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BACK FROM DUTY

Ozaukee County's Veterans Share Their Stories

World War II veteran T4 Carlton Kirst and his father, World War I veteran PVT Peter Kirst, 1946

Veterans' stories as told to Ozaukee County students

Edited by Laurie Arendt

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This book is dedicated to those men and women
who have given their lives in service to our country...
You will never be forgotten.

Hymn to a Departed Veteran

You fought in air, on land and sea.
You fought our fight for liberty,
In battles lost and battles won
Your courage shining as the sun.
Your inspiration and your pow'r
Sustained us through our shining hour.

You were our strength through weary days
Of conflicts long in every phase.
Old friends and new are gathered here
To say, "Good bye" to someone dear.
Another comrade's passed away.
We wish him Godspeed on his way.

Your tour of duty's at an end,
As we say, "Thank you," Comrade, Friend.
To other worlds you now may soar,
Meet other comrades gone before.
Our prayers are with you in your quest.
God grant you now eternal rest.
Amen. Amen.

-Harvin Abrahamson

This book is also dedicated to the memory of Orville Fortney,
one of our participating veterans who passed away the week the project was completed.

AUG 31 2002

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Back from Duty: Ozaukee County's Veterans Share Their Stories is published by the Ozaukee County Council of American Legion Posts, an umbrella organization of the seven Ozaukee County American Legion Posts:

Howard J. Schroeder Post #457, Mequon
Peter Wollner Post #288, Cedarburg
Rose-Harms Legion Post #355 Grafton
Landt-Thiel Legion Post #470 Saukville
Van Ells-Schanen Legion Post #82 Port Washington
Warren Kane Legion Post #410 Fredonia
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Ken Brown, Service Officer
Tim Hillebrand, Judge Advocate
Dick Engert, Historian
Tom Ingram and Bob Weyker, Sergeant at Arms

The support and participation of those fellow veterans who are members of our county's V.F.W. Posts and the Leatherneck Club of Port Washington is also gratefully acknowledged and has contributed to the success of this project.

Laurie Arendt, editor
Carol Reichelt, cover art direction

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Donations given in support of this book were used entirely for the printing and production costs.

We are a partner of the national Veterans History Project. For more information on how veterans can record their own oral histories or to volunteer as an interviewer, contact:
Veterans History Project
American Folklife Center
Library of Congress
101 Independence Ave., SE ,Washington DC 20540-4615
or http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

A celebration of service in our community

To understand the true fabric of a community, one must understand those members who have contributed to it. This is no more evident than in a tightly knit community such as we have here in Ozaukee County. A trip to the grocery store, to a cultural event, even walking a local street often means that you will encounter a friend or an acquaintance. We are more than just residents here; we are neighbors in the best sense of the word.

As you read the stories of the men and women who have come forward to be a part of this book, do so with the realization that these are our friends, our neighbors and our families. In the following pages, you will not just find veterans. You will find four sets of brothers, two husbands and wives, cousins, in-laws, generations within families and just possibly friends you have known for years.

It is for that reason that Ozaukee Bank is proud to be the sponsor of *Back From Duty: Ozaukee County's Veterans Share Their Stories*. We count these veterans as important members of our community.

Inside these pages, you will not only hear the voices of those who have answered the call to service. You will also read the words of a new generation, of a group of county students who answered the call to be part of this book. We commend these students for sharing their time and interest to make this project a success.

Until the publication of this book, many of these stories have never been shared with the general public. In some cases, even close family members are hearing these experiences for the first time. We ask you to read these stories with a sense of respect and honor for those men and women who have answered the call to service ... and now answer the call to share their memories as part of this book.

We believe strongly in the concept of service, be it to each other, to the community or to our country. Without it, America would not be what it is today. Walk into any Ozaukee Bank office and you will see service in action, as we serve our customers, of course, but also as we actively support our Ozaukee County community. Since 1975, Ozaukee Bank has served as a locally owned and operated financial institution. One that continually invests in our community ... helping to make it a great place to live, to work and to raise families.

Please join us as we honor and thank Ozaukee County's veterans with the publication of this book.

M.D. "Mal" Hepburn
Chairman
Ozaukee Bank
Cedarburg, Wisconsin

June 2002

Acknowledgements

More than 300 people have contributed in a variety of ways to make this project a reality. This project would not be possible without the generous support of our project sponsor, Ozaukee Bank. A special thank you also goes out to Mal Hepburn, Jane Roehrig and Jeanne Mueller from Ozaukee Bank.

In addition, we would like to sincerely thank the donors from our community who have provided additional financial support for this project:

Howard and Jane Rokus
Van Ells-Schanen Legion Post 82
Al and Agnes Arendt
V.F.W. Post 9207
Ken Grigas
LeRoy and Marceline Paulin
Rick and Deanna Lee
Carol Roska
Chris Arendt
Zaun Memorial Foundation
Landt-Thiel Legion Post 470
Howard J. Schroeder Legion Post 1571
The Leatherneck Club
Jerry Konkel
Roman and Carol Schommer
Philip Harrison
Virginia Junge
Robert Berthuiame
Peter Wollner Legion Post 288
V.F.W. Post 7588
Rose-Harms Legion Post 355
V.F.W. Post 10171
Steve and June Shock
Janet Krier
Romie Monarski
The Greater Milwaukee Foundation/Spooner Family Charitable Trust
Robert and Lynette Ponton, in memory of Lynette's brother, Lanny
The Ozaukee County Military Historians Club
Hawthorne Enterprises, Independent Herbalife Distributors, Doris and Gary Schlenvogt

This project would also not be possible without the assistance of the following people:

Kathy Buenger, managing editor of *Northshore Lifestyles* and *City Lifestyles* magazines, for providing feedback early on in this project; Ozaukee County Commander Ron Kuta and County Adjutant Bob Batty for their early and continuous support of the project from start to finish; Peter Bartis of the Veterans History Project; the leaders and members of our county's American Legion Posts, V.F.W.s and the Leatherneck Club for their support, encouragement and patience; Dan Czerwinski, Jenee Dellegrazio, Norman Eifler and Jerry Konkel for their willingness to be interviewed and/or photographed for our local newspapers; Melissa Phaneuf of the *News Graphic*, Carol Pomeday and Kristyn Halbig Ziehm of the *Ozaukee Press*, Ann Davis of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Janice Bushe of *Northshore Lifestyles*, Velia Alvarez of 620 WTMJ and Mark Concanon of Fox 6 WITI for providing coverage of our project; our unofficial veteran recruiters: Rudy Manke, Peggy Potter, Artie Helm and Ozaukee County Veteran's Service Officer Ken Brown; Agnes Arendt, Patty Flierl and Peggy Potter for making pre-interview calls; the participating teachers and faculty at our county's high schools, particularly the special efforts of Bob Chesney and his student teacher, Brian Cigelske, at Ozaukee High School; Dr. Richard Cass and Kathy Cocking at Cedarburg High School; and William Marton, Brook Browne and Kelly Clark at Homestead High School; Tomi Fay Forbes for helping to get the word out to our homeschool families in the county; our student interviewers who made the commitment to be a part of this project and followed through; our adult interviewers Patty Flierl, Susie Morter and Danielle Peiffer; Jane Rokus for typing incoming transcripts; Ingrid Pfeiffer for providing German translations; Deanna Lee of Endless Promotions for our T-shirts; our proofreaders Howard Rokus, Kay Dahlke (in honor of her father, Jim Andrae), Jane Roehrig and Jeanne Mueller (and Jeanne's relatives who also proofed on Easter Sunday); Allan Arendt for picking up photos of our veterans; Carol Reichelt, art director of Milwaukee Lifestyle Magazines, for sharing her expertise and talents in finishing our book cover (in memory of her father Second Class Petty Officer Robert A. Bley, a Motor Machinist Mate in the Navy during World War II); those family and friends who chose to honor veterans through a contribution to our Pages of Honor; and most importantly, thank you to the 176 veterans who shared their stories as part of our project.

A call to duty

Since starting this project nearly a year ago, the one question that has been most difficult for me to answer has been very simple. In a nutshell, the most common question simply boils down to one word: Why? A simple question, but one without a truly simple answer.

When I first started doing this, it was purely for personal reasons. I grew up knowing that my father, Howard Rokus, was a veteran. We attended every Memorial Day parade and program. We watched "World at War" far too many times on PBS when I was growing up in our one color television and pre-cable home. We visited more military museums than the average family while on vacation.

It wasn't until I hit my mid-20s that I truly realized the honor and respect due to my father for serving our country. Like many veterans, he is a man who does not talk much about what he did. He spent 20 years in service to his country, and it was something he did rather quietly. He never saw combat, even while serving in the Navy, Air Force and Wisconsin Army National Guard. He is - and has been - truly someone that I look up to in my life.

I am also fortunate to be married to a veteran. He entered the Army on the heels of his older brother, a man he respected, and still does to this day. I have watched my husband grow from a young military police recruit with a terrible haircut into a man who is admired and respected in our community. He provides the same type of role model for our own daughter that my father has for me.

I am proud to say that there are more veterans in my family. My uncle, Bill Wacek of Westboro, Wis., is a Vietnam-era Navy veteran. I am also the grand-niece of a World War II veteran, Frank Bohte, Sr. of Dorchester, Wis. Though he is not profiled in this book, my Great Uncle Frank deserves the utmost honor for his service to our country. In three months, he served in four major World War II battles as part of the Eighth Army before coming home to Wisconsin. His wife was not only waiting for him, but also an infant son, born while he was away.

On a personal level, this is to thank you, Pop, Doug, Butch, Uncle Butch and Uncle Frank.

But none of this quite answers the ultimate question. Why did I decide to do this? Perhaps the best way to illustrate my motivation is to tell you about one of the veterans who agreed to be in this book. When he signed up through his Legion Post, he wrote "maybe" after his name. Early in the project, I called him and asked, "How can I change that 'maybe' into a 'yes'?"

He said, "You want to hear from some guy that strapped grenades to his chest, snuck behind enemy lines and blew up a barracks. You don't want to hear from someone like me. I didn't do anything like that. I just did what I had to do."

Well, yes ... and no. Many of the veterans in this book have made something very clear to me. They have said, "I am not a hero. I just did what was asked of me."

And sometimes that has had profound effects. Some of the veterans in this book continue to fight the enemy every night in their sleep. They choke back tears at the opening notes of the "Star Spangled Banner." They remember those who did not return home, who never saw their children grow up, never had the opportunity to hug their grandchildren or hold their wives (or husbands) one last time. They remember brothers who will never grow old with them. Some veterans cannot or will not talk about their experiences, and their silence speaks volumes of the sacrifice that they have made. That sacrifice should not be ignored.

The 176 men and women in this book are not bragging. They are giving us a first-person account of history. This book was not created to be political in nature. This is not the place to debate politics or the merits of war. This book is to let these veterans know that their efforts to support and protect our country were worthwhile and are still respected.

That is why I have chosen to volunteer my efforts to do this book. If those veterans in our community do not lend their voices, particularly to those student volunteers who have come forward to record their memories, how else can we understand the sacrifice that soldiers - both living and deceased - have made to keep America what it is? How else can we even begin to understand how necessary and honorable it is to answer the call to duty? This is just one small step, and one that I hope will inspire others to listen as the 130 interviewers have done for this project.

To the veterans in this book, I say that though you may not consider yourself heroes, there is no doubt in my mind that had fate dealt you - and fate has to some of you - a "heroic" call to duty, you would've answered it. For that you deserve to be honored with this book. By sharing your stories with us, you honor those heroes who did not come back. You cannot speak for them, but you can help us to understand what it means to serve our country, and to serve it with pride.

You just did what you had to do. And so did I.

Laurie Arendt

Laurie Arendt
Editor

June 2002

The profiles in this book are loosely arranged
by area of geographic service in the following order:

The Pacific and Far East
Europe and Africa
Vietnam
The Persian Gulf
At home, in the air and on the sea

Alphabetical and subject indexes can be found in the back of the book.

Ralph "Mike" Schmitz with his grandson Evan Kichura, Port Washington High School

Seaman First Class in the U.S. Navy

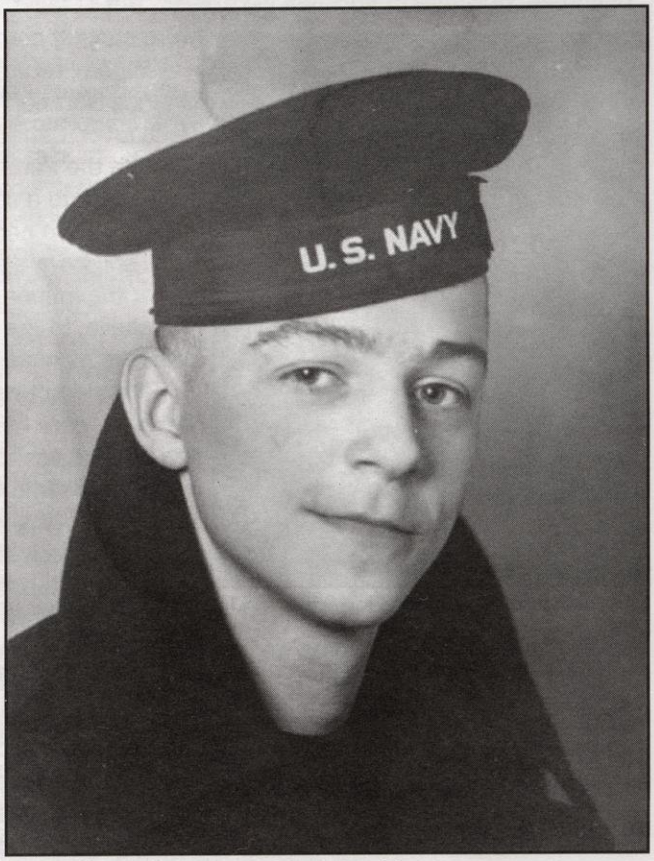
My Grandpa Mike was underage when he enlisted in the Navy. You could say he was a "troubled" youth who hated school and wanted to get involved in the war effort by serving his country. In the spring of 1944, he had an aunt help him "forge" his birth certificate and with his parents' permission, the Port Washington High School sophomore became a 16-year-old Navy seaman.

I was stationed in New Guinea, and I have to tell you that I was never really homesick. We were too busy for that, but I did wonder just what I was doing there. I was so much younger than everyone else - they were 19, 20, 21 years old. I really didn't have much in common with them, so I pretty much kept my mouth shut and did what I was told. I never met up with anyone from Wisconsin, but there was an older guy from Illinois. He was in his late 20s/early 30s, and he knew I was underage, so he took me under his wing.

When I arrived in New Guinea the Japanese had been forced back into the jungle. The Seabees had already arrived and they were building an advanced naval depot which was the central area for all the munitions. Any kind of ammunition that would be needed for an invasion was kept there. Our job was to load the ships that carried ammunition, and in the first few months we worked 20-hour days.

The first Japanese I got close to was in the chow line. There were some Japanese in the jungle and they were starving, so they would try to sneak into our chow lines. They thought they wouldn't be recognized and everyone would let them get up just close enough to the food and then they would collar them and drag them away. Of course, we didn't feel sorry for them.

When we got some free time, we would walk up a jungle stream. About two to three miles up we would run into a native village and they were strictly natives. They did not know what civilization was, and we weren't always sure if we'd be welcome or not. They had no sanitary conditions and the village was pretty filthy; their homes were huts that were on stilts because of the water.



Seaman First Class Mike Schmitz, age 16.

There was a hospital near our base and it would be filled with guys who were serving in the Army. They really took a pounding and they would be in really bad shape. Some had limbs missing and were badly injured and we felt pretty bad for them. When we had time off we'd go talk to those guys.

I was moved to the Gilbert Islands in January 1945 and stayed there for a year. The Tarawa battle, where the Marines slaughtered the Japanese in late 1943, was long over, but there was a lot of evidence of it. Our job was to clean up the debris by dragging it out and dumping it into the ocean or by other means. When the battle was over, they had bulldozed the Japanese bunkers closed and one of our jobs was to open up the bunkers. We'd let them sit open for a few days and air out before we went in and dragged out what was left of the bodies. We found personal items and I kept a Japanese pistol as a souvenir.

I got out of the service at the age of 19, and joined the "52/20 Club." That was where the government paid you $20 a week for 52 weeks for serving your country. We all took that offer, but it didn't go over too good with the folks. They didn't appreciate me sitting around for 52 weeks without a job.

I now have a good friend who was an underage Marine, Merlyn Scharnow [page 173], and we recently joined an underage veterans association. It was surprising how many there were like us.

The Navy sure made me grow up in a hurry, and at 19, when I returned home, I was a lot more mature than the 19-year-olds that had stayed and graduated from high school. Their experiences were different than my experiences. I learned a lot and wasn't sorry I had gone, that's for sure.

Captain Jerome A. Konkel

as told to Laurie Arendt

Merchant Marine Captain

The first time Milwaukee native Jerry Konkel stepped aboard a steam vessel it was as a relief job as a coal passer for the car ferry between Milwaukee and Muskegon, Mich. He went on to serve 27 years on the sea, from ordinary seaman to master, and served 19 years in the U.S. Naval Reserves. During the Korean and Vietnam Wars, he sailed as captain or deck officer on a variety of ships; nearly 50 since the end of World War II. He now lives in Mequon, and admits that he hasn't gone back to the sea since he retired.

I signed on the SS Cape Trinity on Aug. 16, 1943 as AB [Able Bodied Seaman] and we carried ammo to several of the islands which were occupied by our forces in the Pacific. We had no problem getting there and back and, of course, nowhere to go when we arrived. But at least we could leave after we unloaded; the G.I.s and Marines were stuck there ... until they had to take another island.

Captain Jerome A. Konkel in 1959.

When I returned to San Francisco, I signed on the Liberty ship SS Charles Nordhoff on Jan. 4, 1944, as AB. We sailed light, up the coast of Vancouver, Canada to pick up a load of grain, then travelled alone, south through the Panama Canal and up on the Atlantic side to Baltimore. Then we picked up a convoy for the Mediterranean and discharged at Oran, Algiers on the north coast of Africa.

I still have a souvenir from that trip. My fault. One night, and slightly under the influence, I was returning down the long series of steps from the city above, to the docks below, where I slipped and fell on my back. I still have the pinched nerves in my vertebrae.

We did not have a sub attack but we did give them every opportunity when we were homeward bound. Somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic, the Second Assistant Engineer was transferring fuel oil from the double bottom tank into the settling tank, or at least he thought he was. What he was really doing was transferring sea water, which doesn't burn worth a damn. As black smoke poured out from our stack, the engine stopped and the convoy steamed past and left us alone. By the time we were able to get moving again, we were only five or six hours behind the convoy but we never did catch up. Or maybe we just couldn't find them.

In July 1944 I joined the C-2 freighter SS Morning Light as AB in San Francisco. We loaded with ammo and sailed solo for what was thought to be the invasion of the Philippines. Instead, our cargo was scheduled for the Peleliu, in the Palaus Island Group, which was supposed to be a diversionary attack to draw attention from the primary target of the Philippines, just 300 miles away. Peleliu was taken, but at a high cost in lives for the Marines.

We were at anchor for 30 to 40 days waiting for this to happen, then we ferried troops from some of the other islands for the invasion on Sept. 14, 1944. We had no direct attacks on us, but it was hairy sailing through mine-infested waters.

In 1945, my brother, Dan, and I both signed on the SS Alcoa Planter as ABs. He had gotten his Able Bodied Seaman Certificate on the Great Lakes sailing ore carriers, and accepted my invitation to join me in San Francisco. We made two trips on the SS Alcoa Planter. The first was to the island of Tinian with a cargo of candy and all kinds of sporting equipment for the troops. I think everyone in the crew also wound up with a baseball glove. Returning to San Francisco, I signed up on the second trip and was one week out into the Pacific when we heard about the end of the war in Europe. The war with Japan was still going strong, however, and we headed to Saipan with a cargo of military supplies.

I left the ship at the end of July 1945. I was ashore when the war with Japan ended and San Francisco really celebrated. I later served as a third mate on the SS American Shipper, and we carried food, supplies and clothing to France. Up in the forepeak, we carried some 500 silver bars. I was struck by the contrast in our cargo.

When we were unloading at LeHavre, France, we noticed that all of our salt shakers in the mess rooms were missing. We found the stevedores had broken into some cartons of lard and were salting the lard they put on their bread.

I also stopped at Pitcairn Island as part of the crew SS Golden West. Actually, we didn't stop but slowed to a small crawl to drop off the island's mail. That was where the crew settled from the English sailing vessel in "Mutiny on the Bounty." It was still inhabited by their descendants.

Ervin Karrels

as told to his grandson Matt Dommer, Ozaukee Middle School

World War II and Korean War Aerial Gunner

My grandpa Ervin Karrels served in WWII from 1942 to 1945 as a Staff Sergeant in the 8th Air Force. He was an Aerial Gunner on a B-24 Bomber and was stationed at Netashaw Air Base in England. He was also Staff Sergeant in the Korean War from 1950-1952 in the 5th Air Force and was stationed at the K-2 Air Base in Pusan as an Aerial Gunner on a B-26 Attack Bomber.

I was drafted into the service on September 29, 1942, four days before my 21st birthday. I flew 25 bombing missions over Europe in WWII which was considered a Tour of Duty. The missions varied from five to nine hours. All our missions over Europe were 27,000 - 29,000 feet altitude. As soon as we'd reach 12,000 - 13,000 feet we'd put on our oxygen masks. Later, they gave us electric-heated suits to use. At that altitude temperatures would get down to minus 30 degrees. We'd come back and have frostbite on the parts of our face not covered by our helmets and oxygen masks.

The missions were quite scary with the enemy fighter planes coming through the formation with their guns flaming. All you saw was red fire from the machine guns as we'd try to shoot them down. We were very fortunate that we never had any hits or damage and always returned safe.

Ervin Karrels in 1942.

In the morning, before a mission, we'd get real fried eggs because it was possible that it could be our last meal. After each mission we were interrogated by the intelligence officers. They gave us a shot of brandy so we wouldn't be so shaky and we always had a good meal upon our return.

On our first mission they made us lead airplane. They took the bombardier off of our plane and gave us the lead bombardier from the squadron. Our plane was successful, but the plane that our bombardier was on was shot down. We heard that he had bailed out and was taken prisoner of war in Germany.

After one bombing mission, waiting to get into the traffic pattern to land at our air base, some German fighter planes snuck in and shot one of our planes down. The gunners all had their guns pulled out of their turrets and were standing in the bomb-bay for landing. The Germans were sly enough to figure out that it was a good time to shoot the bombers down. After that incident everyone had to stay in their gun positions until we were almost on the ground.

One of the planes in our bomb group had just completed their Tour of Duty. To celebrate, they buzzed the airfield on their way home and flew too low to the ground and crashed. All 10 of them were killed.

After that incident the authorities banned buzzing the runway. I had just finished my Tour of Duty in England when I heard that the war was over. All the guys were celebrating and the people in the big cities were dancing for joy. Several weeks later I was assigned to travel home on a freighter ship from Liverpool to Boston, and then on a passenger train to Chicago. I worked for Pullman Standard Car Co. in Chicago between wars.

S/Sgt Ervin Karrels, an Air Policeman during the Korean War. Photo taken at Brady Field in Japan.

I stayed in the Air Force Reserves after World War II and on Sept. 13, 1949, I was called on to serve in the Korean War. I was sent to Japan and served in the Air Police Department. I was then transferred to Korea and was stationed in Pusan as a Gunner on a B-26 twin-engine bomber. I flew 55 missions which was considered a Tour of Duty. The crew consisted of two to three guys. The missions were all single, individual, nighttime missions which took four to five hours.

Once we got into enemy territory we'd release flares which would light up the whole area as they descended so the pilot could see where he was flying and where to drop the bombs.

On Dec. 19, 1951, I flew in the U.S. Air Force B-26 historic, record-making 5,000th night combat sortie in Korea with the 452nd Bomb Group. I was in Japan after completing my Tour of Duty and that is when the war ended.

I came home to Port Washington and got a job at Simplicity in the machine shop where I continued my career for 34 years. Looking back on my life, I've been all over the world, fought in two wars and flew 80 combat missions; however, my greatest accomplishment was marrying my wife Elaine and together raising our eight children.

Romain "Romie" Monarski As told to Laurie Arendt

Korean War Army Medic

Chippewa Falls native Romie Monarski enlisted in the Army after high school when he realized he didn't have money to pay for college. Once he graduated, Monarski was originally an infantry soldier with the 8th Cavalry Regiment in Tokyo, Japan. In January 1949 he found himself in a new role after a sergeant asked for volunteers in his infantry company to join the regiment's medical detachment.

I agreed to join the medical detachment for a few reasons: I knew I'd be able to get off base more often and it was a much cleaner way to live. Initially I picked up much of my training through on-the-job experience, and in 1950 I started pharmacy school at the Osaka Army Hospital.

Monarski and Col R.A. Skeehan, ret. at the dedication of the statue in Pilsen, Kansas.

When the Korean War started, I had to leave the school and was sent back to the Regimental collection station and later to the 3rd Battalion Aid Station. My job was to bandage the wounded and offer first aid to stabilize those who had been wounded. Seeing the casualties really shook me up at first, and I guess after awhile it didn't bother me as much because it was part of my job, but that was really a difficult aspect of what I did.

Our work depended on what was going on - if there was a lot of fighting, we would work for a few days straight. If it was quiet, we were quiet. I never really saw much of Korea, but I did serve Mass for our chaplain, Father Emil Kapaun, when I could.

Our battalion was hit by the Chinese on Nov. 1, 1950, at Unsan, North Korea and we lost about 600 men out of about 1,000. Father Kapaun said Mass the night the Chinese hit us, and I served for him.

We were getting ready to move out when the attack actually happened. Most of us that got out actually walked out, but some were taken prisoner, including Father Kapaun; one of our medical doctors, Captain Clarence Anderson; and a number of wounded soldiers. Father Kapaun and Captain Anderson had stayed behind to set up a command post and place for casualties along the road.

I had gone to my jeep to get my first aid kit and I was told to fall back to the river. Once I made it there, I connected with about 10 other people and a lieutenant. When an attack happens, there's a lot of chaos. The battle lasted about three days before we were relieved.

We later found out that Father Kapaun was captured by Chinese troops on November 2. We learned that he did what he could while in the POW camp - he smuggled corn for the prisoners, made coffee from whatever he could find and he continued to say the rosary when he could. He died after 202 days of captivity. Captain Anderson was eventually exchanged, and he died a few years ago.

Father Kapaun celebrating Mass at Kumch'on, Korea, October 1950. His altar is the Jeep's hood.

I served a total of four years, and would've probably re-enlisted had I been guaranteed that I could serve in Europe. I came home with malaria and something else - which I don't know what it was - but I was in and out of hospitals for awhile.

When I returned home, I ended up going to college through the Vocational Rehabilitation program, which was a little better than the GI Bill. I taught science at Port Washington High School for two years and science and math at John Long Middle School in Grafton for 26 years before I retired in 1993.

About eight years ago, one of the clerks in the Medical Company 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry (Infantry) Division started looking us up and we've been holding reunions ever since. When we get together, it's just like we haven't been apart. Most people haven't changed all that much.

I was also able to attend the dedication of the addition to the high school near Father Kapaun's home town in Wichita, Kansas last year. it was named after Father Kapaun. They also have a wooden crucifix that was made by a Jewish pilot that was in prison camp with Father Kapaun - somehow it was smuggled out of the camp and is now part of the high school. I also attended the dedication of a statue of him helping a wounded soldier in his home parish of Pilsen, Kansas. Father Kapaun is being considered for sainthood.

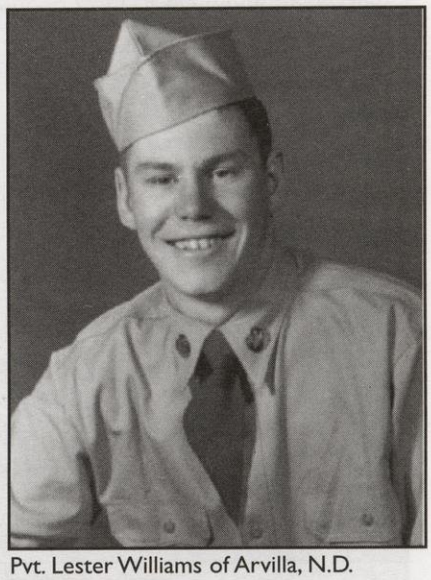
Lester Williams As told to Laurie Arendt

Radar Interceptor during the Korean War

As a young man, Lester Williams watched as several buddies enlisted in the newly formed Air Force for four years. Since he had a good job as a railroad telegrapher in his home state of North Dakota, he waited until he was finally drafted in 1952, toward the end of the Korean War.

My brother was already serving in the Signal Corps, and that was kind of where I hoped to be placed as well because it wasn't on the front lines. About a half-dozen of us that went in together had been telegraphers and our sergeant had been on the railroad as well. He didn't necessarily favor us, but he did take care of us.

After I completed basic training at Camp Gordon, Ga., I went on to radar intercept school at Ft. Monmouth, N.J. Once we arrived, we were trained to intercept foreign radar signals, and when we were done, we were able to put in for where we wanted to be assigned: Alaska, Germany, Turkey or Japan.



Pvt. Lester Williams of Arvilla, N.D.

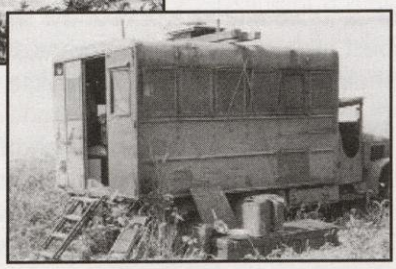
The way our assignments were decided was rather interesting, and very unusual for the military. They put the 12 of us in a room and made us figure out who would go where. I put in to go to Japan because I knew that if that was my assignment, North Dakota was between New Jersey and Japan, and there was a possibility I'd be able to spend some time at home on my way out, which I did.

Three of us were sent to Japan as replacements for the crew that was already there. We were at Hokkaido, and lived in old Japanese navy barracks. We were 200 miles north of Sapporo, and very isolated. The winters were much like they were in North Dakota, and we were all issued skis. We were also told that if we were ever attacked - an unlikely scenario - we should get on our skis and head south.

Our work required us to track and intercept Russian radar on a scope. Once it was intercepted, we would send it down to Tokyo to be analyzed. We would scan all the frequencies that we knew about and once in awhile we would discover a new frequency that nobody knew about. At certain times, radar waves would come over certain frequencies, so we would tune in and pick those up.

We never knew exactly what was being transmitted, but we once received a commendation for intercepting something important, though we never knew what it was.

Our company was fairly casual and our quality of life was good. We were so far removed that we qualified for combat rations and had excellent food. Breakfast usually included eggs cooked to order. I went in the Army as a stringy 160-pound kid and returned full grown at 205 pounds.



(Above) The command post for the radar interceptors in northern Japan. (Right) The mobile unit.

One time I was out cutting grass in the summer and our commanding officer saw me. He came outside and said, "Williams, take a rest in the shade." He was tired of sitting inside and came out and cut the lawn in my place. I had a great experience with my fellow soldiers; we were all like a big family right from the start. I couldn't have asked for a better group of guys to serve with in the Army.

We also got along rather well with the Japanese people. We had houseboys and housegirls, and there was a local "mama-san" who had a little store. Once when I first arrived, they sent me into the village with a houseboy to buy eggs. He didn't really speak English; I didn't speak Japanese and the mama-san didn't speak English, either.

After I realized that she didn't understand that I wanted to buy eggs, I started to cluck like a chicken. She said, "A-so! Tomanga! Tomanga!" which is egg in Japanese.

When my time was up, I was sent back to California. We got the big "re-up" talk, but I don't think anyone in our group actually re-enlisted. I didn't because my job was being held for me back home. I ended up working for the railroad for eight more years before I moved to Grafton with my wife and children.

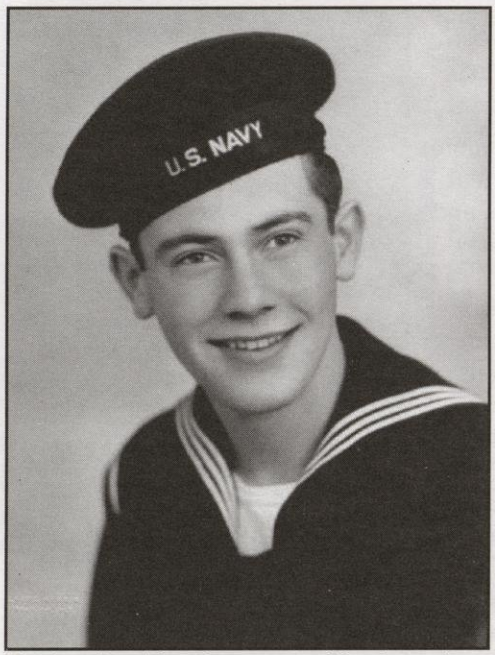
Donald "Perch" Rilling

As told to his granddaughter, Andrea Conradt
Written by his granddaughter, Danielle Peiffer

WWII Naval Storekeeper

Our grandfather, Donald "Perch" Rilling, enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the age of 18. He began his service in Texas after leaving his hometown of Grafton in 1942. Later, he was shipped to Australia and the Philippines. After the war, he continued to serve his country for another three years traveling to the Mediterranean, Europe, North Africa and Antarctica. After his six years of service, he returned home and began working for the Wisconsin Electric Power Company in Port Washington. In 1986, he retired after working there for 37 years.

When I joined the service in 1942, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I thought that enlisting in the Navy before I was drafted would give me some control over my assignment. I originally wanted to join the Marines, but they wouldn't take me because I had weak arches. I guess that was fate's way of telling me I was meant to serve my country in some other capacity. So I decided to do the next best thing by enlisting in the U.S. Navy. When the war ended in 1945, I was Storekeeper Third Class.



Perch enlisted for six years as a Naval recruit.

Some of my experience was good and some of it bad, but all in all, I learned a lot during my six years of service. I was all of 18 years old when I enlisted. I had never been away from home, so when I was sent to the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station for boot camp, my feelings of homesickness were quite intense, especially during the holidays. My boot camp experience was tough, but like everyone else, I rolled with the punches and did what I was told. After a while, I got used to it. From Texas, I went to California and then to Australia and the Philippines.

My tour of duty in Australia was a good one compared to my experience in the Philippines. In Australia, the Navy had a supply depot and I hauled supplies to the docks to load onto the ships of the U.S. Navy 10th fleet. It was here that I learned how to drive. After 16 months in Australia, the Navy closed the supply depot and shipped us north to the Philippines to another supply depot in Subic Bay.

We arrived in the Philippines at the beginning of the monsoon season. I saw enough rain in the six months I was there to last a lifetime. During one stretch, it rained every day for 30 days. Everything was damp and moldy. The food was so bad I quickly lost a lot of weight, dropping from 180 pounds to 135 within a few months. We slept six men to a tent.

Life in the Philippines was monotonous. We spent our off hours playing pinochle and hoping to go home. The war ended in August of 1945, but the rain kept pouring for another few weeks. Despite the grim living conditions, we all breathed a sigh of relief when the war had finally ended. I was a bit dismayed when it was all over because I still had three years to serve, but I was glad to put the worst of it behind me.

My service work was not very glamorous or life-threatening, but it was sure life-changing. Up until the time I left for the service, I had it pretty easy at home. Life in the service was a big change for me. I learned about being on my own and thinking for myself. I also learned a lot about sacrifice and love of country. The hardest part for me was being away from home and not knowing what to expect next. Unlike other veterans, I didn't have to sacrifice my life, but I did dedicate the prime of my youth to helping my nation succeed in the second and hopefully the last world war.

After the war, I served my remaining three years. I was promoted to Storekeeper Second Class. I traveled to Europe, the Mediterranean and North Africa. I was fortunate enough to meet Admiral Byrd and the Pope. As you might expect, serving during peace time was a piece of cake compared to serving during the war.

Upon returning home in 1948, I began working for the Wisconsin Electric Power Company. I worked there for 37 years. I tried to keep in contact with some of my close friends from the service, but over the years we drifted apart. I continued to demonstrate my patriotism by becoming an active member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I was a member of the drum and bugle corps for 16 years and served one year as County Commander.

I look back on my years of service with no regret. I was in the same boat as a lot of guys. We did what we had to do. And we did it with pride.

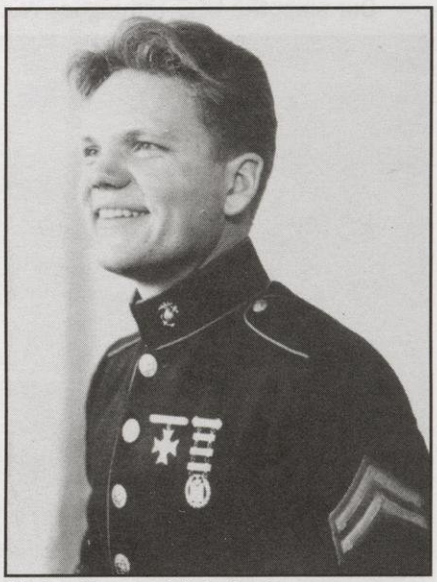
Robert Sanders with his grandson Drew Morton, Port Washington High School

WWII Marine Corporal

My Grandpa Sanders, a Milwaukee native, enlisted in the Marines at 16. He was not drafted; he chose to enlist to protect his country. He picked the Marines because he admired them above all the other branches of the United States military. The following are the stories he relayed to me in his own words:

Once I got to boot camp I wondered if I had done the right thing, but after a few weeks I realized it was making a man out of me. After that initial training, I was sent to a Combat Intelligence School where we learned a great deal about map reading and moving around at night, supposedly to infiltrate enemy lines.

I never had a chance to use these skills because, upon joining the Second Division in September 1943 in New Zealand, they needed machine gunners, so that's where I ended up.


Marine Corporal Bob Sanders.

On Nov. 20, 1943, I was in the battle of Tarawa, considered one of the bloodiest of World War II. We were told it would be simple because of the bombardment before our landing. However, they did not realize the heavy emplacements or that the tides would not favor our landing. There were also 4,500 Japanese Imperial Marines defending the island, and they said that "a million men could not take the island in a million years." Tarawa is roughly about one-and-a-half miles long, and at its widest point, about 800 yards. It is like a postage stamp in the Pacific Ocean.

Most of us had to swim and wade to the beach because our Higgens boats became hung up on the reef surrounding the island plus the tides.

While I had seen many men die or get wounded, to this day I can still remember an NCO [Non-Commissioned Officer] mustering his men to go over a sea wall about four or five feet high. The remarkable thing about this was that he had no backside. His cheeks were gone, and I don't know if he lived or not as I only saw him for a few seconds. Hardly a week goes by that I don't think of him.

What made this battle unique was 4,500 Japanese troops were killed there, and more than 1,000 Marines lost their lives. This all happened in 76 hours. You can imagine the carnage, and anyone coming off of there was damn lucky. We also took 17 prisoners.

About six months later we hit Saipan on Sept. 15, 1944. We landed on Amtracs, which are vehicles with tank treads that are used on water or land. I learned very quickly to get off the beach as soon as possible, just like in the movie, "Saving Private Ryan."

Our squad safely made the landing and continued inland, but as we were crossing the airstrip, one of our guys was killed, and one other was wounded by a land mine. Both were very good buddies, and it made us think about our own mortality. Our outfit was on the front lines for 13 days before we were relieved. After about five or six days, we were called back up because of a counter attack by the enemy. We managed to quell this and proceed to the island of Tinian, which was a sister island of Saipan and only a few miles away.

On Tinian, our outfit was in reserve for this operation so we did not meet any resistance in landing. It was on Tinian, however, where I was hit by shrapnel and received a Purple Heart. It wasn't too serious, so I was only in a field hospital for three or four days. They patched me up and I rejoined my buddies.

We were also on Okinawa on April 1, 1945. We were in reserve for this operation as far as the landing went. We floated around aboard ship about 10 days after the landings were made, and because of the light opposition, we were sent back to Tinian. We stayed there for a couple of weeks before we were sent back to Okinawa. The troops that were there were running into a great deal of resistance. We were called back to make the final push.

Our mission was to relieve the Seventh Marines, who were in dire straits. They were supplied by air drops and the quantities were so large that they were mostly eating the candy bars and throwing the rest of the rations away. They were also field stripping the small arms, throwing the parts in all directions so the Japanese couldn't use them.

By that time I was an "old salt." I'd made Corporal and become a squad leader. By the time the bomb was dropped in 1945, we were ready to come home. After I returned, I received the Presidential Unit Citation for the Battle of Tarawa, the Purple Heart, the Asiatic Pacific Ribbon with three stars, and my favorite, a personal commendation with a beautiful medal and ribbon from then-Commandant of the Marine Corps General Vandergrift, which basically said I was a good Marine. It doesn't get any better than that.

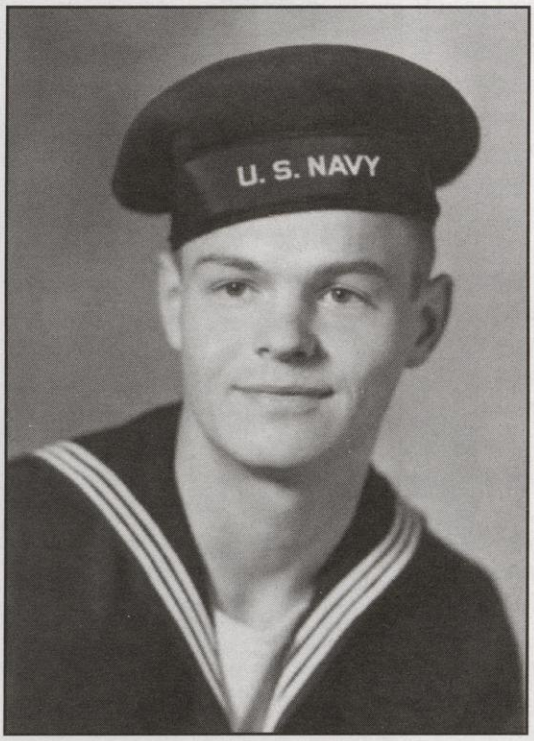
Robert Larson as remembered by his wife, Helen Larson

Witness to the Bikini Atoll Atomic Bomb Tests

Before leaving Japan, my husband saw Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where the first two atom bombs were set off. He walked on "ground zero," not knowing the danger of radiation because the sailors were not informed of it. Bob died Feb. 11, 2001, with lots of stories he never got to tell.

We left Japan and proceeded to Bikini Atoll in March 1946 for the atom bomb test. We arrived on April 12, 1946. We were the first ship at Bikini and we watched the United States Navy take the Bikinians off the island to get ready for the bomb test. More ships also arrived before the test.

Our ship, the USS Tombigbee AOG-11 was converted to carry fresh drinking water and be responsible to all personnel for the drinking water without disrupting other ships. The battleship USS Nevada was present and painted a brilliant orange to stand out amongst all as the "target ship."



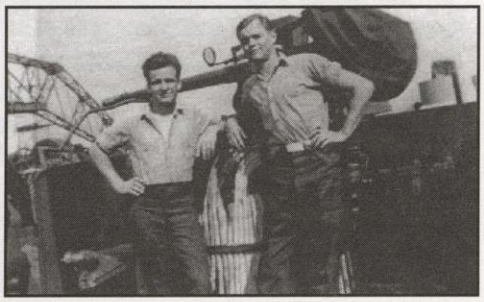
Mequon native Bob Larson in 1946,

The day of the test we were ordered out of Bikini Atoll and into convoy to observe the bomb dropping with its side effects. The Tombigbee crew was ordered to sit on the aft of the superstructure and cover our eyes with our hands. We had no further protection - no badges, no nothing - from the bomb.

After the bomb dropped, we witnessed results approximately 10 miles away. The funnel cloud from Bomb No. 3 was spectacular and burning different colors.

We knew we were going into Bikini Atoll Harbor to anchor berth and get ready for the underwater (No. 4) bomb. We then went out to get more fresh water and returned to Bikini for water distribution. The ships that tied alongside were radioactive and were hitting our "fender guards," which then became radioactive as well. We sat on the fender guards at night to watch movies.

On the day of Bomb No. 4 detonation, we were sent out further to Rongalap Island to stay for a few hours. When we returned to Bikini there were dead animals in the water and debris from the ships. Most all of the ships were still on fire, and we stayed there for some time to evaluate the bomb testing. All the other ships left and we were the last ship to leave Bikini. We were ordered to Johnson Island and re-ordered to go alongside the battleship USS Nevada to pick up her anchor.


(l-r) "Vinny" John Michaels of Port Washington and Bob Larson. The two served together in the Navy.

While there, two other buddies and myself were ordered to pull electric cables over to the Nevada and help hook up electricity to a motor that would pull up the anchor. We ended up staying three weeks after detonation and were the last ship to leave. We were sent to Pearl Harbor en route back to the United States.

The Nevada was pulled into Pearl Harbor and her radioactivity was too much for the Navy Base Hospital to take X-rays (the X-ray machine had to be boxed in lead).

When the Tombigbee arrived in the United States, an officer from the government came aboard with a Geiger counter. He refused our entry because of radiation levels. Our fenders, water hoses, canvasses and gun covers were too "hot." I could clearly hear the officer say, "Christ, with the amount of fall out on this ship you should all be dead."

