



Francis L. Sampson's amazing record as a war hero put him in history books. As the "Paratrooper Padre" in World War II, he was one of the 20th century's best-known Army Chaplains. His real life story of rescuing a young soldier also became the inspiration for the film *Saving Private Ryan*.

Sampson was born February 29, 1912, in Cherokee, Iowa, one of three sons of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Sampson. His father was the manager of a small-town hotel and his Mother took care of the food end of the business.

After graduating high school in 1930 he enrolled at Notre Dame University, from which he graduated in 1937. He entered St. Paul's Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota and was ordained at Des Moines St. Ambrose Cathedral in 1941. He then served St. Joseph Parish in Neola and taught at Dowling High School in Des Moines until receiving permission to enlist in the service. He was commissioned as a First Lieutenant in the Army in 1942. After paratrooper training, Sampson became the Regimental Chaplain for the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division.

On D-Day, June 6, 1944, Sampson became the first Chaplain to take part in the invasion of France when he jumped behind enemy lines for the first time.

Sampson was later captured by Germans as he tended 25 wounded Americans in a tiny French farmhouse under heavy attack. But he was saved by American forces and returned to his base in England.

On December 19, 1944, he again made a jump behind enemy lines: this time into Holland, and again landing in water- the moat of a medieval castle. Captured by German forces at Bastogne, Belgium, during the Battle of the Bulge, Sampson and his fellow troops were forced to march to Germany- 185 miles in 10 days in severe winter weather- and then were imprisoned in Stalag II A, North of Berlin. Liberated the next April by Russian forces, Sampson returned to civilian life in the US in 1945, but only briefly.

In 1950, Sampson parachuted into Korea, near Suncheon, with the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment in attempt to rescue American POW's.

In 1967, President Johnson appointed Sampson as the Army's Chief of Chaplains, and he was promoted to Major General. Sampson retired from that position in 1971. He had served 29 years of his priesthood as a Military Chaplain. Later that year, he served as the pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Shenandoah- only until he was appointed to head of the USO on March 10, 1972, serving until 1974. During the Vietnam War, Sampson made annual Christmas trips to be with the American troops serving there.

After retiring to Sioux Falls, Monsignor Sampson died of cancer there at age 83 on January 28, 1996. He is buried at St. Catharine's Cemetery in Luverne, Minnesota and his grave marker says: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace."



On the north side of the rock is an eagle merged with an Indian Chief. If you look closely the word "Cherokee" is visible where the bald meets the brown on the eagle. The American flag is draped over the top in honor of all Americans.



The Artist...

Ray "Bubba" Sorenson II

The artist, Ray "Bubba" Sorenson II, was inspired by the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, as well as wanting to give Veterans a unique recognition on Memorial Day.

While painting murals across the country Sorenson had the idea of spreading the message of The Freedom Rock to other small communities across Iowa. The Freedom Rock Tour was born to place a rock in each of Iowa's 99 counties.

The Cherokee County Freedom Rock was painted in July 2017 in front of Cherokee County Courthouse. The Cherokee VFW headed this project with the help of the community.

Designed, printed and produced by
Cherokee Chamber of Commerce



Cherokee County Freedom Rock



520 West Main Street, Cherokee, Iowa

Featuring Cherokee Veterans:

- ★ Francis L. Sampson
- ★ Royal C. Johnson
- ★ Benjamin F. Laposky
- ★ Harold "Harry" McManus



Royal C. Johnson 1882-1939

Royal Cleaves Johnson was born in Cherokee, Iowa in 1882. He moved with his parents to South Dakota in 1883 where he attended school. He graduated from the University of South Dakota School of Law in 1906, and was admitted to the bar that same year. He started his practice in Highmore, South Dakota and became the Assistant State's Attorney for Hyde County in 1906, and State's Attorney in 1908 and 1909.

He was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1915, serving through the end of the Seventy-Second Congress in 1932. He was the chairman for the Committee on Expenditures in the Department of War (1921-1925), and the Committee on World War Veterans's Legislation (1929-1932). He was not a candidate for reelection in 1932.

In 1918, even though he had on April 5, 1917, voted against declaring war on Germany, he absented himself from the Congress and enlisted in the United States Army to fight in World War I. He served in the 313th Infantry Regiment as a Private, Sergeant, Second Lieutenant, and First Lieutenant. In Montfaucon, France, on the 26th and 27th of September 1918, he was involved in a combat situation wherein he repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire and was wounded by an exploding shell. Although severely wounded, he accompanied two of his fellow soldiers to the rear and refused space in an ambulance until his comrades were cared for. For this, he received the Distinguished Service Cross from the United States government. He also received the Croix de Guerre with gold star from the Republic of France.

