

FROM ONE HERO TO MANY OTHERS

Ocean View vet donates contents of house to Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans instead of trashing them



STAFF PHOTOS BY JOE LAMBERTI

Retired Army Col. Richard Bauermeister, center, laughs with Air Force veteran David Mosley as Army veteran Roger Bungy moves furniture inside Bauermeister's home in Ocean View. Bauermeister is donating his possessions to the Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans.

JON BLEIWEIS STAFF WRITER

After moving into a senior living facility and the death of his wife of 49 years, 87-year-old retired U.S. Army Col. Richard W. Bauermeister had to decide what to do with the contents of their Ocean View house.

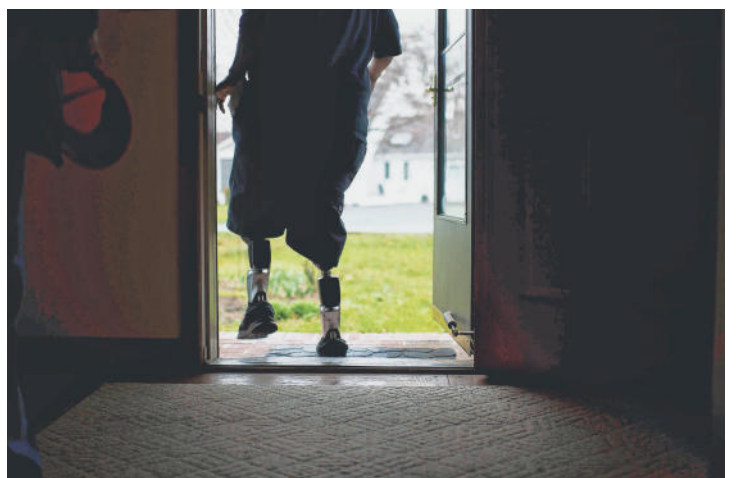
Fortunately his wife, Ella, who was a captain in the U.S. Navy during World War II, was a good housekeeper. If she didn't have a use for something, she threw it away. Over the years, when Bauermeister worked in local thrift stores, he'd been known to bring something home, and she would say to take it out of there.

"I outranked her," he said with a laugh. "Except in the house."

Having no children and with his extended family out West, Bauermeister, along with a friend, Garnet Fowler and her daughter and grandson, spent about a month-and-a-half combing through the home the Bauermeisters designed and had for nearly 30 years, deciding what to keep and what to toss.

"You can't just dispose of things. We have to listen to what it was and who had it and when they got it," Fowler said. "It's memories, so we went through the whole thing very slowly."

As the process was coming to an end, it was time for Bauermeister to decide what to do with what he no longer wanted, including a dining room table and chairs, a dresser, pots and pans, dishes and the treadmill his wife would frequently use until she passed



Air Force veteran David Mosley helps move donations from retired Col. Richard Bauermeister to the Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans in Ocean View.

"We normally get tidbits, bits and pieces. But this is fantastic because it's more than just one chair or one sofa. It's all these things. You might as well have thrown in the house, too."

VETERAN DAVID MOSLEY

CEO, DELAWARE CENTER FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

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COVER STORY



STAFF PHOTO BY JOE LAMBERTI

Retired Col. Richard Bauermeister, left, donates the contents of his home to the Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans.

Veteran

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away at 95.

Fowler had been in touch with Rosely Robinson, director of the Delaware chapter of A Hero's Welcome, a military support group. The two previously worked together as part of Operation: SEAS The Day in the Quiet Resorts.

Robinson told Fowler about the Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans and the veterans in northern Delaware who could use the contents of the home, and they thought it was an opportunity to help those in need. Robinson told Fowler she would arrange for the truck and the veterans to come and collect everything.

For Bauermeister, it was an easy decision and he had no regrets.

"It had to go somewhere," he said about the contents of his home. "And I thought it would be a good place for it."

Drafted

Bauermeister's father, who was born in Germany, believed no son of his would skip the service. The youngest of six, he started his 31-year Army career by being drafted in 1953.

After training in Fort Riley, Kansas, Bauermeister returned home — near Omaha — to finish college and then get his commission. He had a year to choose where he would go — Korea, Vietnam or Germany. Germany was full and he decided he would go wherever he was told. He was supposed to deploy to Vietnam, but ultimately was sent to Alaska in December 1956, where he joined the 96th AAA battalion.

"That was overseas in those days," he said.

As a second lieutenant, Bauermeister was a member of the air defense ar-



STAFF PHOTO BY JOE LAMBERTI

Retired Col. Richard Bauermeister, left, speaks with Rosely Robinson of Hero's Welcome as he donates the contents of his home to the Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans.

tillery, which was part of the North American air defense system. As the war quieted, he was there a few months shy of two years, he said.

"The Russians would come over every night and we would plot them," he said. "And when they got to a point, we would send interceptors to turn them around."

After returning to the Omaha area, he found a job working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. As work sent him from place to place, he would transfer to different commands in the Army reserves.

When he retired as a colonel, he moved to Ocean View a few years later and worked in local thrift shops. It was at the Atlantic Community Thrift Shop where he met Fowler.

"He's always given"

Fowler has taken care of the Bauermeisters for several years, and it was

"It had to go somewhere. And I thought it would be a good place for it"

RETIRED U.S. ARMY COL. RICHARD W. BAUERMEISTER

SPEAKING ABOUT HIS DONATION TO THE DELAWARE CENTER FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

no surprise to her that he wanted to help fellow veterans in need.

"You don't want to have estate sales and all that. It's emotional enough," she said.

In this situation, "you have time and can look things over and make a decision and know you're helping your fellow man, and he's always done that, always given."

Four veterans representing Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans arrived at Bauermeister's home shortly after 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, April 8, to collect what was being donated.

With linens, dishes,



STAFF PHOTO BY JOE LAMBERTI

Marine Corps veteran Mark Harris loads chairs into a U-Haul as donations are gathered for the Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans.

in the house, too."

Despite a constant drizzle, the vast majority of what was inside the house, with the exception of some items allocated for a women's veterans' shelter, was loaded inside a 20-foot U-Haul truck, ready for the journey north.

When the truck gets to Wilmington, the center will write up an inventory and determine where everything will go. Nine times out of 10, Mosley said, items will be donated to a veteran moving into his or her own home. The rest the nonprofit will keep, as it is in the process of opening a second location in Wilmington.

Mark Graham, a former Army specialist, was one of the veterans who loaded the truck. He lives in the 10-bed Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans house, with the hopes of buying his own home in Dover.

"It's going to be good for veterans like myself probably," he said. "I'll be

moving from the house to my own house soon, so I could probably use some of this stuff."

Over the course of the hour, Bauermeister watched from inside, chatting with his fellow veterans as they took a break.

He said he won't miss what he has given up, including some furniture he built by hand, knowing it's going to a good cause. He previously gave his military uniform — from the shoes up — to the Possum Point Players after seeing a show of theirs in which the actor wasn't wearing a military uniform right.

"Being able to help somebody is really worthwhile. I didn't realize how much they can do with so little," he said. "And they think this is a great bunch. We gave a lot of it away before they got here."

jbleiweis@dmg.gannett.com
443-210-8125

On Twitter @JonBleiweis and Facebook at [Facebook.com/byjonbleiweis](https://www.facebook.com/byjonbleiweis)