We took our spare anchor, cargo net and bow fenders and dropped them to the bottom of the ocean. The stern fenders, cargo net and chain from the stern followed. The ship was taken into Long Beach, Calif., where it was sandblasted and all the water pipes and intakes were washed with acid.

The battleship USS Nevada was towed out of Pearl Harbor to the United States, where it was refused entry. The Navy ultimately sank the ship.

I later found out that I had cancer of the bladder, and it had to be removed.

Harold "Butch" Dohr

As told to Andy Lesko, Homestead High School

WWII Marine Machine Gunner

Harold Dohr is a native of Saukville now living in Grafton. After service, Mr. Dohr entered the meat industry, following his father's line of work. Harold Dohr currently lives blissfully in Grafton with his wife.

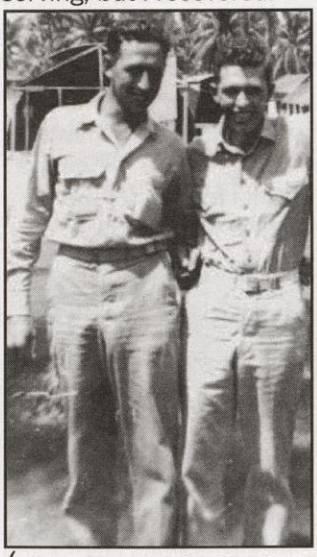
I enlisted in the Marines at the age of 17 with my uncle and brother-in-law while fetching something to eat. I told my parents after I was sworn into the military, and my father did not believe me. I thought it was the thing to do at the time, considering the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. The Marines were always the elite, and I believed I was one myself. I spent my last night home with my family and a few friends, celebrating m y enlistment. I was and am very proud to be a Marine; I believe in the slogan "Once a Marine, always a Marine."

When I arrived at boot camp, I found out that my instructor was from the Milwaukee area. The other trainees thought I was going to have it easy because I knew the boot camp instructor. It turned out that I had it much harder than the other men because the instructor did not want to show favoritism. I turned out a whole lot better than the instructor because he never returned from the war.

Harold Dohr, back row second from right.

In WWII I served in Iwo Jima, Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Rura Sura, Guam and other islands in the Southern Pacific. During the war I obtained a Japanese bugle, periscope from a turret, and a bayonet. I saw combat three times; I was a sergeant in charge of a small squad of machine gunners. I used a water-cooled heavy machine gun. The island natives were very nice to us. We were referred to as "Gooks." I had two native "girlfriends" who washed my laundry on Guam. The military was not as bad as I thought it would be. It is portrayed as incredibly hard and strenuous, but it did not turn out to be that way. The Seabees, or construction battalions, were very important. They built roads or runways for planes into Japanese territory. We had an immense pride for them and made a large sign saying: When the Marines Go Marching into Tokyo with our Hats Jauntily Tilted, We'll Be Marching on Roads Built by C.B.s.

I suffered a minor injury while in combat; shrapnel hit my leg. I did not have a doctor look at it. Years later, I felt a pain in the bottom of my foot when I stepped on a certain area. It turned out that the shrapnel had slowly worked its way down to my foot and caused pain when it got to the bottom. I also contracted malaria while serving, but I recovered.



(l-r) Laurence DeBano and Harold Dohr, both of Saukville. The two met up while serving in Guadalcanal. Dohr saw DeBano and yelled, "Hey Debs," which was DeBano's nickname from home.

To keep in touch with my family, I sent letters to them. My mother sent letters almost daily while my father almost never wrote to me. For good luck, I prayed daily. I looked to God to help me through tough times.

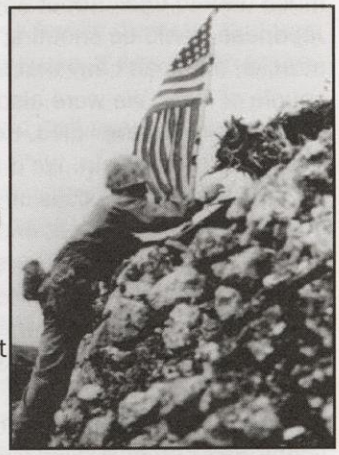
At times the supplies ran short, but overall it was pretty good. When water was running low, we stored it in large white lister bags. One night we saw a white object moving on the horizon; we thought the Japanese were stealing one of our bags. Many people shot at it and it stopped moving. Eventually we approached the object and it ended up being a cow with a large white spot on its side.

At one point we had a different cow roaming in our camp, so we asked the officer if we could butcher it and feed the unit. So I, being a butcher, extracted all the meat I could, which turned out to be enough for about ten Marines. We knew everyone would be angry at us if we did not feed them with fresh beef, so we told the unit that the cow had cancer and the meat was rotten.

The day we heard the news that Japan had given up, my fellow Marines and I celebrated in the camp.

I formed many close relationships in the military. I still keep in touch with friends in Louisiana, California and St. Louis.

U.S. Marine Corps Photo



Dohr witnessed the first and second flag raisings on Mt. Serabachi, Iwo Jima.

Harold Matthews

As told to Gita Makstenieks, Port Washington High School

WWII Navy Aviation Metalsmith

Even before entering the Navy, Harold Matthews was part of the Naval Reserve, which helped him when he enlisted full time. While in the Naval Reserve in 1940, Matthews worked on a Great Lakes coal boat. Later when he joined the Navy and went aboard the USS Yorktown (originally the USS Bon Homme Richard), he became a First Class Aviation Metalsmith. Although he encountered unimaginably frightening weather brought on by typhoons, numerous attacks on the Yorktown by the Japanese and spending 18 months at a time aboard a ship with only one stop, nothing kept this Port Washington resident away from serving our country for six years.

The most vivid thing I remember from serving in the Navy is the problems with the ocean. We experienced some of the worst weather ever seen. We went through winds that were 150 miles an hour and waves that were about 75 feet high. We just bobbed up and down - as big as that ship was, you'd think it was a cork in a bathtub. The wind was so strong that the top five feet of the waves were just cut off, and we'd get that spray in the face. It was like taking a shower all the time.

Harold Matthews (second from right) as part of a patriotic parade in his hometown of Green Bay.

During one of the typhoons we were sent topside up to the flight deck to cut the planes loose because we were hitting so much strong wind and waves. We were to cut the planes loose to reduce the weight that was on the top deck. The only way to do that was to throw the planes overboard.

They came to the metalshop and said, "You metalsmiths get up there and cut those planes loose." So we went topside and there were five or six of us all tied together on a life line.

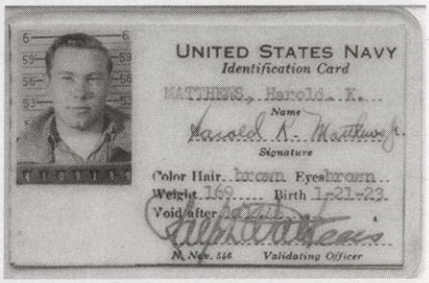
The problem was that you could only stay topside about 10 minutes because you couldn't breathe. You couldn't exhale because it would blow right back in your mouth and you couldn't inhale because the wind was like a vacuum cleaner. If you turned your back to it, it would suck all the wind out of you; you couldn't take anything in.

So finally - with no luck - we went back down below deck and told the officer that sent us up there that we couldn't do it. He understood and told us that we would just have to ride it out, which we did.

I don't think I was ever as scared during an attack as I was when we were in the typhoons. The typhoons were really miserable. We never thought the ship would sink, we just figured that "maybe she's gonna roll over and not come back up" or "roll to a point and just keep on rolling."

I don't remember much of the attacks that were made on us. We were always so busy that we didn't have much time to think about anything else. There was always something that had to be done "right now." When the Japanese would be shooting at us, the only fear was that if they would hit us, we'd go down. I remember the attacks, but I can't say that they were the sort of thing that stays in your memory because we were attacked every couple of days. We were also very lucky because no one ever hit us so no one on our ship ever died, except for the pilots. They would go out and we'd never see them again. We'd lose a plane and a pilot in those cases.

There was one occasion where a plane came in and missed the wires, jumped over the barriers and landed on another plane that was a little forward of the barriers. There were three or four guys under that plane refueling and doing maintenance, and the first plane came down on them and squashed them onto the deck. The plane caught on fire and they were badly burned. That was really the only time anyone every died aboard our ship.



Harold still owns his Navy identification card.

When my time was up in 1946, the best part was to finally go back to Green Bay. The only thing I wish I would've done differently was to keep a better record of my buddies so that I could now go back and just chew the fat with them ... talk about the good old days.

Harold Jerschefske With Laurie Arendt

Captured on Corregidor

Thiensville native Harold Jerschefske was born in 1918, the first of six children. His father and grandfather farmed land that is now the MATC North Campus, and Jerschefske helped plant all the evergreen trees lining Green Bay Road along MeeKwon Golf Course. He was inducted into the Army Air Corps at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Aberdeen, Md. He received basic training and advanced training on aircraft ordnance there before heading to Salt Lake City, then San Francisco.

We boarded a troop ship in San Francisco and were bound for the Philippines. The seas were so rough that everybody was seasick. I went up on deck and sat in the cab of a truck that was lashed to the deck. I would wait for the wave to finish before opening the truck door to throw up.

We arrived in the Philippines after 23 days at sea and with a one-day stop in Hawaii. Once we arrived in the Philippines, I was assigned to Nichols Field. We went about our duties there until we were attacked on Dec. 8, 1941. Some Japanese Zeros flew over us and started to strafe us. We could see the bullets racing down the runway, and I jumped into a rice paddy to avoid them. I was soon handed a rifle and told, "You're in the infantry now."

We moved around the Bataan Peninsula for about four months before retreating to Corregidor, a solid rock formation on Manila Bay. Its entire fixed cannon pointed out to sea to ward off an attack from the water. They needed to be pointed at the city of Manila because that was where the enemy was. The Japanese had their cannon lined up hub to hub and shelled Corregidor for a solid month.

Harold Jerschefske spent time in Bilibid Prison before being liberated.

At that time, I was on beach defense, which meant that I had a foxhole on some ground overlooking Manila Bay. I rolled a boulder over to my position and placed it in front of my foxhole to protect me from shrapnel. I also found a piece of tin and placed it over the foxhole. Every time I would leave the foxhole, the Japanese would open up and try to get me.

They soon started to invade Corregidor, and I was with a Filipino scout and some other soldiers when it happened. We were standing on a bluff overlooking the beach. The Filipino was yelling and cursing the Japanese and he got shot through the lung. Another American and I started to help him back to our lines when I got shot in the kneecap. I had just taken a step forward - so my knee was crooked - and I saw the tall grass moving due to machine gun fire. After I was hit, I crawled into a bomb crater and waited.

A medic happened by and he gave me a shot of morphine. He was going to leave me in the bomb crater but I persuaded him to help me. I walked about a half mile on a shattered kneecap back to the American lines.

I made it back to the Melinta Tunnel, which was a large tunnel of about 30 or more feet in diameter that was cut into the rock of Corregidor. I laid in a fever for four weeks as my leg contracted gangrene. It was frozen in the crooked position and it generated tremendous pain if I moved it in any direction.

We were ultimately captured and taken to Bilibid Prison in downtown Manila. Bilibid had been a Filipino prison that was condemned as unfit for use.

I was the first patient to be served in the makeshift operating room at Bilibid. American doctors amputated my leg with a machete and saw; no anesthetic was used. After the amputation, my fever left and I started to regain my health.

As an amputee, I was put on the food detail and would help clean rice. I sewed secret pockets in my pants and would fill them up with rice. That was the only way I was able to survive, and if I had been caught, I would've been executed on the spot.

When I went in the service I weighed 217 pounds; when I was liberated from Bilibid I weighed about 110 pounds. After we were liberated, I was put on a transport plane back to the United States. I ultimately ended up at Percy Jones Hospital in Battle Creek, Mich. There I underwent an operation to re-shape my stump to allow me to wear an artificial leg. I bought a used Studebaker with a manual shift, fastened a piece of angle iron to the steering column so I could operate the clutch and I drove home every week - through Chicago - from Battle Creek to Cedarburg.

Tom Carron

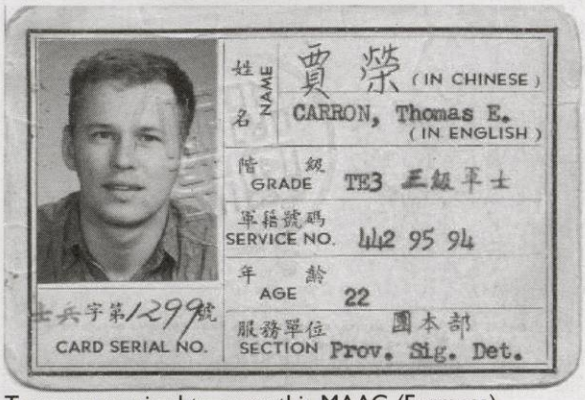
As told to Suzy Maul,
Cedarburg High School

Cryptographer During the Korean War

After graduating in 1953 and starting a job at Wisconsin Bell Telephone Co., Tom Carron received a draft notice. Before being drafted into the Army, Carron had decided to enlist in Naval communications with a letter of recommendation from his employer. Although it appeared Tom's enlistment would be too late, he was accepted into the Navy and left for Naval Boot Camp in May 1953.

I left on May 18 for boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Center. I spent three months there. We went through firefighting, rifle practice and lots of swimming lessons. I graduated from boot camp in August 1953, and I was assigned to a school in San Diego, Calif., a communications school where I learned how to fix teletypes and operate cryptography machines. I went to school until March 1954.

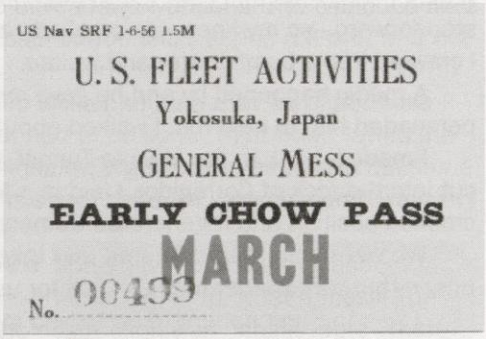
I was assigned to an aircraft carrier, the USS Badoeng Strait CV 116, on North Island in San Diego. We had approximately 1,500 to 2,000 people on it - a small aircraft carrier. The ship went to sea fairs most of the time. People could come aboard and go through the ship, and we would give tours. We went up and down the California coast and made two trips to Hawaii. I was aboard ship for 18 months, until December 1955, and then I got transferred to Taipei, Taiwan, where I was attached to the Admiral's staff on land. I was on attaché duty. We had no base, but instead lived in a house - two other guys and me. The house came with a rickshaw driver, a maid and cook, for $230, which was a good deal.



Tom was required to carry this MAAG (Formosa) Identification Card while serving in Taiwan, 1955.

I was there until August 1956, at which time I had to go out to Quemoy. Everyone had to go to one of the islands for 30 days. Quemoy was right off the coast of China, where they were gathering spy data. Dug into the side of a hill, we took care of the messages that were sent out. If you had night duty, you made sure you didn't fall asleep because a couple of the guys were killed by snipers that way. In Quemoy, they were shelling. There was a big ridge of mountains, and they would always try to lob them over the mountains. After Quemoy I came back to Taipei and finished my tour there.

After the first of the year in 1957, I had to report to Treasure Island, San Francisco. They didn't know where to send me because I only had four to five months left. They finally decided to send me to Japan, which was like a vacation for me. Once I got over there they had two other cryptographers in the communications division already, so they didn't know what to do with me. The officer in charge of communications asked me if I would be willing to do patrol duty. I said it wouldn't make any difference to me, but I did ask what my duties were. I was told I would have to ride around with a Marine in a car. All we did was take prisoners back and forth from Yokosuka to Yokohama, where the army base was.


US Nav SRF 1-6-56 1.5M

U. S. FLEET ACTIVITIES
Yokosuka, Japan
GENERAL MESS
EARLY CHOW PASS
MARCH
No. 00493
Tom still has this chow pass from Japan.

I left [Japan] in the middle of April and took a ship back to the United States ... the worst trip I ever had. It was so rough; we took the Northern Route across the Pacific to Seattle. We must have had about 1,200 troops aboard. It was bad; three decks down everyone was throwing up. I was very fortunate though because one of the guys I was stationed with in Taiwan was the Postmaster aboard ship, and he let me sleep in the post office instead of down in the hole where it was bad. The waves must have been between 30 to 40 feet high, and we just bounced around like a cork out there.

I think every person should have some military service. It teaches you discipline, and it also teaches you to rely on other people. I'm glad I did it. I'm glad I was in the Navy, too. I really got to see a lot more in the Navy.

Mr. Carron returned to Wisconsin Bell Telephone Company, where he worked for 42 years. In 1994, Mr. Carron retired at age 60. Carron has been a member of the Peter Wollner Legion Post for 34 years and currently acts as the Post's Judge Advocate. As a Wisconsin "snow bird" he and his wife of 43 years spend winter in Fort Myers Beach, Fla., fishing on their pontoon boat and visiting friends.

Clay Leque

As told to Vintee Sawhney, Homestead High School

Served in Ammunitions and as a Cook

Clay Leque enlisted in the Navy in November 1942. Prior to enlisting, he spent one month in a Citizens' Military Training Camp at Ft. Snelling, Minn. Seventeen-year-old boys would volunteer one month for four years at a Citizens' Military Training Camp, and at 21 would receive a commission in the Army. However, Mr. Leque still wanted to join the Navy and see the world.

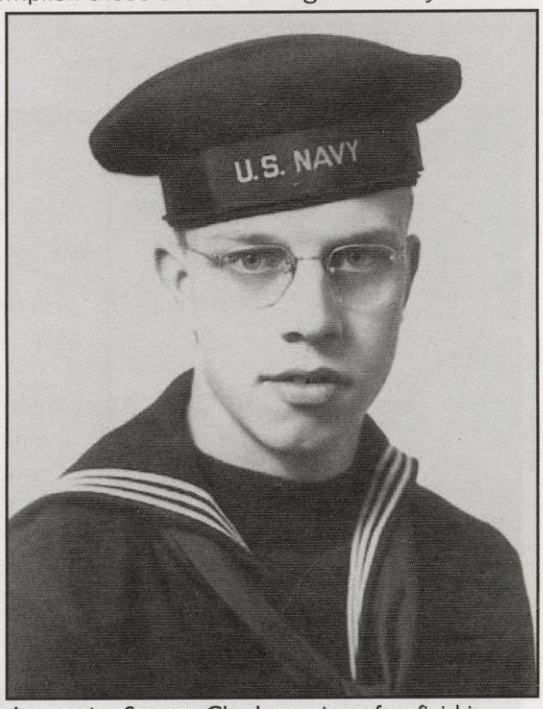
I am a war veteran of World War II and the Korean War. When I was living in the small town of Galesville, Wis., I decided to join the Navy to serve my country. I also enlisted in the Navy to avoid the draft. I was proud to serve my country, and I had dreams of seeing the world. I went on to accomplish those dreams though the Navy.

Although I do not remember much about my first days in the service, I do remember that I found things in boot camp to be relatively easy. As an avid hiker for many years and a fairly active person in general, I did not have a problem with the rigorous activities and training we were put through in preparation for war.

During peacetime, as a sailor I travelled to many exotic countries. Starting from San Diego, Calif., my ship the Happy Valley (which was officially the USS Valley Forge) and I went on a world tour to Australia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, the Suez Canal, Tangier, Panama and many other foreign countries. We also travelled up to Bergen, Norway, and I really enjoyed that because I am Norwegian. I could understand the language, and the waitresses would talk about about us sailors.

We were the first U.S. carrier to go around the world, transit the Suez Canal and conduct flight operations in the Persian Gulf. We started on Oct. 9, 1947 and finished our tour on June 11, 1948.

In the Navy, I worked on aircraft carriers and dealt with ammunition, so I didn't see much combat. My life throughout my time in service was pretty simple.



Apprentice Seaman Clay Leque just after finishing boot camp, 1942.

As far as entertainment, movie stars and bands sometimes came aboard. Dances were held periodically when the ship came to shore. By far the most memorable experience I had was when President John F. Kennedy came aboard the ship. Although I was not able to shake hands with President Kennedy or make actual contact with him, I still remember the experience vividly. Another experience that I remember was when Bing Crosby invited the entire squad to play golf and [he] stayed on board all day.

Something else that was also very exciting to me was when I appeared on the cover of a naval magazine. We were loading missiles onto airplanes. I also still have two cruisebooks for two of the ships I served on. Along with these books, I also kept two menus, one from a Christmas feast and one from a Thanksgiving feast. It is interesting to look back on those menus because back then, cigarettes were included in the multicourse meal.

I also had the unique experience of serving 500 hours flying in a blimp squadron. We would go out two or three times a month for 36-hour training missions. Our blimps had 18 men on a crew and were about twice the size of a Goodyear blimp. We trained to track submarines. I was trained in ammunition, but because we didn't carry weapons, I became the cook. I provided food for three meals a day plus a midnight snack.

Throughout my service time, I didn't take leave very often. I loved my life in the Navy. In fact, I was such a "good boy" that I received six good conduct awards while on board. I always got along with fellow officers and sailors, thought very highly of them and respected them.

I spent 20 years in the Navy and retired in 1963. I was sad to retire because I had enjoyed my time so much. Although I made many close friendships throughout my Naval career, I have kept up correspondence with only two men from the Navy - one in Wisconsin and one in Kansas.

After my service was up, I continued working for the government by becoming a postal worker. I retired in 1987 after 22 years in the postal service. I now spend most of my time volunteering at our local senior center and live with my second wife in Grafton.

Col. Fred Bucheger

As told to Dave Strauss, Ozaukee High School

Dental assistant during World War II and Dentist during the Korean War

Dr. Fred Bucheger served a little more than three years during World War II and two years during the Korean War as part of the Army Reserves. He retired as a Colonel in 1982 after 32 years of service.

I was drafted in 1943 and went on active duty and did basic training at Camp Claiborne, La., where I started out as an engineer but later took a test to become an officer. I qualified and went to Baylor University where I studied engineering. During my third term of engineering school, I took a pre-professional test for dentistry and passed. I still did end up building bridges, but they were in people's mouths, not part of roads.

Before I served overseas, I did duty in a dental clinic in California. They needed someone who could speak German. Although I only took German in high school, I told them, "I'm your man!" I was sent to a German prisoner of war camp where I worked in the medical unit. I had the world by the tail because they couldn't really understand me and the dentist couldn't really understand them, but it worked out. I would've liked to have stayed longer, but I was shipped overseas two weeks later.

Col. Fred Bucheger of Fredonia.

When I went overseas to the Philippines, it took 32 days to get there, but the Pacific Ocean was as smooth as silk. I was on a liberty ship, which was loaded with life preservers. We narrowly missed a floating mine, which the men in the crow's nest never saw. One of the men on the deck discovered it. The first mate shot at it with a rifle. He was unable to hit it because it was bobbing in the sea. A Navy man shot at it with a machine gun.

About 20 minutes later, we were looking down the eight-inch gun barrel of a large war ship. After we raised our flag, they looked for it, but it must have sunk.

While in the Philippines, I served in the 247th General Hospital. I served as a dental assistant, but became the sergeant in charge of the clinic, even though they didn't give me the stripes. I had to do all the typing, letters and reports.

When I came back in 1946, I was on a much bigger ship and the sea was rough. We hit the tail end of a typhoon and I became very seasick.

After being discharged from active duty, I went to the School of Dentistry at Marquette University. In my senior year, I joined the Senior Dental Program, which provided me with a base pay equivalent to that of a second lieutenant. I had a family to support at that time, so it was a good program. I didn't have to serve the military until I graduated. I became a First Lieutenant on the day I graduated. I was sent to Ft. Custer, then to Camp Lucas at Ste. Saint Marie, where I became the post dental surgeon. A year later, I was a captain. I was out in 1952.

In 1955, I joined the 135th Medical Battalion in the 32nd Division of the Wisconsin National Guard. I joined a medical detachment in the Army Reserves in Milwaukee from 1962-1980. In 1978, I took command of the 312th Medical Detachment until the unit was sent to Missouri in 1980.

In 1980, I went to Fort Sheridan where I took command of the 308th Dental Detachment and retired in 1982.

While serving as an officer, I got along with the enlisted men better than most other officers. I knew what they went through, because I was once in their shoes.

After retirement, I received a medal for my achievement, including a letter from President Reagan. At first I did not like the Army, but now that I look back on it, it wasn't so bad. I wasn't a hero. I just did my job.

John McElligott

As told to Bob Ball,
Homestead High School

Machinist during the Korean War

A decorated war veteran who moved to Ozaukee County in 1976, John McElligott embodies the true spirit of the American soldier.

My military career began when I enlisted for the Korean War at the age of 20. I chose to enlist because I had a 1A draft classification, which meant that I would have been one of the first to be drafted, if necessary. I opted for the Army because the Air Force, my first choice, had a stack of applications about two feet high.

In 1951, I arrived at Fort Sheridan, which experienced the coldest winter in about 10 years when we were there. We received our training assignments, and I was sent to the Aberdeen Proving Grounds, which was where I did basic training and my machinist training. Because I had some experience before I enlisted, I was able to breeze through the training.

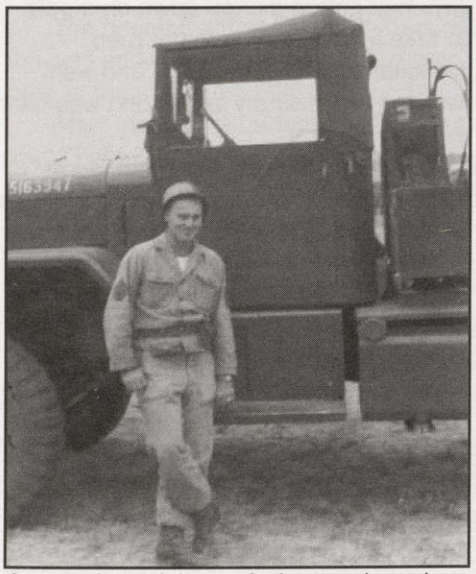
John (far right) and two of his buddies in Korea.

After training, I ended up being sent to Korea and was assigned to the Second Infantry Division. When I traveled there, I discovered that the most unforgiving enemy was the climate. Korea was the coldest place on Earth, and at the beginning of the war, the troops were not sufficiently provided with the right equipment to combat the cold. Fortunately, as the war progressed the troops began to receive the supplies that were desperately needed.

Letters to my family were frequent and they were not censored. The food was half-way decent. A typical breakfast consisted of bacon and eggs. We lived in tents all winter, which were heated by two stoves, but it was still cold. We had about 14 men in each tent, and we slept on canvas folding cots. There was nothing really to see or anywhere to go in Korea, and people don't believe me when I say that I didn't climb a flight of stairs for six months.

Throughout the course of the war, I saw little combat with the exception of being fired upon during air raids. It is important to remember that for every man fighting in combat there are 10 that will never see any action.

My troop, in which I worked as a machinist, traveled all over central Korea, but stayed less than a mile behind the line. We worked in mobile machine shops - we had trucks that contained all the equipment we needed - a lathe, milling machine, etc. - to make whatever we needed. We didn't work in one specific area, but would make anything that was needed. If someone came to us with an old, worn-out part, we would make a new one, regardless of whether it was, for example, part of a tank, a refrigeration unit or something for the artillery. Within my troop, I made many close friends during the war; yet, over time, we grew apart and now rarely stay in contact with each other.



As a machinist, John worked on trucks such as this one while in Korea.

One of my most memorable experiences during the war was my five-day stay in Japan. I didn't know a lot about Japan and Korea before the war, and I was amazed at the devastation in Japan as a result of World War II. Only about five years had passed since the war, and Japan was still a wasteland in the middle of restoration.

On Jan. 24, 1954, my service ended and I returned to Wisconsin as a sergeant. For my service, I was honored with some medals, including the Korean Presidential medal and the United Nations medal. When people ask me if I feel the Korean War truly is the "Forgotten War," I reply that there was a period of time when the war was forgotten. Yet, I feel that the attitude toward the Korean War is improving as shown by the creation of many new Korean War memorials in such places as Washington, D.C. and Milwaukee.

Today John McElligott enjoys the family life with 12 grandchildren, one great-grandchild and a wife of more than 40 years. To his friends and family, he will always be known as a patriotic man who was more than willing to risk his life to aid his country.

George Kohlwey As told to Laurie Arendt

World War II Runner

Cedarburg native George Kohlwey was working at Grob Inc. in Grafton when he was drafted at 21. He ultimately became part of the 33rd Division of the Illinois National Guard, and served in the Pacific Theater.

I trained in Washington and California, and I suspected that because we did desert training that we were originally going to be sent to North Africa. By the time we were finished, that all had ended. We were sent to Hawaii and we guarded the islands of Hawaii, Kawaii and Oahu before we ultimately were sent out into the Pacific.

My job was that of a runner, which meant that I would deliver messages. Everybody thought we runners knew everything, which we didn't. We used to make up rumors for fun, though, and they had a strange way of coming true.

George Kohlwey and his brother, Benoit, both served in the Pacific Theater.

I made $21 a month, but that changed as we did certain things. I remember they paid us an extra $4 a month just to get shot at. By the time I got out, I was making $34 a month.

I remember once when we were in Hawaii I was delivering a message about a quarter of a mile. I stumbled on a stone and knocked a chip off my elbow. When I got to the person I was to deliver the message to, he said, "You're dead," because I ran up to him without taking cover. I said, "Hell, I'm hurt and I need to get to the hospital." I had torn some muscles and ended up in the hospital for seven weeks. They did take care of us, I have to say that. They didn't just throw us out the next day if we'd been injured.

After Hawaii, we boarded ships and landed at New Guinea, where we spent several months. I also met up with my brother, Benoit, who had been injured and was at Finschafen. I was able to hitch a ride on an Army truck and go spend a few hours with him. He eventually recovered.

We were also among the first troops to land at Luzon in the northern Philippines. The place was heavily fortified, and I remember they were shooting down the one road at us and had mined it in places. The U.S. troops ended up taking a bulldozer and building a new way to get up to Baguio. We rode the tanks up the road - we thought that if they missed us the first time, it would give us a chance to get off.

We ended up at Camp John Hayes, which had been a U.S. Army camp prior to World War II. They had a big parade field next to it with about 50 dead Japanese in a row. We didn't go anywhere near them because the Japanese had a habit of booby trapping bodies.

At one point, I was still working as a runner, but I was carrying a bazooka or a flamethrower - they gave me anything I could hang on to. We were close to the front and some of the guys had gotten pinned down on a path below a curve in the road. They told me to drop what I was carrying and go take a cot cover up to the men because one had been shot. I got up there and found one of my friends. He said, "You take the guns and we'll take care of him." I had two rifles slung over my right shoulder and was swinging one over my left when I was hit in my upper arm.

One of the first things they tell you is not to run if you've been hit, but I took off like a big bird. I had blood running in my shoes when I got back to the road. They gave me a couple of units of plasma, some wound pills (we never really knew what was in them) and some morphine. They dropped a hospital tent from the air, and I don't know if the doctors also parachuted in as well, but they took me there to get treated. At that point, they took everything away from me except a pair of shorts.

We were ultimately moved over a path, which had been narrowed severely because it had been hit. It was no more than this much [holds hands about 10 inches apart] and they were using Filipino women to carry the cots. I looked over the edge and realized they could just go "whoop" and I'd be down there. I got up, a guard held on to my good arm and I walked across myself. We were eventually loaded on to an ambulance, taken to Leyte Hospital and then I boarded a plane for the United States, where I spent time recuperating at Percy Jones Medical Center in Michigan. I had my arm in an airplane splint for a long time, but I would come home when I could.

One of his trips home was for his sister's wedding, which was where Mr. Kohlwey met his wife, Shirley. They have been married 55 years and live on a farm in the Town of Saukville. Mr. Kohlwey recently shared his experiences with students at Woodview Elementary School. Since his discharge, he has reunited with 125 of the men from his company.

Rollo Eberhardt As told to Dan Rippl, Homestead High School

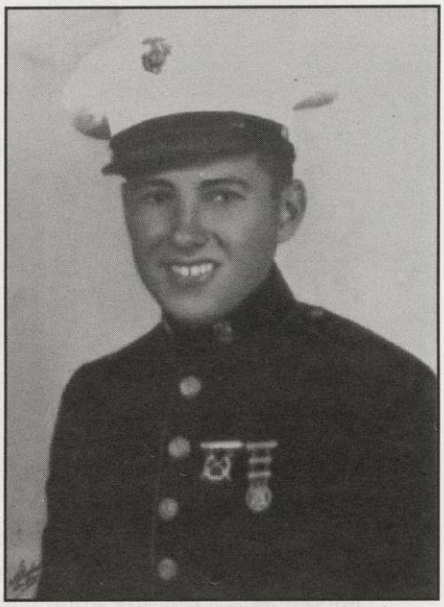
Marine Scout Observer at Iwo Jima

On Monday, Feb. 19, 1945, the Fourth Division of the United States Marine Corps landed on the moon, or at least this is where they thought they were. Covered with large craters and volcanic ash, the coastline of Iwo Jima was not an inviting place. This tiny island, home to two vital Japanese air fields, would provide a safe base for distressed American aircraft if the Americans could take it under control. However, before the battle ended, more than 70,000 American men fought on its eight square miles of lunar terrain, to mark one of the bloodiest battles in history. This is the story of Rollo Eberhardt, a man who fought on Iwo Jima and lived to tell about it.

Iwo Jima was a time I will never forget, because there are just some memories you can't erase. I was a member of the 4th Tank Battalion, part of the 25th Regiment of the Marines, though I was originally drafted by the Navy. When I got to Milwaukee to report for duty, our captain said that the Marine Corps needed men, and as fast as I raised my hand to volunteer, they shipped me to San Diego for training.

By February 1944, I began my training in San Diego at the Marine Recruit Depot. While at the Marine Recruit Depot, every man was subjected to a number of aptitude tests to determine what we were good at. The only thing that seemed to work for me was mechanics, so I signed up for the tank battalion. I had eight weeks of standard boot camp and then another 10 weeks of advanced training at Jacques Farm where I was taught to load, shoot and drive a tank. It was a dust bowl and the conditions were horrible, but little did we know that this was the perfect place for us to train.

By July 1944, all of my training was complete and I was sent overseas to begin my service. I was stationed at Pearl Harbor for the first month out and from there we were to be sent out to fight wherever we were needed. It was here that I received further training to become a scout observer. I did not ask for this position; however now that I look back, I can see that I was lucky. The tanks were death traps.



Granville native Rollo Eberhardt saw the flag raising on Mt. Serabachi, Iwo Jima.

The assignment to Iwo Jima was a surprise to all of us. We didn't know about the island until we got to Saipan. No one had even heard of the place until a week after we left Maui, but if you look at how they were training us, someone had to know what we were getting into. I did not get to Iwo until the fourth day of fighting. I first arrived on a cargo ship and then was transferred to an LSM [Landing Ship Medium] that would take me to the beach.

The beach itself was a dangerous place, scattered with trucks and tanks and many dead Marines. Between the surf and sand was where many men lost their lives. You had to time your descent from the cargo net of the LSM to the water just right.

After many failed attempts, I finally got onto the beach on an ammunition truck. I had never seen a dead body until I got to Iwo, now they were everywhere, and none of them Japanese. I never saw the Japanese; they were all underground in caves and tunnels they had been building for years. They waited until the beach was full of men and then they would open fire. We lost 500 men and 22 officers from the Third Battalion that day - there was nothing we could do.

I was on Iwo for 36 days and let me tell you it was no picnic. We took a real beating. There was no running water, no warm beds and, out of all that time, I only got to change my clothes once. Every morning I woke to the smell of rotten eggs because of the rich sulfur deposits scattered across the island. However, after a few days of fighting, that smell was masked by the stench of rotting flesh. They originally thought we could take the island in a week's time, but after a month we were still fighting. Sure I made friends, but I found out quickly that we never got too close to a buddy, because the next day you could lose him, or it might be you. There was no safe place on that island. All we wanted to do was secure a few air fields, but in the end, it became much more than that.

I was discharged in May 1946 after two and a half years in the service. Though we left all of our tanks, trucks and equipment on the beach, the one thing I couldn't leave behind was the memories. People often ask me if I feel like a hero. Honestly, I don't think I deserve to be called a hero because to me, the real heroes are the men who never came back.

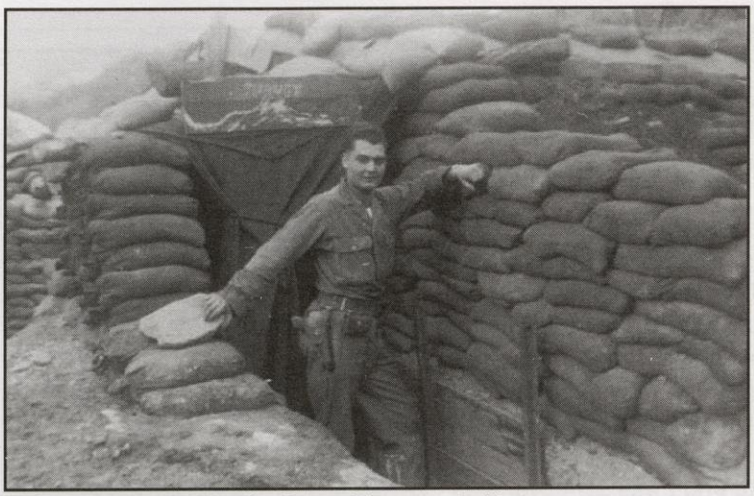
Roman Schommer

As told to Jason Carmody, Ozaukee High School

Motor Pool Mechanic in the Korean War

Roman Schommer was living in Port Washington and only 20 years old when he was drafted into the Army in 1951. He had been married for less than a year when he had to leave her and go to Korea for the Korean War. He was a sergeant in the motor pool which was responsible for fixing broken army vehicles.

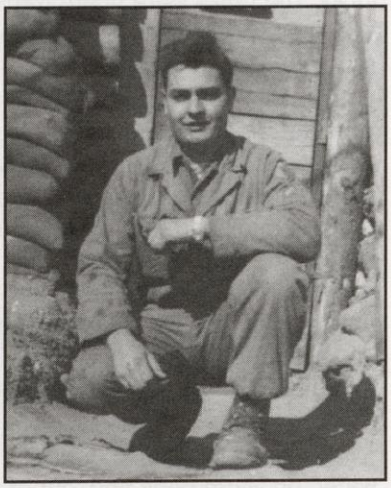
I left Port Washington to go to Oklahoma to learn what I would need to serve in the war. In basic training, I met some guys that I did not know before, and they were from the area so it was easy to talk and become friends with them. After basic training, I went to California where I shipped out to Korea. When I got to Korea, I arrived at a place called Kumhwa Valley on the east side of Korea. While I served, I traveled from east to west along the 38th parallel. It was hard to adapt to the new country at first because there is not very much there. As I was there longer, I got used to the area and that did not become a problem.



It's home sweet bunker for Romy Schommer in Korea.

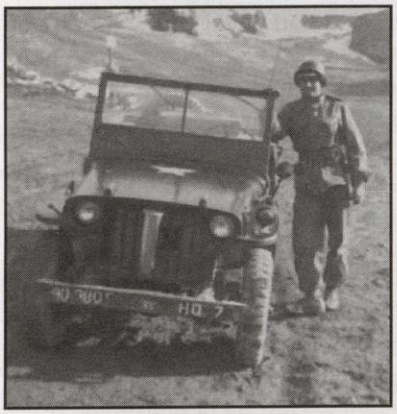
I started as a gun man when I first arrived, but shortly after I became part of the motor pool. In the motor pool, I fixed the vehicles that broke down or were damaged in combat. I was very happy to be part of the motor pool because this kept me out of the front line. I was within a mile or so of the combat so I was not out of the line of fire. I became a sergeant not too long after I was in the motor pool and then I did the paper work for all of the vehicles that were fixed. I came across a small abandoned shack so I had a couple of men drag it up to the base and that became my office.

I served for 13 months when one day I was given my notice that my service time was up and that I could go home. This was the happiest day of my service time. When I came over on the ship I got so sick, and I promised myself that I would not get on another ship again. To get back home, I needed to go on a ship and I didn't even hesitate. I arrived in Washington state, and was able to go home for six weeks. It was great to see my family, whom I had not seen for more than a year. After a 30-day leave, I went to Camp Carson, Col., to finish out my remaining six weeks.



In Korea, 1952.

I received some awards while I served. I was given a Commendation Ribbon and some other medals. Most important of all, I was given an honorable discharge. I also joined the American Legion which I have been a member of for 45 years. I worked for American Can Company in Milwaukee.



Romy and his jeep in Korea.

Serving in the military has given me a different outlook of the military in general. There was one thing that I could not understand and it made me kind of mad. The shrapnel in the bombs that the Koreans had was made in the United States. That meant that we were kind of supplying the enemy. The Koreans also had a one-caliber-higher gun that meant that they could use our ammo and their ammunition in the same guns, but we could only use our own ammo.

My service time positively affected my life. All the things that I saw in Korea made me much more appreciative of what we have over here. Seeing how poorly the Koreans are treated there made me remember how lucky we are to live in a country that treats its citizens so well.

Dr. Robert Jacobs

As told to Greylen Erlacher, Homestead High School

Medical Technician in the Korean War

Dr. Robert Jacobs of Thiensville served during the Korean War from 1954 to 1955. As a podiatrist and medical technician, Dr. Jacobs aided many soldiers. PFC Jacobs, stationed at Oi Jung Bu, Korea, served in the 43rd Surgical Hospital, Mobile Army. At the time of Dr. Jacobs' service, the Korean Armistice was signed, yet a peace treaty was not, and still has not been, signed.

Days after marrying my wife, I received a personal invitation from President Truman, beginning "Greetings!" and calling me into the military service. I unenthusiastically packed my belongings and was inducted, ultimately ending up in Uijongbu, Korea, the summer capitol of the Ancient Kings just north of Seoul.

Medical service in the military was extremely important. Although I did not have to serve in the front line or even encounter the enemy because the Geneva Convention forbade medics and non-combatants to carry arms, soldiers needed my assistance at all times. Patients with bullet wounds, burns and upper respiratory infections were constantly admitted into the hospital. Many times, we, the medical staff, took cultures for a disease which was indeterminable either because the infection was so inflamed or foreign to American medicine. All medical attention was also given as it came.

(right) Dr. Jacobs in Korea while serving at the 43rd Surgical Hospital, Mobile Army.

In Korea, land mines were very prevalent. Despite popular belief, Korea has a very cold winter, very warm summer and a rainy season in between. During the rainy season, land mines would shift because the sandy ground would turn into masses of moving mud. Even if you had a map of the land mines, you were still in trouble.

A unique tactic in the Korean War was the "Bouncing Betty," or land mines built with the intention not to kill, but rather to keep the soldiers out of action. By disabling one soldier, it took one or two more soldiers to clear the original man from the field. Many injuries that I tended to were the result of land mines.

I vividly remember one patient who came in steaming and smelling of burning flesh. Upon asking what happened, I discovered the soldier was instructing others on the use of phosphorous grenades when one exploded in his hand, resulting in phosphorous burns all over his body. Phosphorous burns hotter with oxygen, and immediately we started covering the burning man with thick mud to stop the oxygen from further burning his skin. Only his nostrils remained uncovered. Surgeons worked on the patient, removing six square inches of mud at a time to perform the necessary surgeries within that small area. He was shipped home for further medical care and released from the service. We received word a few weeks later that, although badly burned, he had survived.

A cartoon drawn by Dr. Jacobs, 1954.

Life in Korea was difficult, but the soldiers in the Army's medical field received relatively good food, housing and treatment. My unit inspired the movie and television show, "M*A*S*H," (a highly Hollywood-ized and inaccurate version of war life). I remember always keeping a pair of clean, dry socks in my front breast pocket because the most important key to surviving Army life in somewhat good condition was to keep my feet warm and dry.

Since returning home, I went back to Korea with my wife in 1992. Reunions were never set up for the Korean War, as far as I am aware. It is demoralizing that our efforts as soldiers were part of the awful "Forgotten War." After I returned to America, I more fully recognized the freedom that we have here in this country and the sense of security that has surrounded us, until now. Service also brings about a great level of maturity. I would recommend the services to young adults of the current generation, but in a different way. I think that each citizen owes something to his or her country. I believe that citizens should give back in some form, whether through the military, Peace Corps, Indian reservations or other public service. No matter what a person's physical or mental capacities, he or she can do something!

Garth "Bill" Hoffmann

As told to Mike Schroeder, Cedarburg High School

Radioman on the Navy's First LST Aircraft Carrier

Mr. Garth Hoffmann volunteered for induction into the United States Navy during World War II with hopes of becoming a fighter pilot, but poor eyesight sent him in a new direction. After completing radio school at Northwestern University, Mr. Hoffmann became a radio man on the Navy's first LST Aircraft Carrier.

After our shake down cruise, the Navy announced we were going to be fitted out as a special ship, but we didn't know what kind. After months of refitting, we became the Navy's first LST Aircraft Carrier for small planes.

While stationed in San Diego, I received a package from home, inside was a small evergreen tree that my dad had potted along with Christmas tree lights. The tree went aboard with us to Pearl Harbor, Honolulu. One evening we were on deck gathered around the tree singing Christmas carols. We didn't know someone had seen and heard us, and it was broadcast on NBC about the ship with the little lighted Wisconsin Christmas Tree.