After Johnson returned from the war, he resumed his seat in Congress. Johnson was the House sponsor of legislation to create a federal charter for the American Legion. The Senate co-sponsor was Sen. Josiah Wolcott of Delaware. The bill was filed on June 27, 1919, passed the House on August 27, passed the Senate on September 5 and was signed by President Wilson on September 16, 1919.

Upon retiring from the House, he continued to practice law in Washington, D.C., until his death there in 1939. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. In 1953 he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Medal by the American Legion.



Ben F. Laposky 1914-2000

Benjamin Francis Laposky was born September 30, 1914 on a farm south of Cherokee to Peter Paul and Leona Anastasia (Gabriel) Laosky. His siblings were named George and Raymond. At age 4 his family relocated to Colorado Springs. In 1931 Laposky's mother died. In 1932, Laposky graduated from St. Mary's High school, Colorado Springs and shortly thereafter, the family relocated back to Cherokee where he began working as a sign painter and draftsman.

Laposky joined the US Army and was inducted into Fort Des Moines in 1942. He scored 134 in his army general classifications test, which put him up in the upper 5 percent of what the Army classified as "the ability to learn rapidly"; his mechanical aptitude test was 145. He was sent overseas with the 43rd Infantry division headquarters general staff section (G-3) assigned as a map draftsman (T-4).

As a technical sergeant, he was wounded in the right foot during a Japanese bombing raid at Rendona Island, Solomon Islands, (New Georgia Munda airfield campaign) in July 1943 (for which he received the Purple Heart). He spent 10 months in army hospitals in New Zealand and Alabama. He was discharged with disability in May 1944 after 2 years of service, returning to his home in Cherokee, Iowa.

Laposky returned to his original work, but was no longer able to climb ladders as is required by a sign painter, so he focused on lettering smaller cards and draftsman and student of mathematics, providing many Magic Number Squares to the Ripley's Believe It or Not! syndicated newspaper feature. He owned a sign shop in Iowa and dabbled in art in his spare time. Envisioning "painting with light". He took extension courses in elementary drafting from the University of Chicago.

Laposky's work was featured in over 250 books, magazines, newspapers, advertising art work worldwide. An art portfolio in Fortune magazine in 1956 won a New York Art Directors Club gold medal for best editorial of the year. In total, Laposky's art was published more than 160 times and displayed at more than 200 exhibitions before the emergence of computer graphics upstaged him in the mid 1960s.

Ben Laposky died in 2000 in Cherokee. His original one-man show of black and white Oscillons, along with 52 additional color images, is curated and controlled by the Sanford Museum. The museum's collection contains various commercial works and books in which Laposky was mentioned. The original traveling show, along with some additional works, is maintained and periodically shown by the Sanford Museum.



Harold "Harry" McManus 1920-2010

Harold "Harry" McManus was born February 28, 1920 in Lane Deer, Montana, to Walter & Alice (Raney) McManus.

He graduated from Cherokee Wilson High School in 1939, and was the high school state wrestling champ in 1939. He was a Veteran of World War II and the Korean War in the U. S. Navy. He was a Master Chief Aviation Machinist Mate, a rank appointed by Congress. Harry was a survivor of the sinking of the USS Houston CV30, and spent close to four years in a Japanese Prison Camp. Harold was one of three sailors imprisoned with the "Lost Battalion." While in the Japanese prison camp, on his birthday, the Japanese lit his birthday cake for him; referring to the bombing of the USS Houston.

Harry was married to Betty Shoemaker on September 21, 1963 in Cherokee, and she passed away on April 20, 1997. Harry worked at Perrin's Mink Ranch for one year, at Lundell Manufacturing for a short time, at Ruble's Standard Station for a number of years, and also at the Pastime Bar.

Harry was a member of I.A. Westcott Post #2253 of the V.F.W. and the American Legion, and he enjoyed eating and serving as a pallbearer for many Veterans, and also presenting the U.S. Flag to many Veterans' families at the cemetery. Harry was a good practical joker and enjoyed telling jokes. He was a caller for the Cherokee V.F.W. Bingo and enjoyed playing the game but was once asked not to come back to Remsen because he "yelled too loud and scared the old ladies."

Harry always liked Cherokee and would not move anywhere else. He always said, "Cherokee always took good care of me."

Harry passed away at Country Side Estates in Cherokee in 2010. He is buried at the Oak Hill Cemetery in Cherokee.