



Author Whitey Puro will be signing his book about nerve gas Friday at the historical society.

## Man who gave land to get \$1

A 94-year-old local author who donated an Elk Neck hilltop during wartime so that a radar tower could be built there will finally get his \$1 from the federal government in a ceremony this week.

While working as an engineer at Triumph Explosives, Toivo "Whitey" Puro was asked by representatives of the United States government to sign over ownership of Black Hill at Elk Neck, which had been given to him by his father, so that a radar tower could be built. Out of patriotism, he readily agreed and completed the necessary paperwork, but he never received the token payment of \$1 which had been promised to him. This oversight was recently discovered by members of the Elk Neck Trails Club and the Cecil Forest Conservancy District Board, and U.S. Rep. Wayne T. Gilchrest agreed that a formal acknowledgement of this patriotic act was in order. The First National Bank of North East will be providing an Eisenhower silver dollar for the occasion.

The ceremony, set for 4:30 p.m. Friday at the Historical Society of Cecil County, 135 East Main Street, Elkton, won't be the only cause for celebration. Beginning at 5 p.m., Puro will be signing copies of his new book, "Nerve Gas - the Quiet Peacekeeper," which details his experiences in the defense

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## Local author to finally get his dollar

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industry during both WWII and the Cold War (Glenn L. Martin aircraft factory, Middle River, Baltimore County, 1939 - 1941; Triumph Explosives, Elkton, Cecil County, 1941 - 1945; Edgewood Arsenal, Edgewood, Harford County, 1945 - 1977).

A more informal book signing and chat will also be held at the Historical Society, from noon to 1 p.m. on the same day. Refreshments will be served.

The author is a first generation Finnish-American, born in Wisconsin in 1912. In 1914 his parents brought their young family to Cecil County, where his father started work in the Russell clay pits on

Wells Camp Road. The family eventually moved into a very comfortable log home, which the author's father built with his own hands from logs harvested from his own land. Although he spoke no English when he entered the first grade at the one-room Marion schoolhouse, the author learned quickly, became the valedictorian for his class at North East High School, and won a full-paid scholarship to Western Maryland College, from which he was graduated with a degree in the sciences.

The book gives wonderful historical insights into the inner workings of our local munitions plants, from the point of view of an engineer who worked his way up through the ranks, designing products and overseeing both

their manufacture and their eventual destruction. As the title implies, the book culminates in a detailed discussion of the author's experiences at Edgewood Arsenal with weapons employing nerve gas agents - his aim is to dispel the many popular misconceptions about this class of weapon and the current plans to destroy our nation's remaining stockpiles and replace them with new weapons. The Historical Society of Cecil County is pleased to have been able to assist the author in his research for this book, through their extensive collection of resources related to local industries.

For more information, call the historical society at 410-398-1790.