Bill saw the flag raising on Mt. Serabachi.

We ended up at Saipan, where we were part of the invasion fleet for Iwo Jima. Then the radio message came, and the ships started streaming out. Iwo Jima wasn't far away, and it only took a few days to get there.

We were the closest beached ship to Mt. Serabachi. We would sit with binoculars and watch the hillside, which the Japanese had tunneled out with caves. We would see them roll a door open, push a cannon out, shoot two or three times and roll the door shut again. Then we would radio to our destroyers, and they would shoot point blank at the caves with five-inch guns.

That was where the flag raising was, also, and I saw that with my naked eye. I was up in the conning tower, which was my battle station, and we actually saw the raising of the flag.

There was a greyish-black sand on the beaches, composed of some kind of volcanic ash, so if you would step, sometimes you wouldn't even move at all. The dirt would move, but you wouldn't. The first few days the Marines never advanced very far at all because the Japanese would pop out of the caves, shoot and then disappear again.

We later were sent to the invasion of Okinawa. As we left we went to general quarters again because there were kamikazes in the area. It didn't take long to realize that there was one heading right for us. I just got up on deck, right behind the conning tower. I could see the kamikaze coming straight at us, but he was staying down near the deck, close to the water because the radar wouldn't pick him up, and no fighter planes could dive down on him. Just when he was about to hit us, he had to come up to go back down on us. He came up, and when he did, three Corsair airplanes came diving in at him, each one taking a crack. When the third one went at him, he blew up.

Just hanging out with the guys (Bill is far left).

As a radio operator, my job was to send and receive messages. I used a typewriter called a mill, because it was all capital letters. Then all of the messages would be broadcast, and there would be figures in them, telling you if you should be copying them. All the messages came in groups of five, and then they had to be decoded to find out what they were about. We even had special headphones so that you could listen to more than one radio at a time. When a message would start, you had to realize that you had to type that message and not the other two or three that you were listening to.

Since retiring from the hardware business in 1988, Mr. Hoffmann has enjoyed many recreational activities. He has been a member of Cedarburg's Volunteer Fire Department since 1960 and has held positions as high as assistant chief.

Harold Lehner As told to Laurie Arendt

Prepared for the Invasion of Japan

When Harold Lehner was drafted, the United States was preparing for further efforts in the Pacific Theater. As a new recruit, Mr. Lehner's training focused on mountain and jungle warfare - training necessary for when, and if, the United States invaded Japan.

I was right out of high school when I was drafted. I was expecting it, and I had originally wanted to join the Navy but my parents wouldn't let me. My cousin, Bobby, was in the Navy and I thought I could somehow get in with him.

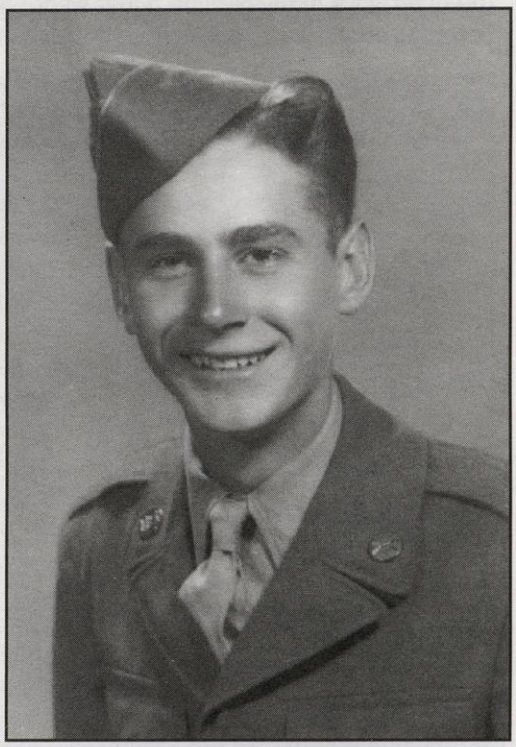
After I reported to Ft. Sheridan, which was where just about anyone from Wisconsin departed through at the time, I was sent to on to basic training. We only had nine weeks of basic training, which was the shortest training period in Army history. They needed us to be ready for the invasion of Japan.

Advanced training was on weapons, including machine guns and bazookas. They figured we'd need it. We left Ft. Ord, Calif., where we boarded a brand-new ship, the USS General Brewster. We thought we'd be in a convoy, which was how troops and equipment travelled. But once we left the California, we were out on our own.

We ended up fueling up outside of Pearl Harbor, and we didn't even go into port. They brought the tanker out to us. We headed farther out in the Pacific. Our ship remained on blackout the whole time because it was wartime. We were only allowed on deck for short periods of time for fresh air.

We were going from island to island along the China coast when we learned that we'd dropped the bomb. We learned about such news through a mimeographed newspaper that came out on board. That was the same paper that reported our initial spotting of a Japanese submarine.

Our ship actually spotted two submarines - whether it was the same sub twice, I don't know - but the subs never attacked. They probably knew something was going on or perhaps they just didn't have the ammunition.



Harold grew up in the Town of Milwaukee (now roughly Glendale) and was drafted at 18.

Because there was no invasion, the first land we saw was at Leyte Beach, which was an absolute mess. Some of our men disembarked, and the rest of us went up to Manila through the islands with a minesweeper ahead of us.

Harold (left) ran into his old neighbor from home while stationed in Manila. The U.S.O. took this photo for the two friends.

I got off at South Harbor in Manila and was trucked up to Clark Field. I later became part of the Headquarters Port with the 670th Medium Port Company. While I was there, I ran into an old neighbor of mine from home who had moved to Michigan. He was serving with the military policeman a few miles away from me. I had no idea he was there until we ran into each other.

I served 13 months overseas before I was discharged. I brought home two Japanese rifles (with a live round) and a set of radios from the Army Signal Corps that General MacArthur used in the Philippines. I also attended Manila's Independence celebration on July 4, 1946, and still have souvenirs from that. I had a pet monkey, Jimmy, and I really wanted to bring him home as well, but I couldn't.

After returning home, I took flying lessons at Mitchell Field and joined the 126th Fighter Wing. I bought a plane and kept it out at the Brown Deer Airport. I did quite a bit of flying. I also had my own pool company, and poured many of the residential pools in the area. I am now retired and enjoy spending time with my grandchildren.

Earle Mueller

As told to André Morrell, Cedarburg High School

Airplane mechanic during World War II

Earle Mueller, a Cedarburg resident his entire life, left high school at the beginning of the second semester in his senior year. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps division out of interest, and, being qualified, he had hoped to fly in the cadets.

I ended up in New Guinea building airstrips and working on airplane engines. I was never trained for it. Like the other guys in my division, I just went and did it. The military did things differently in those days; on-the-job-training I guess you'd call it. We just hopped on a ship, got dumped off on a shore, and told to "go do your job."

Earle Mueller in World War II.

A lot of times we didn't know what we were getting into. Many of the guys, including me, were farm boys. We had mechanical abilities but that was about it. At that time, the Army was a goofed up mess. It was lucky to have a bunch of guys like me: dumb, young fellas who'd do just about anything. I think the Army hoped that by getting us over there we'd know how to do the job. We knew nothing about what was going on in the "main" office and I doubt whether they really knew what we were doing.

It was kind of rough at times, but we made it. The Japanese didn't want to let go of the Philippines and we needed those islands. As we moved north, we began running into the more experienced Japanese soldiers. These soldiers were a real danger, especially in the jungle. They were loaded with ammunition and would sneak into our camps and throw a few grenades around. But the aborigines, who we made friends with, went out to look things over. These people lived in the jungle and knew their business - we didn't. I think they could smell people which helped us a lot. We'd ask them to go find the Japanese soldiers and bring them to us. They would bring us prisoners alright, mostly their heads.

Then came the big one: Okinawa. We were in combat and whatnot. I learned to dig holes real fast and get out of the way. It was just one of those things; it wasn't glamorous like in the movies. But, I got through it OK. I remember the typhoon that came. I had never experienced a storm like that. To get ready, we staked the planes to point into the wind and tied down what we could. We worked very hard and didn't get a chance to sleep for a couple of days. I was so tired, that when we were done, I crawled into one of the hillside tombs and went to sleep. These tombs were where the natives buried their people. The bodies would deteriorate and then they put the bones in jars which were kept on the shelves. It was an eerie place, but I was safe from the typhoon. When the storm was over, we assessed the damage. We lost very few planes but we did lose our tower. The wind indicator broke at 170 mph - now that's a breeze!

I wrote letters to my family. Of course they were all censored, something that was, as far as I'm concerned, stupid. My mom saved my letters - as she did everything I sent home.

After the war ended, I was sent to Japan to tour the factories and mark machines that were used for the war effort. My two interpreters were Japanese women who were schooled in the U.S. From brushing shoulders with them and others, I got the feeling that the average Japanese person didn't care much for this war.

Before I enlisted and was sent overseas, I traveled out of Cedarburg only once in my life. I think there were a lot of people like me. No one traveled, much less knew what the other side of the world was like. Today, the world is so close with the news media. In the 1940s and before, we didn't know what was going on in the world. So I'd say the war broadened my mind. I probably would have been a backwoods farmer. WWII changed my whole life.

After returning home, Mr. Mueller returned to Cedarburg High School to finish his senior year. He went on to Milwaukee State Teacher's College [now UW-Milwaukee], MATC, and became a wood patternmaker. He also played trombone in a big band and violin with State Teacher's College. Later in life, he worked for a sign company. One of his jobs was to construct and place the letters on top of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Milwaukee. He is now 77 and retired, living at home with his wife of 46 years, Frieda, and their two black labs.

Carlton Kirst

As told to Ben Janczak and Pete Hendrickson, Homestead High School

Radio Operator during World War II

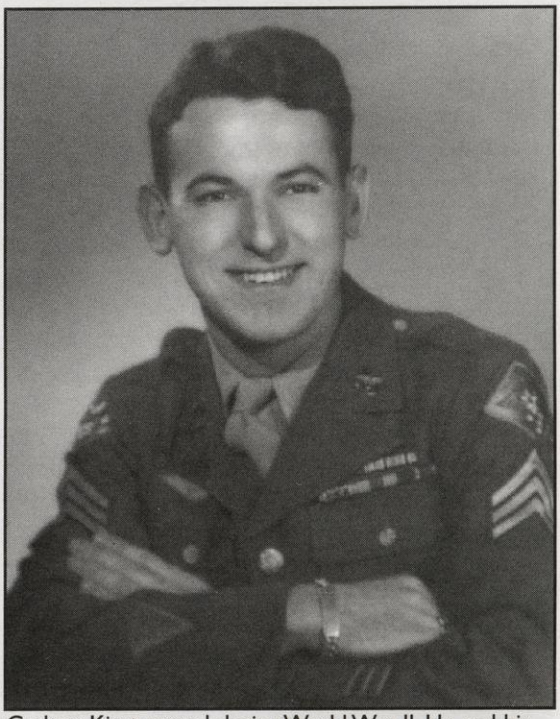
Sergeant Technician Carlton Kirst was a member of the 595th Signal Air Warning Battalion attached to the 13th Fighter Command of the Far East Air Force During World War II. His MOS [military occupational specialty] was radio operation. From 1943 to 1946, he served in the States and the South Pacific. For his three years of service in the war, he received a number of ribbons, metals and battle stars.

After I was drafted and went through basic training, I was sent to Camp Crowder, Mo., for radio training. There I was taught how to operate a radio key. Messages were sent by lifting and lowering the hand key. If you tapped the key down, you got a "dot"; if you held it down, you got a "dash". We learned the International Morse Code to send and receive messages. Each letter and number had its own dash-and-dot combination.

At Camp Crowder we learned low-speed radio operation, and we were able to send and receive messages by hand at a rate of eight to 10 words per minute (each "word" encoded consisted of five characters). In Kansas City, I went through high-speed radio operation training, which allowed sending and receiving at 15 to 25 WPM and greater. I also learned how to use a high-speed key (or "bug") for sending.

There were many different levels of expertise among the guys. The first thing you learned in radio operation was that you operated at the speed of the lowest operator. If you had a network of five guys and one guy could only operate at 10 WPM and everyone else could do 25 WPM, you would still only operate the net at 10 WPM. And if you wanted to get a lot of work done that day, that guy wasn't very popular.

In Florida I completed six months of South Pacific training. This was to get us ready for the snake- and bug-infested regions in the South Pacific. However, I have often said that when I went to New Guinea I found fewer bugs and snakes than in Florida.



Carlton Kirst served during World War II. He and his father, a World War I veteran, can be found on the cover of our book.

In New Guinea, the only enemy that was around when we arrived were the Japanese who were isolated up the coast. The Aussie and American infantry had driven them back into the jungle. Though starving, they would not surrender, having been told they would be killed if they did. Hungry, they were getting pretty desperate, too. Occasionally they would try to sneak into our chow lines and were usually caught. Because it rained much of the time in New Guinea, we all wore ponchos that covered us up pretty well. When they wrapped themselves up in a poncho and put a helmet on, it was hard to tell who they were.

Shortly after landing in the Philippines, our assignment was to assist in setting up and operating a Fighter Control Center near Clark Field, 30 miles north of Manila. We collected data by radio from radar installations around the coast of Luzon Island. This data described friendly, unknown and hostile aircraft activity for possible defensive action by our fighter aircraft, antiaircraft artillery and other ground units. The region we protected included the major U.S. air base at Clark Field and the headquarters in Manila of the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Forces in the Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur.

In December 1945, I left Manila and returned to the United States. It is very hard to describe the job, excitement and relief I experienced at the sight of the lights atop the Golden Gate Bridge at San Francisco in the pre-dawn light in that January 1946 morning. I was home in the United States after nearly three weeks at sea and a year and a half overseas.

Carlton's journey was long and rewarding. His efforts, along with those of the other American soldiers in the Pacific Theatre, helped the Allied Forces to defeat the Japanese. After the war, he separated from the service at Camp McCoy near Sparta. His family consists of a daughter, Suzanne (deceased) and a son, Gregory. He is currently retired and living life to the fullest with his wife in Mequon.

George Watts

Interviewed by Justin Nelsen, Ozaukee High School

Air Observer in the Pacific Theater

The Watts family was living in Whitefish Bay during World War II. With the prompting of his parents, George Watts enlisted in the Marine Corps and soon found himself leaving Wisconsin for boot camp in San Diego.

My mother and father made it very clear that anyone who waited around to be drafted was craven and a yellow coward. My parents also told me and my brother that we would be expected to pay room and board if we didn't go in the service. I saw an ad on a Milwaukee street car for the Marine Corps, and that's what compelled me to join that particular branch of the military.

I was sworn in in Milwaukee and endured a four-day train ride to San Diego. The City of San Diego was covered with barrage balloons, surrounded by antiaircraft units and there were P-38s flying over the city. They were clearly waiting for an attack by the Japanese. The streets of San Diego were full of Marines and sailors - hardly any civilians to be seen, though I do remember that the Roosevelt children who were in the service were highly visible. You could feel the tension in the air.

Our group was made up of volunteers from Wisconsin and Texas and we were still dressed in our civilian clothes. I remember the Drill Instructor greeted us with, "I've never had such a dumb group of [pejorative word]. You volunteered for this; you've got to be stupid." We weren't stupid; we were very patriotic and a little scared. My mother prayed for me every night and I felt her prayers.

I've always found it hard to believe that I was the 454,168th Marine to ever serve. Back then, our serial numbers were issued in order of our enlistment. The numbering system changed shortly after I became a Marine.

As privates, we were paid $21 a month, and we had a lot of expenses. Out of that $21, I remember having to pay for a washbucket and a bar of soap. Marine training was wonderfully demanding. We learned the Marine tradition of "Semper Fi," which means "always faithful." We learned the importance of being loyal to our president, as our oath indicated, but especially to our fellow Marines.

I wanted to join the Paratroopers or a Ranger outfit, but because I had done well on the aptitude tests, I was sent to radar school at Utah State Agricultural College in Logan, Utah. It was such a disappointment for me, but in retrospect, it saved me from being in the worst fighting of all - in the Marianas, Okinawa and Iwo Jima. Had I been at Iwo Jima, I probably would've died.

After radar school, I was sent to the Marine Air Corps in Cherry Point, N.C., where I trained to be an Aerial Gunner on a PB4Y (also known as a B-24). We did photographic training missions along the eastern seaboard. I remember we lost one plane during that time - it was tough to wake up in the morning and see that your buddies weren't there. It seemed, however, that we were going to be stationed there forever. I received a notification of a Platoon Leaders School for non-commissioned officers (because so many Second Lieutenants had been killed) and I jumped at the chance, which sent me to Quantico, Va.

I was actually on my first liberty the afternoon I met my future wife, Martie. I fell in love with her at once. I remember her dad asked me where I had slept the night before, and I told him I had slept on the floor of an armory for 50 cents. He said, "That won't happen again. You're coming home with us." He was a World War I combat veteran, and while he was deeply suspicious of me at first because I didn't drink, he got used to that after awhile.

I was sent back to San Diego and transferred by ship to Oahu in an officer replacement draft. They only took "A through K" and as a "W," I wasn't needed. I then received training as an Air Observer, which meant that I flew in the back of a dive bomber and was trained to direct bombardment during the prospective Marine landing in Kyushu on Nov. 1, 1945. I was to be part of the planned invasion of Japan, but I was still in Oahu when blessed President Truman dropped the bomb on Nagasaki. The invasion was called off because they surrendered.

I was flown to Japan via Wake Island, then Midway and on to Guam and Sasebo. I was one of the first to walk through the ruins of Nagasaki, which is located in a mountain valley, and the blast went right up the valley. It smelled terrible. But the destruction in Nagasaki was minor compared to the B-29 firebombing of Tokyo, which had occurred weeks before. When I flew over Tokyo on the way to Sasebo, it was miles and miles of orange roof tile - the tiles were from the Japanese homes that were burned to the ground. The Japanese had paid a terrible price even before the atomic bomb was dropped.

After the war ended and the occupation began, much to the horror of my Regimental Commander, I flew as the regimental courier to deliver mail all over Kyushu. I was required to fly four hours a month to receive flight pay, which was a significant amount back then, and I saved every bit of it. I returned to the States with 39 points, along with thousands of other Marines who had also earned enough points to be discharged. I married Martie 21 days after coming home.

Myron Thompson

As told to Shawn Warren, Cedarburg High School

Engineer for the Alcan Highway and Bomb Disposer in the Pacific

Fresh out of UW-Madison with a degree in Engineering, Myron Thompson joined a war effort to build the Alcan Highway in Alaska to thwart possible Japanese attack from above. After a year of working on the Alcan, Myron enlisted with the Navy in January 1943.

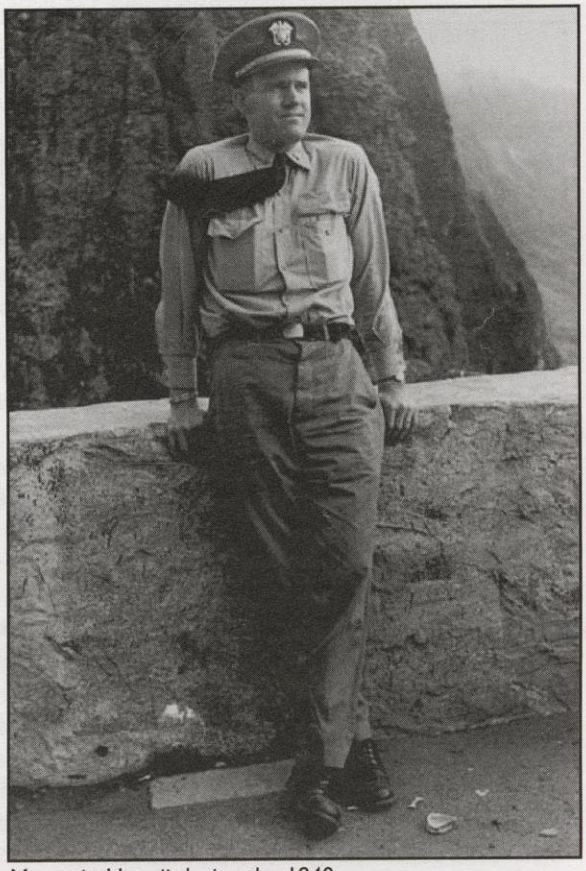
Being a structural engineer on the Alcan Highway project in Alaska was not an easy job. The topography of Alaska was a difficult and unforgiving place to build a highway. The only thing more unforgiving than the terrain was the weather. I remember we were working out there during one of the coldest winters on record. The highest temperature was 48 degrees below zero. The harsh conditions weren't all bad. When the lakes froze it was much easier to build bridges over them.

After I finished the Alcan, my goal was to join an engineering pool in the Navy. I enlisted as soon as I could and in January 1943 I was off to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. After a lot of hard training, I was inducted into the Navy on March 21, 1944.

From there I was immediately sent to Fort Skyler in Bronx, N.Y., to receive assignment. At first I was assigned to command a small landing craft like the ones used during the assault on Normandy. Luckily, a man from bomb-disposal was there looking for volunteers, as it was a very high-risk job that few wanted to do. I knew the risk involved, but I volunteered anyway. I soon found myself in Washington, D.C., for 13 weeks of bomb-disposal training.

The training was one of the most difficult experiences of my life. In place of bombs, we had to diffuse fireworks. If the firework went off, you failed. It was very nerve-wracking, but you needed to be able to work under pressure to diffuse bombs. After all, if you fail on a real bomb then it's all over, you can't just walk away. I am proud to say I never set off a firework during my training.

After completing the training I became a member of The Mobile Explosive Investigation Unit Number Four stationed out of Pearl Harbor. My job was to travel with my unit from island to island in the Philippines and dispose of any live explosives remaining from battles to render safe landing areas for occupational forces. The explosives were eliminated in two ways.



Myron in Hawaii during the 1940s.

The first method was used primarily on beaches. C4, a plastic explosive, was placed on the live explosive. Then, someone stuck a fuse in it, lit it, and ran for cover as fast as their legs would carry them. The second method, used in cities, was more dangerous by far. The explosive object in question was opened up by a rope and pulley attached to the fuse. The person defusing the bomb then went behind a barrier and used the rope to manipulate the wrench and gradually pull out the fuse. Any sudden movements and the explosives would go off. Then the now fairly harmless, but still potentially dangerous, bomb was placed on a machine called a "Steam Jenny" which created a blast of steam that melted the explosives, finally rendering it helpless.

I experienced fear only once. By some stroke of luck, the United States recovered a completely intact Kamikaze bomb during a battle on one of the Philippine islands. It was a bomb containing more than 1,000 pounds of explosives placed in the nose of a fighter, intended for ramming United States battleships. I was assigned to diffuse this thing. I had heard stories of the Bomb Disposal units in Europe finding explosives that, when tampered with, were booby trapped to go off. Being the first to defuse a bomb of this kind, I was worried that it contained this sort of mechanism. Uneasy as I was, I held myself together. I was lucky. The bomb was not booby trapped in any way.

After my time was up I went back home to my wife, had seven children and worked as a civil engineer in Duluth and Milwaukee for 40 years. I enjoyed my position as Cedarburg Town Clerk from 1971 until 1998. I have retired from that position and am enjoying my free time.

Maj. Glenn Dohrmann, ret.

As told to Casem AbuLughod,
Ozaukee Homeschool Student

Platoon Leader and Company Commander

Glenn Dohrmann joined the Army shortly after the end of World War II. He joined out of a sense of patriotic duty instilled in him while he was growing up. His brother had served in both England and Germany during WWII.

I was sworn in at Fort Snelling, Minn., on Jan. 17, 1946. I enjoyed basic training and I felt that it was a good experience. Having been a farm boy toughened me and made it easier for me during training. I was able to rise earlier than anyone else and have my chores done, too, because that's how it was on the farm.

One evening my sergeant came into the tent that I shared with 40 other men from my platoon and asked whether any of us would like to take the test to join Officer Candidate School. We promptly chased the sergeant out amid much jeering. After thinking about it the whole tentful decided, since the sergeant was such a nice guy, we would all try out for OCS. All 40 of us took the test, 39 passed and 12 of us passed the board and physical examinations.

Glenn Dohrmann receives the Purple Heart, 1953.

I was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Infantry. My first orders were to the Army of Occupation in Korea, where I would spend two years manning outposts at the 38th Parallel, which divided North and South Korea.

During the Christmas season before I arrived the Army officers and their Russian counterparts had celebrated together. Soon after I arrived I was given a briefing and tour of the surrounding area by a CIA officer. The officer saw two Russians he recognized. When he waved, the Russian officers shook their fists angrily. This surprised the CIA man. Shortly after, the Americans received orders that there was to be no more fraternizing with any Russians. To me, this was when the Cold War began.

During my tour of duty with the Army of Occupation, I participated in Korea's first free election. I was in charge of a unit that was assigned to the city of Chuminjin to help keep peace. My men and I were called out twice. The first time, one of the candidates on the ballot was attacked. His home had been bombed by members of the Communist party. The candidate was killed and some of his family were injured. The second call was the same. This time however, the candidate and his family escaped with minor injuries.

After serving for two years in the Army of Occupation I was assigned to Ft. Ord, Calif. A new program called the "Leader's Course" had been created for officers and non-commissioned officers. I was an instructor there for 19 months. Because the program was new, we were continually inspected by high ranking officers and to keep us even more on our toes, instructors were graded by the students. In this way, the instructors became a highly respected team for the quality of our work.

In 1950 I was sent to help set up another "Leader's Course" at Camp Brekinridge, Ky. We were to train men going to serve in the Korean War. Several months later, I was given orders to ship out for Korea. Leaving behind my newlywed wife, I ended up spending eight months on the front lines of Korea. What is combat? Well, combat is hell. Combat is a constant barrage of what-ifs and close calls. It makes you want to write a letter every single day, to keep a connection with your family and other loved ones. During the Korean War, a letter from a soldier took three weeks to reach wherever it was sent and another three weeks for any reply to come back.

I was wounded when my company was caught in a trap while assaulting "Old Baldy." I was shot three times and lost 77 percent of my men in the attack. After I was wounded, I was sent home to recover. I did not return to the war, having been in hospitals more than nine months.

I served in the Army for several more years, joined the Reserves and retired as a Major. My wife and I moved to Wisconsin, where we raised our family and I worked in the insurance business. I am an active member of my church and have given war history presentations in Cedarburg, where we currently reside.

Raymond Tiegs

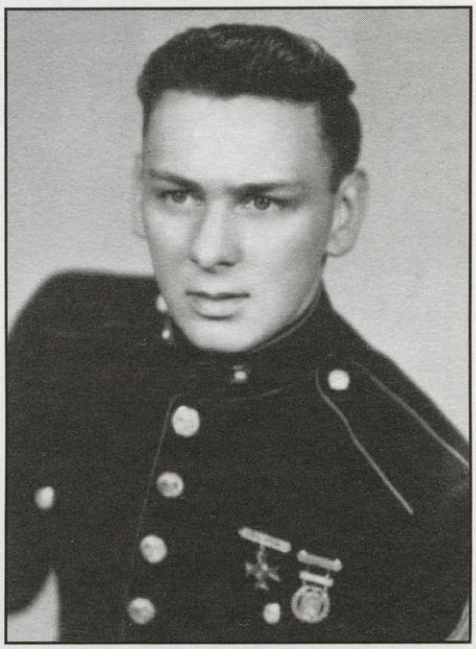
As told to Gillian DeGroot,
Grafton High School

Part of the First Marine Group to Land in Korea

Grafton native Ray Tiegs had just turned 19 when he enlisted in 1948. He decided it was time to meet new people and try new things. Following in his brother's footsteps, he chose to become a Marine. He ultimately ended up serving one year in the Navy Reserves, four years in the Marine Corps and three years in the Marine Corps Reserves. Ray has had many amazing stories and experiences.

I started out my Marine career in boot camp at Parris Island in South Carolina. It lasted 12 weeks. This time was pretty rough, but I stuck with it, and I made Private First Class when I came out of boot camp. My advice for any Marine-to-be is to keep your mouth shut, do not wise off and do what you are told but never volunteer.

After boot camp I was sent to Camp Pendleton where I began working for Brigadier General H.B. Liversedge from October 1948 to March 1949. I was then transferred to M.C.R.D. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot) in San Diego where I became a clerk and fireman. I also attended fireman school. I had spent about eight months in San Diego when five of us were ordered back to Camp Pendleton.



Ray Tiegs was with the Fifth Marines during the Korean War.

The war came on pretty fast and no one was sure where it was going to go. Three weeks after I returned to Camp Pendleton, I was on a ship going to Korea along with about 5,000 other Marines. The ship was a new and exciting experience for me - it kind of felt like riding on a roller coaster for the first time.

I was with the Fifth Marines, Third Battalion, H&S Company. The plan was for us to arrive in Japan and get supplies, but the war advanced so quickly that we were taken right into Korea. We arrived on Aug. 2, 1950 and were to help the Army. Our brigade was used to plug the holes in the line, force the North Korean army back and take new ground. After six weeks, we pulled out and joined the First Marines Division for the Inchon Landing.

We landed at Wolme-do Island, where the tide rose more than 35 feet in 24 hours, after taking Inchon, Kimpo Air Field and the capital, Seoul. We later loaded up and sailed to Wonsan. After we landed there, we went north to the border of North Korea and China. Our Division went about 100 miles to Yudam-ni, which was part of the Chosin Reservoir. The Chinese hit us around midnight on Nov. 27, 1950, which was part of a hit across Korea from coast to coast.

We held our ground and that opened all the lines that had been breached. Our Army was on one flank and the Republic of Korea army was on the other; both pulled back and left our Division hanging. We discovered that we were trapped and began the long two-week trip to the sea down mountain roads under gunfire. We ended up walking about 86 miles in 30 to 40 degrees below zero, on one-lane mountain roads. Three-thousand men were killed or wounded, and others had frozen hands, feet or other exposed body parts. I was lucky because my injuries were minor and my frostbite did not require amputation.

I had about two weeks of rest and got more supplies at Pusan, but because of all the men that had been lost, I was put back on the line and headed back up north.

I remember once when I was on guard duty, there was a Chinese man on top of a hill. He was blowing his bugle and yelling profanities at us. The Chinese then charged and we retreated a few hundred yards down the road. When I finally returned to my post, my down sleeping bag was just a pile of feathers because the Chinese had thrown a grenade in it.

I saw death all around me in Korea. I really began to admire the Marines for how they took care of their wounded and dead. Even in the most gruesome situations, the Marines would always go out for the dead to retrieve them.

My buddies and I were relieved a few months later, and I returned to the United States in April 1951. My new assignment was at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard where I was responsible for Marine training until my discharge.

My time in the service gave me the opportunity to see and experience new things. I played baseball in the service for a farm-club team. We played against the San Diego Padres, which were not yet major league.

I ended my career in the Marines as a Sergeant on April 5, 1952.

W.E. "Bill" Lang

As told to Mike Priaulx, Cedarburg High School

Crew Member of the USS Ringgold

At the beginning of WWII, Bill Lang was a junior in college, living in Idaho. He enlisted in the Navy and served on the USS Ringgold.

The war, as we all know, started on Dec.7, 1941. There was so much going on, and none of the fellows knew what was going to happen to them. Several branches of the service came to interview and recruit people for service. First, the Army/Army Air Corps came and then the regular Army. If I would have been drafted, there was no telling where I'd end up, so a couple fellows and I decided to see what the Navy had to offer. We liked what we saw, and we were promised a commission if we made the grade.

I graduated from midshipman's school at Northwestern University in Chicago and joined the crew of a destroyer, the USS Ringgold. I chose to be on a destroyer and not a carrier because it was the difference between living in Milwaukee or New York; a carrier was just too big.

Bill chose to serve on a destroyer because he thought a carrier was just too big.

In 1944, the Ringgold was sent to Iwo Jima in Task Force 38. This was when the Japanese started to use kamikazes. There were more destroyers lost at Okinawa than throughout the entire war in the Pacific. We were on the outer edge, and these kamikaze planes wanted to get at the carriers. However, if they were hit, their last resort would be to at least take out a destroyer. If a kamikaze plane hit a destroyer in the right place, the destroyer could easily sink.

I never felt scared; whatever happens, happens. At times, the kamikaze planes were so heavy, you couldn't tell if you were hitting them or if someone else was. There were several hundred kamikazes, and some of them crashed only 100 yards off our ship.

One night, I was down in the combat information center, and I heard the guys hollering, "Here it comes, here it comes!" A Japanese plane was headed right at us, maybe 25 feet above the water. Sheew, he went right by us. He was heading toward the larger ships. Our task group always had at least four planes in the sky at any given time, and after pinpointing this incoming plane, one of our planes knocked it out.

The skipper called us into the wardroom and told us we had a special run to make. Our Division (four destroyers) was sent into Sarugawan Bay. Because we were the division flag, we were the lead ship. It was a bright, moonlit night. With the use of radar, we were able to determine that the Japanese were tracking us all the way in. We could have put up radar countermeasures, but there was no necessity for it. They had us, and if they had the artillery, they could have opened up anytime. Later, we surmised that we were sent into the bay just to see if the Japanese would open fire upon us, and if they did, we'd have to plot wherever the shore emplacements were. With the bright, moonlit night, they could see us as plain as anything, but they didn't open up.

The phosphorescence on the wake of the ship was just beautiful. We went all the way into the bay. And when we got there, looking down at us was Mount Fuji. It was like a picture post card. When we got all the way to the tip, we made a turn to the port and opened fire on a smelting plant. For five minutes, we shot five-inch shells, just one round after another. On our way out, we picked up a radar blip from shore. It was determined that there were some small vessels coming out at us. The Japanese not only used kamikaze planes, but also boats filled with dynamite. Again we opened fire, and after about five minutes, whatever it was disappeared. Because of this run, the Ringgold came the closest of any Allied ships to the mainland of Japan during the war.

About 15 years ago, I received a letter from some of the fellows I served with. They were holding a reunion in Ohio. When I got there, I didn't recognize anyone. After 40 years, holy man! It was the most tear-jerking meeting I've ever gone to. We were very close.

After the war, Bill Lang returned home to Milwaukee and joined his family's floral business. Now a great-grandfather, Mr. Lang lives in Mequon.

Chuck Sandoval

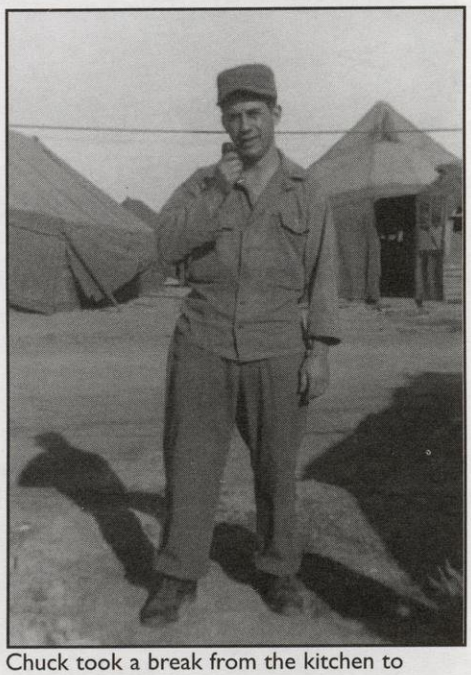
As told to Katie Grevenow, Cedarburg High School

Cook during the Korean War

From 1951 to 1953, Chuck Sandoval devoted his life to his beloved country, the United States of America. He served as a corporal in the Korean War, working as a cook for Army officers at the Taegu outfit in Korea. I sat with Mr. Sandoval and his wife in their kitchen as he recalled his memories from the years he spent in the Army.

I was drafted when I was 22, which was old to be going into the service. I missed the first draft for World War II because I was 18, and the war was coming to an end. It didn't bother me that I was drafted. I was glad to go. I went in with a crop of hair, but on the first day they took us through the barber for buzz cuts.

The basic training was pretty rough. It teaches young men to go into combat and protect their country. On the rifle range, one of my sergeants used to tell us, "You either kill or be killed." It got a little hectic at times. During basic training we had to go under barbed-wire fences with live ammunition above us. One guy, crawling on the ground, was so scared that he jumped up and was killed. You have accidents; you can't get away from them.



Chuck took a break from the kitchen to enjoy his pipe.

Once, I tried to hitchhike home from Fort Leonardwood, Mo., the area where I was being trained. I got 50 miles away, but that was as far as I got. Then, I went back because I only had a weekend pass, and I didn't have enough time. There were five of us from Milwaukee, and on our 36-hour leaves, we jumped into a car and sped home.

After the 10 weeks of basic training, we were given our assignments. Everybody wanted to go to Germany, away from the war; I went to Korea. Ten of us replacements - guys green behind the ears - arrived in Pusan, Korea. At two o'clock in the morning we were in the mess hall, and all of a sudden we heard gunfire. One of the sergeants said, "We gotta take cover." That was my first night in Korea.

My job assignment was to be one of six cooks serving about 60 officers. One day, I was wearing my wedding ring, and it got lost in the bread dough. I'll never forget that. We were in the combat zone. Our barracks were cold in the winter and very hot in the summer. I wrote to my wife every day, but everyday it was the same. Nothing changed.

I was stationed at the largest landing strip in Korea. They had new jets there. My buddies and I would sit and watch these jets take off over our heads. Twenty of them would go to the front line to drop bombs and such, but only 18 or 19 would come back. You see a lot of stuff you don't like to see. So many never came back in all the wars. Those are the ones you feel sorry for, and the families who lose them.

Though he spent much of his time in the mess hall, Chuck was equally as comfortable here.

When you leave the United States, the last thing you see is the San Francisco Bridge, and you know you're leaving. I was nervous; you get nervous and scared. You're young, and everything is new for you. The first thing you see when you come back is the bridge. When we saw that bridge, we knew we were just about home.

I still have my dog tags. This is the way they can identify you . . . sometimes. I also have a Korean Medal because I served in Korea during the war. The government in Korea gave it to everyone who served there, to show their appreciation and because it was their 50th anniversary.

War changes you. It's an experience to go overseas and see how other countries operate and live. I'm very glad I went. I'm a flag waver. I believe in this country. I love this country. We may not be perfect, but it's one of the best countries in the world. If you live in this country, you fight for this country. If you have to go, you go.

Currently, Mr. Sandoval and his wife reside in Cedarburg, near their two children and four grandchildren. A retired meat cutter, he has been a member of the Peter Wollner American Legion Post 288 for more than 15 years, and he enjoys volunteering for the Post's many community fundraisers.

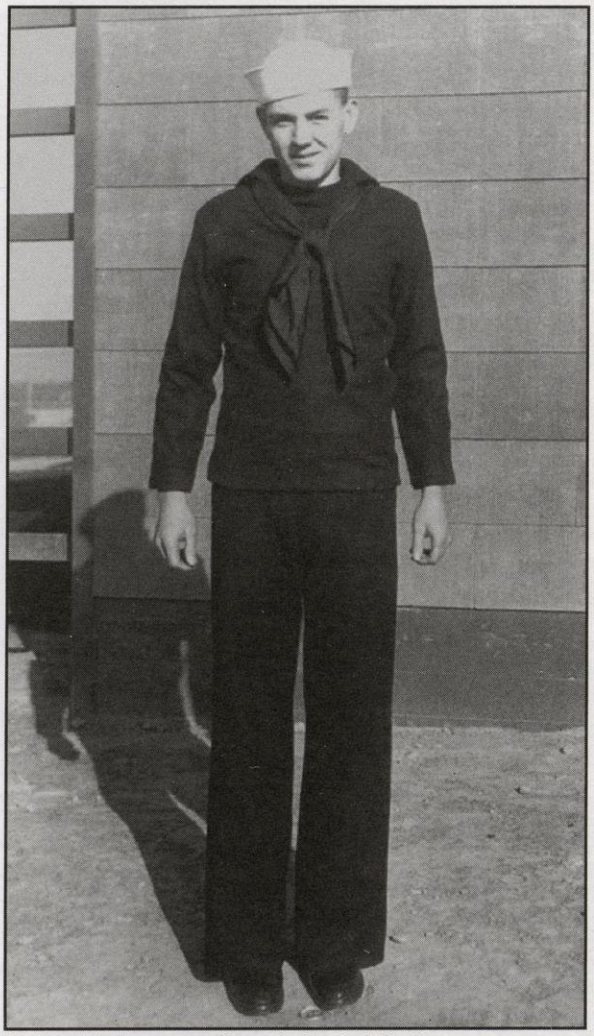
Richard Anderson

As told to Jason D'Amato and Kara Voigt, Ozaukee High School

Machinist on a Submarine and Destroyer

Richard Anderson enlisted in the service alongside some of his good buddies. He knew about the war, and he also knew what his duty was: To defeat the enemy and protect his country. After training, he was stationed on the submarine USS Batfish and later on a destroyer, the USS Herrman DD532, in the waters surrounding Pearl Harbor.

A couple of friends and I had just gotten out of high school and decided to enlist. We knew that if we didn't, we would get drafted. We all knew of the war and knew we would have to fight. I wasn't really nervous or scared to fight, and I never thought twice about my decision. It was just something that had to be done.



Richard Anderson at Great Lakes in Illinois.

I was coaxed into serving on a submarine with a friend of mine who also enlisted with me in Memphis, Tenn. We did our initial training at Great Lakes, but then went on to machinists training in North Dakota. We were then sent to Connecticut where we completed submarine training.

We arrived in Pearl Harbor by Batfish from New London, Conn. As we journeyed onto land, we saw people still working to rebuild from the effects of the past bombing.

I had been trained as a machinist, and I had been trained well. I was first assigned to work on the submarine, and I knew that I had to work efficiently. I mainly worked on the lower deck of the sub and made sure that the engines were running well. Being down there, I didn't see much action or activity, but our sub was fired at several times. We also encountered many Japanese ships that were after us.

Nobody really joked around on the submarine. We all took our jobs very seriously and we were very hard working. We knew that we had to work together and do what was expected of us. Everything was very compact and cramped on a submarine. We had to make sure we put things back in their proper places because there wasn't room to just leave things out. Our own bunks were also quite cramped, though we each had our own bunk and did not share it with anyone else.

I remember one specific experience while serving as part of the crew on the sub during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. At one point the Japanese were firing depth charges, and we had to shut down the entire sub and go onto the bottom to avoid being detected by their radar. For 26 hours, we had to sit in complete silence and wait for what would come next. We couldn't even move around, so most of us just slept.

Like the other men that I worked with, we knew that if we didn't do what was expected of us while on the sub, there would be consequences. After all, we were hundreds of feet beneath the surface and on our own.

After I finished my service time on the sub, I was reassigned to service on a destroyer, the USS Herrman. I had been transferred to the destroyer due to a medical condition I had developed while serving on the sub. Because I was a machinist, I continued to work below deck. Our task on the destroyer was to sail the waters between Pearl Harbor and the Japanese Islands.

I spent a year on the destroyer, and at the end of that year, my time was finally up. I was sent to Texas where I was reunited with my buddies that I had originally enlisted with. We had all made it out of the war and back home, and we were very proud of victoriously serving our country.

After the war, I went on to get a job working on the railroad. I worked in this field until I retired. I am now very active at our local community center in Grafton.

I am glad that I served because I know I did what had to be done. It was an unforgettable experience for me.

Henry Ahrenholz As told to Laurie Arendt

Member of an Intelligence and Reconnaissance Group

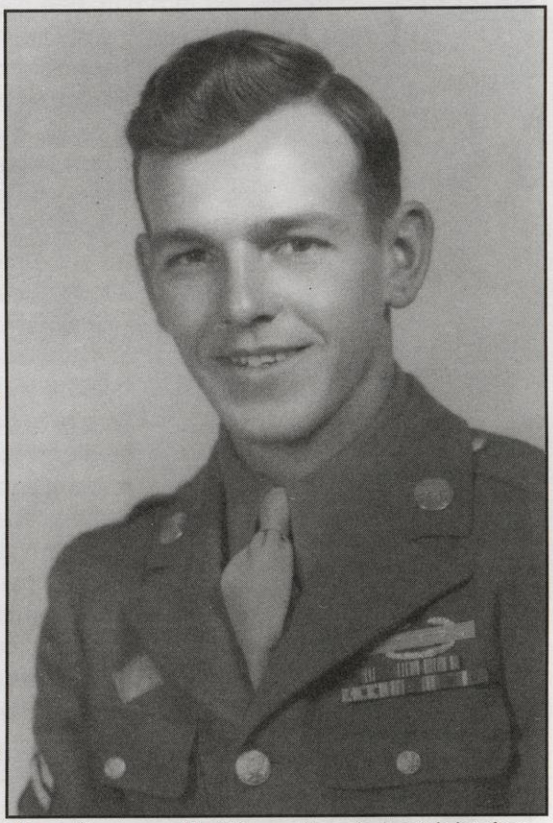
Like many others of his generation, Henry Ahrenholz found himself spending his first years as an adult in service to our country. His impressions of basic training, however, were a little different than that of many who found themselves drafted during the early 1940s. He was assigned to the 96th Infantry Division (Deadeye), 382nd Regimental Headquarters Co., which later received the Presidential Unit Citation.

I was sent to Camp Adair, Ore., which was a new camp. It was so new that we literally built parts of it when we arrived. Since we were among the first to arrive, we spent our time doing such things as building sidewalks and getting the base in shape. I remember wondering if we were going to end up doing housekeeping instead of basic training.

