



## East Boston Skating Rink Rededicated to Honor Lt. Porrazzo

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Bob Anthony has been coaching hockey in East Boston forever, and over the last 40 years, whenever he'd walk into the First Lieutenant Louis Edward Porrazzo skating rink, he'd ask himself: Who was this Porrazzo guy?

Anthony is an Army veteran himself and he looked around the rink and noticed there wasn't a photo of Lou Porrazzo anywhere.

He wanted to put a face with the name, and then he started looking for stories to put with the face.

He found a group of men who served with Lou Porrazzo in Vietnam, in Bravo Troop, First Squadron, Ninth Cavalry of the First Cavalry Division. They helped fill in some of the blanks.

Then he asked them if they'd come to Boston, to Eastie, to rededicate the rink to their long-dead friend and comrade, Lou Porrazzo.

The Cavalry always comes.

Barry McAlpine came from Michigan. There was big John Flanagan, who was born in the Bronx and raised in the Cav. In all, there were eight men, 12 Silver Stars between them.

"When we were in Vietnam, we weren't old and fat. We used to look like those guys," Flanagan said, pointing to a pair of Cavalry officers who had traveled up from Fort Hood.

Bert Chole was 31 years old when he assumed his first command in Vietnam. One of his young officers was a guy from Boston with a funny accent.

"Lou stood out," Chole said.

For one thing, Lou Porrazzo had a wife and kid back home.

"He had the gift of leadership," Barry McAlpine was saying. "You either have it or you don't. We never said 'no' to Lou. I don't know if Lou was a good hockey player, or a good singer. But I know he was a good pilot. He was a good strategist. He was a good leader. And he was a good man."

Porrazzo was a pilot but volunteered to temporarily take over an infantry platoon until a replacement could arrive. On Sept. 27, 1967, some Cavalry scouts radioed that they had found the enemy in Lo Valley.

Porrazzo - known as "Blue Saber," the call sign for platoon leader - had trained his replacement, but didn't want to send the new guy out so soon. He decided to go himself.

"Lou was supposed to leave the next day for R&R," Barry McAlpine said. "Bert Chole tried to talk him out of going out on that mission. Bert said, 'Lou, let the new Blue take 'em out.' But Lou said he wanted to be with his men." Lou Porrazzo and his men jumped off the choppers into a firefight.

Barry McAlpine remembers the voice of the radio man, screaming through the static: "Blue's down! Blue's down! Blue's dead!"

More than 42 years after that day, Lou Porrazzo's comrades see something wrong in a country where war is left to the few.

"In Iraq and Afghanistan, less than 1 percent of the country has stepped forward like Lou did," Chole said.

Part of that less than 1 percent, Mike DiMonte, was standing off to the side of the rededicated rink, taking it all in. He grew up in East Boston and started skating at the Porrazzo rink when he was 10 years old. He played for Bob Anthony at East Boston High, and for all those years he didn't know who the rink was named after.

"To be honest, I didn't even know the name of the rink," he said.

Then Mike DiMonte joined the National Guard and somebody told him they were going to rededicate the Porrazzo rink, so he came down Saturday night.

He listened to the stories, he shook hands with some of the veterans, and he imagined a young guy from East Boston shipping out to a war in a far-off land.

This week, 21-year-old Mike DiMonte and his unit are shipping out to Iraq.

He looked up at the new photograph of Lou Porrazzo on the wall, then around the rink.

"I won't be alone," Mike DiMonte said.