

# Don Dinello: Soldier of good fortune

## Getting to Know You

A monthly feature about the people in your  
On Top of the World community

by John Koning

Donato Dinello served this great country for almost 40 years, rising from the rank of private to full colonel.

During those years, he has had many memorable days. There is one day, however, that he will never forget.

Don, as his friends know him, understands the notion that freedom isn't free. He knows that freedom is paid for with the service and sacrifice of military people like his father and his brother.

Even as a young man, Don embraced the idea of putting his country ahead of his own safety and comfort. Now, as a veteran soldier, he believes that every young person should give at least a couple of years of service to their country.

On a clear, cool morning, on Sept. 11, 2001, Don was in a meeting at the Pentagon with a group of generals who were conducting a General Officers Steering Committee. Don was a Lieutenant Colonel at the time. The brass were congregated in room 1E385. A last minute change had moved them from another room into this one.

Don was there to "back seat" Brigadier General John Adams. Back seat is a military term for managing the reams of information each general brings to a meeting and to have just the right information in his general's hands when they need it. Don was seated next to the door to the hallway.

Then, 9-11 happened.

The impact from the first explosion, as a hijacked plane pierced the building, blew the door next to Don open with such force that it whacked him in the head, stunning him.

Seconds later, when he regained his wits and checked outside the room, he was greeted by utter destruction in the hallway.

He quickly corralled his general and others, escorting them to safety through a secondary exit.

By the way, that other room where Don and his cohorts' meeting was supposed to take place, was incinerated.

On that clear fall day Don was truly a soldier of good fortune.

For the rest of what became a very long day, followed by many more, Don and his peers began a new kind of war against an insidious enemy. Through it all, the priority for those who escaped the explosions and fire was to account for every lost soul and to give the families of the fallen some closure so they could start the healing process.

Much later, Don confided in his brother about the uncontrollable sweats he would suffer on his way to work at the Pentagon. They were so consistent that his brother suggested to Don that he might be suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, a completely normal response to horrific and abnormal circumstances. This career soldier and veteran of countless hellish experiences had narrowly escaped an attack on the seat of US military power. It made sense.

So how does a kid from Pittsburgh rise from private to ultimately be considered for the rank of general not once, but twice?

Don might call it luck, but this reporter begs to differ. The kid from Pennsylvania started with a university degree, then added some street smarts, a healthy respect for family and country, and packaged it all up with some formidable people skills.

During the interview for this feature, Don sited scores of names of the people he served with during his long career.



Don holds an Engineer Guidon, backdropped by colors given to him by the officers and men of his last combat command.

The first and last names rolled off his tongue like he was talking about family. He still knows when he met each one and when their paths crossed again. With each name came the description, "my good friend."

Enough said.

Today, Don and his wife Jeongryul

(Jay) share an idyllic life here at On Top of the World. Both are active participants in the many clubs that make this community great.

For Don, today's battles are fought between his brain and his feet on the dance floor. On most days his feet fall into line like good soldiers.

## The next time your spouse calls you Honey ...

Marge  
Mayer



Internet Humor

A man says to an elderly gentleman, "You have been married to your wife for 50 years and you still call her 'Honey,' 'Darling' and 'Luv.' That's so sweet.

The elderly gentleman responds, "Well, actually, I forgot her name 49 years ago.

A wife, in the mood for romance, looks at her husband and says, "I wish I were a newspaper. Then I would be in your hands every morning."

The husband looks at his wife and says, "Great idea. Then I can have a different newspaper every day."

A marketing research company asks a woman, "What book has helped you the most in your life?"

The woman responds, "My husband's checkbook."

A man walks into a bookstore and asks a female clerk, "Do you have a book called 'Husbands - Masters of the Household?'"

The female clerk responds, "Fiction and comics are on the first floor."

A husband wakes up in the morning and says to his wife, "It's a fine day!"

The next day the husband is eating breakfast and says to his wife, "It's a fine day!"

The very next day the husband is watching TV and says to his wife, "It's a fine day!"

Finally, the wife says to her husband, "Why do you keep telling me it's a fine day?"

The husband replies, "Because last week you said 'one fine day you are going to leave me.'"