I didn't mind the military too much, but if there was one thing I just didn't get accustomed to it was our "gunboats," or boots. We'd wear whatever was issued to us, whether they really fit us or not. As long as we could put them on and not turn our feet around twice, they "fit" us.

But after we'd been there awhile, we did start to train, and I trained in intelligence and reconnaissance. In other words, I learned how to "see and not be seen" at the same time. That training was part of my regular basic training experience. It was a time of war, and we were all ready to finish basic and get on to serving our country. We ended up doing additional training up and down the west coast, and in Hawaii. When we had free time, we took our mattress covers, blew them up and went floating off the beaches in Hawaii.

It was about this time when we received a little rundown of what we could expect after training. We knew we would be part of an invasion, and we boarded a ship in preparation. But as it turned out, we decided to bypass that island and wait until we had more troops on the ship. Sometimes they didn't tell us where we were going and we really never knew the details until the last minute.



The military provided Henry Ahrenholz with his first trip outside of Wisconsin during World War II.

Ultimately, we were part of the invasion of Leyte, Okinawa and regrouped on Mendoro. I remember we landed on Leyte with about 75 pounds on our back: rifles, camping equipment, canteen, etc. We were coming on shore in big landing barges and we had so many men crammed on the barge that there was no place to go. I remember they had big cleats on the floor of the barge, and I tripped and went down on one knee right on top of a cleat. We were there on Oct. 20, 1944, which was the start of the Philippine action. We lost some good men there.

We also invaded Okinawa on April 1, 1945. It was a little later in the invasion and I brought a jeep over with me. It was waterproofed, and I remember sitting on top of the seat. They threw everything but the kitchen sink at us on Okinawa.

I remember at one point that I had to drive a colonel around because his jeep was being repaired. He was smoking his big cigar (or cigarette, I don't quite remember) and telling me to go this way and that way and this way ... I had a pretty good idea that he probably didn't really know where we were going. I was right - we ended up about two miles ahead of the front lines. He ended up getting killed on Okinawa, but not while I was driving him around.

After we dropped the bomb, I found out my brother was stationed in Manila, and I received a pass to go see him. Just at that time, we were told that those of us who had accumulated so many points had to stay on the island because we were going home. Because I had enough points, I didn't see him until we both returned home.

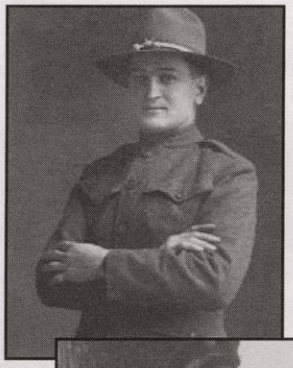
When we got back to the United States, I was sent to camp to be discharged. When they called my name and handed me my discharge papers, I saluted. They told me, "You don't have to salute anymore, you're a civilian."

Arthur Viesselman

Interviewed by Erica Janczak, Homestead High School

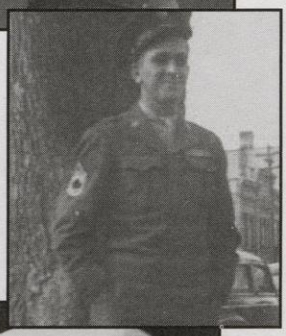
Marine Corps Construction Worker

What is it like to be actively involved in war? Many people who have not experienced this have asked the same thing. It is from our nation's war veterans that we can receive some answers to this complicated question. A Korean War veteran, Arthur Viesselman shared his memories of an experience that changed his life.



I was drafted in 1952 and served for two years until 1954. I reported for duty on my birthday. We were told that the first three that finished their physicals would end up in the Marine Corps. I was the second one. I had to take a physical and was sworn in. We left at 5 p.m. that night and took a three-day train trip to California. I remember that I was carrying my stormcoat when I left, and when we arrived in California, I was told to put it on. I exercised on the parade field all day with my stormcoat on and I thought it was the end of the world.

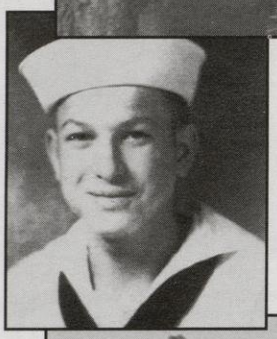
At boot camp, the first thing we got was a haircut, right down to the skull. We were issued a uniform and had a picture taken with numbers in front of us, just like in prison.



Boot camp was rough. When we were training in the gas chambers, we had to sing the Marine Corps Hymn. We stumbled out of the gas chambers not knowing where we were because of the effects of the gas, and the drill instructor told us we hadn't sung it loud enough. We had to go back in and do it again.

Once when I was on the rifle range, I received a box of Easter candy from the Ladies' Aid back home. The second-in-command drill instructor came up to me and said, "I heard you have candy. Did you ask for it?" I told him, "No sir." He said, "You know, you're not supposed to have it." I said, "If you want it, take it." He did, too.

The difference between boot camp and civilian life was like night and day. I did write to Margie, my fiancée from home when I could. Every time I sent her a letter, I enclosed a penny for good luck. I also carried her class ring - we had met during our junior year of high school - with me the whole time I was in the Marines.

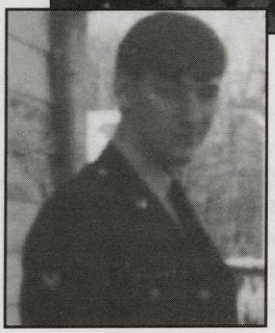


After I finished my training at Camp Pendleton, I came home on leave. While I was home, I received a notice that I was to report back because the whole Third Marine Division was moving out to replace the First Marine Division in Korea.

However, at some point, my parents must've said something about my two older brothers, Louis and Herbert. They had been killed within five days of each other. My brother, Louis, joined the Army on Feb. 25, 1941, and fought in New Guinea. My brother, Herbert, enlisted on May 11, 1944, and served in the Seventh Fleet. Both of my brothers were killed, which meant that I was not able to serve in combat. I was "froze" in Japan, but the Third Division never did replace the First Division, so we all ended up in Japan.

Life in Japan was different than it was back home. Food in the United States was good, but the food we had in Japan was primarily dehydrated. I left at 182 pounds and came home nearly 30 pounds lighter. We didn't have much free time in Japan, but we would play some basketball or Hearts when we could.

I served until March 1954. Margie and I were married in June of that year, and we've now been married for 48 years. I would join the Marines again if I had another chance because you always knew who was along side of you and they would protect you.



We have a long history of service in our family. In addition to Louis and Herbert, my dad was in World War I. I served during the Korean war and my nephew served in Vietnam. My wife's father also served in the Marines, and he enlisted when he was 16 in 1916. When the Viesselman family settled down in Lakefield in 1843, my great-great grandmother made the lead instead of the bread to fight the Indians.

Three generations of Art's family have served our country (top to bottom): his father, Elmer served during World War I; Louis served in New Guinea during World War II; Herbert was a member of the Seventh Fleet during World War II; Art served during the Korean War; and his nephew David served in Vietnam.

John Marita

As told to Nathan Kautz, Homestead High School

Combat Engineer During the Korean War

John Marita was drafted into the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion, part of the 7th Infantry Division after he graduated from college. Once he received his mathematics degree, he lost his deferment and was ultimately sent to Korea. John experienced many life-threatening events that would forever change him.

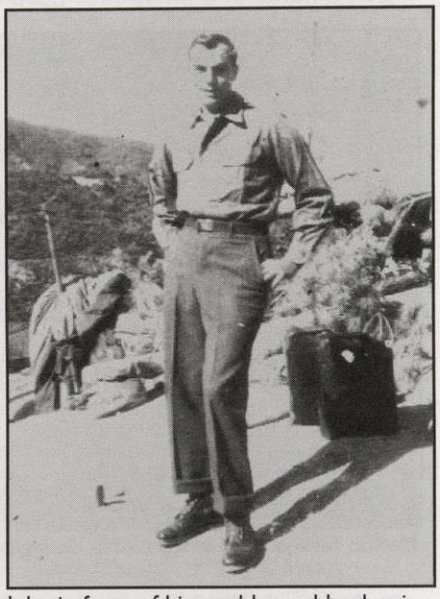
Before going to war, I was an isolated farm boy in my early 20s from High Bridge, Wis. My family and I were all Catholics, and prayer was important in our lives. After my father found I out I was drafted, he never expected to see me back home again. My parents prayed often for my well-being while I was away. I had accepted a job to teach mathematics in Chester, Mont., and I had to call them and tell them I wouldn't be coming.

I trained for the infantry at Ft. Jackson, S.C., and when I got overseas I was transferred into Engineering. I was the only one transferred out. My infantry buddies and I had all made arrangements to keep track of each other through our mothers. I later found out that some of the men I trained with were killed on the line shortly after we arrived in Korea, so it was probably quite fortunate for me that I was no longer in the infantry.

Korea was full of danger. On one day of my 21-month draft, I was with some others from the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion. We were sent in a pickup truck-like vehicle to a location to disarm some Chinese landmines.

The Chinese land mines were particularly hard to find. They were mostly wood with very few metal parts. They weren't designed to kill, but to maim. The Chinese knew that Americans soldiers would take care of their buddies, so if one was wounded, others would carry him to safety.

Apparently the enemy had been watching our operation because a mortar shell struck our truck. It was probably the North Koreans with the dead accuracy they were notorious for. Disabling the wooden land mines was not our top concern at that time when being shot at by an enemy beyond our reach.



John in front of his sand-bagged bunker in Korea. Note the water cans to his right.

Another frightening and unforgettable event took place in a seemingly secluded field. Some men from our battalion were assigned to lay anti-tank land mines. We'd use a little geometry and laid the mines in three lines so that no matter how the tank approached, the mines would at least blow off one track.

The usual operation was to pick up a mine, place it in the ground and arm it. However, a friend of mine from West Virginia had armed the mine before planting it. While my friend was carrying the mine in his hands, the North Koreans sent a mortar that hit the ground somewhat near us. The force from the explosion set the mine off in his hands. He died instantly. When close friends die, your whole outlook on life changes.

With 17th Infantry Regiment, after we were there I was given "Skoshi" [small] R&R [rest and relaxation]. There were five or six tents back behind the line. We could sleep, play ping pong, listen to the radio, etc. I remember one boy had really seen some heavy action on the line when I was there. He had that horrible stare and would shudder every once in awhile. I couldn't get him to respond to anything.

Because I had been in-country long enough, later I also had the opportunity to take R&R in Japan, where I went to Tokyo. I went into Ginza, which was the shopping center, and bargained with the storekeepers. I sent home a big box of dishes, some silk, a smoking jacket for my dad and a kimono for my mom. I still have the mailing label with my mother's address and my APO address. I just received word that the Wisconsin Veteran's Museum wants to put it into their permanent collection, a request that I am happy to fulfill.

In Korea, we also had a priest from the Norbertine Fathers in DePere. He would sit on the hood of a jeep, we'd rest our arms on his knees and confess. That was quite different than being in an old-fashioned confessional, but we felt fortunate to have the opportunity.

John returned home and began his teaching career in Mosinee. After a few years, he moved to Ozaukee County, where he taught mathematics at Homestead High School for 27 years. He retired from teaching 12 years ago.

Marion Swatek

As told to Kate Schroeder, Homestead High School

Army Nurse

A current Grafton resident, Marion Swatek served as a nurse and a Second Lieutenant during World War II. In the hour I spent with Marion Swatek, this World War II veteran informed me of her personal experiences with the United States Armed Forces.

I served at Camp McCoy, at bases in California and at bases in Manila. There were various reasons why I chose to enlist, the most prominent being that it was the thing to do at the time. During World War II, I was working as a nurse at a Milwaukee hospital and as more young nurses departed for war, the workplace became extremely chaotic and strenuous. The hospital was an understaffed and unequipped domain, unable to deal with the steady flow of patients that sought medical attention. I was often times overwhelmed with extended work hours. I thought, "Nothing could be more work than this," so I made the decision to enlist.

Marion served as an Army Nurse during World War II.

As I expected, my Army routine was remarkably less hectic than my civilian hospital routine. All the officers were quite pleasant and I never had any difficulties with anyone. The food was very satisfying, the sleeping quarters were clean and comfortable, and the supplies were abundant. Everything was run very efficiently. If something ever needed to be accomplished, it was accomplished in a timely manner.

I was immediately put to work as a nurse; officials kept me busy throughout the entire workday. Many receive a false image from the entertainment industry that the service turns into one big party at night. I giggle at the misperceived conception. Free time? We didn't have any free time. We were kept busy at work almost all the time. However, there were buses available for those who had some spare time to go into town.

When I did have some time to myself, I would write letters and rest. While in the service, I kept in touch with family, friends, and my fiancé through letters. My fiancé had already been fighting in the war for a significant period of time before I decided to enlist. When he left for war, I was still enrolled in school. I promised him that I would not enlist but under shifting circumstances, I hoped he wouldn't mind my decision.

We tried to keep in touch through letters, but it was difficult because of our various temporary locations. When I arrived in Manila, there was a huge pile of letters from my fiancé that finally caught up with me. What an exciting welcome they were.

The most unusual story I have from my time in the service was the fact that I was married in Manila. Soon after the wedding, my new husband was discharged and just a few weeks later, so was I. When we returned to the United States, I continued working as a nurse in the Milwaukee area. Eventually we settled down and I dedicated the rest of my adult years to being an enthusiastic mother and wife in Ozaukee County.

When asked how my brief time in the service affects my opinions concerning the United States Armed Forces, I must say that I had a pleasant experience when I served my country. I think that we have an excellent defense system protecting our country.

A member of the Rose-Harms Legion Post 355, Marion Swatek served our country as a nurse. She worked hard at her designated job in the service and helped defend our freedom. She is a very special citizen in the community and she should be recognized for the time she dedicated to our country. Her story and enthusiasm for life shall be forever honored.

Tom McQuaid

As told to Julie Shen, Homestead High School

Cook during World War II

Grafton native Thomas McQuaid went off to World War II at age 16. He encountered numerous interesting experiences in the Army and was stationed in the South Pacific. His experience in the war has changed his view on the validity of wars and the role of the United States in foreign affairs.

It was March 1944, and I signed up in Milwaukee. There was an ad in the paper for the Army. I signed up because I hated school and I didn't know how involved it was going to be. Us fellows trained for about six weeks at Catalina Island near Los Angeles where we jumped off the dock into flaming water. We trained on 20mm cannons.

Then they sent us up to San Francisco. This friend I got to know, Vernon Fanon (he's from Crandon) and I were put on the same army transport as ship cooks.

We had maybe 2,000 men, and went on to Hawaii where we took on more troops, maybe another 2,000. From there we went to the Marshall Islands. At the time when we passed the islands, a lot of the palm trees were blown up and just stumps remained because the Marines had just taken over the island. The Japanese had been there and they bombarded it before the Marines landed.

Then we lifted anchor and went to Enewetak Atoll. That's where the big Task Force 58 was. As far as you could see: ships, battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers, destroyers and all kinds of stuff. From there, we went about 500 miles to the Marianas. Then the Task Force 58 hit Saipan and started taking that over. We followed in our transport with another eight ships and had a destroyer escort, a smaller boat for safety and to ward off the submarines. Every once in awhile they would drop depth charges, and there must have been subs lurking around.

> "I wrote to my family to keep in touch and I'd tell them that I was just working off of San Francisco. For a while I didn't say anything, but they must have found out..."
>
> - Tom McQuaid

Around this time, we suggested to the officer in charge of us to sleep in hammocks on deck because the stairways and ramps would blow up if we were torpedoed or bombed. We would have been crunched and crumbled pretty good because we were young guys. It was a good idea. We slept under a 20mm steel gun mount. In case we did get a torpedo, we'd have access to get off right away.

We continued to follow Task Force 58 and anchored at Guam. There, they had what they called a "turkey shoot" in the Philippine Sea. They shot down 400 Japanese planes but we only lost 26. When the Marines took it over, the Japanese lost 17,000 guys. Later on, we found out that that area was called the Mariana Trench. It's the deepest underwater spot in the world, 36,000 feet, just right off of Guam. Our forces needed the Marianas for airfields; Tokyo was 1,600 miles away.

We hauled a lot of wounded troops back on our ship to Hawaii. I was lucky I never got hit, because there were lots of subs in that area. After we had gone back to the States in 1945, the Indianapolis was sunk by a sub. The guys were in the water for four days because they were not supposed to let anybody know where they were. Lots of the guys were gnawed by sharks. They saved a few hundred of them. When I think about that I thought about us being there, young guys, dumb kids, actually. That's how it happens. We were young and it was kind of like an adventure for us.

I wrote to my family to keep in touch and I'd tell them that I was just working off of San Francisco. For a while I didn't say anything, but they must have found out. We played cards to entertain ourselves, and some guys bet a lot of money because they didn't care; they were going off into battle and getting killed. There were some guys that were good at musical instruments and they would sing sometimes. I talked to guys from all over.

I was honorably discharged with a medical, but the war was still going on. Later I joined the Marines for a while. I went back to the Army in 1950 and 1951 and I got pretty good at machine guns.

Let me tell you something. War's all bad. Why don't the politicians get together and fight it out instead of sending us guys? We try to help out everywhere, which is good, but we don't do enough to help out here at home.

After the war, Mr. McQuaid drove trucks and discovered a newfound hobby: boating. Unfortunately, his boat exploded and sank, giving him severe burns. His veteran friends helped financially and psychologically in recovering from the trauma. As a means of giving back to the community, he started a disabled veteran fishing outing and it has grown to include about 140 vets and 50 boats. The event ends with a fish boil, and Mr. McQuaid adds that "a lot of good people help out." This year marks the 29th year the Disabled Veterans Fishing Outing has occurred in Ozaukee County.

Elroy "Buck" Scheer

Interviewed by Luke Kadubeck, Ozaukee Homeschool Student

Radioman aboard the USS Salamaua CVE 96

Elroy Scheer was living in the town of Grafton when he enlisted in the Navy in November 1943. He went to boot camp at Great Lakes, Ill., and then attended Northwestern University Radio School in Evanston. After he graduated from radio school, he was assigned to the USS Salamaua, a small aircraft carrier, as a Radioman Third Class. His duties as a radioman were to receive coded messages. After he was released in May 1946, Mr. Scheer mustered out as a Radioman Second Class. He came home to Grafton and went into business with his Dad, F. Scheer and Son, painting and wallpapering.

I could've stayed out of the service because I was working on a farm. At that time deferments were available. My buddies were going into the service, so I decided I would be in the Navy. I had cousins in the Army that told me about the crapholes they had to stay in, so that was one of the reasons I chose the Navy.

Elroy Scheer in 1943.

We didn't get a choice of where we were to be sent. I always thought it was funny that when I went in, I was issued woolen underwear. I ended up in the South Pacific, where woolen underwear didn't do me much good.

When we were training at Northwestern University, we could hear and see airplanes over the lake; they were practicing takeoffs and landings on a converted liberty ship constructed as a carrier. It was called the USS Wolverine. A few years ago, I read a newspaper article telling of some divers who had been diving in the area and found planes that had crashed with personnel in them.

After school I was assigned to the USS Salamaua. It was a small carrier, about 500 feet long. The living conditions weren't too bad, and the food was pretty good. I do remember, though, that the scrambled eggs were sort of a bluish yellow and not too great. There were some days aboard ship that candy bars or other items made up a meal. I went in weighing about 150-160 pounds and came home at 135 pounds.

On board the Salamaua, the signal men and the radio men were classified as K Division and worked together. There were about 900 men aboard ship; each group divided into divisions. You did not get to know too many people other than those who were in your division.

We were in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater. One of our assignments was the battle of Leyte Gulf, and we offered air cover for the landings. The next assignment was the battle of Lingayen Gulf offering protection for the troops and landing craft. During this operation we were hit by a Kamikaze, which caused damage, but we stayed afloat. We suffered casualties: 88 injured and 15 dead. This happened on Jan. 15, 1945, at 9 a.m. in the morning.

The Kamikaze carried two bombs, of which only one exploded. Had the other one exploded we would've been lost. The next good thing was that our planes had been dispatched before the attack. Through cooperation of the entire crew we extinguished fires; the divers sealed holes below the water line and that kept the ship afloat. We made it back to the United States.

U.S. Navy Photo

The crew cleans up the damaged engine room of the USS Salamaua after the kamikaze attack. Scheer helped in the cleanup (and may be the sailor kneeling in the middle of the photo).

I was reassigned to a tanker, the AOG 52 Mattabesset, which again went to the Asiatic-Pacific area. We were at Pearl Harbor when the war ended, and I then began the most memorable part of my service experience. We got to see different areas such as Saipan, Midway, Iwo Jima, Tokyo, Yokohomo, Nagasaki and Ginsen, Korea, in addition to many other islands. I called this my "Grand Tour."

The most memorable aspect of seeing these places was that you didn't realize how much damage was done until you actually saw it yourself. While at Tokyo, I did get to see the Emperor's Palace from a distance.

Serving in the Navy was a good experience for me. It taught me discipline, respect and comradeship, which has helped me throughout my life. Seeing other areas and the way people lived made you realize we have a a good life and a great country.

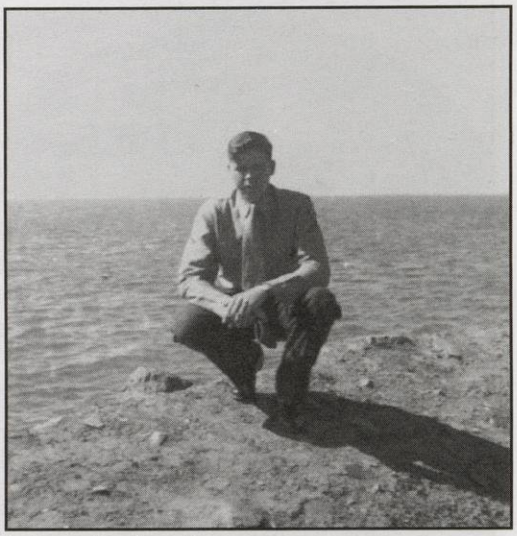
Jack Peterson

As told to his grandson John Peterson, Ozaukee High School

Radar Operator in the Marine Corps

Jack Peterson from Grafton enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1953. My grandfather picked the Marines because he had a lot of respect for them. He decided to enlist instead of waiting to be drafted. He was part of a large convoy of ships on the way to Korea when the war ended. He served three years in the Marines in the eighth tank battalion. In 1976, he joined the Air National Guard where he served 17 years. He remembers the days he spent on the ship like they were yesterday. Even though he never served in combat, he was ready to die for his country.

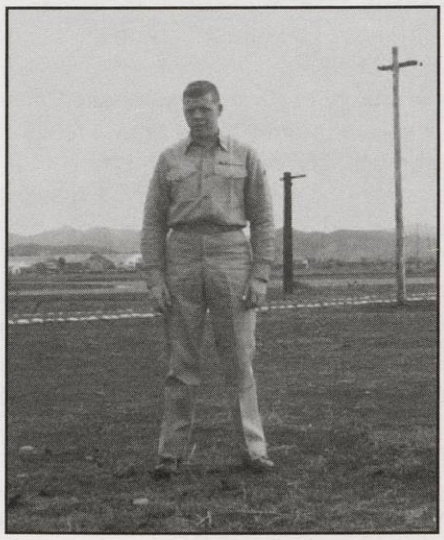
It was the first day of boot camp and we were all in a big room. They picked on this big guy who was a football player. He thought the whole thing was a big joke. They made him come out to the middle of the floor and they told him to laugh. My brother-in-law thought it was funny so they made him laugh in front of everyone also. This was my first experience with the military, and I was thinking what did I get myself into. As soon as our training was over, they shipped us off to Korea. The Third Marine Division moved in a convoy to Korea. The entire Division left.



Jack on the shore in Japan.

It was dark, cold, and silent. We were on our way to the war in Korea. I was scared about having to go to war so I prayed a lot. We were under radio silence at night, which meant that we could not have any lights on or make any noise so the enemy would not hear us coming. I was on the U.S. Naval Ship Marine Serpent, which was a C-4 type troop transport ship. While on the ship, we played cards for each other's cigarettes to keep our minds off what was about to happen, and to pass the time. One night, we were in a very bad storm and I went up topside to take a look. I was not supposed to but I did anyway. All I saw were large ships, most bigger than the one I was on, bobbing up and down like corks. My friends and I were very scared because one of the sailors let it slip out that the sister ship to the ship I was on sank in a violent storm. I was very lucky to have the top bunk during the storm because everyone was getting seasick.

As our whole convoy moved across the Pacific Ocean, the anticipation grew. Everyone on board was sad and scared thinking about what might happen. As we got closer to Korea, I got closer to God through prayer. I thought a lot about my family and friends back home. I was also thinking about the mess I had gotten myself into.



Marine recruit Jack Peterson.

One night everyone was passing the time on the ship when an announcement came over the speaker system that the war had ended in Korea. When we found this out we were very happy. You've never seen a bunch of happier guys in all your life. I think you could have heard us all over the ocean. So instead of going to Korea, we went to Japan. We were still occupying Japan because of World War II. I stayed in Japan at Camp Gifiefor a year and a half. I was a Radar Operator and spent most of my day in a little radio shack. I was very glad that I was in Japan instead of the mountains of Korea. The people of Japan were very kind to us, and the year and a half passed by quickly.

In 1976, I enlisted in the Air National Guard and served for 17 years. It was a lot of fun to be a member of the Guard. We traveled the world and I got to spend time in different countries including Crete, Norway, Guam and the state of Hawaii. I also got to travel all over the United States. I flew in an air refueler and was part of water and waste management.

I got married while still in the Marines and lived with my wife at Camp LeJeune, N.C. We lived in a trailer camp run by the military. Our first son, Thomas, was born at Camp LeJeune's military hospital.

The G.I. Bill paid for my apprenticeship as a carpenter. I then went to work for Allen Bradley in Milwaukee as a full time carpenter. I'll never forget my days in the Marine Corps. I often think about how lucky I am, and about those who were not so lucky. I am now retired and a member of the American Legion.

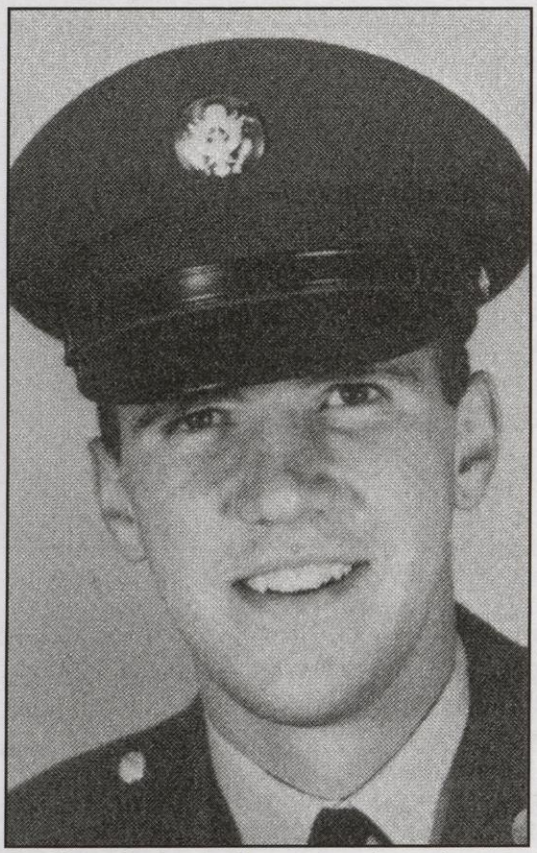
Ron Knop

Interviewed by Scott Peterson, Ozaukee High School

Parts Clerk in Korea during the Vietnam era

Port Washington native Ron Knop was drafted on Nov. 10, 1964 to serve during the Vietnam era. He left with 51 other men from the Port Washington and Sheboygan areas. They all left on a bus to Fort Knox, Ky., where he spent 22 weeks in basic training. He served two years in the Army until he returned home as a Private First Class.

When I first entered the service, we had to go through basic training and boot camp. At first I thought that it was going to be easy, but things changed once I got into boot camp. It was horrible; I had never experienced anything like it. They told us they were looking for "truck drivers," so we all raised our hands. They took us and said, "There's your trucks," which turned out to be wheelbarrows. We had to haul rocks to a semi-trailer. However, I did ultimately end up in engineer and mechanical training for Nike Hercules missiles.



PVT Knop, fresh out of boot camp, photo taken from his Ft. Knox basic training book.

We were on our way to Vietnam, and boarded a troop transport out of Oakland, Calif. There were 8,500 guys aboard ship, and the guys that were going the furthest were given KP. We would all wear different colored tags to designate what we did. Because KP duty was from 3 a.m. until 9 a.m., we had the following day off. The Marines on board would see our tags and know that we were allowed to roam aboard ship.

When we arrived in Okinawa, we found out that our orders had changed and we were to be sent to Korea. This didn't really make sense to me because I had spent so much time training for the Hercules missiles. In Korea we would end up working with Nike Hawks [missiles]. They are surface to air missiles, and I believe they were being used in the Persian Gulf.

Our mission in Korea was to act as peacekeepers. This was after the Korean War era, but there was still conflict along the 38th Parallel. The United States was still maintaining a significant presence.

I thought Korea was really a Godforsaken country - all rocks and hills. It would get so cold at times, yet during other points in the year it would be completely different. In the spring, there would be monsoons until summer where it was well over 100 degrees almost every day. In the fall, it wasn't bad but still it would rain constantly.

As a parts clerk, I was in charge of generators, missile transporters and radar units. Those were my jobs in the Army. I really didn't mind this job at all that much, compared to what other men and women had to do. I was stationed with "C" Battery, 7th Missile Battalion, 5th Artillery, about 20 miles northeast of Chumchon.

I made a couple of friends in the service, and the best one was Sully. He would make me laugh when I was down. When we were in basic training, he and I had to haul rocks together. One day, we were doing a normal job. We noticed that the trucks were leaving. We got left behind and we both had duty in the morning. Our only option was to run like hell back to camp. That wasn't very much fun.

I returned back home to Port Washington where my fiancée and family were waiting. I was excited to be back, but I also knew I would probably never again see the friends I made in the Army. I will never forget my time in the service. I learned a great lesson from my military experiences; war is something that you never want to see in person.

By serving in Korea, I didn't have much contact with the enemy, but the guys that did were the bravest people on Earth. I sit down and think of those who saw combat, and that takes guts that many Americans probably don't have. That is why Veteran's Day is so important. When you take a moment to think about how many people died just to preserve the freedoms of our country, you can't help but be moved.

Charles Imbruglia

As told to Laura Hennings, Cedarburg High School

Pearl Harbor Survivor and Naval Band Member

It was peacetime in 1939 when Charles Imbruglia enlisted in the Naval Reserves. At the age of 18 he left his hometown of Providence, R.I., and joined the Navy with the intent of having fun and seeing the world.

My first duty was on a destroyer where I was fortunate enough to gain what they call a Third Class Boatman's Mate. The job is on deck where you're in charge of all the necessary housekeeping aboard the ship. I was also in charge of the Captain's motor launch. When you're ashore, you take the Captain wherever he wants to go. However, I got in an accident with the motor launch, and I lost my rating right away. That's how I got into music.

I decided to start all over again, and I thought I may as well do what I liked to do. I went through about three months of music school, because I already had a lot of experience, and then they shipped me to Pearl Harbor aboard the USS Maryland battleship to join that band. That's how I got to be down in Pearl Harbor.

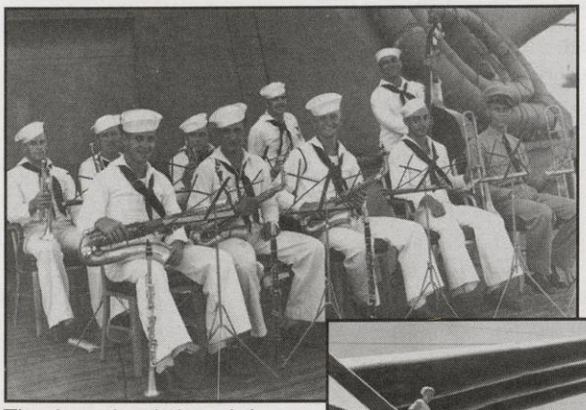
I was down there about eight months before Pearl Harbor was attacked. The band was getting ready to play that morning for colors and we looked up and saw all these planes. I would estimate there was a good 200 of them. We were wondering what they were doing maneuvering on a Sunday morning.

We could see they had a red ball insignia on them. Our planes had the same circle on them except with blue peaks like a star. Up in the sky, we couldn't see the blue, so we thought they were our planes. Of course, we knew differently when the bombs started coming down.

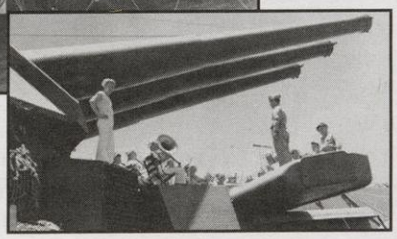
It seemed just as if a signal went off, and all these planes were positioned over the ships. They started dropping bombs at the same time. The USS Maryland was tied to the USS Oklahoma, which was hit with torpedoes and started to capsize. Because we were tied together, she was pulling us over. Of course we had quite a time finding axes to cut those lines so that she wouldn't pull us over.

Charlie met his future wife around the time this photo was taken. He was 22.

The Japanese sunk so many ships that oil filled the whole harbor. You couldn't see any water. When we pulled those guys out of the water, they were just black with oil and all you could see was the whites of their eyes. We pulled men out of the water, some of them afire from the oil, and their bodies burning up. You lose your patience when you see something like that.



The dance band aboard the USS Maryland. Charlie is the fourth band member from the right in the front row.



I had little religious experience and was not very spiritual. I didn't know the Lord personally. I believed that there was a God, but that was about it. When those bombs started falling down at Pearl Harbor, and I was running to my battle station, I said, "Lord, get me out of here, and I'll be yours."

A few days later I started to go to Bible classes on the ship, and it was through those studies that I came to know the Lord personally. I'm always ready to thank the Lord for bringing me this situation. I think that was His reason for setting me in Pearl Harbor.

After Pearl Harbor we returned to the States for repairs, and then I was sent to the South Pacific. During that time, the USS Maryland was hit by a kamikaze, which was one of the first kamikaze attacks. We lost more men there than at Pearl Harbor. Then I was transferred to the USS New Mexico. On that ship I was in most of the battles in the South Pacific: Leyte, Guadalcanal , the Coral Sea and the Philippines area. We ended up with sea duty in the Aleutian Islands, where we also got into a few scrapes.

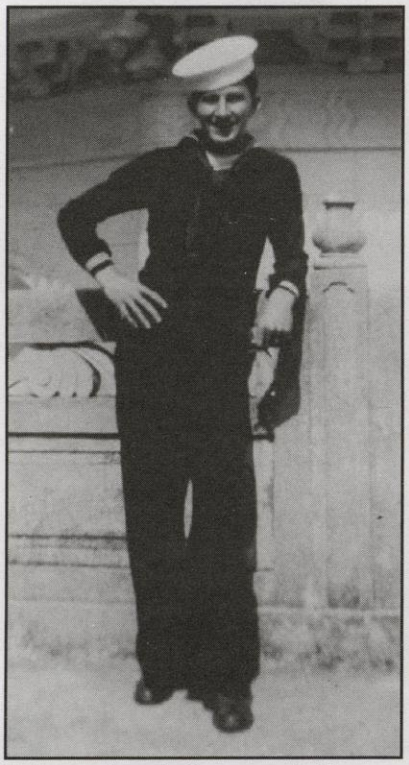
During the last years of the war, I was put in what they called a Bond Tour Band. They put a big show together and had famous actors. We'd fly around the United States, put on a show and then we'd sell war bonds. That was some pretty nice duty.

Phil Harrison With Laurie Arendt

Took Part in the "Passage to Freedom"

Mr. Harrison's ship, the USS Montague AKA 98, was undergoing major maintenance in Subic Bay when it received a command to take part in a historic mission. Here are Mr. Harrison's own memories of this mission.

After two days at sea, the Captain informed the crew what our mission was. The mission was designated "Passage to Freedom." We were heading to French Indo China (Vietnam). The country had been divided in half under a negotiated United Nations, French and Communist attempt to settle the occupation of the country as a colony of the French. Hostilities between the French and the Communists were to cease and an amnesty of 30 days was given to the people who wanted to live south under freedom. The problem? How to get hundreds of thousands of people relocated in such a short time. This is where the United States Navy played a major role to accomplish this objective.



Phil served nearly four years in the Navy on the USS Montague AKA 98.

The USS Montague AKA 98 was the first United States Ship to arrive in Haiphong Harbor to take on this task. We arrived on August 27, 15 days after we set sail from the Philippines. The journey was hard. It was the typhoon season with the ship pitching, yawing and rolling about 45 degrees. The bow would dip down into the rough seas and then the fantail would come up and out of the water and the screw [propeller] would shake the ship. Due to the rough weather, our top deck was split in a six foot run with a one-inch gap and part of the deck plate started to buckle.

Aboard ship all of the compartment hatches were battened down, which made passage from compartment to compartment slow. It also reduced the amount of fresh air that was circulating, and the ship smelled. We were dealing with hot tropical air during typhoon season, and better than half of the sailors on board ended up seasick. The odor below decks was sickening. To combat seasickness, a lot of saltine crackers were consumed to settle the stomachs.

The USS Monatague's participation in operation "Passage to Freedom" consisted of six round trips from Haiphong to Saigon. On each trip there were several births and deaths, with the dead being buried at sea immediately to prevent an outbreak of disease. The refugees disembarked in Saigon, which in the height of colonial days was called the "Pearl of the Orient" because of its beautiful layout. It soon became a refugee camp and a dump. We took on approximately 700 refugees each trip. Prior to boarding they were deloused with powder at the bottom of the gangplank. As they came aboard, they brought what they could carry and the clothes on their backs.

I could see how filthy they were and the poor health they were in. Many young and old alike were scabrous and covered with open festering sores. Many had physical disfigurements because of inhuman treatment by the communists. Our ship's doctor, the famous Dr. Thomas Dooley, identified the diseases as beriberi, yaws, leprosy, elephtiasis and one case of cholera. Dr. Dooley immediately started a variety of treatments and medication.

One night after getting off of watch I went topside to get some fresh air when some one thrust a battle lantern in my hands and said hold it. Here was Dr. Dooley delivering a baby with assistance from the ship's Corpsmen on the deck. With directions from Dooley of where to direct the light, I witnessed a delivery of a baby. Unfortunately the baby was dead and everyone felt sad about this. However, Dr. Dooley said it was for the best, because the baby was syphilitic and would not have survived.

Fortunately, some of the educated Vietnamese were Catholic Priests and Nuns who could speak French and Latin. In our own limited way, with sailors of French descent from Louisiana who could speak a little French, which was archaic; and some of the sailors who had taken Latin in High School, with Latin at the time being the language of medicine, we communicated. Dr. Dooley, along with the sailors, were able to outline the rules of the ship. Eventually, their fear disappeared with obvious signs of gratitude of being free from the horrific communist treatment. Again, as we got underway in the rough seas with hot humid temperature, immediately most of the refugees became seasick, while most of the sailors had developed their sea legs.

Our participation in operation "Passage to Freedom" ended September 16 and we headed home to San Francisco, where we arrived on Oct. 7, 1954.

Ardis Estes Cordts

As told to Vaneeta Neni,
Homestead High School

Quartermaster and Ordnance Clerk in World War II

In 1943, Mrs. Ardis Estes Cordts, now a resident of Grafton, joined the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps. Her sister was a Navy nurse, and she had a brother in the Marine corps. When asked, "Why did she join?" Mrs. Cordts said that "there was an atmosphere during the war that everybody was very willing to do what they could to help the war effort." That is how the interview commenced.

The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later changed to the Women's Army Corps) was the first women's military service created during World War II, and that's what I joined. I was working in an office in San Francisco when I decided to enlist. I worked in a Quartermaster office at Ft. Custer, Mich., for a year and a half, then went to Fort Oglethorpe, Ga., for overseas training. We marched in an area where the Civil War went through.

It was discharge day for Ardis (far left) and her friends in November 1945.

Then we spent a week on a train taking our WAC group to San Francisco, where we borded the USS Lurline, a Matson liner stripped of its luxury. It took us a month to get to our destination which turned out to be New Guinea. It was a safe trip, but with about 5,000 people on the ship, we only had two meals a day. The stairs on the Lurline were filled all day with people waiting to go through the chow lines.

We thought we were going to Australia, but debarked at Army Base "G" in Dutch New Guinea, where lived in tents like those seen on the M*A*S*H television show, but inside a fenced compound. We had an outdoor shower building with a wooden floor - we could've gotten rained on when we showered.

I worked in the Base "G" Ordnance Office. It could laughingly be called an office; it consisted of a corrugated tin roof held up by 2x4s, with a gravel floor. We had about six desks. I pounded out letters and reports on a manual Underwood typewriter and had to put rocks on my papers so they wouldn't blow away.

The "office" for Base "G" Ordnance in Dutch New Guinea.

We were about one degree from the Equator, so the temperature sometimes went to 130 degrees, and sometimes we had torrential rains. We had telephones just for inter-office communication.

There was little to do other than one's job, but on days off, we could swim at the beach. Once in awhile some of the WACs were invited to have dinner with a Navy outfit, a treat because the Navy had freezers and fresh meat. In our Mess Hall tent we had a lot of what was called Australian "bully beef," or hams that were heavily salted, but our cooks did well with what they had to work with.

When our WAC Company was shipped home it was on a military transport ship, the USS Billy Mitchell, and it only took two weeks to get to our destination at Ft. Lewis, Wash. Our first meal there was a fine turkey dinner. I was discharged from the Army on Nov. 4, 1945.

After I came home, I took advantage of the G.I. Bill to attend college. In three years at the University of Montana I received a degree in Modern Languages with a Spanish major. I met my husband Howard [page 67] there; he also used the G.I. Bill to get a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master's degree in Organic Chemistry.

I don't know if the war had a great effect on me personally, because I was lucky enough to remain healthy during the year I was in the South Pacific ... except for one severe sunburn!

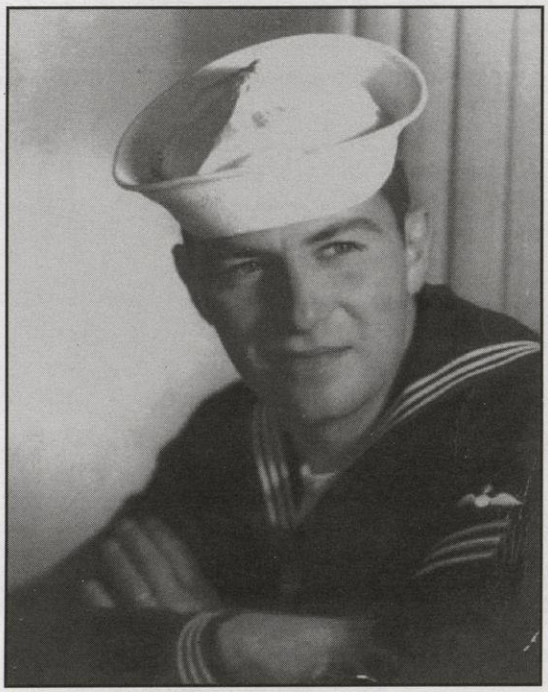
John F. Budelman

As told to Malini Soundarrajan, Homestead High School

Aviation Ordnanceman during the Korean Conflict

John Budelman became interested in the Navy while he was a high school senior in New York. He worked as a civilian prior to entering the service.

My name is John Budelman and I joined the U.S. Navy Reserve in 1951. I became interested in the Navy while I was a high school senior. After graduation from Bayside High School in New York, I found employment at Time Inc., Rockefeller Plaza in New York City. I worked in the Photo Lab processing film and pictures for Time, Life and Sports Illustrated magazines. Part of my work involved accompanying the photographers on photo assignments all over the United States. My job was challenging and exciting for a young man. But I was also drawn toward flying and the aviation industry. When I was activated into the Navy, I hoped to pursue the direction of my experience with photography. This was not an option offered to me at that time.



John Budelman, Navy yeoman.

Following basic training in Maryland, and due to my interest in the field of aviation, I was assigned to Norman, Okla., for an eight-week study program. There I received instruction in the basic skills to work in the Aviation Ordnance areas. I was then transferred to NAS Jacksonville, Fla., for an additional 16 weeks of training before being assigned to the Midway Islands in the Pacific.

Midway is comprised of an atoll of two islands. My assignment was maintenance of ammunitions and I did bomb and munitions storage checks as well as other related tasks. As Midway was a facility that supported the war effort with transportation and medical aid for the military, I also worked with the seaplanes used to rescue people. All of our supplies were delivered through air cargoes and military landing crafts. When there was no fresh water, the Navy desalinized the ocean water for drinking; not as good as what we were used to at home.

When I was assigned to Midway, my wife and I were about to have our first child, who would be born while I was away from home. I stayed on Midway for 14 months and while there made many new friends and even found an old buddy from high school who ran the local radio station on the island.

Entertainment was never a problem for us because Midway had very many diversions. It was a bird sanctuary for a great variety of different species of birds that nested and raised their young there. The sailors enjoyed playing with the baby seals and enjoyed sports such as volleyball, softball, fishing, movies and participating at club events. Some of the men passed their time working on crafts, and especially enjoyed working on leather projects.

