

April 14, 2015. Kent Lakes, NY. Earning Top Secret security clearance in 1953 during the McCarthy Era enabled the Marines to train local Kent Lakes, NY, resident Kathie Freston, to run the Enigma Machine at the communications center of the USMC Atlantic Command in Norfolk, VA. Armed escorts accompanied Ms Freston on base when she was delivering Top Secret communiqués as she was responsible for the accurate decoding, re-coding, and delivery of the messages coming and going, representing the most sensitive of information, operations, equipment and troop movements, and security. With no “*Imitation Game*” movie about her experiences with wartime, nor fanfare about her skill sets and integrity, nor mention of the novelty at the time of being a female Marine, Kathie Freston passes off the enormity of her post in true Marine fashion: “I was doing my job.” Ms Freston went on to earn her Captain’s bars before exiting military service in 1961. This Thursday, April 30th at 7pm at Kent Volunteer Fire Department, the greater community will celebrate Kathie Freston’s 85th birthday and her many accomplishments including the formation of the now 5 year-old H. G. Fairfield Arts Center for the Environment, based in Putnam County, NY.

Honored as a 2014 Emerging Trailblazer by the Putnam County Chambers of Commerce and as the 2011 Volunteer of the Year by the Town of Kent, Kathie Freston is the real deal in her continued service to her country. After active USMC duty and while in the Reserves, Kathie earned her Masters of Arts from NYU and began a 32 year career as a teacher, with 30 years in the Bronx for the Ethical Culture Fieldston School, under Pete Seeger’s brother John as Principal. When she realized the Social Studies textbooks were lacking, Kathie traveled alone during the summers of 1958 – 65 to Africa, India, the Mediterranean, Asia, the Far East, Istanbul, Luxor, Amman, Jordan, Jerusalem, Iceland, the North Atlantic, Mexico, and even Malta and Majorca on an archeological dig, always bringing her experiences, photos, movies, and travel accounts back to her students.

Ms Freston’s lifelong passion for Drama, Theater, and the Stage developed early as a student at The Brearley School under the tutelage of Broadway legend Mildred Dunnock, who spurred h.s. Kathie to apprentice in Summer Stock at Chase Barn Playhouse. At Vassar, Kathie broke with tradition in designing, directing, and presenting for her 1952 Senior Thesis a Japanese Noh drama, “The Damask Drum,” pairing it with Yeats’ “The Dreaming of the Bones,” and setting precedent as she collaborated with a senior Music major for the score. Kathie worked summers at the Indian Hill Music Workshop, becoming the first person to put Arlo Guthrie on stage. At 76 years-young, Kathie tried acting herself in Lora Lee Ecobelli’s class at Arts on the Lake, leading to Kathie being cast in plays at the Aery Theatre productions at Phillipstown Depot Theater, NYC’s The Producer’s Club, and in Roger Simon’s “Bard at the Bar” in Grammercy Park’s The Player’s Club.

Kathie Freston was on the Board of Plan Kent, is a Board member of Kent Recycling, was Treasurer of the Sagamore Lake Association for 15 years, and in 2010 she registered a NYS Charity named after her maternal grandfather, H. G. Fairfield, to promote arts and culture to meet the needs of communities, while promoting economic development and environmental

stewardship. Since the 2011 launch of the extraordinary *30 Shows in 30 Days: Courage Continues At Home Comedy Tour* with PJ Walsh, H. G. Fairfield Arts has engaged and sponsored the performing arts and other programs in community settings to bring awareness to issues and to gather funds to help local veterans, women, children, and the environment. With regional events such as 2013's *Nimham Mountain Music Festival* and *Woman Fest* and national programs with the US Military Vets Motorcycle Club doing two x-country veterans suicide prevention runs - 2013's *A Run For Veterans Healing* and 2014's *Riding For Our Lives* with benefit comedy performances with PJ Walsh, Mark Riccadonna, and Kim Blacklock in San Antonio, TX and Fargo, ND, H. G. Fairfield Arts even stretches internationally in the supportive partner role with the *Athena Film Festival* at Barnard College celebrating women and leadership and *globalFEST*, the world music event and tour. H. G. Fairfield Arts remains local with programs like the *Young Filmmaker Atelier* in George Fischer Middle School and regional in helping support the Annual Chief Daniel Nimham Veterans Memorial Powwow and in producing the *Wounded Veterans Benefit Comedy Show* at Brewster H. S. June 2014 for local Brewster VFW Post # 672 and Semper Fi Odyssey – a program for discharged wounded troops of all branches, run by Major Gen. T. S. Jones (USMC, RET) in Pennsylvania.

Wanting to recognize and encourage others' community efforts promoting the Arts and for work on behalf of and with our Veterans and families, H. G. Fairfield Arts created *The Grasshopper Awards* for "leaps in forward thinking." Kim Blacklock is M.C. for the award ceremony at Kathie Freston's "Cake & Comedy" birthday party, with international comedian Mark Riccadonna of Armed Forces Entertainment headlining Thursday 7pm April 30th at Kent Volunteer Fire Department. No imitation at 85, Kathie Freston is a Hudson Valley treasure we celebrate.

For more information or ticket reservations, call 845-363-1559 or email office@HGFairfieldArts.org. Tickets will be available at the door, with \$5 handed to those entering with a White Elephant Auction item. -///-