

Different, but much the same

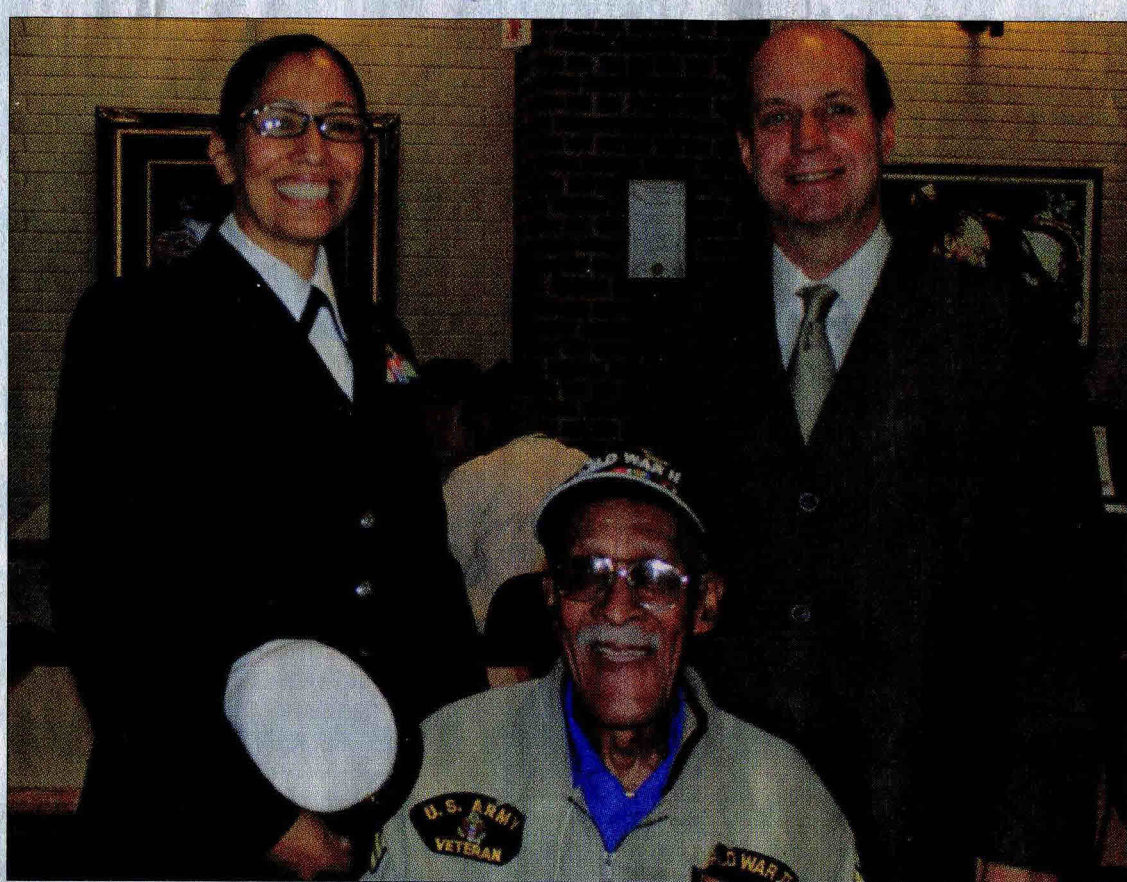
Veterans of wars 65 years apart meet at hospital

Although they served their country 65 years and six wars apart, a chance encounter between two veterans of the armed services at East Orange General Hospital before Christmas brought about smiles, hugs and a common respect for duty and country.

The meeting between East Orange resident Bill Monroe, 91, and Montclair native Jenny Bahamonde, 42, was planned as part of the hospital Diagnostic Services Department's holiday celebration. Department staff included Greg Nkwodimmah, Maria Woje, Ebony Lawrence and Pamela Smith.

"I really give a lot of credit to our staff for coming up with such a unique way to remember the holidays and our veterans," said Kevin Slavin, the hospital's president and chief executive officer. "Very often it's easy to forget the sacrifices these veterans made, but today we didn't and honored two of them in fitting fashion."

With the theme of "I'll be Home for Christmas, in Honor of Our Troops" as a backdrop, Monroe, an Army veteran of World War II, and Bahamonde, a Navy E-6 petty offi-



Bill Monroe, a 91-year-old East Orange resident who served in the Army during World War II, is flanked by Navy Petty Officer Jenny Bahamonde and Kevin Slavin, president and chief executive officer of East Orange General Hospital.

Photo Courtesy of East Orange General Hospital

cer first class who recently returned from Afghanistan, met for the first time and were applauded by hospital staff.

They exchanged stories and polite jabs about each other's branch of service before taking pictures together and having lunch in the hospital's dining room.

Monroe, who saw active duty in both Europe and the Pacific, is a former Diagnostic Services patient

from four years ago who returned at the invitation of the hospital. Bahamonde works for the hospital in its LifeStar emergency transport division. Both looked fit and service ready as Bahamonde appeared in full dress uniform and Monroe sported a crisply pressed Army World War II veteran jacket and baseball cap.

When Bahamonde entered the room to meet Monroe, he sprang up

spryly to greet her with a handshake and a hug.

"I was surprised how fit he was and really was honored just to be here with him today," said Bahamonde, who is entering her 15th year in the Navy Reserves. Monroe, a former construction contractor and insurance salesperson, was equally touched by the encounter. "I declare," he said. "I'll remember this day until I pass away."