There was always something new and interesting to do. During my stay on the islands, I met several celebrities who made stops on Midway. While, there "Mr. Roberts" was being filmed at our location. As well as meeting Henry Fonda, Jack Lemmon, Terry Moore and the rest of the film crew, I even appeared as an "extra" during filming. That was very exciting.

When I returned home from my assignment at Midway, I met my beautiful baby daughter for the first time. Since being discharged, my wife and children regularly attend reunions with most of our out-of-state family and friends, most recently in the Catskill Mountains of New York. I consider my service career to be a very valuable part of my life with a great many memories and wonderful experiences. My time with the Navy provided me with a college education and the ability to purchase a lovely home for my family, not to mention that I am so proud to be a veteran of the military services of the United States. What marvelous experiences I had that I will treasure for all my life and to talk about with my children.

Mr. Budelman believes his service career taught him "many valuable lessons such as orderliness due to living in confined spaces, discipline, taking orders, self-control and living with very little money." He is now involved in the American Legion.

Maj. Chris Reinhardt, ret.

Interviewed by Jessica Jones and Dominique Olds, Homestead High School

Supply Sergeant during World War II

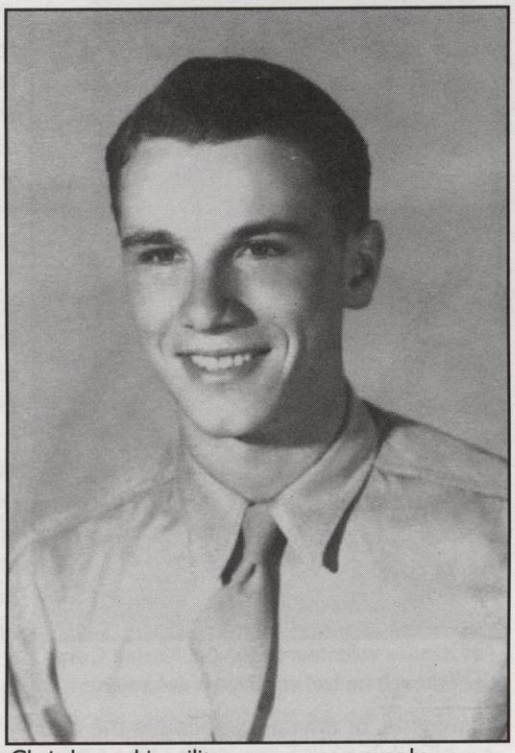
Major Christopher Reinhardt, ret., USAR, was stationed in the United States, New Guinea and the Philippines from January 1943 though February 1946. During World War II he was a supply sergeant and later attained the rank of First Sergeant. After his active duty in the second World War, he enlisted in the Army Reserves, where he served for 21 years and attained the rank of Major. This is his story.

In the United States, we generally trained in the desert as a 90 mm antiaircraft unit with the secondary mission of field artillery. During this time I was a supply sergeant and was in charge of issuing to the men all the supplies which included clothing items to rifles and unit equipment. Before we left the various locations, we had to make sure to cover up and mark the various garbage pits and latrines.

After our training in the United States, we travelled to New Guinea. We celebrated both Christmas Day and New Year's Day there, and the temperature reached 131 degrees.

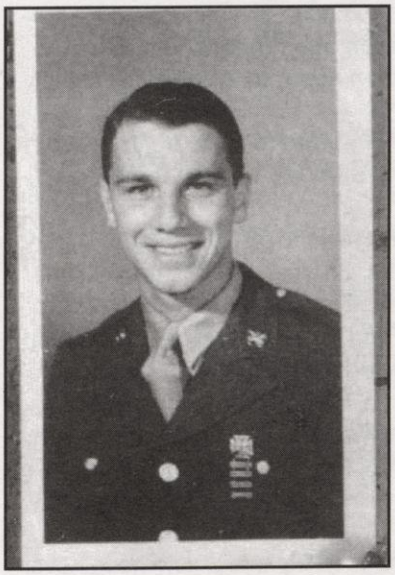
When we were in New Guinea, we would start our day by filling our helmets with water for a quick wash-up. Occasionally we were allowed to take a shower.

While in New Guinea, I had an opportunity to talk to a young native man who indicated he was about ready for marriage. All young woman at age 12 were sent by the Australian government to a compound up the coast where they were trained in wifely chores: cooking, sewing, etc. The man had to qualify before he could take a wife, and needed to own certain land, have a certain amount of money and pigs. He would then pay the required fee and pick his future wife. They would be married in a civil ceremony and return to his village. There, the village chief was the absolute ruler. Among these people there was no adultery, no attorneys or courts, no jails, no divorce and no lying. Yet these people were quite happy and lived a peaceful life.



Chris began his military career as a supply sergeant during World War II. He was 20 years old when this photo was taken in 1943.

From New Guinea, we traveled to the Philippines. On board ship, the quarters were very cramped and most uncomfortable. An Aedes Aegypti mosquito had infected me with Dengue Fever, causing every bone in my body to hurt. I spent three weeks in "bed," a lifeboat which served as a sick bay.



After completing three years of active service, he joined the Reserves.

When we were in the Philippines, our unit was engaged in field artillery combat for 31 days in the battle of Epo Dam, which supplied most of the water for Manila.

At one point while I was unloading supplies from a truck, a Japanese sniper took several shots at me and missed. A nearby soldier immediately grabbed his rifle, ran down to the corn field and killed the sniper.

We tried to find things to amuse ourselves during the long days when we were not fighting. One of my friends adopted a dog and named it "Trigger." One night after a few beers, a few of us decided to ride the carabao owned by a local farmer. We rode it for a short time before the farmer screamed at us to stop. Occasionally we were privileged to see a movie which were sometimes shown in the very late nighttime hours.

My battalion was preparing for the invasion of Japan when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Afterwards we were given the task of setting up camp areas for the Allied returning prisoners of war.

Upon being discharged, I joined the Army Reserves and have since retired after 21 years of reserve service.

Art Krause

As told to Emily Donaldson and Carolyn Reddy, Cedarburg High School

Part of the Marine Engineers

As a young man during World War II, Art Krause was granted a deferment because he was employed at Delta Power Tools, which was engaged in 100-percent war production. Even though he had a young wife of four years, Art felt that he was not doing his part, as most of his friends were already in the service; he felt he was "being left out." So he volunteered for the Marine Corps in fall 1943; however, he had to wait until his deferment expired at the end of the year. Thus he "joined up" on Feb. 29, 1944.

On that day I was on my way to San Diego - that's where the Marine boot camp was. So when I got to boot camp ... oh boy, I thought I knew what tough was. But not until I got to boot camp did I really find out what it was.

Art Krause volunteered for the Marine Corps even though he had received a deferment.

After boot camp, I went to a school in the mountains of California to learn how to drive and how to back trailers. I backed trailers until I had blisters on my hands. Finally, we got through with all that and then we started to do convoys at night, with no lights, in the mountains on a narrow road - switch-back roads?! All we had was blackout lights, which were two tiny red lights in the back of the truck, you could barely see, and two tiny green lights in the front. It was over a month, I guess. Morning, noon and night, seven days a week.

Finally I became a private first class. I was sent to Camp Pendleton. My friend, John Young, and I decided to volunteer for overseas duty. We thought as long as we were going to be there, we might as well do something important, like be heroes or something. Two days later, we were in new barracks in the 10th Replacement Draft.

When we were out at sea and on our way overseas, we were informed that we would be going to Saipan to join the Second Marine Division. Finally when we got close to land, we saw a pretty good-sized island, at least as far as islands go. It was Saipan, where I would be stationed for quite a while. I became part of A Company Engineers. Our business was to protect the island, which still had a lot of Japanese around ready to kill anybody they could.

Wouldn't you know it, but on the first night there I was on guard duty, which was very spooky. It was pitch dark because we didn't carry flashlights, or anything, because the enemy was out there yet, waiting to pick a few of us off if they could. I pulled guard duty about every third night for some time, which got to be a real pain in the neck.

In the cane field behind our tents was a great big bull. We didn't see him during the day, but he'd thrash around at night in that cane field. I don't know how many guys shot at him while on guard duty, but I don't think anyone ever really nailed him.

When the war ended, we got moved to Japan. That had an unknown quality. We were to go there in the same way every beach landing was made: Not knowing what to expect. This was shortly after the atomic bomb was dropped. That cinched it; we thought for sure they had given up.

We went over to Nagasaki, just like always, and made our landings. We didn't have to make a beach approach because there was no resistance and we landed at the Nagasaki docks. Oh, man, what a mess! The atom bomb had hit about a few hundred feet above where we landed. The destruction was unbelievable - there was nothing standing. There were piles of stones and whatever. Here and there you'd see a steel beam sticking straight up in the air. The shipyard had all these big cranes and they were a tangled mess. It is still hard to describe.

After we unloaded we were hauled to our quarters, which was an old prisoner of war camp. Oh, what a dump! We did a little fixing while we were there. I had to go into town many times to bring supplies back and, as I drove through that area, they were still pulling bodies out from the atomic bomb because there were people in there - not unlike the World Trade Center in New York City after Sept. 11, 2001.

The atomic bomb that exploded over Nagasaki was one of the smallest ones ever exploded, yet I have never seen such destruction. When I landed on Saipan, that had been pretty well blown to pieces by the Navy with their dive bombers and ships, but that was nothing compared to what I saw at Nagasaki.

Nick Schanen

Interviewed by Katie Sipiora, Homestead High School

Supervisor at Subic Bay

Nick Schanen, a man of 18, said goodbye to his family and life as he knew it in Grafton as he prepared to contribute to the American effort during the Vietnam conflict. As I sat across from him in the comfort of his home, he relived the experience, describing every detail as if it was yesterday. Mr. Schanen, along with countless other courageous men, sacrificed a part of his own life to contribute to the American cause. They deserve the respect and gratitude of all of us.

From Sept. 20, 1966 through Sept. 19, 1972, I served as a member of the U.S. Naval Reserve. After going through basic training at Great Lakes, and a couple of two-week training cruises on destroyers in the Great Lakes and the Atlantic, I was assigned duty at the U.S. Naval Magazine at the Naval Air Station in Subic Bay, on the island of Luzon in the Philippines.

GMG3 Nick Schanen, 1968.

Subic Bay was the largest naval military base in the Pacific serving the 7th Fleet. It was 36,000 acres, 12,000 of which were devoted to the magazine, which housed a wide range of munitions, from small arms amunitions to bombs. Ship repair, a fuel tank farm and an air base were also provided.

My duty was to supervise some of the 16,000 Filipino nationals employed by the U.S. government in the loading and unloading of 40,000 tons of munitions received each month from Merchant Marine ships. The munitions were then stored in the appropriate magazine and then reloaded onto naval supply ships for the Navy and Marines. The carriers USS America, Enterprise, Constellation, Ticonderoga and the battleship USS New Jersey, as well as the cruisers, destroyers and subs that provided their escort could often be found at Subic Bay.

I, along with the other members of my Division, received a Meritorious Unit Commendation Ribbon from the 7th Fleet for exercising sound organizational ability, imaginative planning and dedicated effort in the logistics buildup of supplies to cope with the rapidly developing situation in Southeast Asia from July 1965 to November 1967. We also received the National Defense Ribbon.

I can remember the day I arrived in the Philippines. It was a lot of "hurry up and wait," confusion and chaos. The area certainly wasn't like Grafton. Many areas lacked running water, sewer, electricity and paved roads. They also had typhoons. Still, it was a very naturally beautiful country. Nowhere was this more evident than in the breathtaking view of the pine-covered mountains I could see from Baguio, which is at an elevation of 5,000 feet, similar to Denver.

While on leave I saw the Manila American Memorial, which honored the U.S. soldiers who died in World War II. I also saw Corregidor (which was the headquarters of General MacArthur and Philippine President Manuel L. Quezon) and Grande Island, both of which were heavily fortified to help protect the Philippine Islands. I traveled the route of the Bataan Death March, where many American and Philippine prisoners of war were marched to their death on the way to Japanese prison camps during World War II. I found that visiting these places made the extreme sacrifices these men made much more meaningful to me.

I returned to Grafton just before Christmas 1968. While many things looked the same, many other things had changed. Life had gone on without me. Many of the people I would see when I went out before were now married. Interstate 43 had been built from Milwaukee and my church had been replaced with a new building.

I don't regret my military experience though, and I feel everyone should spend some time in the military or at least in basic training. I feel it helps you to develop discipline, respect and appreciation for what you have. The experience was a lot like many experiences: when you're in it you can't wait to get out, but once you're out you think it wasn't that bad to begin with.

I also recall a special, unbreakable bond that developed between the men I served with because of our shared experiences. I continue to keep in touch with many of them and we do hope to reunite soon.

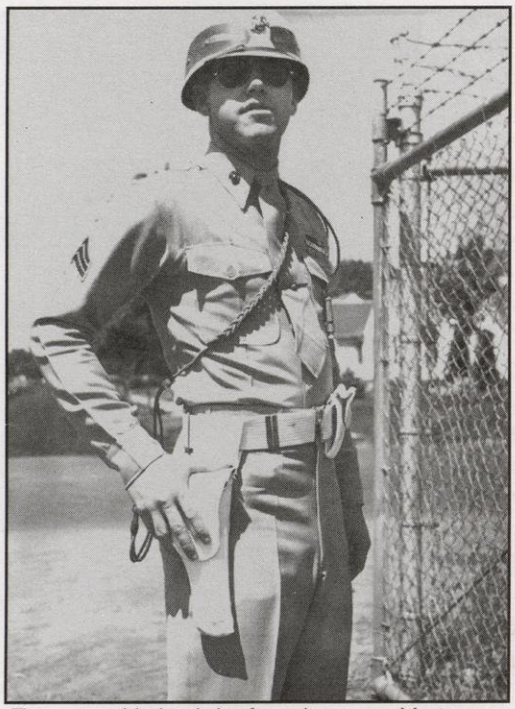
I still follow what happens in the Philippines. It saddens me to read how the country has suffered from corruption and its unstable government. I still appreciate the beauty of the Philippines and I'm grateful for the experience and knowledge I received during my duty there.

Tom Frank As told to Angi Hilgendorf, Cedarburg High School

Aircraft Mechanic and Flight Engineer

After graduating from Cedarburg High School, Tom Frank knew he was going to be drafted into the service. He did not want to be drafted into the Army, so in January 1952 he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. This was the beginning of his life-long dedication to his nation.

I enlisted in the Marine Corps because I knew a lot about the branch through friends and stories. I knew that I would inevitably be drafted, so I took the initiative to avoid being entered into the army. I was first trained in boot camp, which lasted for 14 weeks. Training varied from swimming, fire training, rifle range practice, to obstacle courses. I believe that it was a lot different from what it is today. I think sergeants got away with a lot more back then.



Tom served behind the front lines as a Marine Mechanic and Flight Engineer. His role was to ready the planes for their missions.

Following boot camp, I took a basic test and scored high in mechanics. For this reason, I trained at advanced mechanic schools in Jacksonville, Florida and Memphis. Finally, I made the trip to Korea where I remained for 14 more weeks.

On any given night, while attempting to sleep in Korea, the "Bed Check Charlies" screamed over our bases. The North Koreans dropped small bombs at night when we slept. I would describe these midnight scares more as harassment than attacks, since we were forced to get out of bed and run for a foxhole in the middle of the night.

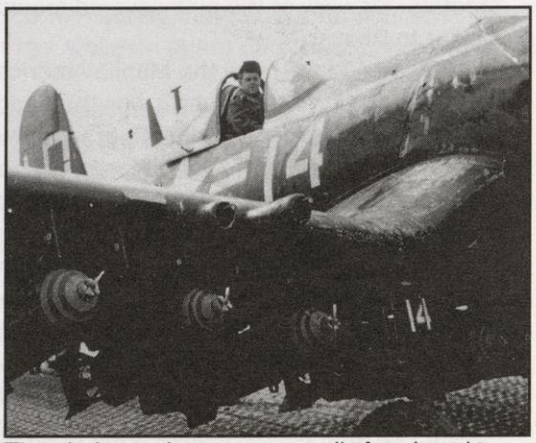
I did not witness any battles or casualties firsthand. I worked behind the scenes, readying the planes for their flights. When the planes returned, shot-up and battered, I worked on them again hoping to restore them.

I also served after the Korean War, when I found myself stationed at a Minneapolis naval base, working on burial details and other duties. I then transferred to the Air Force Reserves as a flight engineer for nine years. This is when I met my wife, a nurse who also joined the Reserves.

Eventually, we worked the 96th Troop Carrier Squadron together, flying soldiers to and from various locations on trips that lasted between five and nine days. These troops were being trained for the Vietnam War. I remember soldiers becoming sick before jumping out of the planes. I will never forget because I was the one who had to clean up the mess.

From Minnesota, I returned to my home state of Wisconsin, specifically to Eau Claire. In Eau Claire, I served in the Department of Defense. After my military service, I spent nine years working at a company in La Crosse that produced equipment for the government. I then spent another 10 years in Milwaukee, again working for the government.

Twenty-five years after I left Cedarburg as an 18 year old, I returned to the small town. I spent practically my entire working life serving my nation and I am proud to say that I enjoyed it very much. It is an experience I would never take back if given the chance.



Though the mechanics were usually found working under the planes, Tom managed to slip into the cockpit for this photo.

Today Mr. Frank enjoys keeping in touch with some of the friends he made along the way, some of which also reside here in Cedarburg. He is an active member of the Cedarburg Legion. He is still married to the woman he fell in love with during service, and together they are two very proud parents and grandparents. Mr. Frank and his wife annually enjoy traveling around the southern parts of the United States for months at a time. Tom Frank is truly a man of his country, and his stories are those of much honor.

Arthur Schwartz

As told to Brett Cherniack, Homestead High School

Tailgunner on a B-25 Mitchell Bomber in the South Pacific

Grafton resident Arthur Schwartz was living in Milwaukee when the draft arrived. Knowing that he would probably be drafted, he visited his doctor for a consultation. Schwartz discovered that he had a heart murmur and was told he was certainly not fit to join the Army. He presumed military conscription was out of the question and married his fiancée. The young married couple soon had a baby girl. However, when the U.S. Services experienced a shortage of volunteers and draftees, he was reclassified and deemed fit for service in 1943. He went on to fly 12 combat missions as part of a B-25 Mitchell Bomber crew.

My departure day arrived when I was 21 years old and I boarded a train headed south. The excursion seemed endless as we draftees often wondered what state we were in. Several times fellow draftees and I stuck our heads out the train windows and asked, "Where are we?"

With very little military experience, I lacked an idea of which area of the Army I wished to join. Based on I.Q. tests and physical examinations, I was placed in the Air Corps. Before I actually saw any combat or hands-on activity, I worked my way through countless schools and training courses, mostly in Florida and the Carolinas. On the East Coast, I practiced transition flying, basic training and familiarized myself with other crew members and soldiers.

Art's original B-25 crew: (front) Curley, Art, Gordy, (back) George, Blackie and Bob. The crew's pilot, Gordy, was killed on the first mission, though the rest of the crew is still alive today.

From the moment I left my wife and daughter, I attempted to stay in touch with my family at whatever means necessary. I wrote to my wife every day, though the letters didn't always reach home. I also called my wife whenever I could; however, periods of time spent off the continental United States proved harder for keeping in close contact with her.

Finally after completing training and routine practice runs, I began actual overseas tasks and missions. Much of this took place in the Philippines and Okinawa, although I did seem to hop from island to island quite frequently, with stops on Canton Island, New Guinea and the Philippines. I saw most of my true combat in Okinawa.

On the defensive, fellow soldiers and I dealt with and fought against Japanese air raids. I always said the Japanese raids were recognizable because of their lack of organization in the skies. We referred to the Japanese squadrons as "wash machine Charlies."

Following the dropping of the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, my crew and I flew above the demolished city. Taking in all I could, I lay, stomach down, and took pictures out of a large window of damaged Japan. I never saw those photos as my camera was later stolen on my journey home.

In my four years in the service, I had some free time. Many of us soldiers played cards, other games or swam in the ocean. I was from the Midwest and I thoroughly enjoyed the ocean, but a jellyfish encounter I had ultimately closed a beach to all soldiers.

Despite treacherous accidents, crashes and attacks, the one circumstance that proved the most gruesome and violent resulted from none other than Mother Nature. Two weeks after the war ended, I was stationed at Okinawa and a typhoon struck my camp. Wind rushed up to speeds of nearly 180 mph, and we were on our own to quickly find cover. Tent stakes flew through the air before landing in the bodies of disheveled soldiers and officers. My crew and I discovered a safe cave to sleep in, but not before a companion and I invaded the laundry tent to find some dry clothes. The next morning, after the storm had finally calmed down, everyone awoke to find heaps of destroyed tents, beds, luggage, people, even planes. The winds had torn the green paint off the B-25 Mitchell Bombers and planes, leaving them a shiny silver color. Although I dealt with combat and war conditions, I undoubtably underwent the most terror and horror the night of the typhoon.

Schwartz was honorably discharged and was awarded several medals and citations, including the Philippine Liberation ribbon with one bronze star. He returned home to Milwaukee and his family. To this day, he deeply regrets missing the development of and raising of his young daughter. However, he is enjoying life as a great-grandfather.

Ken Gengler

As told to Susan Johnston, Homestead High School

Rifleman and Machine Gunner in World War II

Ken Gengler was 23 when he was drafted into the Army on Aug. 10, 1942. At basic training in Ft. Lewis, Wash., he was trained to be a Rifleman, Machine Gunner and Squad Leader. He was in the 130th Infantry of the 33rd Division and was shipped around the world.

I remember when we first got out of basic training. We were taken to Hawaii. We all thought that was pretty nice, of course - heat, sunshine and palm trees. That didn't last long. It seems we were immediately moved to New Guinea and then the Dutch East Indies, where I was put on guard duty.

Like many GIs through the years, Ken was an expert with his rifle ... and a mop.

Once we were in the Philippines, though, I saw some action. I remember the first time I was put into battle. I was the Squad Leader. We were keeping low while walking through the tuna grass when we were taken by surprise. The Japanese were just over the hill, shooting away, and we had to think fast. My men asked me what to do, so I told them I was going to get down low and roll down the hill to safety. One of them didn't listen to me, tried running down the hill and was picked off just like that. The rest of us got out OK, though. The Philippines had to be the place where we saw the most action.

After my time in the Philippines, I was discharged because I had enough points. Back then, they had a point system that decided when you could go home.

But before I could actually get home, there was one more stop to make: Japan. We didn't trust the Japanese even at that time. We transferred from large ships into smaller landing crafts while being fully combat loaded. When we landed, there was only one old man sitting on a rock watching us.

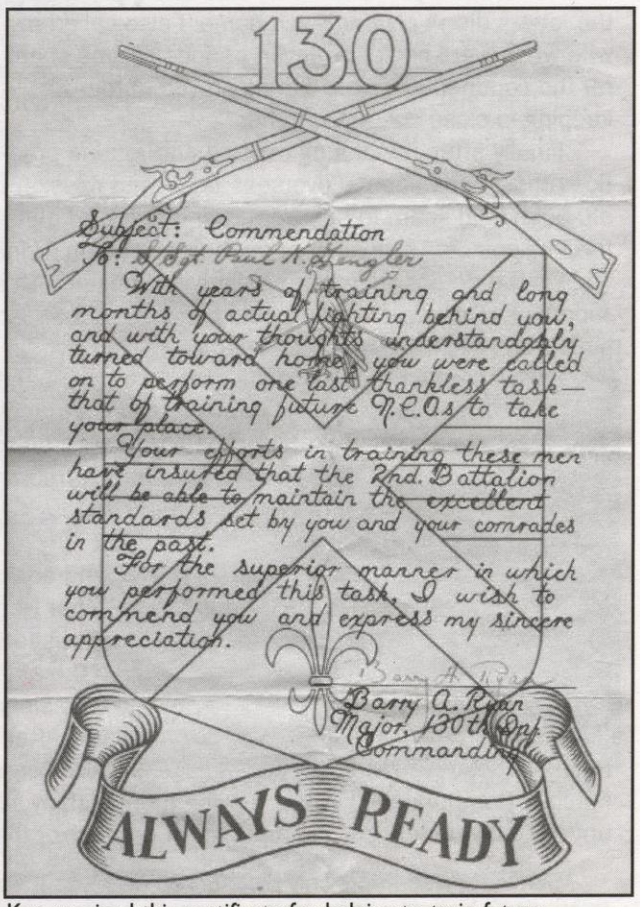
The Japanese didn't trust us either, but once we met, we found we had nothing to worry about. They were so sick of hearing all the propaganda, and we ended up making friends. They just couldn't do enough for us.

For example, the laundry ladies would make these paintings on silk handkerchiefs. They would paint them right away and immediately give them away to us.

Finally, I was given the okay that I could go home. We were sent home on troop ships to Seattle, Wash. I was discharged at Camp McCoy one day before Christmas 1945.

In the year after I returned from World War II, I spent my time working for the Allen Bradley baseball team. Later I became a carpenter and started my own company. I married my wife and we had two children, both of whom are now grown.

After my experience, I think everybody should have a chance to see how other people live. You'd be thankful to God that you are living in the good old United States of America. I had quite a few close calls when I was in the military and I was glad - and still am glad - to have come home alive.



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Subject: Commendation
To: S/Sgt Paul H. Gengler

With years of training and long months of actual fighting behind you, and with your thoughts understandably turned toward home, you were called on to perform one last thankless task — that of training future N.C.Os to take your place.

Your efforts in training these men have insured that the 2nd. Battalion will be able to maintain the excellent standards set by you and your comrades in the past.

For the superior manner in which you performed this task, I wish to commend you and express my sincere appreciation.

Barry A. Ryan
Major, 130th Inf.
Commanding

ALWAYS READY

Ken received this certificate for helping to train future non-commissioned officers in the 130th Infantry Division.

Robert Struhar As told to his daughter Susan Morter

WWII Machine Gunner

My dad enlisted in the Marine Corps in June 1943 at the age of 17. A lot of his friends enlisted and he didn't want to get drafted. He joined the Marines because he thought it was the best branch in the service. He took a train to San Francisco and started basic training.

When I arrived, I went to the barracks. After one month, I was issued my gun, an M1-Grand. I remember learning to never drop my rifle. If I did, I would have to take it apart and sleep with all the parts in my bunk. It happened to me only once. If we didn't get up for 4 a.m. roll call, they would throw a bucket of water on us or tip over our mattress.

I spent 14 weeks in boot camp. I was a good boy. After boot camp, I went to advanced training for machine gun at Camp Elliot. In six weeks, I could shoot and assemble my gun blindfolded.

On November 8, 1943, I boarded a troop ship that took me to Pearl Harbor. I was assigned to some guard duty on Ford Island, which is where all the battleships were stationed. I saw the USS Arizona overturned with its 16-inch guns still sticking out of the water.

After Pearl Harbor, I was part of the invasion of Tarawa. I was lucky I didn't get off the ship to fight, but helped bring the wounded aboard ship. There were young kids with their faces, arms, and legs blown off. I thought I had seen hell. We had shipboard services and buried many Marines at sea.

In late April 1944, a plan to invade Saipan was ordered. On the night of June 14, I was on an LST rounding the northern tip of Saipan; we landed at 0542 on June 15. I was scared, but I knew I had to fight. Saipan never seemed small, all though it was only 72 square miles.

Robert Struhar saw heavy combat while serving in the Marines.

The skies were filled with smoke from the Navy bombers. Shells were bursting every 25 yards every 15 seconds. Marines were getting killed all around me. We reached the erupting sands at the junction of Green Beach and Red Beach 3 near the northern end of the mile long Charan Kanoa airstrip. All along the beach the mortars made the sand shake and the air was full of soft whuffles. Artillery shells burst among the tree tops, shearing the green leaves and sending down shrapnel showers. We continued to push past the beach and into the slimy swamps. We had pushed inland 1,000 yards, captured the airstrip and the radio station and we were driving south toward the swampy shores of Lake Susupe.

Struhar saw Betty Hutton during a USO Tour and took this picture. It was the second star he encountered while serving. He also met Shirley Temple when he took leave in Los Angeles.

I saw Lieutenant Colonel Miller take a Japanese grenade caught between his feet and strip much of the flesh from his limbs. I remember running without being able to see anything because of all the smoke. There was gunfire everywhere. I heard a noise behind me and then felt something running down my leg. I thought I had been hit, but it was water from my canteen that had taken a bullet. I prayed to God that I would live. I had been ashore for 12 days, always under fire and never out of the front lines more than 30 hours. We took the island on July 7.

The Japanese civilians, who were terrified of us, were throwing themselves and their children over the side of the mountains to their deaths. So many were wounded and there were so many lost children. We took some to the camps where they could be given treatment. I stayed there almost a year.

After leaving Tanapag Harbor Saipan, I headed for Okinawa. God allowed me to live again through another horrible battle. I re-enlisted for another three years, and for 18 months after the war ended, I was stationed in Bermuda. I wanted to stay in the Marines, but my wife wanted to go home. I went to school to become a mason, which was supported by the G.I. Bill.

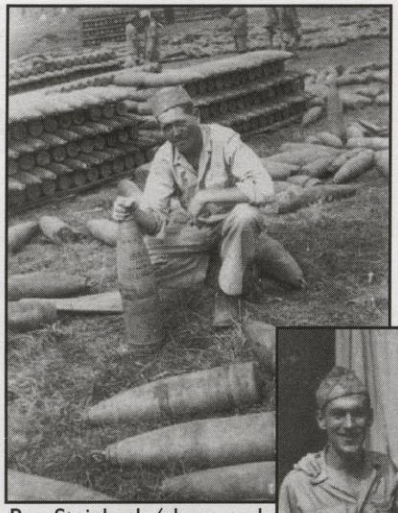
Once a Marine, always a Marine. I share this with my comrades of the Leatherneck Club of Port Washington.

Benjamin Steinbach As told to Laurie Arendt

Guarded Munitions in India, Burma and China

Cedarburg's Ben Steinbach is somewhat unique among the veterans who volunteered for this project. The sights he saw and the countries he visited are quite unique among veterans.

It's true, there weren't too many of us in that area of the world. We were there because "Merle's Marauders" needed ammunition. Merrill's Marauders was the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which had Nisei troops [first-generation Japanese-Americans] who parachuted into the jungles of Burma. They were chasing the Japanese, and we helped supply their ammunition.



I never expected I'd end up way over in that part of the world. We left Los Angeles, went past Australia and came up in Burma. We went by rail over Madras and took a boat to Calcutta, a place I didn't care for too much. It was too hot and there was too much malaria there. I ended up getting malaria, too.

All of a sudden, we were all alone in Burma. There were less than 200 guys in our unit. We took care of the munitions, and I was a guard. We'd work a regular shift and then we'd do night guard shifts. They'd originally brought in a canine outfit for that work, but it wasn't successful. There were coyotes up in the area, and the dogs were afraid of them, so they pulled the whole unit and replaced it with human guards.

Ben Steinbach (above and far right) guarded munitions. He spent most of his time in fairly secure areas, so they didn't run into much enemy action. He admits that the job did get boring at times, and he would often walk from point to point around the camp.

It was pretty uneventful because we were behind the lines. Trucks would pull in and after checking them out, I'd wave them back in. There was one guy who decided to just start shooting off his gun - for no reason - and one of his bullets carried to a nearby village and hit a little girl. He was a buck sergeant and ended up getting discharged for what he did.

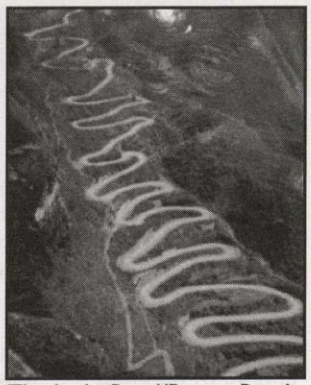
One time I was on guard duty and I was lying on top of a bunch of ammunition. I heard crunching behind me, so I reached down, got a round of ammunition and put it in my riffle. I reached over; I was ready. It turned out to be a bull wandering by.

Twice I saw planes coming in and I knew they weren't going to make it. I shot three times in the air, which meant "everyone come!" I ended up receiving two stars for what I did.

I took a lot of showers when I was in Burma; it was so hot and we'd get so sweaty that if you didn't, the other guys would smell you coming. I had a houseboy of about 8 or 9 when I was in Burma - he would stand there and hold my soap for me. He was very helpful and did little tasks for me. At one point, I wanted to buy him something to thank him, and I was told to take him to the market and see what he wanted. He wanted a pair of trousers, and he haggled with the shopkeeper. He'd get a price, hold up how many fingers it was and I'd give him a "thumbs down" until he got the right price. He was with me all the while I was in Burma.

We crossed the Ledo Road/Burma Road, and I got paired up with a guy who didn't have a driver's license. I took one look at where we were going and I ended up walking next to our jeep when he was driving. You had to go really slow anyway, but I wasn't taking chances. There was no way I'd get in that vehicle with someone like that!

We ultimately ended up in China, where I saw the Yangtze River. I saw a lot of sights that most people don't see. We went through the Suez Canal on our way home. After we crossed the Atlantic we ended up in New York, where we parked next to a big battleship - it looked just like a porcupine with all its gun barrels. It was a nice trip, and I was sure glad to get back home.



The Ledo Road/Burma Road.

I returned home to my wife, Shirley, and we were married for 66 years before she passed away. I spent 35 years at A.O. Smith before I retired.

I now have a granddaughter who is a Navy SEAL, and I am proud that she is also serving our country.

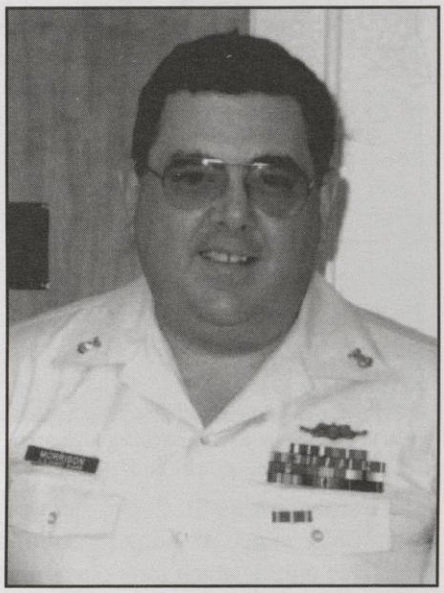
Jack Morrison

As told to Greg Long,
Ozaukee High School

Master Chief in the Coast Guard

Being a proud member of the fifth armed force, the Coast Guard, Jack Morrison probably saw more of the world than most people do in the other branches of the military. After 24 years of service, he retired at the rank of Master Chief, the highest enlisted rank you can achieve. Jack Morrison has been stationed all over the world. He sailed the oceans on four different ships and on the icebreaker, Westwind. He had three different commands in Cleveland, Ohio, Northern Michigan and Cape Cod. On two of the ships, he was the Leading Chief. Besides sailing the oceans, he was also stationed on many land based Coast Guard stations. One of the more memorable stations was on a loran station on Iwo Jima.

I remember my first impression of Iwo Jima. It had black volcanic beaches, which were hot as blazes. On the north end of the island was the loran station. We were the master station for the smaller stations around the North Pacific. I had to spend an entire year on the island the size of eight square miles with 37 other guys. We didn't even have air conditioning the first six months I was there. The temperature would range from 115 degrees during the day to 90 degrees at night. Besides the heat, Iwo would average an earthquake a week. On top of that, there were bubbling sulfur pits. When one of those exploded, it was powerful enough to wake you up from your sleep.

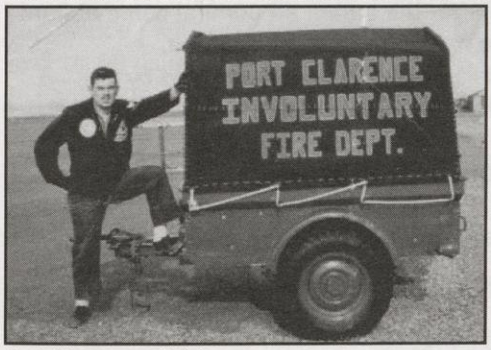


Master Chief Jack Morrison.

One of the things we did to pass the time was what we called "cave crawling." Because the Japanese had over 20 years to fortify the island, there were many caves for us to discover. The caves we went into could be from five to six feet tall. The openings to the caves would be two feet wide and about 15 feet deep before the tunnels widened.

One cave was about four feet wide and five feet tall. I remember seeing niches where the Japanese would sleep. Then you would see a set of stairs that led to the inside of the mountain. In that area, there was a generator that the Japanese had which showed how much time they had to fortify the area. The whole way through the tunnel, I would have to step over ammunition and bottles.

I was stationed on the island when the 25th anniversary of the attack took place. The military had all the Marines that were part of the invasion, which were still on active duty, attend the ceremony. The Iwo Jima veterans accurately told others and me the location of caves they had found 25 years ago.



Jack Morrison, 1964.

With the help of the veterans, we found the old Japanese command cave. They had to dig down 20 feet to reach the opening. After the opening was found, we still had to wait a couple of days to let some fresh air in. When we first went in, we saw about 10 skeletons; they all looked like they were sleeping. Our guess was that they killed themselves because they considered surrender a disgrace.

I remember that while I was there, it took me a day and a half to find out that we landed a guy on the moon since we had no radio or TV. It took two weeks to see a newspaper about the moon landing. After I left Iwo Jima, I saw the video of the astronauts on the moon.

I also had an experience completely opposite of Iwo Jima: I spent some time in the Arctic. Instead of the sulfur pits and earthquakes, the Arctic had the constant snow and cold. To pass the time there, we made go-carts. Because we had fifty-five hundred feet of runway, we took advantage of it. We would order most of our parts like the engines and wheels. The parts we didn't order, we made. When we had spare time, we would race the three go-carts we made down the runway.

In winter, we would go to the Eskimo village of 300 people, 15 miles away. It would take us an hour to get there and an hour to get back. We would visit the village's general store and talk to the natives.

If I had the option to do it all again, I would. I don't think that there's a job in the world with as much excitement as the Coast Guard. Where else could I go cave crawling on Iwo Jima and race go-carts down the middle of a runway in the Arctic?

Harvey Krueger

As told to his grandson Brett Krueger, Cedarburg High School

Member of the "Little Beavers" Squadron during World War II

Like many others of his time, Harvey Krueger enlisted in the Navy in search of adventure, excitement and money. As a local butcher who was working for "peanuts," my grandfather attempted to enlist in the Marines. He was denied acceptance due to his "flat-footed" condition. He then enlisted in the Navy, which changed his life forever.

After I enlisted, I first went to boot camp. After 21 days of training and immunization shots, I got nine days of leave and was then transferred to Orange, Texas, by rail. When I got there, a ship was awaiting my arrival. This ship, however, was not ready to be set to sea. I was given a specific duty while waiting for the ship and, due to my previous experience as a butcher, I became a cook and butcher. After about one month, I boarded the USS Claxton DD571 and we went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

We soon continued on to South Carolina and then to New York where we met other ships. There were a total of 57 ships, all of which we needed to screen for war-like materials. We encountered no such materials. After leaving New York with full ammunition and fuel, we went to the Panama Canal. After going through the canal, we went to Pearl Harbor. We then escorted several ships from Pearl Harbor to New Caledonia, which is right off the shore of Australia. On the way down, we were initiated for crossing the equator.

Harvey Krueger left Cedarburg in search of adventure, excitement and money.

A squadron of 10 destroyers, called Desron 23, The Little Beavers, was assembled. Our main task was to provide a safe landing zone for the Marines going ashore. We would shoot over their heads as they went ashore to destroy the enemy forces.

We first went to the Solomon Islands. Bougainville, one of the largest islands in the Solomons, was our most important bombardment. We successfully took over the island and established the first air base in the Solomon Islands.

Our first contact with the enemy came in the Buca Straights. We had received a message that a group of Japanese ships was leaving Boganville through these straights. We went into the straights at night because we had radar, and the Japanese did not. At this time the encounter was called the Battle of Cape St. George. We went into the straights with three other ships from Division 45, and two ships from Division 46. We sunk three Japanese ships immediately.

This battle, which took place on Thanksgiving Day, was known as the perfect battle. Our squadron then adopted the name the "Little Beavers." We got this nickname because after the battle, an admiral came aboard to commend us. He saw a painting that was on the ship and decided to name the squadron after it.

From that point on, we headed towards the Russell and Admiralty Islands, which were also held by the Japanese. We continued with our bombardments at night, and fled to friendly waters during the day for protection from the enemy planes.

In 1944 we headed to the Philippines, where we joined the Seventh Fleet. Upon getting there, the seas were too wild and the minesweeps could not clear the channel to Leyte Gulf. We had to remain outside the channel. In the meantime, one of our ships rolled over and sank outside of the channel. We lost more men on that action than any other encounter with the enemy.

While in Leyte Gulf, we bombarded the beaches in preparation for the landing forces. Al that time, enemy ships tried to enter the harbor through a different channel. They proceeded to draw us out of the Gulf and we annihilated the Japanese fleet. When morning came, we went back into the Gulf and their were Japanese people clinging to floating debris throughout the water. We went right through with our ships and gave them a chance to come aboard, which they refused.

As we were in Leyte Gulf, the Japanese began with suicide planes. Our ship was hit by a kamikaze. The ship that was docked next to us, the Abner Read, was struck by a kamikaze just after we were. Supposedly the gas from the air plane went down into the magazine of the ship and all the ammunition went off. The ship split in two and sank.

In 1993, 50 years after the Battle of Cape St. George, Mr. Krueger, along with the entire "Little Beavers" squadron, was invited on-board the newly commissioned USS Cape St. George. The captain of the ship provided the "Little Beavers" with a Thanksgiving meal. This meal was to replace the one they missed 50 years ago, and to prove that heroes will not be forgotten.

Norman Eifler As told to Laurie Arendt

Gunner on a Troop Transport Ship

Even though World War II was ending, Cedarburg resident Norman Eifler was drafted in 1944. While he felt his work at home was aiding the war effort more than service in the military at that time, he soon found himself on the Uruguay, a converted cruise ship doing wartime duty as a troop transporter.

I was surprised to be drafted at age 25 because the war was ending and I had received deferments because I was welding tanks at the Heil Company in Milwaukee. I also had a farm, and after I left, my wife and neighbors had to harvest our vegetables because I wasn't around to do it. We also had another child on the way, but none of that ultimately mattered.

I was first drafted to be in the Army, but I told the recruiter that I really saw myself more as a Navy man because I had been on ships before. What I didn't tell him was that those "ships" were really a boat or two on Lake Michigan. I didn't want to be in the Army, and they must've thought my "experience" was helpful, so I found myself in the Navy.

From farmer to sailor, at least when Uncle Sam calls.

Before we left on our first trip, we were in port in Boston. I received a telegram from the Red Cross telling me that my wife had given birth to my daughter, Nancy. Because we were preparing to sail out to sea, I wasn't allowed to take leave or even call her. I pestered my lieutenant so much that he finally gave in and told me I could go use a pay phone, but he would accompany me and he would carry a gun. He said, "If you say one word about me allowing you to do this, I will shoot you and then shoot myself." We weren't supposed to leave the ship at all, but I got to make my phone call.

I was assigned as part of the Navy's Armed Guard and my official duty was that of a 20mm gunner. I spent most of my time standing watch at a gun station. There wasn't much to do because at that point, we'd pretty much shot all the German planes out of the sky. We had nothing to shoot at.

Our job was to transport troops, and we made regular trips to and from major European troop ports: LeHavre in France, Southampton in England and Leghorn, Italy, where I went up to the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and rang all its little bells. We also took 5,000 African-American troops to Manila, where they were being trained for the planned invasion of Japan.

It was on my first trip after learning that Nancy was born when I had an experience I will never forget. We were part of an armada that was 10 miles long by 10 miles wide. We had 5,000 troops on our ship and we were purposely in the middle of the armada to protect them.

It was sometime in the afternoon and I had just started walking from the back of the ship when I saw two little wakes coming at us: Torpedoes. We were supposed to be protected and there were a lot of little ships watching out for the enemy, but these two torpedoes were headed right at us. If we could see the torpedoes, we knew they weren't too deep, and I saw that they were heading at our ship's magazine, which was right above our engine room. If they were to hit us, they would've blown the entire back of the ship off. The Uruguay was such a tin can anyway, and our troops would've died because they never would've had a chance to get out.

I hollered through the microphone, jumped up and ran to the other side of the ship. I didn't see a thing, and nobody else saw the torpedoes. What happened to them? To this day, I think the Lord put his two fingers down and pushed those torpedoes out of our way.

That was during the time when the Germans were sending out their Wolfpacks. They would target our tankers because we would also carry airplanes on the tanker ships. They also knew that our armadas would keep on going and we didn't go back to the ships that had been hit. During that trip, I'd see a tanker or two get torpedoed and explode at least every day.

The American ships would drop depth charges, and that was when we knew that there were German submarines in the area. I remember at one point I was in my sleeping berth, which was at the ship's water line, when a depth charge was dropped. The concussion was so great that I ended up on the floor. We could tell when they hit a submarine because, even though we couldn't see the submarine itself, we'd see oil wash up on the ocean.

I spent a little under two years in the Navy. I was glad to come home.

