

# A pinup book 'For the Boys'

■ Glen Mills photographer participates in project he says is a way to say 'thank you' to troops.

By KATHLEEN E. CAREY

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**CONCORD** — After 28 years of success as a photographer, Robert Wood wanted to give something back to the troops.

So he participated in creating "For the Boys," a 156-page full-color, glossy pinup book inspired by the creations of Gil Elvgren. Six of the pictures in the publication are his.

"We just wanted to put something (together) to say, 'Thank you,'" Wood said. "You go back and you hear all the arguments but it's the poor guy on the field."

That's why he also gives military personnel who are being shipped out a free family sitting at his studio plus a free 5- x 7-inch picture.

From the portraits to the book, Wood is grateful for American soldiers. Memories of growing up during the Vietnam War are imbedded in his mind.

In 1971, he attended Delaware County Community College with Frank Monahan, who now lives in Virginia. The two still golf together and it was one of those trips that Monahan pitched the idea for the book.

Wood was sold. "I thought it would be nice to do something for the troops," he said.

Wood has taught at the Antonelli Art Institute in Erdenheim, Pa., two days a week for six years.

He decided to enlist the help of some of his students in the project.

Serena Sotsky is Serena Star, seen holding records, playing checkers or holding an apple, all with a smile throughout the picture book.

All of the pictures were based on work of American pinup artist Gil Elvgren, who shot to fame when he designed pictures to be pinned on the back of GIs' knapsacks during World War II.

"It's Norman Rockwell, except with an edge," Wood said of Elvgren's stylized works.

Wood said Monahan secured the rights from Brown & Bigelow Inc. for



Times staff / PETER A. ZINNER

Glen Mills photographer Robert Wood holds a copy of 'For the Boys.'

certain Elvgren prints and he instructed his team of photographers to replicate the poses.

"We simulated Gil Elvgren and there's a little bit of our flavor, too," Wood said.

The Glen Mills photographer said the most challenging aspect was coordinating all of the schedules from the model to the set design people to the hair and makeup people and, of course, the photographers. It was all done for free, to keep the price at cost for the troops.

They also had cultural considerations. "We also had to be careful because we were sending it to a Muslim country," Wood said. "We didn't want to offend anybody."

He was thankful for the experience.

"I got to widen my horizons," Wood said. "It was kind of a fun thing to do."

The kickoff for the book was in July and they've been on sale since.

But now, Wood is preparing for his visit with Santa.

Each year for the past 12, Santa has come to his studio at Route 1 and Cheyney Road. Carols are sounding and cookies are available while Wood takes pictures in 10-minute intervals for pre-arranged appointments for \$60 packages. He's had customers return each year.

Wood said the best part of the season is the flexibility. If the children aren't ready, they can watch as others take their picture with Santa until they feel comfortable. Then, he takes both posed and candid pictures as they share their hopes and dreams with the man from the North Pole.

Wood said his service is an easy choice for parents. "I can't understand why people would go to a mall with an hour and a half backup when they can come here," he said.

"For the Boys" is available at [www.forthetropsonline.com](http://www.forthetropsonline.com) for \$16.95. If you're buying a book for one of the troops, it will cost \$7. To set up an appointment with Santa for Saturday, call Robert Wood at (484) 840-1495.

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