retiring on a disability pension today would receive \$58,295 per year tax free.

After a while, Vyskocil grew restless in his forced retirement. He'd always loved visiting the countryside as a boy and in 1948 he purchased a small farm in upstate, New York hoping to make a living away from the bustle of the city. His son recalled milking the cows and living in an old farmhouse that had no running water, very little heat and an outhouse in the backyard. But the cost of installing plumbing and a furnace, coupled with purchasing seed to raise crops and feed the animals quickly drained Vyskocil's life savings. After just two short years he reluctantly gave up his dream. After the farm was sold, the family relocated to Amityville, Long Island where Vyskocil sought work in fields that he was more familiar with than pastures, first as insurance investigator for Travelers and later as security guard at Republic Aircraft. He still retained his calling for public service and joined the Amityville Volunteer Fire Department where he rose to the rank of captain. In his spare time he took his son rabbit hunting on the farmlands adjacent to route 110 and flounder fishing on Great South Bay in a fourteen foot rowboat. He never missed opening day of the fishing season even if there was ice on the water.

Emil Vyskocil Jr. poses with his father's awards which he has kept safe to this day.



Emil Vyskocil continued working into the mid 1960's. Sadly, his wife Emily died in 1971. Although he contracted Parkinson's disease, he always stopped by his son's house on Saturday mornings with fresh jelly donuts for the grandchildren. In 1974, he underwent an operation on his stomach and suffered a stroke from which he never recovered. Vyskocil passed away that April. He was only 65 years old, but thirty-five years later, thanks to his son, we remember him once again.