

STEVE OTTO  
 FLORIDA/METRO  
**He carries little flags, big message**  
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"There's Joe Wolf."

We were standing out on our front steps, staring glumly at the withered front yard baking in the late morning heat. That's when I saw Wolf slowly walking down the other side of the street. He was carrying a box and going from door to door.

Wolf lives on the next street over, but he's one of those neighbors who knows everything that's going on in the block. It was his family that was Wolf Brothers, the fine clothing store that closed several years ago. Joe has been in real estate for a while, which is one reason he knows what's going on in our area.

We sat there for another 20 or 30 minutes until he came plodding down our side of the street. He looked beat, and it didn't take much convincing to get him to come sit down on the stoop for a glass of water.

Wolf handed me an American flag. That's what he had been doing, going door to door asking people if they wanted to stick a flag into the ground in front of their homes for the Memorial Day week. He said he had 155 flags to give out.

"They're for Memorial Day and Flag Day and the Fourth of July and just because this is the greatest country in the world and I want to do this, he added."

"A lot of people think so," I said, "but they don't go through their neighborhoods handing out flags."

"Maybe not," he went on. "I think part of it is because I'm Jewish. We've tracked at least 25 members of our family who died in the Holocaust. There were no gray areas in that war. It was good and evil and something we had to win or lose.

"I grew up in this country. I know what the idea of America really means, and I don't want people to forget ... or to forget that it has cost so many of their lives to preserve it."

His glasses were steamed up from the heat. He was looking at me, but I could tell his mind was drifting back 60 years.

"I was 17 when the war broke out. I wanted to join the Air Force but they said I had to be 18, so I took a job down at the McCloskey shipyards on Hookers Point, where they were building those concrete ships. It wasn't very glamorous work. They put me down in the bilge section where it was hot and it smelled awful. But at least I felt like I was doing something, that I was making a contribution to end the war.

"A year later I turned 18 and they took me into the Army Air Force. I never got out of the country, but I think we were getting ready to go to the Pacific when it was over.

"All of this," he said nodding his head around the block, "is ours because so many of our neighbors and friends gave their lives to preserve it. I think it's my duty to help remind people of our heritage."

Wolf finished his water, gathered up his flags and headed off down the street. "I won't finish today," he said, "but everyone should have a flag before Memorial Day."

Looking for Rosie: Coincidentally, Gary Mormino stopped by Mother Trib to ask for some help. He said he wanted to invite Rosie the Riveter and her friends out to lunch this coming weekend.

Mormino is a professor of history at the University of South Florida. He is working on a story describing the women who worked at Tampa shipyards during World II.

"It's going to be an open house this Saturday [May 26] in the Special Collections Room on the fourth floor in the library at USF. I'm hoping," added Mormino, "that they will bring photos, union badges and most of all, memories. I don't care if they were welders or secretaries, I just want to hear the stories." So if you worked at McCloskey shipyards, Tasco, Tampa Marine or anything related to those storied places, the event will be from 10 a.m. to noon. You can call Mormino at (813) 974-2808 for more information.

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