Victor "Earl" Putzbach

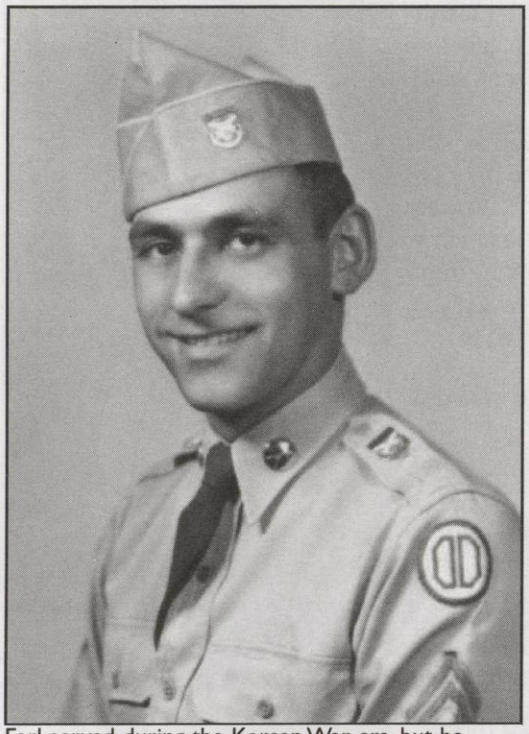
As told to Katie Grevenow, Cedarburg High School

Truck Driver

In January 1951, Victor E. Putzbach was drafted into the Army in the 31st Dixie Division in South Carolina. He remembers his first day as being "kind of apprehensive."

General Paxton was our commanding officer. We had around 11,000 guys from Michigan, Wisconsin and New York to fill out the Division. They trained us, and after 14 weeks of basic training nothing happened. We did training, training, training. After I was in there for about a year, and thought I had it made, they had an Operation Longhorn. They moved the entire Division by rail, air and truck to Texas where we fought war games with the 82nd Airborne. This was the first time they used helicopters to transfer the troops.

Then, some of us went to Germany, and a lot went to Korea. When I arrived in Germany, they put me in artillery, which I knew nothing about. Everything I learned before was wiped out. I drove a truck before I went to the service, so they put me in a service battery of the 28th Division. Eventually, I was put in charge of the proper loading of seven trucks. I carried all supplies, mostly ammunition, gasoline and food. It was a good situation for me over there.



Earl served during the Korean War era, but he served in Germany.

There were a couple of scary moments. One time we lost a three-quarter-ton truck and it was gone for three days. It turned out the guy who was driving it met a girlfriend and hid the truck in a barn and spent a few days there. One time we were coming home from our exercises, and the truck ahead of me hit a bump and the trailer it was pulling came loose. It ran through a picket fence, and almost ran into a German house. The German kids scattered.

I knew my wife-to-be before I left. We decided to get married while I was in the service. I came home on leave after returning home from Operation Longhorn. I figured I wouldn't be going overseas. I was home for the weekend and had to go back Sunday night. Monday morning they told us all leaves were cancelled and that we were going overseas. So it was a hectic week, I did not know if I was going to get home or not. Thanks to the Red Cross, I got a three-day pass. I got home for the wedding and was back at camp on Monday.

We had some good times too. One night, we borrowed the captain's jeep. I had a buddy only about 10 miles from where I was stationed. The captain's jeep driver was in our group, and talked us into using the jeep. We found my friend's buddy, but I never found mine. At about 10:30 p.m. we decided we needed to get back to camp. We weren't in bed five minutes and an alarm went off. It was a red alert. If we would not have been back, we certainly would've been in deep trouble.

In January, I got my orders to go home. I was on a railroad car that broke down, and we were late and missed the boat. So we didn't get to go home before Christmas.

I returned shortly to Continental Can, but did not receive my old job. So at that time Grafton-Milwaukee was looking for a truck driver. I applied and got the job, staying there for 25 years. Then they went out of business. So I worked for a company in Milwaukee for four years, and then went to West Bend Transit for 10 years. So I had almost 40 years in the trucking industry.

A couple years after I got out I signed up for the American Legion through the Peter Wollner Post in Cedarburg, and I've been active with the Post for 48 years. I've held every office but treasurer. I have two daughters, both married, and six grandchildren.

Earl drove a truck similar to this one - he even had his name stenciled on the side door.

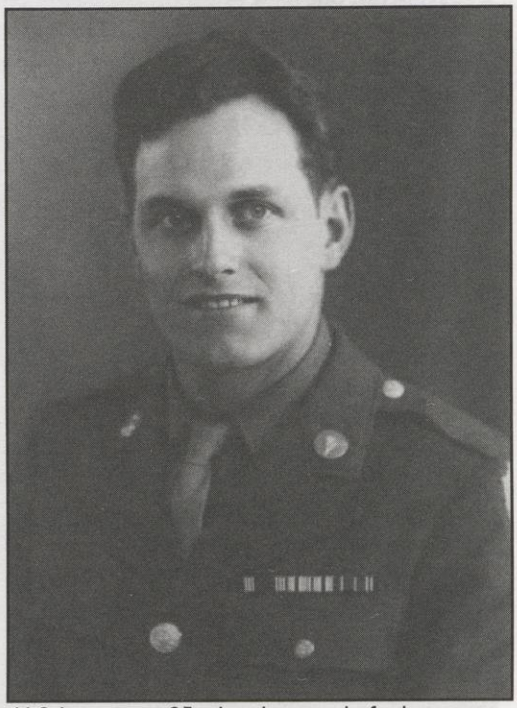
Alphonse "Al" Schanen

As remembered by his widow, Martha, and his son, Nick

Medic during World War II

Though Grafton veteran Al Schanen passed away in 1986, he had told his wife and children quite a few stories about his experiences during World War II. His wife, Martha, and his son, Nick, were able to recall many things that he had spoken about during his time as a medic with the 816th Engineering Aviation Battalion.

My husband was 25 years old when he was drafted but he didn't complain. He felt it was his duty to go. We were married for four years and had acquired land on which we intended to build our house. Al put a gate across our driveway and a big sign that said, "Gone to War." He wanted to get in the Air Force [Army Air Corps] but he couldn't because he was color blind and had a trick knee. He couldn't be in the field so he ended up being a medic.



Al Schanen was 25 when he was drafted.

He was sent to Europe six months before D-Day. His battalion started out in England, and he did spend some time there. In fact, he met up with his twin brother, Alfred, at Oxford, England. The twins were avid golfers and they played a few rounds of golf together at Oxford. That wasn't the only person Al met up with while in Europe. He was in Belgium being transported in a convoy when he heard one of the MPs yell, "Hey, Schanen!" It turned out to be Lester Retzer from back home.

There were some things that he never did share with us. He didn't talk a whole lot about what he saw in terms of the war, of how people were injured and that sort of thing. He did land on Omaha Beach as part of the D-Day Invasion, so we know he did see quite a bit. He would tell us how they drove off the LST right into the water, but the water was too deep so the jeeps sunk. They didn't have any transportation at that point, so they were pretty much on their own. He always wanted to go back on the 50th anniversary of D-Day, but he didn't make it.

Al's medical company had a mobile unit called "The Rolling Pill." They were able to do quite a bit inside, which helped bring the needed medical aid out to the men in the field. They also had a jeep called the "Quack's Hack." It's hard to believe what they were able to do with those facilities back then, but they helped men in Normandy, Northern France the Rhineland and Central Europe.

The Rolling Pill brought medical services to the men in the field.

By the end of the war, Al's battalion ended up in Munich. He did tell us that the scenery was beautiful and the German people were friendly. Al didn't know much German, but he occasionally was asked to translate.

He didn't have enough points to come home when the war ended, so Al ended up staying. His letters were censored, but Al pretty much knew what he could and couldn't write. The only time anything was blacked out was when his unit was slated to go on to the Pacific Theater. That didn't happen. He ended up staying in Europe and travelled quite a bit, making several trips to the French Riviera and Berchtesgaden. He also met his brother, Zip, in Italy.

Al saw many sights while in the service, including Bing Crosby during a USO show.

Al also had an in with a captain who sent supplies home. He would get souvenirs for this captain, who would, in turn, help Al send souvenirs home. He only saved a few of the things he acquired and disposed of the rest when he came home. He had a number of bayonettes, swords, rifles and guns. He also sent me French perfume and silk stockings, and I remember he wrote that the silk stockings were quite expensive, but if I liked them, he would be sure to buy me more.

Fred Linn

As told to Emily Wilson and Sarah Young, Cedarburg High School

Commanding Officer in the Signal Corps

Fred Linn graduated from the University of Illinois in 1938, serving in the Army before returning to civilian life and working as an engineer in Chicago and Minneapolis. Three years later he was ordered to serve again during World War II in the Signal Corps. Mr. Linn was promoted to the rank of major during his military service.

I started out as a radio officer in the Fiftieth Signal Battalion and went out to Fort Riley, Kan., to the Calvary Division, where I was a troop commander and later a signal officer. We didn't see combat - our main job was to install radio nets, lay telephone wire, switchboards, teletype machinery and portable telephones.

Fred served in the Signal Corps and worked on installing communication devices for our troops.

We received our Preparation for Overseas Movement orders and got on a boat to go to England and Scotland. After we crossed Utah Beach, we toured across Normandy and into Germany. The Ninth Armored Division captured the Remagen Bridge across the Rhine, thus providing a crossing of the Rhine with dry feet. When we reached the Remagen Bridge as part of the First Army, we didn't ask any questions but just moved as many troops as we possibly could across the bridge in the shortest time.

People who say they were never scared are lying. The Battle of the Bulge - that was pretty scary. You didn't know where people were coming from, what they would be driving or what uniforms they would be in, and we had a great deal of trouble. As the Germans came west, they tore up a lot of our telephone wires. For about 20 days, it was generally a chaotic time. After that, they were stopped, and we started moving east.

After the Armistice, we had vast quantities of displaced persons, particularly those who had been liberated from prison camps. We also had people who were moving around the country on horses, on mules, on foot, on whatever they could find because their homes were either burned or had been bombed out.

People who were dislocated came through our area, and through the processing station we had set up. The first thing we did was give them a bath, because some of these people hadn't had a bath since God knows when. We weren't concerned with the aroma, but we were certainly concerned with the germs. Persons coming through our station were given a bath, deposited their clothes in piles and went into the big canvas tent with showers. After the shower, they were given a doctor's examination and received brand-new clothes. They were then separated as to their destination: North, west, east or south, and trains took them in that direction.

Our Division was in Czechoslovakia when the war ended. We were quite relieved as we got a call to the Division Headquarters for an organizational meeting to determine our destinations and discharge.

It took quite a while to get back to the United States. We had a point system where each soldier and officer had a point value - so many points for each month in the service and if you were married (more points), had children (even more points) and so on. It took about a month to set up the point system and get everybody checked out medically. We set up people in camps. We had Camp San Francisco and Camp Los Angeles, depending upon where you were going in the United States. Total evacuation took about two months. When we landed in the United States, we went to the railroad, loaded on trains and left for our destinations. I took off for Chicago. I was given terminal leave, and after arrival, reverted to reserve status instead of my active duty commission.

It was a strange feeling, not being responsible for a Signal Co. of 300 men and officers anymore. For a while I missed the job, but that feeling passed quickly. It was good to get out of that uniform! I guess you have to wonder when you come through that sort of thing why you were preserved and others weren't.

Fred Linn currently resides with his wife Louise at Cedar Lake Campuses on the outskirts of West Bend. The proud father of four and grandfather of three, Mr. Linn actively volunteers and operates ham radios. He participates in a men's group and an organization of ex-railroad employees and enthusiasts.

Melvin Reif As told to Laurie Arendt

Spotter in World War II

Saukville resident Melvin Reif was drafted into the Army on June 2, 1942. He originally worked in a supply company in Patterson N.J., but later found himself moved to Texas as part of a 40mm battery company. He found Texas so hot and unbearable that he volunteered to be in an infantry unit just to get out of the state.

I ended up being transferred to the 65th Division, which was attached to the Third Armored Division under General Patton. We boarded a Liberty Ship in New York and it took us 20 days to get over to France. We were in a convoy, and a destroyer ahead of was throwing over "tin cans" (barrel-type explosives) for the submarines. We went this way, and that way, and this way - I never saw so many guys get sick. I had heard that if you keep your stomach full, you don't get seasick. I found some sodacrackers and ate them the whole way there and I never got sick. We were supposed to land in England, but ended up disembarking at LeHavre, France.

Melvin Reif in the 1940s.

We stayed in a tent city called Camp Lucky Strike - all the tent cities were named after different cigarette brands. When we first arrived, we could hear the guns firing from the Battle of the Bulge. It wasn't very pleasant living conditions. We didn't have any heat and we kept warm by walking around the tent poles.

After we landed in France, we continued to push forward through France and into Germany. I was part of a cannon company in the infantry. I don't really know what the French and German people thought of the Nazis, but they sure seemed glad to see us.

Mel Reif in Germany. The sign on his chair reads, "Hitler doesn't live here anymore."

I remember when we were still in occupied France, one of our men went up to a farmhouse that had chickens. He wanted to buy some eggs so he knocked on the door. The people didn't speak English; he didn't speak French, so he did the next best thing. He said, "Haben sie eier, bitte?" The farmers nearly filled their pants because they thought we were the Nazis!

At one point we were directing fire across the Sarr Basin and into the German pillboxes, which were big concrete bunkers. I worked as part of a squad that directed our fire from an outpost. I did the calculations, plus we had a Lieutenant, a radio operator and a jeep driver. My job was to try and figure out what our guns should hit next.

We were sighting targets from a church steeple on one side of the basin and we noticed another church steeple on the other side. I remember we said, "Okay, maybe the Germans are sighting off of that steeple."

On the next round of calculations, I did one for the church steeple, and we directed 105mm fire in that direction. That didn't make the Germans too happy because all of a sudden, we could hear an incoming mortar being directed at us. You never saw four guys go downstairs and outside so fast as the four of us in that church steeple. We all hit the dirt face down with our hands and arms covering our heads. The mortar actually hit about 20 feet in front of the church, and though we were all covered in dust, no one had gotten hurt. We were quite lucky, and received the Bronze Star for what had happened.

After the war was over, Reif also visited Hitler's mountain hideaway, Berchtesgaden. By that time, Hitler didn't live there anymore either.

We continued moving through Germany until we met the Russians in Linz, Austria. On that last push, we lost our company commander and his jeep driver, so when we arrived in Linz, we named our camp after him: William A. Moore Camp. He was a character; we really liked him.

At that point, some of us were assigned to military police duty. We were supposed to drive around and make sure that nobody was breaking the law. We didn't find anyone, but just drove around and had a good time. I had some time to take a tour, and I went to see Berchtesgaden. You could see for miles from there.

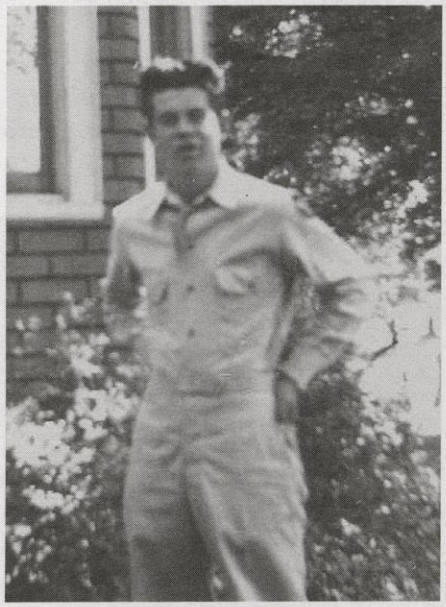
Ultimately, I was assigned to a hotel where we had live German music with every meal. This was after the war and the French government supplied us with French liquor, mainly cognac and a green liquor. We finally were transferred to Czechoslovakia where we disbanded and sent home.

Eugene Pierron As told to Laurie Arendt

Motorcycle and Jeep Driver During World War II

Gene Pierron was working in a Grafton machine shop that made boosters for bombs. It was a cold winter in December 1942 and hoping he would get sent to a southern state, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps. When Pierron arrived at Ft. Sheridan, Ill., the Army learned he had motorcycle riding experience, so they sent him to Camp Hood, Texas., where the Army just formed a tank destroyer battalion.

I did my basic training at Camp Hood, and after six weeks, I asked the Company Commander about the Air Force. I was told that wherever I was, regardless of it being the Army or the Air Corps, I'd have to take basic training. At this point, I realized I was actually in the Army, not the Air Corps, but we would be riding motorcycles soon, so I stayed.



Gene Pierron was a member of the 661st Tank Destroyer Battalion.

When the 661st Tank Destroyer Battalion was formed, I was assigned to the Reconnaissance Company. I needed a motorcycle because I was the "getaway" guy. If my unit would come under fire and was pinned down, I was to get away to another unit so that help could be obtained, usually in the form of artillery fire.

I also needed a motorcycle for when our battalion moved from camp to camp for maneuvers because my job was to go ahead of the unit and stop traffic so that the equipment could move though. Our unit completed advanced training at Camp Clairborne, La., Camp Swift and Camp Bouie in Texas and Camp Chaffee, Ark.

On Dec. 22, 1944, the 661st entrained for Camp Shanks, N.Y., and on Jan. 9, 1945, embarked for the European Theater of operations. Twelve days later, we landed at LeHavre, France. The war was raging.

I had the same duty as before, but this time it was with a jeep. After my Lieutenant saw me riding in a jeep, he had a radio installed in it. At that point, I had a lieutenant riding along with me to reconnoiter the area. My other duty also stayed the same with the jeep: I was still the "getaway" guy if we came under fire.

Within two weeks, our battalion moved through ice and snow to join the fighting in Belgium. This is where the 661st Battalion joined the 69th Infantry Division, which started its march through Germany at Schmidheim, crossed the Rhine and Bad Neuenahr and continued north of Frankfurt. This Division captured more than 1,000 towns, including the major city of Leipzig. It was during this battle that I received shrapnel wounds. My rain poncho was full of holes, but that did not keep me out of action.

As the Division moved deeper into Germany, the various units took 35,000 German prisoners and freed more than 26,500 Allied prisoners from other lands who had been brought into Germany to work as slave laborers. One of the POW camps liberated by the Division held my brother, Bob, and I missed liberating him by five days.

This USPS stamp commemorates the meeting of U.S. and Russian forces. Gene was part of this important event.

The most famous action of WWII was the meeting of the United States and the Russian troops at Torgau on the Elbe River in eastern Germany. I was the only Ozaukee County soldier with the unit. A stamp commemorating this meeting was issued by the United States Postal Service.

My time with the 661st Tank Destroyer Battalion when it was attached to the 69th Infantry Division remains a vivid memory. I am a member of the Board of Directors for the 69th Division Association and represent my tank destroyer unit.

Gene Pierron is now an active member of the American Legion Memorial Post 412 in Belgium where he currently serves as the post's Service Officer. He is also a life member of the V.F.W. Post 5373 Ozaukee County. His work week is now defined by the miles he makes driving disabled veterans to area hospitals and doctor appointments as well as to the Zablocki Medical Center in Milwaukee.

Elmer Livingston

As told to Lexi Noruk
Homestead High School

Air Spotter in World War II

Elmer Livingston is 82 years old and his life is very quiet. Or at least quiet compared to the time he fought in WWII. He now works with veterans from other wars at the VFW and is a Poppy chairman for the Cedarburg and Grafton area. He has a grandson in the Marines.

I was drafted in 1944. I was living in Waukesha at the time and hadn't thought of joining. This was just a thing that you did; you didn't have a choice. I wanted to go into an Airborne unit but, because of my eyes, I couldn't. I am colorblind to certain colors and that means they won't take you.

In boot camp, there was work to be done: getting different stuff, going to different places, getting the barracks you are assigned to, getting all of your clothes, meeting many other GIs. At boot camp there were all new recruits so there were no standouts. Oh sure, some people made mistakes, but we were all in training.

Elmer Livingston during World War II.

I learned the gun inside and out. I could take the gun apart and put it together blindfolded. You had yourself on a blanket. You laid a piece here and you knew exactly where you put it because you were going to have to pick it up again later. We had time limits on it. How fast you did it and got it right, that was the main thing. Because once it goes back into the gun, if it isn't right, you were lost.

I was in the branch called ACAC, which was antiaircraft. In other words, we were shooting at planes. I belonged to the 636th Antiaircraft Division. In wartime you are not stationed, instead you go from one place to the other. We were shipped to England, and from there I went to France. We arrived three days after D-Day.

From France we went to Normandy. Many of our soldiers came through Purple Heart Lane, and that is where we went through, too.

My unit was a mobile unit, which meant that when something of value to us was taken, we would move in. As soon as the area was safe, we pulled out again and moved to another place.

We guarded a trestle unit in France. We were a 40mm unit, and our guns were set up for airplanes, not ground troops. We guarded this big trestle, which already had a huge hole in it. We also made a gasoline run to Brest, which was in the western part of France. After that, we came through Paris up to Belgium and were stationed at Bastion, which was a railhead and one of the most important spots because all the material was brought in by railroad.

From there we moved up to St. Vith, which was a very small town that had already been bombed out. First the Germans had it, then we took it. Then the Germans took it back. After that, we finally claimed it for the last time. They didn't want it anymore. We were never up along the front lines. The infantry was always ahead of us and we didn't have much contact with the soldiers. We sometimes moved up to where the infantry men were but then they would move on. Later we moved on into the Black Forest and stayed in some big castles.

We had to go into Holland to get around the Siegfried Line. That was a very well built line. After that, we moved back into Germany and ended up at Leipzig, which was where the war ended. I remember a lot about the day the war ended. We had German planes coming in and surrendering. We were very happy about it because this meant we were going home. I tried to keep in touch with some of the guys. I don't even know if a lot of them are still alive. I think I am one of the last ones. I'm 82 years old; that's a long life.

I'm not a military person. Military means that you have to do everything by the rules. It's a poor way of life. Some people like it, but it is just something you do for your country. But we were glad to get out of it. Most of my outfit left. I could have been sergeant if I had stayed. No, thank you. Now that I am out of the service I think before I act. Sometimes young people don't think. I would say, put your mind in operation before your tongue talks. I have more respect for people, individuals.

You know how you watch it on TV and they get shot and then they die right away, that's not the way they die. They scream and holler. And believe me, its chilling when it happens at night. To hear somebody out there, you can't get to them but you can hear them. Another thing, at night time, watch and look. You can see a post move in your mind. It doesn't move, but your mind tells you it does. Like it's somebody out there and you just don't know.

Kenneth Hypki

As told to Heather Erickson and Jessie Bartz, Ozaukee High School

Codeman during World War II

Mr. Hypki is different than most of the people interviewed for this book because he is a first generation American. His parents came to America and could not read, write or speak English.

I attended Whitefish Bay High School and, during my senior year when I turned 18, I enlisted in the service. They did not even let me finish senior year with my high school class.

I went to basic training in Texas and enrolled in the Army Air Corps Air Cadets program, which trained us to be pilots. Here we got in shape and took our exams, which really showed the air cadets what we were made of. We had physical training twice a day. At the end of basic training, they announced that they had too many pilots, so there were about 1,000 of us dismissed from the program.

Ken had this photo taken when he was stationed in England - he sent it home to his mom.

We had a choice of several things, and I chose aerial gunner and mechanics (one practical, one not so practical), neither of which I received. Instead, I was sent to Chanute, Ill. to become a cryptographer, which meant that I would be decoding the messages that came through during wartime.

We had various systems - volumes and volumes of them - that were used for the messages, which came through on teletype machines. Some of the decoder systems were done by hand, and that took forever. It was a very interesting job for a kid that had barely been out of Wisconsin. I only had one or two "top secret" messages come through during my time.

I was then transferred to a top-secret organization called the AACS (Army Airforce Communication System). I went overseas to England on the Queen Elizabeth from New Jersey in five days.

Once I arrived, my job was to basically work in the code rooms and decode the codes. No one else was allowed in the code rooms except for me. I was later sent to London to do the same thing. It was a safe job

The worst part of my job was that at midnight, the machine would ding three times and all the names of the deceased or missing in action would come over the machine.

There was also an airbase nearby that no one knew about. Unmarked planes that only flew in extremely bad weather were stationed there, and they took Americans back to England if they got shot down in someone else's territory.

I loved horses, and once when I was at the RAF [Royal Air Force] base in England, I wrangled a horse out of a local farmer. They had beautiful beaches, but they were full of barbed wire and antitank mines. Bicycles were also in great demand in England, and we used to stand in line to obtain one.

When V-Day came, there was no longer a job for me because the war was over and they no longer used us for cryptography. I was sent on to Paris to fill out a report that accounted for all the people in your outfit. You were only allowed three mistakes and then your commanding officer would also sign off on it. I worked with four other people who did not speak English, so it was very difficult to work with them at first.

Paris was very unique in that, at the time, it only had electricity three hours a day. When you walked down the street there were dogs hanging from the windows because they ate dogs. People lined up at the garbage cans to get leftovers that we didn't eat. I lived with a friend of mine, Walt, in a linen closet on the fourth floor of a building in Paris. I became friends with many French families while I was stationed there, but then I had to leave.

I had the opportunity to continue on the Air Force, and was offered many incentives and a promotion. The officer in charge was very unbending, and I had been in long enough to know the ropes. I was to be sent to Frankfurt, Germany, but I wanted to take 15 days of leave and travel time. He said, "No, can't do that." So I said, "No, can't sign up." My mother's health was failing and I wanted to go home and take care of her, which is what I did. I did join the Air Force Reserves for three years after I left the Army.

I now live in a farmhouse in Fredonia with my wife. I have worked very hard to get my farm, and I proudly fly the American flag every day.

Howard Cordts

As told to Anita Mantha, Homestead High School

Transportation Lieutenant in World War II

Howard P. Cordts, now a resident of Grafton, was drafted into the Army, Oct. 23, 1941, at age 24 from North Dakota. He served as a Transportation Lieutenant during World War II. Now he spends time on the weekends with his daughter and enjoys going out with his wife. The image of utter destruction upon Europe still stuns him.

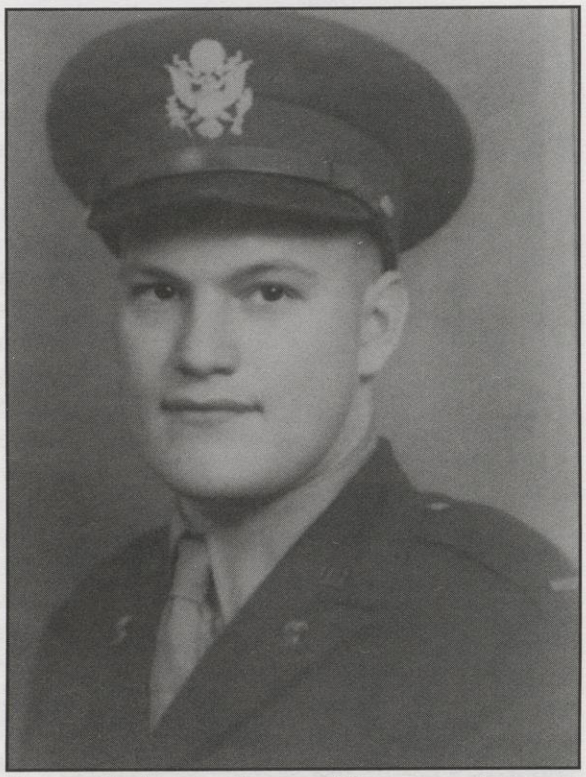
At the time I was drafted I was in the CCCs in Minnesota. I took basic training at Ft. Francis E. Warren in Cheyenne, Wyo. At the training camp I learned to drive trucks, chiefly 6x6s. After training I was transferred to a Heavy Ordnance Company in Panama, where I worked in the radiator, gas tank and gear case repair shop.

In 1942, I returned to the United States to attend Officer Training School. After graduation I joined the 141sy QMC Trk Co. (TC) in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada. The Alcan highway was gravel at this point, and the function of the 141st was to provide truck services to the post.

With the 141st, I returned to the United States, where all of us went on leave. In April 1944, we went to England. In Basingstoke, we housed in British homes. My platoon was giving tipping lorries and worked in an immense gasoline dump nearer the embarking point, not a pleasant site when a buzz bomb would go overhead, especially if the motor stopped.

In July we went to France with our Chevy semi-trucks. After the St. Lo breakthrough we hauled gasoline on the Red Ball Express from Cherbough to General Patton's Third Army. Our company saw no action. By virtue of the semis, we could only deliver to an Army dump.

In addition, the Allied air superiority protected us. Although we did have one truck strafed, the bullet grazed the driver's helmet and went into the floor boards. On return trips we sometimes hauled prisoners of war, and after Batogne, this was our chief cargo. We spent the last month of the war in Germany, where we also house in homes.



Howard Cordts served in many different areas during World War II.

Howard and his sister, Irma, in 1943. She was a Navy nurse.

Needless to say, we gave the Germans a bad time about why they allowed Hitler. The usual replay was, "We never had it so good." It was true. In England and France people had ragged clothes, whereas in Germany most women had silk stockings even while working in the rubble.

I kept in touch with my family by writing letters. The mail was censored by company officers. They would black out the words or cut out any revealing information.

Soon after VE Day we were sent to a reassignment camp where I was among those with sufficient points for eligibility to return to the United States. It was an immense relief to also hear about VJ Day, which meant no duty in Japan and the Pacific. I had spent a total of 39 months overseas.

On Oct. 24, 1945, I arrived back in the United States. I completed the usual paperwork, was given leave until Dec. 17, 1945, and attendant separation from the Service. I returned home to North Dakota and then went on to school on the G.I. Bill at the University of Montana. This was where I would receive my Master's degree in Chemistry and meet my wife, Ardis [page 47].

In 1995, I went on a tour of Europe. Nothing was as I remembered; everything that had been destroyed was now repaired and cleaned up. None of the wrecked, shot-up and destroyed material and buildings remained.

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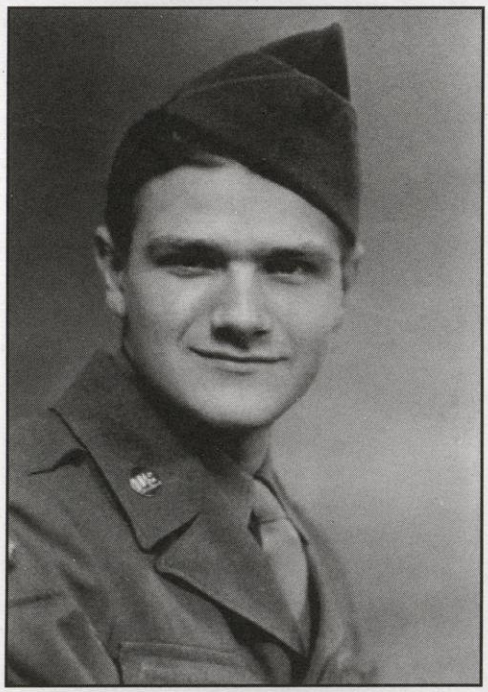
Charles White

As told to Jessie Bartz
Ozaukee High School

World War II Truck Driver

Drafted at 19, Charles White never knew what fate was to hold for him in the Army. He is a World War II Veteran serving from 1943-1946. Although he rarely saw combat, he did see the battle inside a small concentration camp. He has showed me pictures that I will never forget, for he was actually there. He has created an autobiography on the life he led in the years he served. The story to come is just a little tale that he has told me so I may also remember what has happened.

We had just arrived at Camp Mauthausen. This was a concentration camp near Austria. It wasn't a camp for us soldiers, but what seemed to be a kennel for the Jews.



Charles White at 21, 1945.

I had arrived the day after the 11th Armored Division had taken over the camp. As I entered, there was a very familiar smell lingering in the air. The smell seemed to consume my every thought and emotion. I can't even describe the stench. It was as if I knew the smell, but I really couldn't place it. Then I saw them. Made of skin and bones, sickly men, women, and children closed in behind a fence. It was as if they were animals in the pound that no one seemed to want. The sight was terrible. One minute you'd see the scrawny stick-like people walking, the next, they'd drop to the ground taking their last breath.

Although much of the focus was on these disfigured people, I kept my concentration on the smell. Then I saw them. Hundreds upon hundreds of bodies were piled on top of one another. It ranged from babies to the elders. It was a massacre that was sore to my eyes. They reminded me of some type of warped dolls draped over one another.

Before they would meet their fate, the guard would take the gold teeth and any other costly item from them. So, in a tin outside the crematoria, where the bodies would be burned, there the valuables would sit. Like I already had said, my Division had taken over camp a day before I had got there. Nevertheless, everything still seemed in such disarray.

The bodies that had been burned in the crematorium were to be taken and put in trenches that were being dug. They were put in no special order. Just placed one on top of the other, side by side as many as would fit. I seldom saw combat, but I sure saw the battle that the Jews fought.

At this particular camp, my job was to deliver bread to the kitchen. Some days, an older man in his 60s would come and sit by my side inside the truck. He'd tell me how his sons and he were wine merchants in Munich, and once they left camp, they'd return home. Deep down inside, I knew this time that his sons were no longer alive. There is no possible way those five to six years of being prisoners of war, that these kids had made it. So there I'd sit taking in one of many stories I would hear. At the time I didn't have the heart to tell him.

Victims at Camp Mauthausen, Austria.

Some days, I'd go out to a farmhouse and have myself a warm breakfast. It never eased the pain, but it did help lift the hopes for the prisoners and me of returning home.

To this day, I can still recall the smell. Although I never had to smell it again, it still lingers in the back of my mind.

If I could leave you with one thing, it would probably be to realize what you have and how free you really are. Society tends to gloss over the truth of the matter. The only way you will ever find out what it was really actually like was to be there. I hope no one will ever have to see the sights I saw or experience the things I did. Again, be grateful for all you have, including your freedom.

Weldon Reed

Interviewed by Carson LeMahieu, Port Washington High School

Field Artillery in World War II

Weldon Reed was drafted into the military on May 11, 1944. He was trained in Field Artillery and Advanced Infantry at Fort Bragg, N.C., and at Camp Maxey, Texas before being sent to France in 1945. After being discharged in May 1946, he remained in the Army Reserves and retired as a Captain of Artillery in 1965. After being discharged, he attending Western Maryland College where he received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Biology. He also attended Rugters University and earned a Master's of Science in Chemistry.

In 1941, at the age of 17 and the day after I graduated from high school, I went to work at a war plant, the Glenn M. Martin Aircraft Plant. I built B-26 Bombers.

After being drafted in 1944, I was sent to Ft. Bragg, N.C., where I took 13 weeks of Field Artillery Instrument and Survey training. Due to the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge, I was transferred to Advanced Infantry Training at Camp Maxey, Texas, for eight weeks. At the end of Infantry training, I was transferred back to a Field Artillery Battalion, the 293rd FAObsn Bn, that was being readied for shipment to Europe. I was to go overseas with this battalion.

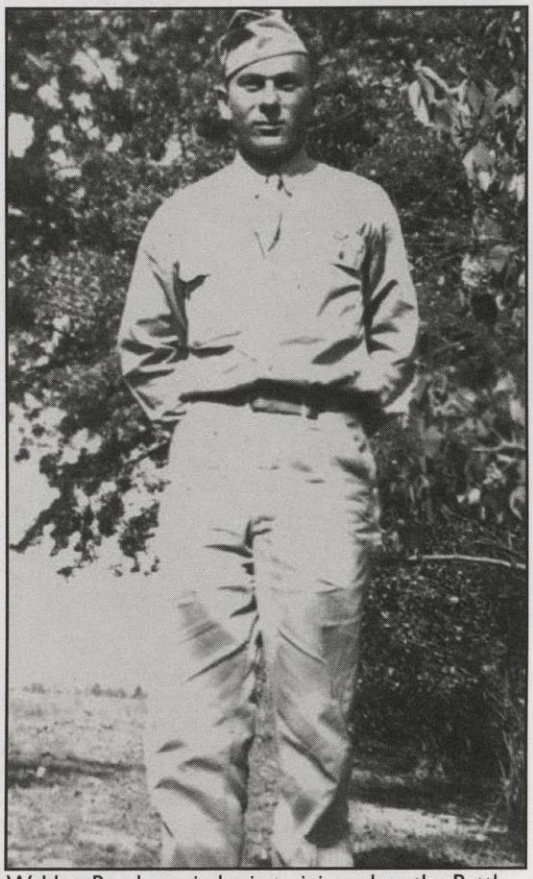
On Feb. 1, 1945, we boarded the French ship Athos 11 and sailed for Europe. The trip took 12 days, and as we sailed, we could hear the depth charges exploding. I was also seasick the entire trip.

We landed at the French port of Le Havre, where we were loaded into boxcars and taken to a staging area, Camp Lucky Strike. During our stay there, I was sent to the recently opened Port of Antwerp (Belgium) to pick up the battalion vehicles. Our battalion was then sent to St. Nazaire on the Atlantic Coast, which was where 50,000 German troops had been bypassed when our troops had broken through after the Normandy landing.

During breaks in our overseas duty, we visited the Benedictine monastery in Fecamp, France. This was where the Benedictine liquor was made, and the monastery also had a museum.

On April 11, President Roosevelt died, and the French people wondered what would happen with the war. They were confident in the United States, however, because of our many airplanes.

When the war ended in May, our outfit was returned immediately to the United States for redeployment to the Asian Theater. We returned on the USS General Black, landing at Boston, Mass. We were then sent to Ft. Jackson, S.C.



Weldon Reed was in basic training when the Battle of the Bulge occurred.

The atomic bombs were then dropped, World War II was over and I finished my time at the Field Artillery School at Ft. Sill, Okla. I stayed in the Army Reserves until 1965, and I retired as Captain of Field Artillery.

After graduating from Western Maryland College, I worked for two years as a bacteriologist on the government's ANTRHAX project at Ft. Detrick, Md. I also worked at the Glenn L. Martin Nuclear Division, the Industrial Reactor at Princeton, N.J., Central Research for Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) in Wilmington, Del., and Freeman Chemical in Port Washington, which is where I now live.

As General Sherman said when he was teaching a history class after the Civil War: "War is Hell." However, friendships made during wartime are long lasting and unconditional. I formed a long-lasting friendship with three of my comrades. We corresponded and visited each other for 50 years. We got to know each other's families. Two years ago I sent a 1944 photo of myself standing between two of the buddies to them; within three weeks, both of them had died. My other friend had died several years before.

During my last week in Nates, France, I met a young French lady who was a teacher and had studied in England. We still correspond at Christmas. On a recent visit to France, my wife and I were able to talk with her. Time has taken its toll; she raised a family and her husband died. I also raised a family, and my own wife had died. Fortunately, I married a long-time family friend whose husband had also died. Life goes on. We live life to the fullest and cherish memories of the past.

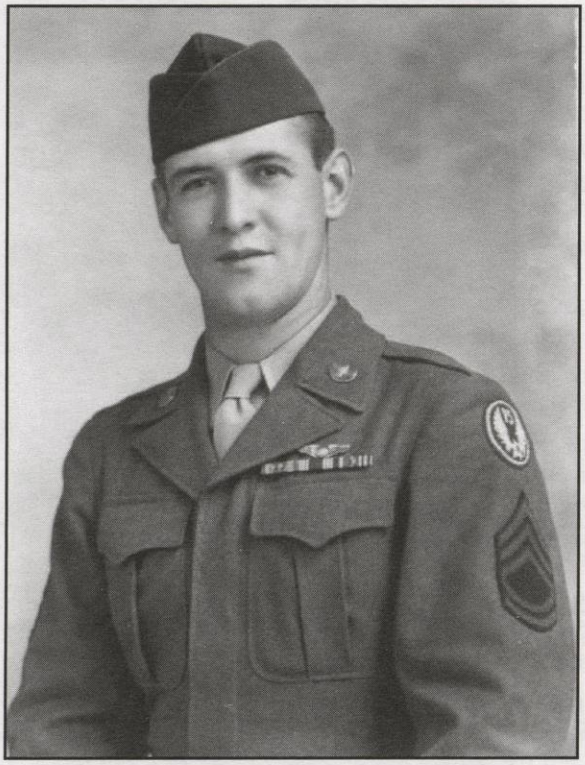
Joseph Meunier

As told to Sari Kimmel, Homestead High School

Member of a B-24 Bomber Crew

Grafton resident Joseph Meuiner joined the Army when he was drafted in April 1943 as a result of the war. At 24, he left West Bend and his wife of three days for Ft. Sheridan, Ill., where he began training for the Army Air Corps. Ultimately he was assigned to a B-24 Bomber Crew as a technical sergeant, flight engineer and gunner, flying 35 active bombing missions with 242 aerial hours in combat against the Germans.

Prior to joining the Army, I was required to take an IQ test, where I received a 128, categorized as "average intelligence." That put me in the position of a flight engineer. I was nervous, for I had never flown a plane in my life. As a flight engineer, I checked that the plane was able to fly before the crew and I left the ground. While in the air, I checked the engines, oxygen systems, bomb racks, communicated with the bombardier and checked with the navigator to make sure we were on course.



Joseph had never flown in his life, but ended up on flying 35 missions on a B-24 bomber crew.

My plane flew in formation with several other bombers to the desired targets, usually oil refineries and oil fields, railroad yards, aircraft factories, shipping harbors or other similar targets. My crew consisted of nine other men from all over the United States: one pilot, co-pilot, bombardier, navigator, radio operator, four different gunners and myself. Each of us carried a .45 pistol for protection and an ID card in case the plane was shot down.

On the day of a mission, we would wake up at 3:30 a.m. for a roll call. Then we ate breakfast and proceeded on to Intelligence to receive our mission plans. I would perform the regular plane inspection, and takeoff was usually at 7 a.m. We felt very nervous before each mission, never knowing if that one would be our last. A sense of uneasiness always lingered in the air, leaving us tense, not taking each day we were alive for granted.

The missions were long and tiring; I remember how completely exhausted I felt after having to fly as much as three days in a row, in the air on oxygen for more than eight hours each day.

I was extremely lucky, for my plane was never shot down. However, I remember very vividly seeing other planes go down. You could almost walk on those big black clouds, if they would hold you up. When planes were shot down, it was the crew's duty to escape and try to return to camp.

My B-24 was shot at frequently by the enemy. Sometimes the engine would be shot, resulting in the plane leaving the formation and being escorted back to camp by a fighter plane. After each flight, the American Red Cross met us and served us doughnuts and coffee ... Intelligence served us a shot of booze. Then it was back to the tents until further notice.

Life in the Army was grueling. It was hard waking up each morning at 5:30 a.m. and having to line up for roll call. The food was terrible, consisting of dehydrated vegetables and Spam. I hated the fact that so many people were suffering in concentration camps. War is hell, just terrible. Survival of the fittest.

I only made $171 a month and sent some of it home to my wife. We wrote each other back and forth every day. Officers had to check the letters to make sure no secrets were revealed in any of them. I could not wait to return back to society and lead a normal life again.

I left the service on Oct. 6, 1945, acquiring 85 points soon after VE Day in May. On that day, my crew was taken to a camp and served huge T-bone steaks, our first good meal in two years. We then returned to Boston where we received a huge welcome from the city. I will never forget that greeting.

Today Joseph Meunier is an 83-year-old great grandparent living in Grafton with his wife. He used to send Christmas cards to his crew each year, but lost contact after many years. He is now trying to contact them again. He believes that America will always come out on top. He is glad that he fought for his nation and was able to be part of the experience.

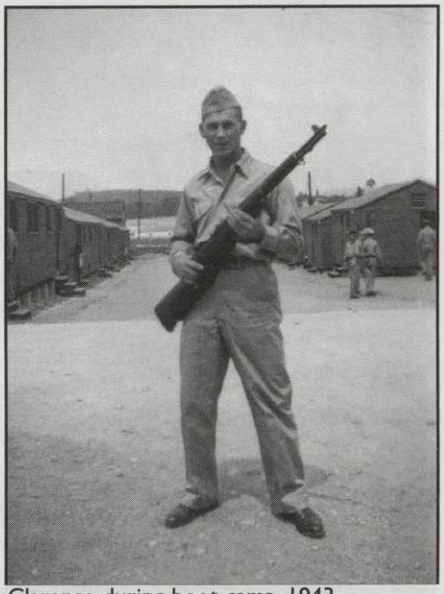
Clarence Groth

As told to Noor Najeeb, Homestead High School

Member of the 45th Infantry in World War II

Stationed in Africa and then on the front lines of Italy, Clarence Groth fought in the Army's 45th Infantry during World War II from 1943 to 1945. He was a Private First Class and earned two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star. His war experience included many horrific and distressing situations, but it also contained numerous heroic and victorious events.

I was drafted when I was 20 years old. The Army was in dire need of replacement troops. I went to Ft. Sheridan and from there I went to Ft. McClellan in Alabama, where we had to go through basic training. We were in quarantine for that time. One of the corporals there always gave us a hard time, so when he was gone for the weekend, we picked up his boots, got a jar of peanut butter and placed the peanut butter in his shoes. In the morning when the bugle sounded, everyone had to be out on grounds, no ifs, ands or buts about it. The corporal had no choice but to put his feet into the peanut butter inside the boots. We just wanted to get him back for the things he had done to us.



Clarence during boot camp, 1943.

After basic training, I was sent for advanced training in jungle warfare at Camp Rucker. I then had to wait for an assignment, so I was sent to Virginia where I boarded a Liberty ship. We sailed the high seas for about 28 days until we got to what is now called French Morocco. We stayed there until they were ready to ship us to the front lines or at least closer. By truck we were shipped to Algiers, which I will always remember because of the sand. It seemed as if we ate as much sand as we did food. We then boarded a British luxury ship that was converted into a troop ship; it was called the Britannica.

