

**TOWNSHIP OF BALDWIN  
COUNTY OF ALLEGHENY  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

**PROCLAMATION**

**A PROCLAMATION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BALDWIN TOWNSHIP, HONORING THE UNWAVERING COURAGE AND VALOR IN THE FACE OF WAR, THE SELFLESS DEDICATION TO COUNTRY AND TO FELLOW SERVICE MEMBERS, THE COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY AND FAMILY, AND THE HUMILITY AND KINDNESS TO HIS BRETHREN NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS, AND CITIZENS, BY:**

**PRIVATE FIRST CLASS RUSSELL “HUCK” HAMLER**

WHEREAS, in 1943, at the young age of 19-years-old, without fear or hesitation, Russell “Huck” Hamler, U.S. Army, Private First Class, volunteered to join the 5307<sup>th</sup> Composite Unit in a top-secret, classified military operation, thus embarking on a grueling journey through Southeast Asia, on this critical World War II mission, whose countless acts of heroism, bravery, and sheer will to survive, has earned the 5307<sup>th</sup> Composite Unit, and its selfless and courageous Members, their rightful place in our history books as “Merrill’s Marauders”;

WHEREAS, over the next two months, PFC Hamler and his fellow Merrill’s Marauders Unit trained in jungle warfare to achieve the ultimate goal of disrupting enemy supply lines in order to free northern Burma from Japanese forces and capture a crucial Japanese-held airstrip in the city of Myitkyina;

WHEREAS, PFC Hamler and his fellow Marauders had to travel nearly 1,000 miles, on foot, enduring merciless weather, trekking through dense terrain while behind enemy lines, and working with pack animals, to ensure delivery of desperately needed supplies to other troops and services also engaged in the area along their way toward that crucial airstrip;

WHEREAS, during their perilous and uncertain journey through Burma, PFC Hamler and fellow soldiers were at times so short on military rations that they had to resort to using grenades to 'catch' fish from nearby rivers to cook in their helmets, in order to stave off disease and starvation while fending off the enemy and enduring equally punishing terrain and severe weather conditions;

WHEREAS, against all odds, PFC Hamler and his Unit did defeat Japanese forces over the course of five major battles and 30 engagements, and did accomplish their mission of ceasing that crucial airstrip and enabling the Allies to occupy Burma and ultimately prevail in bringing the War to an end;

WHEREAS, the relentless commitment to the cause and unrivaled desire to fight for country displayed by PFC Hamler and the 5307<sup>th</sup> Composite Unit likely hastened the end of the War and, in so doing, significantly reduced the overall loss of life to troops and civilians alike;

WHEREAS, this critical mission took such a toll on the 5307<sup>th</sup> that by the end, only about 200 of the nearly 3,000 original Marauders that were still fit to engage in combat;

WHEREAS, so cunning and successful were their tactics and special operations that Merrill's Marauders became the forefather of today's 75th Army Ranger Regiment, whose members still bear the Marauder's crest on their patches as a reminder of the elite training, relentless courage, stamina, and valor in battle exhibited by the 5307<sup>th</sup> Composite Unit;

WHEREAS, Merrill's Marauders were awarded a Presidential Unit citation and each Member, including PFC Hamler, earned the rare distinction of the Bronze Star, the fourth-highest military decoration for acts of valor in combat;

WHEREAS, PFC Hamler was also awarded a Purple Heart for injuries sustained in the Battle of Nhpum Ga, after he was struck by a large fragment of shrapnel;

WHEREAS, PFC Hamler recovered from his injuries and transferred back to Pittsburgh, where he was stationed as a military policeman for the PA Railroad Station until he was honorably discharged in 1945;

WHEREAS, after returning to civilian life after the War, Mr. Hamler went on to work for nearly 40 years at Trans World Airlines, first as a ground service helper, then becoming an airframe and powerplant mechanic after going to school, and eventually getting promoted to lead mechanic and a certified FAA safety inspector;

WHEREAS, Mr. Hamler was blessed with nearly 72 years of marriage to his wife Imelda "Jean" Hamler, and the couple had the joy of raising three sons, James, Ronald, and Jeffrey, and making Baldwin Township their home for the past 60 years;

WHEREAS, on April 24, 2022, in a standing-room-only ceremony held at Baldwin Township's Community Building, Mr. Hamler, surrounded by friends, family, and neighbors, was recognized for his service as a member of Merrill's Marauders and was presented with the Congressional Gold Medal, a most prestigious award presented by as Congress' highest expression of national recognition and indebtedness for achievements and contributions to Country; a Certificate of Special Recognition from the House of Representatives from Congressman Conor Lamb; a commemorative NFL Veteran's coin and a signed Pittsburgh Steelers football, while the Color Guard from the 2nd Battalion in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, stood in formation throughout the entire ceremony;

WHEREAS, on May 25, 2022, Mr. Hamler and the rest of Merrill's Marauders will also be honored at a virtual ceremony with their Congressional Gold Medal going to the Smithsonian to educate people about the heroics of their unit;

WHEREAS, of particular note in an already impressive list of accomplishments, during Mr. Hamler's April 24<sup>th</sup> celebration in in Baldwin Township, "Huck" Hamler captivated the audience as he gave a quiet and composed, yet unwavering and powerful speech, in which he said that while at the time all Americans were ready for war, he "*would like to see them outlaw wars*" and when there is strife between nations he wants them to "*get together and iron it out in words instead of bullets. People who haven't been around killings don't realize it's not nice to be shot at, let alone shoot somebody else. And, I would like to see a peaceful world.*";

WHEREAS, Mr. Hamler, being the humble and modest individual that he is, would never speak of himself as a hero or a man to be honored to the highest degree; however, Baldwin Township is happy to do it for him and recognize him as a genuine Baldwin Township hero, who loved and served his Country, his Family, and his Community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, by the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Baldwin, for itself and previous Boards, on behalf of his family, his friends, his community members, his fellow service members, and a grateful Nation, that:

*The 3rd Day of June, 2022, hereby is and shall forever be known, memorialized and honored by the Township of Baldwin as RUSSELL "HUCK" HAMLER Day of Appreciation.*

RESOLVED and PROCLAIMED on this \_\_\_\_ day of May, 2022.

ATTEST:

TOWNSHIP OF BALDWIN

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nina Belcastro, Manager

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Eileen A. Frisoli, President

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Robert F. Downey, Jr., Vice President

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Nicola F. Pellegrino, Member

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Christi R. Fredrick, Member

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jamie E. McCabe, Member

Approved as to Form by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas P. McDermott, Solicitor