Boot camp turned out to be peaches and cream compared to actual war. I didn't prepare myself for the possibility of dying in battle because when you're 20 years old, you don't expect to die; you think you're too young to die and you still have your whole life in front of you. The only "good luck" charm I had at the time was a cherrywood pipe that I used because I was a smoker at that time. Every time nightfall rolled around I got my knife out and cut a little notch in the stem of the pipe signifying that I had made it another day.

Once I got to the front lines in Italy, I stayed there for four months. I used an M1 that was able to shoot 500 to 600 yards. The need for troops kept increasing, and we were the next ones up. I wasn't too happy about that, but in order to keep this country free, that is what we had to do.

The way the Americans did it was to fight for eight days, rest for four days, fight for eight days and so on. We would push the Germans off the mountain, and after a four-day rest, would end up in the same foxhole once again. It was sort of a stalemate ... we would push them off and they would push us back.

I remember going into "no man's land" because there was a rumor that the Germans were going to launch a surprise attack. So, 12 others and I sat out there for 72 hours with machine guns. When you're in battle, you have to think it's either his life or yours, that's part of the reason so many people were killed or injured.

On Friday, Dec. 13, 1943, at around 11:30 p.m., I got in the way of a machine gun and it ripped through my legs. Twenty-seven of us went on combat patrol that night; 14 of us were injured and six were killed. The bullet shattered my tibia and also went through the other leg. The doctors were planning on amputating my left leg, but in March 1944, we received a shipment of penicillin. As soon as they gave me the penicillin my leg started healing.

My other Purple Heart was awarded after a shell landed near my foxhole and tore it apart. It didn't get me, but a piece of shrapnel went across my back. I had on a T-shirt, sweatshirt, wool shirt, jacket, overcoat and raincoat, and the shrapnel cut through everything except my T-shirt. I thought I was okay, but when I felt my arm it was bleeding, so I quickly went to the aid station.

After partaking in boot camp, training for jungle warfare but going to Italy, recuperating in the hospital for 22 months and witnessing and contributing to the appalling nature of battle, it was finally Aug. 31, 1945, and my service was over. I now oppose war and prefer not to do it all over again, but if this country's freedom was ever put into jeopardy, I would do it once more. Freedom is what drives most of us, and if you don't have freedom, you don't have anything.

Alfred Miller

As told to Sukie Crawford,
Homestead High School

Heavy Equipment Mechanic in Word War II

Grafton native Alfred Miller was drafted into the U.S. Army at 24. With no prior training he became a Heavy Equipment Division Staff Sergeant, an impressive position for a draftee. He worked on Sherman Tanks and other wheeled automotive vehicles and was eventually shipped off to England. Throughout this time, he missed his sweetheart, Martha as well as his family and friends.

I handled the separation from home the best I could. The other men looked up to me and knew that if there was ever a tough situation, I was the man they should call on. If there was a complicated problem with mechanics, I was the one to ask. I found out that I was a natural with the mechanics of a truck and became well versed in assembling hydromatic transmissions. That was pretty good, considering that my only previous mechanical had been in fixing my father's farming equipment.

After the war was over, Al came home and married his sweetheart, Martha.

I was part of the group that assisted the First Army Division in five major battles throughout Europe. We repaired the heavy equipment used by those fighting in Normandy, Northern France, the Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe.

One night while I was eating my rations, I saw a first sergeant talking to an unknown man. They came over to tell me that I had to go out that night with a friend to fix a truck. I gladly accepted the given job and promptly went to the site.

I couldn't use a light because that might give away the location of the truck, but we made it by with just a flashlight as I decided what needed repairs. After fixing the break, I told my friend that the truck needed to go back to camp for further repairs. It was then that we realized that we could not remember how to get back to camp. Traveling in the pitch black with no light, my friend and I accidentally headed blindly towards the front lines until we met a man with a rifle who was very surprised to see us heading that way. He instructed us to turn around and follow the river. We ran into a few obstacles, such as flat trailers for hauling tanks, but we finally returned back to camp at 2:30 a.m.

After the Battle of the Bulge, we were told to retreat, and we ended up staying with a family in Belgium. I was listening to them talk to each other when I realized I could understand them. My father and uncle would talk "Low German," which was Flemish. One morning, I went to the daughter and asked for water to wash up with, and she was so excited she almost fell over. She said to her mother, "I can understand - they would like some water." They were so happy that we could communicate.

One time, I was the sergeant of the guard during watch, which meant that I had to stay awake. We were near a German schoolhouse, and I went inside and found a bunch of German schoolbooks. I knew I could understand spoken German, but I took a look - sure enough, I could almost understand what was written, which was good, because the books kept me awake. After the war, I also had two German POWs assigned to help me, and we talked to each other. They said, "Oh, Al, when this is over, you can go home, but our homes are gone."

I ran into another problem while in Europe when an officer came in complaining of trouble with the air breaks of a truck. After surveying the situation, and taking note of the large load of ordnance in the truck, I instructed the officer to run the motor and I'd check each wheel. Well, the first and second wheels were running just fine, but the third wheel's brake drum had been corroded with salt water. I removed the wheel and showed the man how the drum had worn down extremely deeply. They couldn't get the necessary parts to fix it properly and send it to the front lines, but I said I'd figure out how to make it work, and that's exactly what I did. I was a problem solver!

We were in Paris four days after it was liberated, and we had a really hard time getting out trucks through because there were so many people in the streets. The children would run up to us and ask for candy and "cigarettes for Mama and Papa."

Because of my large amount of points, I was allowed to leave quickly after World War II ceased. I returned home with many citations such as the American Defense Ribbon, the Middle European Theater Ribbon with five bronze service stars, the American Theater Ribbon, a good conduct medal, a sharpshooter's medal, mechanic's medal and a WWII Victory medal.

Rudy Manke

Interviewed by LaQuita Wilson, Homestead High School

Supplied First Aid to Wounded Soldiers in World War II

Local veterans may recognize Rudy Manke as one of the drivers who takes them for appointments at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Milwaukee. Former students of the Mequon-Thiensville School district may remember him as a custodian at Oriole Lane School. During World War II, he was part of a collecting company detachment that provided first aid and assistance to wounded soldiers. His company was essentially "spare troops"; that is, they would fill in if a company's medics had not yet arrived.

I was drafted into the medical collecting company. I didn't have a medical background, but my basic training did include medical training ... and there was a lot of on-the-job education. I did find medicine somewhat interesting, but not enough to follow up on it after I was discharged.

During World War II many brave American men were injured as a result of war. I was on detached service to a clearing company, which helped keep American soldiers fighting by preparing meals and sending the sick and wounded by ambulance for treatment. Our clearing company was there to make sure that all the soldiers were taken care of physically and internally. We had stretchers and basic first aid supplies in every ambulance.

I was sent on many missions to clean up and help the wounded, but luckily not that many of the units I was sent to had wounded soldiers. I also had other things that made my job a hassle. Since we were going through a time of war and depression, we had little extra food to go around for us soldiers because of spoilage. For example, eggs would spoil because we didn't have access to refrigeration.That didn't ever stop the clearing company and me from trying to make sure there was enough to go around.

We were out in the field, and always in the "combat zone," though we weren't on the very front lines. One night, however, our company was strafed. I don't think they were particularly targeting us, but two of our ambulances were hit and we lost two men.

That night, we all hit our foxholes. When I was in mine, I could feel the ground falling in from where the bullets had missed me and gone into the ground. I was praying the whole time.

The next day we had to move and did so in two shifts because we'd lost two of our ambulances during the attack. The fellow that I had bunked with was a truck driver, and he was the one going back and forth to transport us in two shifts. When he was picking up the second bunch of guys, he went over and looked at our foxholes. After awhile, he said, "Boy, they just missed you by the small of your back."

Dachau, a German concentration camp, needed American soldiers to come and tend to the desperate Jews. This was one of the most horrible things that I had ever seen, and I thought there was no way one madman could treat so many innocent people like this. I was also glad to have seen it because many people I knew, even relatives, denied that this was going on, which upset me deeply.

Rudy Manke (above) wasn't the only member of his family to serve in Germany during World War II. During his tour, he met up with his brother, Frederick (left). On July 8, 1945, Rudy and his brother took a picture of each other standing in the same spot in Bayrueth, Germany.

After the war, we were allowed to find out where our friends or brothers were at in Europe. I received a weekend pass and picked up a ride with the 5th Division to where my brother, Frederick was stationed. He wasn't surprised at my visit; somehow or another we did manage to communicate.

At times, his commander would ask him to do interpretation because our grandmother had taught him German. He was about 10 years older than I, and I was told that my grandmother offered to teach my older brothers and sisters German if they would teach her English. I never formally learned German, but I had picked up enough to make myself understood while I was in Germany.

As a soldier, I was proud to say that I served my country with honor. It was a great time for me, and I say that's partly what helped me get through the war. Not only that, but this year I just received an honor I deserve for serving as a soldier in World War II. I was honored on March 9, 2002 by the French government, which was proud to have me, Rudy Manke, as an American soldier during World War II.

George Colbourn

As told to Beth Ewig, Homestead High School

Tank Driver during World War II

George Colbourn, a World War II veteran, served in Patton's Third Army from 1944-1946. He has lived in Mequon since 1952, before it was even a city. He raised four children on his farm on Pebble Lane and put them all through Homestead High School. This is his story:

I was drafted into the service in June 1944, when I was 18, right after high school. I couldn't swim and I was absolutely petrified of water. The generals lined us all up in rows and went down the lines saying, "Army, Navy or Marines." I was assigned to be in the Navy, and I said, "For God's sake, I can't swim!" so I switched with the guy behind me who was being assigned to the Army. I thought, "Okay, good. At least I'll be on dry land."

George Colburn during World War II. The tilt to his cap signifies that he's a "tanker."

I went to Europe on the Queen Mary. My job on the boat was to throw rope over the side of the Queen Mary in case a torpedo hit the boat. And then I'd have to climb down the rope, so I said to the guy, "I'm goin' down with the captain."

Once we got to Germany, we had to cross 26 rivers. My job originally was to walk across the river and make sure the water was shallow enough for the tank to drive across and not sink. My last frightful experience with not being able to swim was crossing the Rhine. We crossed the Rhine on two metal strips, and the only two people in the tank were the driver and me.

I don't know how I got into being a tank driver because most of the men who were in the tanks were construction-type people since they were used to handling heavy machinery, and a tank drove in much the same way. Driving a tank took time and practice, but once you got the hang of it, it was like driving a car.

Living conditions were not that bad. I don't think I ever spent more than two or three nights sleeping in a tank. Because we were able to move around and we had to keep the tank near us, we always had a place to sleep. We could go into houses, and if the people were home, they would give us their extra beds, but if they weren't, we just slept there and then left.

We always brought our own food. We would get boxes of K-rations, which had eggs and bread in a can. The food was good; we never starved. Our battalion had its own cooks; they stayed a few miles behind us, and they'd come up when it was quiet and feed us. If it wasn't quiet, they'd go back. I don't think I ever missed a meal, and if I did it was my own fault. We'd catch chickens - we'd use coat hangers, chase them around and try to hook their legs. We always had potatoes. If we wanted meat, we would go into the people's homes if they weren't home. Since they used to smoke their meat in the fireplaces, we'd take the meat and eat it.

After World War I, Germany tried to get a democracy by setting up the Weimar Republic. One morning, we got up with the sun and we were going to take the city of Weimar. On our way into the city, a few men stood in front of us in their morning wear so we stopped our tanks. Our tank commander got out and went to talk with them. When he came back, he said the men standing there had just surrendered the city to us. So, we drove the tanks in and parked in the square that was the middle of town.

While we were eating breakfast, a group of 200 to 300 Hungarians marched into town. They were all well dressed. They came marching into town singing their national anthem because they didn't want to get shot. We rounded the men up and sent them to prisoner of war camps. I think they were guards from the concentration camp that was only a mile away from where we were staying.

We lived like there would be no tomorrow. I was very naïve when I went away. Everything was new to me; shooting a machine gun at someone and walking through a concentration camp. We were a very mobile army and we shot the last shots of the European Theater of Operations with the 80th Infantry Division.

Jim Andrae

As told to Ryan Ebling, Cedarburg High School

Combat Engineer during World War II

The first time Jim Andrae showed up at the draft board he was informed that he had a heart murmur. As a result he was classified 4F. As the war went on, he realized that as the oldest of three boys, it was his duty to go first, so at the age of 24 he went back to the draft board and was reclassified. He was more than ready to go. He left his young wife in the care of her parents and joined World War II.

We were sent to Oregon by train and a lot of the guys got sick because they weren't used to the train. Then they shipped us out to California, to the Mojave Desert. I was in the water supply engineers there. The reason we were out there is that they thought the Japanese were going to come in through the West Coast. We didn't have any rifles so we had to march around with broomsticks at night.

Jim Andrae and his wife Rachel.

We stayed there for six months. I knew a colonel who was in the Air Force; he got me transferred to the Air Force. I was pretty lucky. At least that's what I thought.

They gave me a choice. I could be a tailgunner; I wanted to be a pilot but I wasn't good enough, or I could go back to college. So I went back to college to study advanced mechanical engineering at Oklahoma University. My wife joined me there and lived off-base while I went to school. As long as I did well in school I could stay in the program. Eventually though, I was shipped off to Europe.

We sailed to Marseilles, France on a Liberty Ship. We then marched about 10 miles north to a bivouac, where we pitched our pup tents in mud. We worked our way north. We purified water for the whole infantry at the Battle of the Bulge. The soldiers would come with their canteens and we'd fill them up and they'd walk right up to the battle. That's how close we were. A lot of times, bombs would go right over our heads or go off close to us, and we'd get holes in our tanks. We'd have to dig trenches and get into them.

We had a dog named George that we bought for a can of gasoline from some French people. He came in very handy because at night George would guard the tanks from anyone who might try to put holes in them.

Andrae in England, 1944.

We were all trained for infantry, so if they wanted us in a battle they could grab us. There were five of us, four to purify the water and one to drive the truck. We had a big pyramidal tent that we slept in. It was very cold. We'd climb in and put our equipment in around the only gasoline stove so the equipment wouldn't freeze. The warmer it got in the tent, the softer the mud would get, so eventually we were once again sleeping in deep mud. We each had only two blankets and a comforter.

One day I was out walking in the country with George. As I walked past some caves I heard someone call out "Comrade!" Two Germans who had been working at a nearby concentration camp had run away from the camp after it had been liberated and were hiding in a cave. I went back to my unit and got my friend Harry Wildfong and a couple rifles. Then the two of us and George took the Germans prisoner and turned them over to the MPs.

After the Battle of the Bulge a few of us were staying with a family in Alsace Lorraine. My lieutenant pulled up in a jeep in front of the house with a telegram. My father-in-law had sent the telegram to my APO to let me know that Craig James had been born on Feb. 3, 1945 and everyone was fine. I was a father!

Curt Lang

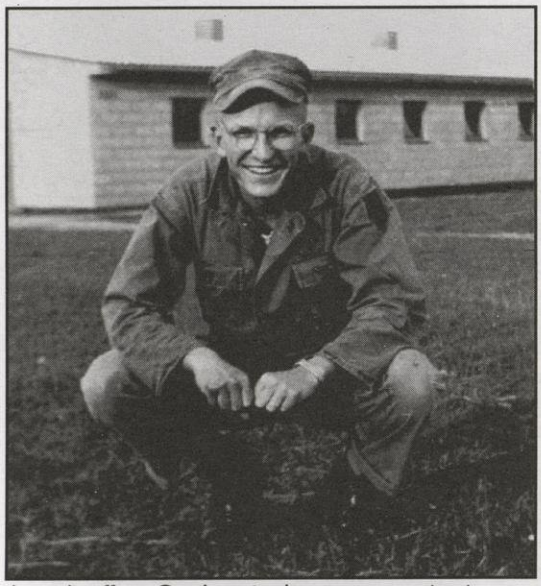
As told to Jenni Schnuck, Cedarburg High School

Army Driver

Drafted during the Korean conflict, Curt Lang experienced training in different parts of the world. In Germany, he encountered the unique opportunity to chauffeur a general.

In 1951, we were not married yet, Jean and I. There was a man we knew who lived in Cedarburg, a commander in the Coast Guard Reserve. Because the Coast Guard wasn't in existence in Milwaukee since World War II, they were starting a reserve unit again, and he wanted me to enlist. So I did. I started going to reserve meetings, and after about six months, I volunteered for active duty. I was shipped to Cleveland, Ohio, where I failed the physical, on my eyes. So I came back home, out of the Coast Guard.

Jean and I decided to get married. We had invitations made, and then I got my draft notice. I needed to report to the Army in two weeks. We were in a dilemma, whether we should get married or not We decided to get married. We were only married for about 10 days, and I was gone. I then went to Camp Chaffey in Fort Smith, Ark.



As a chauffeur, Curt's main duty was to maintain a jeep and a car for the brigadier general.

I went through basic artillery training. After training, the unit pretty much broke up. Most of my unit went to Korea, but I volunteered to attend a leadership school for an additional eight weeks of training. Why I didn't go to Korea, I really don't know.

That December, I was shipped to Germany for the next two years, where I was connected to a first division artillery unit in Erlangen, Germany, called Big Red One. I think I went to Germany because I could speak some German, a blessing in disguise.

After we got to Germany, we went to a survey school. There was a posting on the board, a chauffeur for a general. I volunteered and got the job. For the next year and a half, I chauffeured Brigadier General Harry P. Stork, a very fine man. Since he was a Field General, I had to maintain two cars, because we would go out on the maneuvers. He didn't stay back; he went out with the troops. So, I had a jeep to maintain and an additional car.

It's nice to be with a general, because even as an enlisted man, I didn't have to do too much other duty, like K.P. duty or standing guard or anything like that. My big responsibility was the general, and I had to watch out and take care of him. When the general wanted to go anywhere, I had to be there ready to go.

While in Germany, the general's daughter and wife were there too, and his daughter was marrying an officer from West Point. The flowers came, and I had been a florist all my life. When she saw the flowers, all the bride did was cry because they were so bad. So good old Private Lang here took it upon himself and said, "Don't worry General; I'll take care of it." I tore apart all the bouquets and remade them for her. Of course, then I was the hero of the day. That was quite an exciting time.

Over in Germany, when I was on leave, two other guys and I went through Europe. I think I had $150, but we went to Paris, Amsterdam and through Germany, mostly by train. For that amount of money, we didn't stay in a lot of nice places, but we did it and had a great time.

Looking back, I didn't mind the military at all. It was a great experience. In my two years, it wasn't until the week before I was coming home that the general promoted me. I ended up coming home a corporal. But for two years, I was either a private or private first class. That was not unusual for that period of time. But it was really a good experience.

When I came home, I went right back to work in the flower business. It was rather hard, because all of a sudden, you come home after a long period of time, and here you are with a wife and a child that you didn't even know. It's quite an adjustment, as you can imagine. About a year after I was out, I received an honorable discharge from both the Coast Guard and the Army. So I was in two branches of service at the same time, whether I knew it or not.

In my own experience, I think being in the service reinforces your patriotism. I feel very strongly about my country, and I am a Legionnaire now. I would do it all over again.

John Paulin

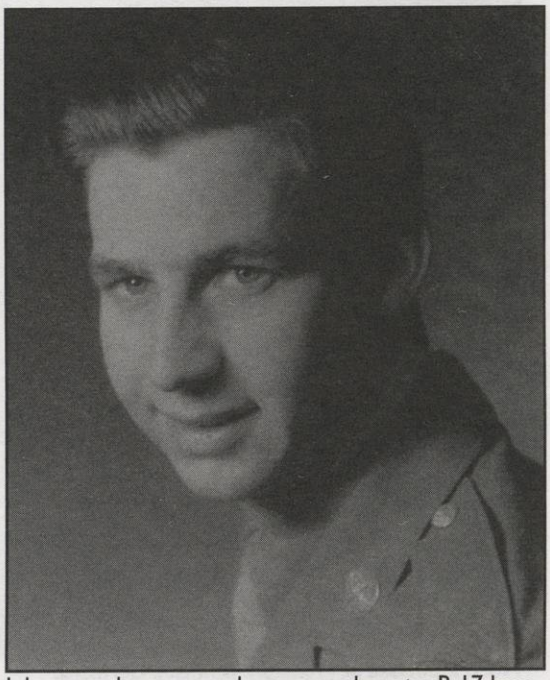
As told to Karen Chen
Cedarburg High School

Ground Crew Member at a B-17 base

John Paulin, a native of Port Washington, is a veteran of World War II. He served overseas in England as a Chief Clerk in the 398th Bombardment Group. After the war, Paulin enrolled at Marquette University under the G.I. Bill of Rights.

I enlisted about two months after I graduated from high school. I had a job as an apprentice draftsman. I hadn't planned on going to college at the time. Soldiers were being shipped from around town, so I got that "wanderlust" spirit too. I wanted to join up, do my duty, be patriotic and see places. So I quit my job and enlisted.

"Boot camp" was at Scottfield, Ill., a permanent air base. It was mostly drilling, discipline and manual work. Then they sent me across the United States three times for all different kinds of training.



John served as a ground crew member at a B-17 base.

There was homesickness, but they kept us busy. I was doing paperwork, learning to keep the records. We started getting promotions, and I became the chief clerk in Operations at Rapid City, S.D., Air Base.

I wanted to get out of the training group and get over to Europe. I was only about 18 or 19 years old, so I had no knowledge about what it would be like over there. We became a new battle group, the 398th Bomb Group, and were sent overseas with our B-17s.

We flew in low over England - a beautiful way to see England. All these little patchwork fields with hedge rows, a patchwork of color. We got settled, and it didn't take long before our planes were going off on missions over Germany and France.

At headquarters, we could hear those "flying bombs" the Germans used. That was threatening and ominous; they'd go "bzzzz, bzzzz, bzzzz, bzzzz," and then they would hit their targets below.

I remember one shocking experience. I was on my way to the mess hall. We couldn't see the V-bombs - they went up and down so fast. All of a sudden, there was a big "BOOOOOMMM," and the whole earth shook. Later, we found out one of those V-bombs had hit near our ammunition depot. That was kind of shocking to think those bombs could hit your base. But when I took the oath, I put my life on the line, and I still wanted to be there and do my job.

I missed my family, but I had an extended family. English families could get in touch with American soldiers and invite them to their place. I had a buddy who was invited to a nice family in St. Ives, a little farm village near Cambridge. I went up there with him. It wasn't very far; we hitchhiked. It was a wonderful experience. I always went back there when I had a day off, and I learned a lot about their customs.

One of my duties, and this was an unpleasant task I didn't like, was making sure mission reports were done and delivered to headquarters. The hard part was some of the pilots came back missing part of their crew, and some didn't come back. I hated to wake the resting pilots.

One time during the blackouts, I had a day off, and I went to London. I knew where I was going, what station to get off at, but when I came up from the Underground, it was black, black, and black. I thought, where am I? I finally found the side of a building and felt my way along. I could hear voices once in a while, other people and vendors calling out their wares. I turned the corner, and I saw a flash of light. I headed for it, feeling my way along. I found a door and went inside. It was a United Service Office building, where soldiers could sleep and get a nice hot meal. I was lucky; I think my guardian angel was with me all those times I was in unfamiliar territory.

When they sent us home, I was on the Queen Elizabeth I with 15,000 troops on board. I remember the excitement when we sailed into New York Harbor and saw the Statue of Liberty. I felt, "We're home; it's over."

I think, like most soldiers of World War II, I am more patriotic now. And I feel if I were young again, I would do it again and volunteer my services.

A much-revered teacher, Paulin taught American literature, speech and rhetoric at Cedarburg High School for 26 years. He is now retired and lives in Cedarburg with Eunice, his wife of 41 years. They share a love of travel and have gone on frequent land tours and cruises.

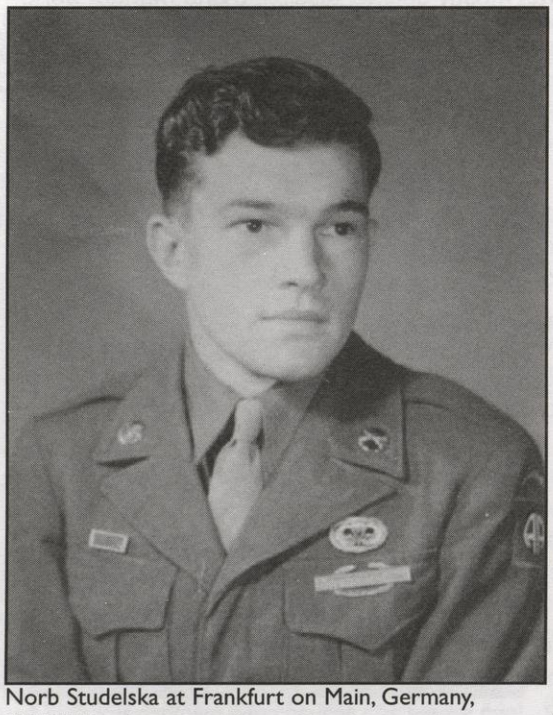
Norbert Studelska

As told to Nicholas Ellenbecker, Ozaukee Homeschool student

Paratrooper in World War II

Norbert Studelska of Grafton is the most patriotic person I know. Although born in Saskatchewan, Canada, his love for the United States is obvious in every aspect of his life. I believe Norb will never be separated from the military in his heart, and I honor and respect the freedoms he so bravely fought for and I benefit from today.

At age 18, I entered the service at Ft. Snelling, Minn. in 1943. I selected the Army because my brothers were in other branches of the military. I preferred the Army Air Corps, but was assigned to the infantry and completed 17 weeks of basic training at Camp Roberts, CA where I learned all infantry weapons, field and village fighting, poisonous gas defense and the usual physical and military discipline.



Norb Studelska at Frankfurt on Main, Germany, SHEAF Headquarters Honor Guard, around September 1945.

After completing that training, I volunteered for the paratroops and was sent to Ft. Benning, Ga., for four weeks of intense and grueling physical and mental training by instructors, whom I considered to be "expert torturers." During the training cycle, I learned to pack chutes and participated in various jumping simulations including mock plane doors, jumping off of various platforms and parachuting down controlled 300-foot towers. We troopers were issued special jump uniforms along with exclusive boots that were always kept very shiny. We looked sharp and were the envy of the other soldiers.

Parachuting those days was risky. I remember my last training jump, which was at night. After the opening chute shock, I was floating down and it was very peaceful. The only noise was the drone of the plane. I was really enjoying the night ride down when all of the sudden, another jumper landed on my canopy. I saw his boots punch footprints deep in my chute and all I could say was for him to get off my chute. He did just that and after landing we joked about it.

After earning parachutist wings, and 23 weeks of infantry and jump training, I was sent overseas and assigned to the 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division in Nottingham, England for more training and combat preparation. On Sept. 17, 1944, I took part in Operation Market Garden, a paratroop and glider mission 70 miles behind enemy lines designed to capture a series of bridges leading into Germany. I landed near Nijmegen, Holland, next to the German border.

At first enemy resistance was rather light but as the enemy deployed a defense there was much close combat. The enemy artillery was accurate and devastating. It was so random and there was no way to fight it because the big guns were way back in enemy territory. Enemy small arms fire didn't seem to bother us much because we were on an equal footing.

During the two months of fighting in Holland, our division completed all of its objectives, but I lost some of my friends. Our division was sent to a reserve area in France for troop replacements and more training in preparation for the next mission.

On December 16, my unit was alerted to leave for Belgium to stop an enemy offensive, which became known as the Battle of the Bulge. With little ammunition and limited winter clothing, we were loaded on topless semi-trucks for a cold and snowy trip to a staging area near Werbomont, Belgium. There was confusion and, at first, no one seemed to know what was going on. During the entire campaign we not only had to fight the enemy, but also the elements.

After two months of combat and fighting on into Germany, my regiment was sent back to reserve in France and, with the end of the war in Europe, was assigned as Gen. Eisenhower's Honor Guard in Germany.

The 82nd Airborne Division was honored to be selected to make the World War II Victory Parade in New York on Jan. 12, 1946. A few days later Norb was discharged at Camp McCoy, Wis. After two years and three months in the service and earning various military awards, Norb went home but was still not old enough to vote (age 21 at the time) or to legally buy a beer at the neighborhood tavern.

Elroy Bruss

As told to Bill Ritt,
Homestead High School

Fighter Pilot during World War II

A native of Colby, Elroy Bruss had started college before becoming a fighter pilot during World War II. For virtually his whole life Elroy had the idea that he was going to be a lawyer and he had left the state in pursuit of his law degree at Valparaiso University. His dreams of a law career were interrupted on Oct. 12, 1942 when he enlisted in the Army Air Corp as an Aviation Cadet. He later returned to college, and obtained his law degree 3 1/2 years later than he'd originally intended.

All of my friends were big guys whereas I was this little 5'6" kid, therefore I enlisted as a pilot while my friends entered the Army or the Navy. I had never been in an airplane when I enlisted in the Air Force.

Fighter Pilot Elroy Bruss showing off his wings in England, 1945.

My first real experience I had was flying in Florida. At Primary Training in the open cockpit Steerman bi-wing aircraft, I was nervous and scared, and the instructor could tell. We were flying over Lake Okeechobe near our training base. The instructor asked if I had my shoulder and seat harness secure. I checked and told him yes. He then said he would take the controls and he did an outside loop. I knew I would fall out of the open cockpit and land in the lake. Then he did a slow roll where you hang upside down in hanging straps. By the time he told me to take us back to base, I was relaxed. I loved flying and had no more fear. He said, "Some can't make it back, but you did." At the time I was scared but now I look back on my first flying experience and laugh. I lived!

For training, I went through Alabama's Maxwell Field which was the West Point of the Army Air Force. As a cadet, the training I went through was very strict. You stood straight and could never slump; if you broke any rule or didn't salute you were punished. This type of discipline was used to whip us into shape. Once at 3 a.m. one of my friends was accused of looking at my paper on aircraft identification. Since he cheated, he was drummed out and I or anyone else was not allowed to speak his name or communicate with him. At 3 a.m. he had to pack his bag and he left the barracks immediately. His life had to have been ruined. I believe they used my friend as a "fall guy" to show the rest of us the consequences of disobeying our officers.

After training to become a pilot, I went to Duxford near Cambridge in England, serving in the 78th Fighter Group as First Lieutenant. I shared my stories and feelings with my family by sending letters. There was no other way to communicate besides letter, and I would send home money orders for $100 out of my pay. I got paid $100 a month plus $90 for flight pay. If we had any free time during the war, which came particularly after V-E Day, we went to shows in the hangars where the U.S. big bands would perform hangar dances. We would go to these hangars and dance all night ... the jitterbug, of course!

We were young and not sure about out future so we made the best of what time we had left. We were told this was the "war to end all wars." Although that was wrong, we believed it at the time. Everyone was thinking in their mind that they may never see another day. With that in mind my friends and I, along with the rest of the young men serving in the military, would party often.

The Army Air Force was like a fraternity; everybody protected everybody else. To have fun, my friends and I went to London which was only 30 miles away, as well as Cambridge. England loved American pilots! We had the wings, and we were very lucky! We flew the best fighter - the P51 Mustang - in World War II.

For good luck or for the hope to see another day, I carried a cross. You really feel close to God when you know that somebody wanted to shoot your tail off, and you know that you'll need His help to get back safely.

If you happen to see a car with the license plates "XP51," you can bet that Mr. Bruss is behind the wheel.

Nathan Irwin Interviewed by Meredith Togstad, Homestead High School

Naval Combat Demolition at Utah Beach on D-Day

Not only was my experience with Nathan Irwin educational in the academic sense, but it also taught me to glorify the events of my country's past and the determined people who boldly represent its history.

I took part in the Allied invasion of France at Normandy. The D-Day experience was one that I will never forget. D-Day originally meant nothing more than the day on which an envisioned military operation would be started. Likewise, H-Hour was the time of the attack on D-Day. Because the Normandy operation was so enormous, the phrase D-Day became associated with June 6, 1944.

I was working as a civilian engineer in Trinidad when war was declared. I tried to enlist in the Navy at that time but was rejected because I had acquired a case of amoebic dysentery while working in that tropical climate.

Nathan landed on Utah Beach.

I returned to Milwaukee in spring 1943 and immediately tried to acquire a commission as an officer in the Navy Seabees. I was again rejected because I still had the infection. The Navy medical officer at the recruiting office recommended I consult with his former professor of tropical medicine at Marquette Medical College. I followed his advice and became a class project. After a month of treatment by the entire class, I was certified cured.

After notifying the proper Navy recruiting personnel, in June 1943 I was immediately inducted into the Navy as an apprentice seaman. After two months of boot camp, my commission was approved.

I was then assigned to the Navy Seabees at Camp Peary, Va. While there in August 1943, I volunteered and was accepted into a special unit being formed called the Naval Combat Demolition Unit, which is now the Navy SEALS. The intended mission of the NCDU's was to blow up any obstacles placed on invasion beaches by enemy forces.

We knew what obstacles to expect thanks to the Navy Scouts and Raiders who, together with other military intelligence, actually surveyed the landing areas and furnished us with detailed maps (which I still have). The obstacles on our beach were angled stakes, made of steel or wood, pointing out to sea. Other obstacles were steel pyramids and three steel beams welded together.

At the completion of our training many of the crews departed for England to prepare for the planned invasion of France. My crew remained at Fort Pierce to act as a liaison with a group of civilian engineers. We joined our group in England in early May. We had only a month to make final plans for the invasion.

There were five assault areas on Normandy. The American beaches were Utah and Omaha. The British beaches were Gold and Sword. The Canadian beach was Juno. We had 32 NCDU units in our entire group. Eleven units were assigned to Utah and 21 to Omaha. My unit was part of the Utah force.

The High Command at Supreme Headquarters decided the best way to open gaps in the rows of obstacles was to demolish them when the tide was out. This was the key decision needed to set the invasion date and meant that D-Day would be June 5, 6 or 7. These were the only dates when low tide would occur at the right time - about an hour before dawn. If these dates were missed, the next date for prime time conditions would have been June 19. My crew crossed the English Channel the night of June 5 in an LST.

At about 3:30 a.m., June 6, we went over the side of our ship down cargo nets and unloaded our explosives and other demolition gear into a small landing craft while it was bobbing around in the heavy Channel waters. We started for the beach at about 4:30 a.m., two hours before H-Hour.

Due to tide conditions, we had limited time to place the explosives at the base of the obstacles, wire them together using a detonating cord and detonate the charges. We lit purple flares to warn incoming assault troops of our area of operation and we fired electrically to maintain complete control.

We completed the first phase of our task at 8:30 a.m. when the incoming tide prevented further demolition. Later that afternoon at low tide, we went out again and cleared several areas of our landing beach. We remained on the beach for about a week doing clean-up work and then returned to England for rest and reassignment.

We lost one seaman of my regular crew during the assault, and one of the most difficult jobs I faced was to write to his parents and tell them their 21-year-old, happy-go-lucky, very bright son had made the supreme sacrifice in the service of his country. He is buried in the American cemetery behind Omaha Beach together with over 8,000 American heroes. My wife and I visited his grave on the 40th and 50th anniversaries of the invasion.

Harvin Abrahamson As told to Laurie Arendt

Radio Operator and Machine Gunner during World War

Sixteen-year-old Harvin Abrahamson graduated from high school just before World War II broke out. He wanted to follow in his older brother's footsteps by becoming an aviation cadet and pilot, but instead found himself drafted into the Signal Corps before completing the necessary two years of college.

I ended up writing the cadet exam, and in order to transfer from the Signal Corps into the Army Air Corps, I had to show a birth certificate, which became a problem because the doctor had misspelled my middle and last name. I was told that they couldn't accept a transfer because I wasn't the same person as on the birth certificate. I contacted Cook County, Ill. officials and asked for a correction and was told it was illegal to change one's name in Illinois, but there was a pending bill that could change that. I ended up calling my parents in Shawano County. They had papers notarized that I was the same person and my transfer was in the works; however all of this took months to complete.

Harvin Abrahamson during WWII.

I wanted to be a fighter pilot ... wouldn't have minded piloting a heavy bomber, ultimately wound up washing out of cadets and instead chose to go to radio school, gunnery school and eventually operational training. I enjoyed my training, though it was radio school in Sioux Falls, S.D. in winter and Yuma, Ariz., in the summer for gunnery school. I enjoyed radio school because it had to do with science and I had liked physics in college. We had to build working receivers and transmitters from scratch. We had to be able to transmit and receive International Morse Code at a speed of 18 words a minute (16 words overseas). I could do 25 words a minute but no more because I couldn't print any faster.

Our crew was put together before operational training and, like a family, we did everything together. We shipped out on the Il de France, a former French luxury liner. We wound up with the 487th Bomb Group near Lavenham, England. I had a great deal of respect for the English; they were a courageous people, always friendly and helpful.

We flew 17 missions on the B-17 Flying Fortress, some on a B-17 called "Fearless Fosdick." It was so full of patched-up holes nobody wanted to be assigned to it, but it always got us home.

Our crew was very blessed and only sustained minor injuries - our waist gunner was hit in the foot with some aluminum from the plane as a result of a flak hit. Our bombardier got scratched by some flak. I came close to having my legs blown off when flak came through between the swivel post of my bucket seat and the back of my legs but never touched me. I said, "Thank you" in my prayers that night.

Besides being a radio operator and gunner, I was also "in charge" of "chaff" (the British called it "window"), which actually was tinsel strips cut to the frequency of German radar used by their antiaircraft batteries. There was a little chute right by my seat in the radio room. Reduced air pressure over the wing would suck the chaff out. When it hit the air stream it looked like exploding bushel baskets. It would take hours for the chaff to hit the ground. While falling it jammed up the radar below rendering the exploding "flak" less accurate around us. Incidentally, the word "flak" is an acronym of three German words: Flieger Abwehr Kanone (aviation defense gun).

Flak was always heavy on the bomb run. Enemy fighters would usually stay away for fear of getting hit. I remember one day when we had finished our bomb run our pilot was doing evasive action. As usual, the bombardier asked me to check the bomb bay to see that all the bombs were out. I stood up (my oxygen hose was long enough for me to step up and open a small door to the bomb bay) and looked, then yelled, "Don't close the bomb bays [doors]. There's one hung up!" The pilot yelled over the intercom, "Kick it out!" The remaining armed bomb was hanging by one shackle with the nose protruding below the door opening. Had the bombardier closed the doors it would've been the end of us. I plugged in a "walk around" oxygen bottle, walked out on the six-inch wide walkway to the bomb, clung to the v-shaped bomb rack and started kicking, to no avail. We radio operators didn't carry any tools but what I would've done for a screwdriver at that point. Finally the bombardier came back from the nose compartment (with a screwdriver). He was small in stature but long in sheer guts. I held his oxygen bottle while he lay down on the catwalk and released that bomb. We were at 20,000 feet without our chutes. We must've looked like a couple of Keystone Cops, but he did the job and we returned safely to base. Again, I said "Thank you!" in my prayers that night.

Maj. Frank Boesch, ret.

As told to Christy Moss, Grafton High School

B-24 Bombardier and Navigator during World War II

Frank Boesch is a Thiensville native. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps when he was 19. This had not been his original idea for his future but with the draft in action he wanted to have the choice of where he was placed. He was informed it would be a year until he was called. Two months later Frank Boesch was on his way to Miami Beach, Fla., for basic training.

I traveled from up here where it was zero degrees to Miami where it was 60 degrees. From Miami I went to Nashville for bombardier training. There they tested my eyes and everything to see if I was going to be a navigator or bombardier. If you slipped up on the tests in training, they placed you in the infantry and no one wanted that. So these tests were crucial.

Frank Boesch spent 26 years in the air in service to our country, first in the Army Air Corps and then in the Air Force Reserves and Army.

I made it as a bombardier and went to Ellington Field, Texas for eight weeks of bombardier training. Then I went to Midland to get acquainted with the bomb site, and then on to Laredo, Texas. I fought three wars; one in Europe and two in Texas!

Our 10-man crew was actually put together in Colorado Springs. Once we were put together as a crew, we flew out together. To give you an idea of how many men we lost in the war ... about 30,000 men were lost in training and combat. About one crew was lost daily in training. Flying over Colorado, we would see the mountains and before we knew it, we would reach them.

We completed training and were sent to Lincoln, Neb., where we were given a brand-new B-24. We were real happy about that. At that point, we flew over to England and had two weeks more of training in Ireland before they let us go into battle. In England, they took away our new plane and gave us an older model, named Shady Sadie. We were ready for combat.

Some of our missions were long and some were short. I flew 10 missions as a navigator and the rest as a bombardier, 35 missions in all. For every mission we had to get up early for a two-hour briefing. We learned where we were going and who was going to meet us during those two hours. We would fly out in formation from the base. Our planes would fly in formation, and sometimes we flew so close that we had to lift our wing tips so we wouldn't collide.

My wife was pregnant while I was over there and my pilot was in the same predicament, so we both wanted to get home. But we flew seven missions in a row during that time and we soon started to get nervous, we called it "flak happy," so we had to stop it for awhile.

On our 34th mission we lost an engine. If you lose an engine you have to stop an engine, which was known as "feathering" it. We landed in France, which was friendly at that time so it wasn't that bad. We had to throw out all our ammunition in the plane because we couldn't keep the plane air bound, having no place to fly. We carried about 8,000 pounds of bombs.

After I returned from France they wouldn't release me, so I had to stay in the Air Force Reserves. I had to fly around here; I joined the Artillery Outfit in Cedarburg. I spent 26 total years in the service, serving both active and reserve duty.

In the Reserves I was a lot of things: mess officer and ate like a king, an order officer for a while. Then for the last eight years I was in charge of a drill sergeant school in Sheboygan. I'd go to Fort Sill with 60 young punks and they'd want me to go out with them, but I was getting too old for that. I enjoyed the service; it kept me young.

At the end of his long 26 years of service, Boesch retired with many medals. However, it would be 56 long years before Boesch would receive his most desired medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross. Frank Boesch was finally presented this honor on Veteran's Day 2001 at a ceremony at the Rose-Harms Legion Post in Grafton.

Lester Riebe

As told to Devon Tice, Grafton High School

Company Clerk and Interpreter in World War II

Just days after he graduated from high school, Lester Riebe was drafted to serve in World War II. He served from 1943 until 1946.

I graduated from high school on a Friday night. The next Wednesday, I was a soldier for the United States Army. After completing basic training in California we were transported to the East Coast. We left Boston to head by ship to Liverpool, England. I was told our ship could outrun an enemy submarine, but because it could not outrun an entire pack, we had to zig-zag eight days all the way to Liverpool.

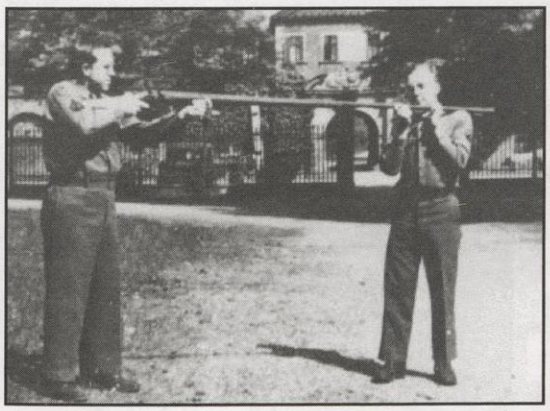
From there it was a 12-hour trip by train to South Hampton, then we boarded a steamer to the English Channel. Finally, we landed at Utah Beach, the site of one of the worst areas of fighting in the war, where just a few months before many American soldiers lost their lives. Landing on the beach, even then, was a challenge. We had to climb down the side of the ship on a swaying cargo net, all while ignoring the stormy waters below. We also had to throw our bags down to the landing craft, and if we missed, we would lose all that we had with us.

Lester and his friends found this rifle while staying in a German castle.

We bought many of our supplies with our wages. We were paid $10 a month. The money allowed us to pay for things like our laundry. In many of the places where we stayed, women would come to our camps and ask to do our laundry. It was very common that they did not ask for money, but only to trade the service for things such as soap, gum, candy bars and juice; whatever we had.

Once when we stayed at a convent, the Mother Superior came to us to ask for our leftover food to be distributed to the poor. Another time a man came to our camp and I was called to translate. He asked if we had any watches that needed repairing. I did have a broken watch so I gave him mine, not really expecting to ever see him or my watch again. A couple of days later he was back with my watch perfectly fixed. I asked him what I owed for it and he said, "A pack of cigarettes." When I gave him two packs, he jumped for joy and told me he could finally buy his son a pair of shoes. Most of the time, we traded or bartered candy bars or cigarettes for the things we needed. Our wages were always paid in the currency of the country we were in at the time, and we moved around a lot.

Sometimes we only would stay in a place for one or two days in a row. My favorite place to stay was in Holland, where we stayed in a convent, and went to a nearby coal mine where we could take hot showers. We also stayed in one of the many castles in Germany, which were very beautiful. We had the opportunity to do some traveling while we were in the countries. While we were on leave, we could pay $30 and that would pay for our travel, a tour, food and the hotels. I was able to go on several tours. One of my favorites was in Switzerland, where I learned how to ski in the Swiss Alps. I was also able to buy souvenirs from all the places I visited. I have dolls from France, handkerchiefs from Holland and postcards from Switzerland.



It wasn't quite what the soldiers were accustomed to, but this ceremonial rifle would do in a pinch.

Aside from taking tours of the countries, most of the entertainment we had to make for ourselves. One soldier in our camp always refused to get out of his bunk on the weekends. So one Sunday after returning from maneuvers, a few soldiers in our group picked him up, mattress and all, and carried him outside to the street. I have very fond memories of the people I met during my time in the war, the civilians and soldiers, and all the experiences we shared. I will never forget them.

After the war ended, Lester Riebe opened a grocery store in his hometown of Cedarburg, where he worked until it closed. He then became a machinist for a Grafton factory. He is now retired and currently resides in Grafton, where he volunteers his time to give lectures at schools on his war experiences.

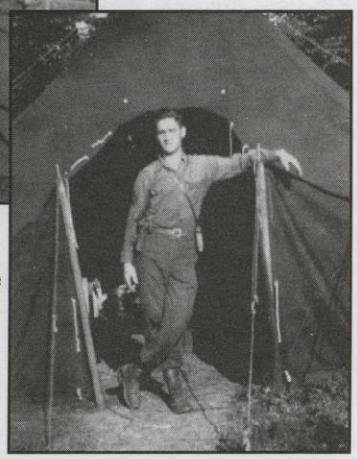
Raymond Zahn

As told to Laura Laning, Homestead High School

Mess Sergeant during World War II

Raymond Zahn served in World War II in Battery D of the 467th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion. His rank was staff sergeant, and his job included being the mess sergeant and fighting in combat. He was stationed in Germany for three years and traveled to France, Germany and Belgium.

I had been drafted and was soon sent to boot camp. It was just like you would imagine it to be. Mainly, we were there to get in shape and become familiar with what was going on. Our instructor was always funny because he was a small, short man that would walk and act contrary to his size. He was also known for posing for the camera whenever there was the opportunity. We used to get a camera with no film and tell him to pose in odd places like the roof, and he would get up there and pose, only later to find that we had no film. We had fun with him. It didn't last long, though, because they needed us for the war ... which was happening at that very moment.



(above on the left) Ray and his friend, Dannie LeBlanc after crossing the Rhine. (right) Ray lived in a tent during his time in Europe. This photo was taken in 1945.

When we finally arrived I found myself getting off a dreaded ship ride and stepping onto English soil. The day was so beautiful and I was anxious to finally exit the ship. As I walked the streets, I noticed they were lined with high piles of guns and ammunition. I was too excited for what was to come of me; I had no idea what was going to happen even in the next moment.

I was especially happy because now we would no longer have to eat flavorless food. For example, the cooks on the ship slacked on their cooking, especially when it came to coffee. They made coffee in the same urn that was also used to make navy beans. The urns were never cleaned our properly and the beans at the bottom were not removed. The first cups of coffee always had beans in them. Ugh! Upon landing on shore, the cooking would soon be up to me anyway, as I was the Mess Sergeant. We no longer drank our coffee with beans.

That was not the only thing I did during the war; I was also in combat. I was so scared I couldn't breathe. During that time I would leave early to feed the soldiers. Through all the combat I was in, only one person was hit. The shell went up and came down on his shoulder, injuring, but not killing him. When I was in Germany, though, we did see concentration camps and the devastation first hand. A sad, sad sight to see so many people killed en masse.

My favorite story to recall is about digging a foxhole. There was a man in our group that we called "Foote," and he was digging a foxhole. Now you have to know that this man was not tiny and needed a lot of space if he was going to hide in a foxhole. So, I was sitting in the back of a trailer and I said to him, "You're going to have to make that wider and deeper if you're going to be able to fit in there."

So he kept on digging and all of a sudden an "88" started firing at us. In the blink of an eye, three men (including Foote and myself) stuffed into the hole to take cover. Foot said to me, "I thought you said it was too small." That made us all laugh.

Chow in the woods with "natural seating."

The day my service ended I came home and walked in the door. I stood in the kitchen doorway to find that they hadn't even noticed me. I pounded on the piano to get their attention, and then they finally noticed I was home

In the days after returning, I focused mainly on trying to get back to the way life was. I went on to be a baker and worked at A.O. Smith. Overall, war is just a part of life. I know how bad it is, and know that they really don't need to solve problems that way. War didn't affect who I am; it is just a part of me ... a part of me that can be remembered as bittersweet.

Melvin Mayer

As told to Sara Koberstein, Homestead High School

Medic and Anesthetist

Many people served in the wars the United States has fought, but few are aware that their next door neighbor may be a veteran from World War II. Melvin Mayer, a resident of Ozaukee County, enlisted to fight in World War II. He cared for injured people by working as a Medic and Anesthetist all over the world from 1940 to 1945.

I entered the Army on Dec. 18, 1940, about a year before the United States entered the war. Two of my brothers had enlisted before me, so I decided to enlist also. I started at Fort Sheridan. It was the week before Christmas, so I figured I would be able to go home for the holiday. I wasn't able to, and it ended up being the first of five Christmases that I missed. I started working at the base hospital at Fort Sheridan for about two hours every morning after doing some basic drills. The rest of the day I worked in the ward working with patients who needed help. I would buy things patients needed, like shaving cream or a candy bar, and bring these things back to them. They really appreciated it.

Four sons of Paul and Lydia Utech Mayer served in the war effort: (l-r) Milton, Marvin, Martin and Melvin. This photo was taken at the end of World War II.

We landed in Casablanca, North Africa, on Christmas Eve, 1942. We set up a hospital in Rabat and stayed there for about four or five months. Another hospital was set up in Oran, where at that time, many people were driven crazy by the war. It was then that the hospital was changed from a medical/surgical hospital to a mental hospital. It was awful.

Later, in Europe, we moved around quite a lot and in each place we worked at a new hospital, not too far away from the fighting. There were big battles, like the Battle of the Bulge, happening all around us and we had to care for the people who were hurt and who were driven insane. But we always managed to keep our sense of humor.

When a new guy came, we always "short-sheeted" him. We would fold the top sheet on the cot back so it would look like a normal top sheet but the new guy could only get in halfway. Other times we would bend the cot legs inward so when anyone sat down on the cot, it would collapse. Pranks were pretty common.

At the hospital, I worked in surgery, so things got kind of hectic sometimes. There could be five or six people who would come in with minor injuries, like an infected cut, but at the same time there were more serious things like the removal of someone's appendix. I had to give the patients the drugs to make them sleep and to keep them asleep. There were sometimes 20 surgeries a day, so I was doing this a lot. Sometimes we would start working at eight in the morning and still be in the operating room at midnight because we had to clean up or wash sheets or something like that. Our work was pretty monotonous, except in a few cases.

I remember one particular time when a soldier came in because he was shot through his side. The bullet had gone through several of his organs. We had to remove the bullet and sew each of the organs and the different layers of the intestine shut. It was a big job; I thought we would only finish two of the holes, but we finished them all. The guy that was shot lived. Another time we had a guy who had been shot in his face. We had to repair the damage done to his skin and even put some artificial skin on his face. He was sent home. We never found out what happened to him.

I have stayed in touch with many people I met overseas. The man I shared my tent with is still a good friend of mine. I still get Christmas cards from him and see him and many of the other people from my unit at the reunions we have every other year. We were a pretty close-knit bunch; we were together in the same unit for five years. I was probably closer to the 250 to 300 people in my unit than I was to my own brothers and sisters.

Although there were so many bad things that happened in the war, it was a good experience for me. I did things I never thought possible and made some very close friends. Overall, it was a great adventure and I'm glad I joined.

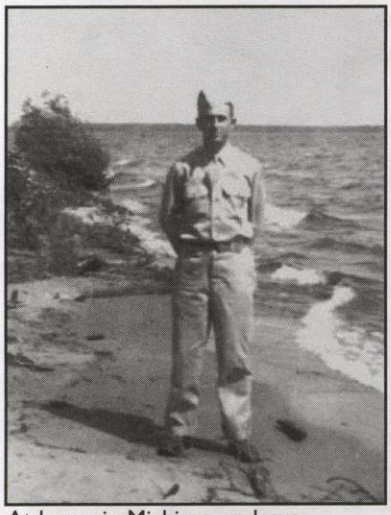
Frank Brown

As told to Jennifer Hur, Homestead High School

Machine Gunner

Frank Brown, a war veteran, served in World War II as a Machine Gunner and Squad Leader during 1944 and 1945 at the Battle of the Bulge. In the Army, he served in the 87th Golden Acorn Division. Frank describes his years in war as a "good experience."

After finishing high school at 18 in Upper Michigan, I was drafted. I did not want to join the war, yet along with a few other young men from my area, I left to join the war. I got off the train, arriving in South Carolina. My first days of training in South Carolina were difficult, both emotionally as physically. As soon as I arrived, I was asked to clean a machine gun. It was a somewhat humorous experience, since I did not know how to clean a gun the way I was told to. I had some other struggles as well in basic training. A young man, I was afraid of having to be away from home and preparing for war. I missed my father, mother and sister. I met a young man from Kentucky and we became friends. Still, I missed my family and dealt with being away from home for the first time.



At home in Michigan on leave.

My experience in the war, the Battle of the Bulge, was a good experience for me. There were about seven others in my squad, and we became very close to one another. One experience was when I was in Belgium. A German came out from behind a ditch, and I tried shooting at him multiple times. I ended up using a whole belt and still never got him.

Fighting in the war did not seem too difficult for me. My opinion was that between two enemies, one would eventually have to die, so there was no chance or reason not to shoot.

Once we were in a German house at the edge of a small down (I don't remember the name); but we were firing across an open field at some German soldiers in the woods, which was on the other side of the field. The Germans did not approach us or we would have stayed and fired on them with the machine gun. When a line of explosions started "walking" across the field, I knew we had been spotted. The Germans were zeroing in on us with their mortars. As any soldier will tell you, mortars are extremely accurate, but because of their high arc, they had to be "walked in" on a target. We were that target, so I said, "Let's get out of here, they've got us spotted!" The Germans got our "MG," but they did not get any of my men as we had reached a lower level of the house by then.

After the war, I returned home to my family. I wanted to make it a surprise, but the news was out that my squad would return anyhow. I went out with my friends to have a few beers, and just hung out, happy to be home from the war. The government paid a decent amount of money after we served in the war. I tried going back to school, but after the war, returning to academics was quite difficult for me. So, I took a job right away. I moved to Wisconsin and married my wife, Joan. Joan and I had several children soon after. After trying to go toward the field or architecture and engineering, I decided to work at National Food, a grocery store. Going back to a normal life was not too much of a difficulty for me.

Frank (far right) and his squad in the Ardennes.

I now live in an apartment in Grafton with my wife. At first, I did not say much about my war experience, however, now I talk more comfortably about it. I share a few of my rather humorous stories with my relatives. I do not keep in touch with my friends and other veterans from the war.

My belief on war is that it obviously is not good, but that it is a good experience for boys to get out to train, at least. It would make them learn about life and quickly become "men." I say this because for me, the biggest impact the war had on me was that I quickly changed from being a boy to a "man."

Some veterans refrain from talking about the war, however, my thoughts and experiences differ. Luckily, war was not too gruesome for me; it did not scar the rest of my life, as war did to some veterans such as in the Vietnam War. War, in my mind, seemed like a good experience, which boys should all get a chance to train for sometime. I gladly share my experience in World War II as I reflect on my years long ago.

Wayland Potter

As told to Jessica Linzmeyer, Grafton High School

Tank Commander during World War II

Wayland Potter was the first person drafted for World War II in Langlade County. In 1941 at the age of 24, he began boot camp in Louisville, Ky. Because he could type, Wayland was assigned to a year of office work. When it was later discovered that Wayland and some other men had never had basic training, they were sent to Alabama and assigned to a tank platoon. This was where Wayland was made a tank commander. He later went on to earn many honors, including numerous victory medals, a Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts. He's also earned the respect of many, including myself.

The first thing I remember about going overseas was being seasick the whole way to England. The trip took about nine days and on about the fourth day, I decided I would go get some breakfast because I hadn't eaten in days. As I was going down to the kitchen, I passed another soldier and he told me not to go down there. When I asked why not, he informed me that they were serving stewed kidneys! Needless to say, I didn't eat breakfast that day.

Wayland Potter during World War II.

After I arrived in England, I trained platoons. I had some excellent people come through among the 80 I trained. We did the same thing about every day; we got up, ate breakfast, got our group together and loaded onto a landing craft. Then we'd go out into the English Channel and ride around all day. This went on for about three or four months.

Then one morning I got up and went to eat breakfast. That's when I knew that day was going to be different. We had fresh milk instead of powdered milk; fresh eggs instead of powdered eggs. We knew what day it was - D-Day.

After floating up and down in the Channel for four days, we landed in France. We weren't the first ones on the mainland. When we arrived there were bodies floating all around us. Our job, as the 101st Airborne Division, was to do the least amount of fighting at St. Maragliese. We needed to relieve the others that were stationed there.

When we arrived, I saw one of the funniest scenes I've ever seen in my entire life. Gunfire was all around us and there was a 70-year-old woman sitting in the middle of a field milking her cow. The gunfire didn't seem to bother her or the cow one bit.

After we passed her, we came to another field. This field had four-foot-high fences made out of dirt and rocks. We were having problems getting past that, so they sent out three tanks, me being one of them. There was a German gun emplacement up on the side of the hill. When the three tanks advanced, the Germans fired three shots and knocked out all three tanks.

I had the turret open on our tank, and when the shell penetrated the tank, it exploded inside. It blew me out of the turret and I landed on the ground. The tank was on fire and I knew all of my buddies were still in the tank. I tried to get up and that's when I realized I had lost my leg. So I laid there. After awhile, a glider landed about 30 feet away from me. Two of the guys came over to where I was and I asked them if they had any morphine. They just kept looking and finally they went away. To this day, I don't know if they were American or German.

Then it got dark. The medics came and took me back to the field hospital. I spent about four hours there. That's when I got my first amputation. The next day they took us back to England. That was kind of scary. They loaded us into a pretty good-sized ship and, while we were still in the harbor, a German airplane came over and started attacking our ship. The gunners on the ship shot the plane down that was strafing us. We were then able to continue on to England where we received medical treatment. I had my leg amputated again in England because there was dirt in it.

In a few weeks I came back to the United States to Michigan's Percy Jones General Hospital, an amputation center. I had my leg amputated a third time because it hadn't been done properly the first two times. Back then, they would put maggots in your leg to get rid of all the dead stuff. Then they would put a cast on it and it itched like crazy. One day it was itching and all of a sudden a worm came out. I called the nurse over and then the doctors came. They sawed the cast off and then put alcohol on my leg - that was painful!

I had to stay in the amputation center for more than a year. When I talked to my wife, I told her I'd only lost my toes, which was true. Losing my leg was very hard to deal with. I'm glad my wife didn't do what one guy's wife did. She walked into the hospital ward and told him she wanted a divorce. We saw that quite often. Peggy and I have been together for 58 years. We now have three children and six grandsons.

Orville Fortney

As told to his grandson, Matt Bialzik, Ozaukee High School

Battalion Postmaster in the Army

Orville Fortney served in World War II. He was drafted into the Army in early 1942. He trained at Ft. Steward. Ga., before he was shipped overseas. He traveled everywhere, from Algeria to Switzerland. He fought in six combat missions before they found out he went to college for one year. Then they knew he had some brains, so they promoted him to Postmaster. He had one assistant that helped him sort and put together all the mail for almost 850 people. He was almost always working, so that means he had little time off. He has hundreds of pictures of him or other people all over Europe. He still has all of his dog tags and other patches from World War II.

It all started when I was in my early twenties when I was drafted into the Army. At that time, I lived with my parents in Viroqua, Wis., in Vernon County, by the Mississippi River. I was attending college to become a teacher when I was drafted.

Orville Fortney served as a Head Postmaster in the European Theater. When he came home, he taught science to students in Port Washington.

A week later, I had to meet an Army representative to get a physical. I passed the physical and was shipped to Ft. Steward for training. I met a couple of new friends at the fort when I arrived there. After training, we saw some soldiers wearing a patch on their shoulders. It was an awesome patch that only higher soldiers in the Army could have. I wanted that patch, so I went and found one and had it sewed on my uniform.

After all my training was finished, I was shipped off to war. I went by troop transport over to Europe to begin fighting. I met some new friends over there. They taught me a couple of new things. I shot my first 40mm gun. That was really fun. I was in six combat missions before they found out that I had some college background. Then they promoted me to Postmaster for the 451 CA, AW, AAA Battalion. I took care of almost 850 people's mail everyday. It was tough at first, but I got used to it, and then it got really easy.

One day I would be in Italy and the next day I would be on a boat traveling down river to another country. I traveled a lot when I served in World War II. I was in Austria. I was in Africa.

One day my buddies wanted to tour a concentration camp. I really did not, but I had to. I was with them. We drove past the camp. We got out, and instantly I felt sick. It really hurt me when I saw all the starving men standing by the fences. There were hundreds of dead bodies in huge piles everywhere. I wanted to leave immediately. So I went and sat back in the jeep. An hour later, they finally came back, and we left.

Some days we had nothing to do. Some days we would not be able to rest more than five minutes at a time. Those days were terrible. I would get up and eat breakfast and clean up. Then I would work my butt off to sort all the mail. By noon, it would be time to hand out all the mail to the people. Then my day was almost over. By that time, I was so hungry, I could eat a pig. After that, we called it a night.

That we were going home was the best news I heard since I left for training. The was was ending. The enemies were backing away. We would be able to go home pretty soon. I was relieved that I was going home. I wrote a letter to my mother telling her I was coming home. When I got on the boat, I was so happy. I went through a lot of things during World War II. I was glad I served and glad to be going home.

When I got home, I finished college and started teaching in a one-classroom school in Vernon County. In 1956, I moved to Port Washington with my wife Marion, and my daughter Patricia. There, I began teaching in the Port Washington School District as an earth science teacher. That was extremely fun. Today, I live in the Harbor Club, the old hospital in Port Washington.

Warren Luft As told to David Miller, Ozaukee High School

World War II Army Mechanic

Waubeka native Warren Luft left for the Army in March of 1943. He served in the Army until 1946 when the war ended, and he returned to his farm. During training, he was interviewed by the Colonel of the 575th AAA, and Warren was given a T/4 rating. This bumped him up from a private to a sergeant, and he was very proud of his promotion. Warren remembers the many cold nights and hardships he faced as a member of the Third Army, 11th Armored Division, 575 AAA Battalion.

We were obviously unprepared for the cold nights that we encountered in Europe. We never got to sleep in buildings, but rather outside in the freezing weather on the ground. The only thing we had for warmth was an Army sleeping bag that only had two layers to it. It was impossible to stay warm in that thing at night.

We also took our shoes off at night which was a big mistake. When morning came around, we could never get them back on because it was so cold that our feet were so swelled up that they couldn't fit back into our shoes. Boy, did we have a fun time getting our feet back into our shoes. Many guys froze their feet, It was so bad they would lose their toes, sometimes even their whole foot. A guy from Minnesota and I decided to do something about that. We took our army blankets and cut 'em up. After that, we wrapped our feet in the army blanket and put them back into our boots. This acted as padding for our feet and kept them warm.

Warren Luft now farms in Fredonia, but was an Army mechanic during World War II.

On Christmas Day 1944, we were going in a column north to Bastogne. We travelled all night to get into position for the next day. I was riding in the rear of a truck loaded with gasoline, which was to supply our half trucks. It was very cold, and I had my shoes off and was rubbing my feet to get warm. It was a moonlight night and a German plane strafed our column. Shrapnel hit the side of the truck I was riding. I jumped over the tail of the truck. The scare was so great I was shaking a half hour later, still in my bare feet. This was my first experience of combat.

Once, a couple of buddies and I came across a barn. Since we always had to sleep on the ground at night, we thought it would be nice to have a place to stay in for a change. It was probably about a 40 x 60-foot barn with a drive through running down the middle. There was still daylight so we decided to go in to get out of the cold weather, but what we saw inside was quite a shock. Here in this barn, from previous battles, were dead bodies piled above the beam.

On the right side were American bodies, and they were frozen in the positions they were picked up at. On the left side were the Germans all piled up over the beam. I then turned to my buddy and said, "I don't think I'm going to stay here tonight. I'll go sleep out in the cold again."

My job for my battalion was a mechanic as well as a runner, or messenger. One night in Belgium at around twelve o'clock, I was awakened by some of my men and they said I had to deliver a message to the tank battalion about three quarters of a mile away. I left to deliver the message for this tank battalion that was over in a different section of the woods. Coming over to the battalion, I came across two Germans that had been badly wounded. They were crying and moaning from the pain and when I got to the sergeant I told him they should send a medic over there. A medic never went over to help them.

The next morning when it was still dark out, I had to return a message back to our battalion on the other side of the woods. When I got there one of the fellows wanted to cook a C-ration on a little burner inside a half track. When he lit it, a flame started to glow. The Germans were right across the road and they saw this light in the half track. They zeroed in on us and started firing off rounds at us in the woods. We lost quite a few guys in this event. One guy was hit in his arm; a piece of shrapnel hit his heart. They never did take the piece of shrapnel out of his heart and somehow he is still living today. Another guy had a piece of shrapnel right go through his leg and out the other side. It was now daylight, and I had to go back through the woods to the tank battalion. On the way, I came across the two Germans from the night before. They were now dead, and they were still hugging each other.

After living through the war and experiencing the cold nights, I have a lot to be thankful for. It's nice to be able to sleep in a warm bed instead of on the frozen ground practically freezing to death.

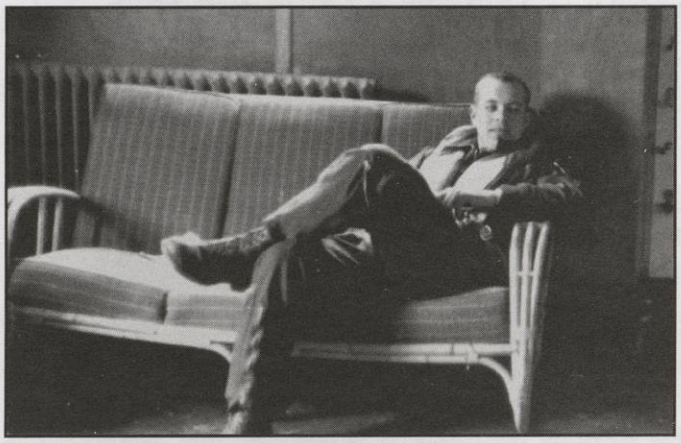
Lloyd "Stu" Auer

As told to Steve Geis,
Ozaukee High School

Jet Fighter Pilot

Lloyd Auer was born in 1929. He was twelve when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He spent most of his youth working. He saved his money to spend on flight lessons. Upon receiving his pilot's license, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps with his parents' permission at age 17. After eight weeks of basic training, Lloyd was assigned to a radar outfit in Japan. There he served as a power man servicing generators because of his previous mechanical experience. After being in the service from 1946 to 1949, he was discharged. Then, after two months, he decided to enlist again. He then went on to fulfill his goal of flying.

During World War II, I always looked up to the older boys who were out fighting for our country. I rode my one-speed bike from Mayville to Milwaukee to take flight lessons at age 17. After I received my pilot's license, I enlisted in the Army Air Corps hoping that I would be able to fly. I was a little disappointed when I was assigned as a power man. I understood that the Army Air Corps wouldn't want a 17-year-old flying an expensive aircraft, even though I knew I could handle the challenge. I stayed in Japan as a power man until my time was up.



Stu between missions.

After spending two months out of the service, I decided to reenlist. Upon reenlisting, I took the cadet exam and passed with flying colors. Then I made the decision to go to Jet Fighter School. After training in the F80 I was chosen to go to Wethersfield, England. In England, I was in the first tactical nuclear outfit flying F84s. Our outfit would have been the first line of defense against the Soviets during the Cold War.

During a long single ship mission that required precise navigation, I was flying through dense clouds. I was on course and climbing to altitude. Everything was going exactly as planned. During this mission, ground radar was to keep me clear of other aircraft, but I didn't know that they had an equipment failure. Then, against my will, the stick moved to turn the plane off course a few degrees. I immediately corrected back on course and then broke out of the clouds about 10 feet behind a C47 transport plane. I know, to this day, that someone was looking out for me.

During the time I was in England, I lived in a small house off base with my wife. While in England, my wife and I had two boys. We enjoyed our time in England. One time while going to the theatre we saw Winston Churchill. We still have friends in England whom we correspond with. The service was definitely a great aspect of my life.

I was able to see many parts of the world. I saw Japan and most of Europe while in the service. Also, I was able to do what I really wanted to do, which was flying planes. While I was in flight training, I met many people. Many of these people I met went on to the Korean War. This is actually where I requested to be stationed, but they sent me to England instead. After we left flight training, I never saw some of my friends who went to Korea. These men were all great guys.

There's nothing quite like the view from an airplane.

The main reason I got out of the service was because it was not a place to raise a family. The divorce rate for service men was extremely high. So my family and I moved back to Wisconsin. I wanted to start farming, so I bought a tractor with some money I had saved. But farming didn't go so well. I then got a job at Globe Union. I worked there and farmed on the side, even though I didn't make any profit. I am still active as a veteran. I have attended every parade, funeral, holiday, Silent March, and honor guard occasion I could for the last three and a half years. I also gave the Memorial Day address in the 2001 ceremony. I have no regrets about being in the service mostly because of the flying end of it, and the lifelong friends encountered.

Howie Himstedt

As told to Ashley Wolf, Ozaukee High School

Worked in Bombs and Explosives During World War II

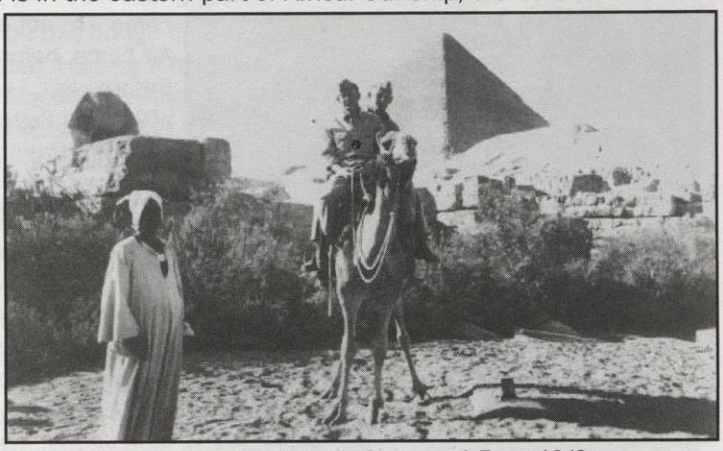
Living in Fredonia, Howie Himstedt was drafted in the war at age 22. Howie had to leave his job at Janke Construction and say goodbye to his steady girlfriend.

"It is more important to note the points that unite us than to stress the points that separate us." This thought of the day starts out my diary. As I look back at my diary, I discover that I've done many things, been many places, and have experienced many different emotions.

While I was stationed in Aberdeen Proving Grounds, I worked in bombs and explosives. I never knew America was actually going to go to war, so you can imagine how I felt on Dec. 7, 1941. When I heard the news of Pearl Harbor, I didn't have time to think. Soon, I found out I was going overseas to fight in North Africa.

I was sent to New York, and from there, my group sailed hostile waters alone. We had no convoy to accompany us. I can't even describe how scared I was at that time.

We ended up arriving in Freetown, Africa, which is in the eastern part of Africa. Our ship, the SS Louis Pasteur, traveled along the African coast all the way to Durban, which is located on the southern tip of Africa. Once in Durban, we found out our new destination was in Yemen, northeast of where we were. Sounds pretty easy, but instead of going through the Madagascar Strait which takes you right to Yemen, we had to sneak around Madagascar because German subs were stationed there, and we would have been killed very fast if we attempted to go through. Sneaking past the subs was one of the scariest things in my life. I started to realize how precious life was and how quickly it can be taken away.



Howie Himstedt in the "backseat" of his camel, Egypt 1942.

From Yemen, we traveled to Egypt, where we experienced our first battle. We were not on the front lines of fighting, but we were dangerously close. In Egypt, we caught *E coli* and had the stomach flu pretty bad. We ran out of clothes so we received British clothing and ate British food. And let me tell you, I learned to appreciate good food after having to eat the food we were given. In Cairo, I experienced many new things and also got to see some amazing sites, though I wish it had been under different conditions. I saw the Sphinx in Cairo. In the picture, I'm the man riding on the back of the camel. If you look closely at the picture, you can notice the stone surrounding the Sphinx. This was set in place to protect the chin of the Sphinx in case of bombing.

Being stationed in Egypt was not an easy thing. We were hit by dust storms every day around noon. Sometimes, it got so bad that we would have to wear gas masks. It was unbearably hot in Egypt during the day and frigidly cold at night. When we camped, we had to dig trenches in the sand for sleeping. In case of bombing, the trenches improved our chances of surviving the blow. Even though we were under very stressful conditions, we found ways to forget the bad things for a couple of minutes by pulling pranks on each other. For fun, we would fly planes very low near some tents, which blew the tent covers off.

We then went to Bombay, India, and from there headed to Calcutta, which is on the opposite side of India. I ended up spending 14 months there. We were awarded a Presidential Union Citation. We also found out that our A.C. Group earned 126 points. Since we could leave after earning 85 points, we got ready to head home. I felt relief and happiness.

To get home from where we were, we had to head to Australia and carefully cross the Pacific Ocean to California. I guess you could say I took "a trip around the world." I got to go back to Wisconsin for 30 days, but had to go back to Los Angeles to get a physical done to see if I contracted any diseases. After that, I was stationed in Texas, where I became a truck driver. After doing that for a couple of months, I finally returned to Wisconsin for good. I met my boss from Janke Construction at the bus stop in Fredonia. He said that he expected me at work the next day. I was so relieved to be back home that I didn't care that I had to go back to work. My steady girlfriend I had before the war was married and had started a family.

I've done many things, seen many places and have experienced many emotions while being in war. If I was asked to visit any places I had been, I would say no, because I don't think I could sit on another train or another mode of transportation. All I have now are the memories.

Louis Tackes As told to Laurie Arendt

B -24 Bomber Pilot in the 15th Air Force

Montana native Louis Tackes was working at the Wisconsin Chair Factory when he received his orders to report. He had been working overtime when one of the girls from his rooming house ran up with the letter. He read it, stuffed it in his pocket and then realized he had two days to report. It didn't give him much time to get his affairs in order.

I'd originally tried to become a Naval Air Force pilot, and I passed all the tests except one. They would advance a pencil toward my eyes, which had to remain focused on the point until the pencil reached my nose. About six inches from my nose, one of my eyes would shift out. I was supposed to go see a specialist , but on the way home, I realized I didn't have the money to go to a specialist. So, for a few minutes every day at home, I took a pencil and did the same exercise until I corrected the exophoria myself.

First Lieutenant Louis Tackes, 1943.

I don't know why I originally wanted to be in the Naval Air Force; I'm not a water person. I tried again, this time with the Army Air Force, before I would be drafted and I successfully enlisted. Before I left, I went out to the West Bend Airport and took a Sunday afternoon flight. That was the first time I'd ever been in a plane.

Pilot training required a lot of study. I studied physics, math and geography for six weeks. I continued on with primary training where I first soloed in a single engine PT-13. I was commissioned in Blythesville, Ark., in April 1944.

My orders were originally to become a training officer, and I was disappointed. I was able to convince my superiors to give me an overseas assignment. I was also to become a B-24 pilot. It was not my first choice - fighter pilot - or even second choice. A B-24 was a large, four-engine plane, and I was hoping for something a little lighter, even a light or medium bomber.

After four-engine bomber training, I was sent to Westover Field, Mass., to pick up my crew. Later in Long Island, N.Y., I was literally assigned my own B-24. I had to sign for it. They did that because if the plane was taken by the enemy, they couldn't say it was property of the U.S. military.

We were to go overseas, but the weather was terrible. We were leaving from Bangor, Maine, and that became one of the most difficult flights. We were overloaded with radar equipment to take to Italy and the weather hadn't been cooperating. After take-off, we were not able to get the air speed above 130, which prevented me from gaining enough altitude to clear the trees on a turn around. Finally, I realized that after being grounded for two weeks in snow and rain, the Pito tube was partially frozen. The Pito tube is a tube protruding from the wing, allowing air to enter and register the speed of flight. After switching on the heater, we were able to proceed to Labrador, then past Greenland, on to Iceland and Wales. I didn't sleep for the first two days of the trip because we had to leave whenever there was a break in the weather, and when we landed in Iceland, I slept for 16 hours.

Our crew was assigned to Turretto Base in Southern Italy. We were lucky because it was toward the end of the war and there wasn't much German fighter plane opposition. Plus we always had our own fighter plane escorts. Depending on our targets, we'd encounter medium to heavy and accurate antiaircraft fire (flak). We normally targeted bridges, refineries and rail yards, though we also did some troop support missions. We would go after the enemy and could see them retreating as we fired.

On one mission, I lost the supercharger on one of my engines. A supercharger is important because when you fly above 14,000 feet, there isn't much oxygen, and the supercharger gives the engine a bigger volume of air. Two more engines were damaged by antiaircraft fire, so I had to "feather" three engines. Ultimately, I ended up radioing in with the news that we'd have to leave the squadron. I was told to call for a fighter plane escort, and when I did, I received a response from the black squadron over the radio - "Yes'm, sir, we'll be right down." They were a terrific bunch of guys. I received the Distinguished Flying Cross for this mission.

My crew and I flew 26 missions, and I had enough points to take my release so I came back home and found a wife. I knew her slightly before I left, but I think it was my uniform that did it.

Richard Brund As told to Allie Dorszynski, Homestead High School

Member of the Blackhawk 86th Division in World War II

Throughout the war there were good times and bad times, and these events are what I heard about from Dick Brund, a World War II veteran. Here is his story:

In California, we were trained to go to the Pacific. Because of a breakthrough in Europe, they put us on trains to Boston, and then we were sent to LeHavre, France. We first went into action on the Rhine River, where we relieved the 82nd Airborne Division. We then were assigned to General Patton's Third Army and rode on the top of tanks. We had complete confidence in Patton and our other leaders.

Our tanks usually went at night, and a lot of men would get hurt. We were on the hills of Southern Germany, so the tank would all of a sudden go down the hill and roll on people. But Patton said, "You go on these tanks until they run out of gas, and then I'll fly it in to you." We still all liked him.

Once during the day we were on a tank, which would hold about 16 men, and we had to cross a bridge. Tanks don't turn in circles like automobiles, instead they have square or angled turns. We hit this bridge that was made of ties over the river. The engineers hadn't tested it to see if it would hold a tank, and it didn't. It crumbled, and the tank flipped sideways. We all fell into the river. We managed to swim out before the tank fell, but I was hit in the knee with a 6x6 railroad tie and it split my gun in two. That was the one time I had a close shave.

We would get on the tanks, one squad, and in the back was the exhaust. The grate would get very warm. So we would shift, and three guys would get off the grate, and the next three get on. We'd stand on it until we started to smell the rubber burning on the bottom of our boots.

When in towns, we usually looked for food. We would go into farmyards and shoot across the yards, killing chickens instead of catching them. Back at camp, we would heat water in No. 10 cans and dunk the chickens in there. The feathers would come off nice and easy. We ended up making chicken soup with just the chicken and broth. We also went into abandoned homes and pounded against the walls. When we found a hollow spot, we'd break it open and find potatoes and canned food.

Mabel Brund visited her 18-year-old son at Ft. Sheridan on Jan. 16, 1944.

We then crossed over the Danube and took a French town. There we found some young boys - about 14 and 15 years old - with brand new German uniforms and new guns. We didn't know what to do with them, because we didn't want to hurt them. So one of our Italian sergeants came over and took his knife out and they thought he was going to kill them, but he cut the bottom of their pants off and made shorts. He kicked them in their rear ends, and told them to go home to their mothers. We never really hated the Germans; we were there to fight only those in uniform.

Later on, we served in the Pacific. We were supposed to land in Japan from submarines. We would land and clear the coast of land mines and other obstacles. I did not look forward to this, but when you are 18, 19, 20, there is nothing in this world that you're afraid of, you're "gung-ho" as we would say.

We had very interesting eating rituals on the troop ship in the Pacific. There were so many guys that you'd get in line for breakfast in the morning for hours. They had tables on posts hung from the ceiling, to put your tray on to eat. We had to eat standing up. We'd eat some food, and the ship would sway one way and so would the trays, and we'd wait for the trays to slide back down, so it was quite fun. The worst thing was when some guy down from us got sick and threw up on your tray, and you couldn't eat it when it swayed back over. When our meal was done, we'd sit back down for a few minutes, then get right back up for lunch, and the same with dinner.

While we were on the ship, the bomb was dropped on Japan. We stayed in the Philippines. Our regiment went to WaWadam, where we found American skeletons from the Japanese invasion. We took starving Japanese prisoners that were hiding up in the hills. We kept them in guarded compounds, feeding them one ration a day, which we would starve on, but they thrived on. Instead of getting skinny, they got quite husky and strong. We would have one Japanese do the work of two or three Philipinos. They were also very artistic; they would take nuts and bolts and carve them to make rings. They would also take parachute shrouds, the strings that held them together, and pull them apart to make some of the best hula skirts. I shipped one home to my girl.

Hilbert "Hilly" Robel

As told to Kyle Drees, Cedarburg High School

Signal Corps Radio Operator

Eager to serve his country, Hilbert Robel volunteered for the Army Signal Corps for one year of duty, which turned into four and a half years. His tour of duty took him to North Africa, Italy, France and Germany.

I was 21 years old and living in Mequon, when I volunteered for the Army Signal Corps for one year. It became four and a half years. I was second on the list to be drafted from Ozaukee County in 1941, so I volunteered because it gave me a greater opportunity to get into something I was interested in. The Army Signal Corps appealed to me because I had experience in railroading.

My father had to take me to Port Washington at 6 a.m. to get on the Interurban to Milwaukee, where we were given physicals. From there we were sent to Camp Grant Ill.; it was a new camp, and the officers there were from the Army and didn't have much experience in training. Boot camp lasted about three months. The food was horrible. When we got to our base in Fort Lewis, Wash., the food was much better.

Hilly volunteered for one year of service, but ultimately ended up serving for four and a half years during WWII.

Once, when we were on maneuvers in California, and it's snake country up there, a couple of guys tied some rope to the legs of my cot while I was resting and tipped me over. Well, I thought I'd fix them, so I got a banana and stuck it under one of their blankets. Well, the guy got into the cot, and he put his foot down there and thought that thing was a snake. He jumped right out of there, and I'll never forget it.

I was shipped from the West Coast to the East Coast in November 1942. That month, I boarded a ship in New York harbor and took part in the Invasion of North Africa at Casablanca.

I did not come in with the first wave, because they had to move some sunken ships out of the way. Once we were on shore, we then marched through the city with full field packs on our shoulders. I spent a year in Casablanca, Algeria and Tunis. I was first put in charge of a guard detail for a couple of days, because they had no need for radio operators. I then joined a crew of two other persons on a vehicle to do telephone and switchboard work. After we had defeated the Germans and the Italians, we boarded ship at Bizerte, Tunisia, and sailed to Naples, Italy.

I did more telephone and switchboard work in Naples for a few months, until the frontline broke through Anzio, and I moved to Rome. Rome was a beautiful city because it had not been bombed by either side throughout the war. I was able to see quite a bit of Rome. For example, one day I picked up a little Italian boy, who spoke some English. He asked me if I would like to see some of the Roman ruins. I said sure, and I drove around with him for a while.

I then boarded a ship from Naples, Italy to southern France during the invasion. I didn't go with the first wave because a storm came up and I needed to stay on the ship. I didn't end up going until about the third day of the invasion. Because I was on the ship for three days with no change of clothes or socks, I got wet feet and it was the start of my trenchfoot. The first day we went 100 miles north because the Germans were retreating. The second day, we arrived in Dijon, France and that's where we set up our company headquarters. The next day, I went on sick call for my trenchfoot, and I ended up in the hospital for three months. I was sent to three hospitals. If the third couldn't cure me, I was going to get to go home. While I was in rehabilitation in the hospital, the Battle of the Bulge started and all hospital personnel were sent to the front. All the patients, including myself, were left to fend for themselves. Five days later, my buddies picked me up from a replacement depot, and I went right back to regular duty.

When the war ended, I decided not to reenlist and went back home to work. I also got married two months after I returned home to my wife, Margie. I eventually opened my own business, Mequon Electric, and ran it for many years.

Richard Kelley

As told to Megan Rose Mulcahy, Grafton High School

Army Medic during World War II

When America entered the war, Mr. Kelley tried to get into the Navy Air Corps to be a pilot, but didn't pass the eye exam. The Army drafted him shortly thereafter and he entered the 9th Armored Division, initially training as reconnaissance soldier.

We were getting ready for Europe, so the Army had me leave the engineering course that I had been in. They decided to make me a medic instead. We landed in Southport, England in April 1944, and we were there for two-and-a-half months. On June 5, 1944, three other guys and I went on an antiaircraft LST [landing ship tank] to Plymouth and across the English Channel. We landed in France on June 6. We rejoined the 102nd Evacuation Hospital and waited for the injured coming in from the invasion. I was frightened and I sat behind a steel I-beam in case we were hit by German aircraft.

From there we went from site to site. Sometimes hospitals were set up in buildings, sometimes they were tents joined together - in those, there wasn't much light to see by.

Richard Kelley in World War II.

We rode in ambulances to Labin, Belgium. We set up a hospital in a chateau for two months until we went to Eddelbrook, Luxembourg - the city where some of my ancestors came from. On my first day there I was pulling guard when I saw a kid on a bike. His bike had an advertisement for Serres' Bakery. Serres was my ancestors' family name.

The boy spoke English so I asked him about it and he took me to his grandfather's house. There were pictures of German soldiers on the walls! The kid interpreted for his grandfather and me. They took me to the Burgermeister's office. We went through the books and found that I was related to the boy and his grandfather. My great-great grandfather left Eddelbrook in 1832. The hospital we worked at in Eddelbrook was in an agricultural college across from the town's cemetery. I went to it one day and found the graves of my ancestors.

We celebrated Thanksgiving there, and on December 16 the Battle of the Bulge hit us. The Germans were shelling us but the hospital was surrounded by big hills which protected us. They used mortars since direct fire wouldn't work. I had to pull guard during the shelling so I patrolled near an open manhole in the street, ready to jump in if the street got hit. Lots [of shells] hit the cemetery. I got hit with chunks of dirt flying from the cemetery and I wondered if it was my ancestors raining down on me. We evacuated the hospital, but we had to leave behind the immovables and people to take care of them. The town was leveled during the Battle of the Bulge and I never heard from the kid and his grandfather again.

We went to Huy, Belgium. The Battle of the Bulge was still going on and we had patients like mad. On Christmas Day, 1,039 patients came in to our 300-bed hospital. By the end of the war, our hospital had treated 30,000 wounded, more patients than any other hospital in the European Theater. We received a Presidential Citation and were called an "elite unit."

After the 9th Army jumped off and smashed through German lines we moved into Germany, first to Achen where I watched a German jet fighter get shot down by 50 P47s, and on to Giesen. The war was going down and we had prisoners like mad, trucks full of them being taken to POW stations.

We also liberated an American POW camp near Remagen, Germany. Like the men at Dachau, they were only 70 or 80 pounds. They had wooden shoes with straw for socks in the middle of winter. Some had died. When eighteen and nineteen-year-olds die, it kind of hits you.

Ten men, including me, went to Dachau to pull those poor souls out of the partitions they were kept in. They slept on straw and they had straw sticking out of their arms. The prisoners were mostly men weighing only 70 or 80 pounds. They didn't want to come out. They didn't know who we were. Some of the Americans couldn't handle it; they were throwing up.

Richard Kelley was 80 years old in April. He has six children and has been married to Cookie, his second wife, for a year and a half. His first wife died five years ago. As a remembrance, Cookie used pieces of his army uniform to make a uniform for a teddy bear, complete with a hat and decorated with his dog tags and the medals, ribbons and insignias he was awarded for his service. Cookie always says, "Old soldiers don't die, they become teddy bears."

Robert Klug

Interviewed by Emily Bourne, Cedarburg High School

Radio Mechanic during World War II

In June 1941, Robert Klug's draft number came up, and not wanting to be drafted into the Infantry, he decided to enlist in the Army.

I did not want to be in the Infantry - I had enough hiking and camping out in the Boy Scouts. I enlisted in the Army with the hopes of choosing an area in which to serve. I enlisted on July 8 and was sent to Selfridge Field, Mich., near Detroit. As they were trying to build up the Army Air Corps real fast, that's where they put me. It was OK; I loved airplanes ever since I was a kid.

Instead of the usual 13 weeks of basic training, I was assigned directly to a unit - the Fourth Pursuit Squadron, 52nd Pursuit Group (some time later "Pursuit" was changed to "Fighter"), where I became a radio mechanic. I was ineligible for pilot training because of my age and a vision problem.

Three members of the Klug family served during World War II: (l-r) Bob; Catherine, who served in the Navy at the Jacksonville Naval Air Station; and Daniel, a member of an Army Armored Tank Division.

As a Private, my pay was $21 a month for the first four months, after which it increased to $30. At that point, I figured I could afford to operate my car there. On Dec. 5, 1941, I was able to get a ride to Milwaukee to pick up my car.

On Sunday afternoon, Dec. 7, I picked up a buddy in Racine. He broke the news to me that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor!

We arrived back at Selfridge long after midnight and were immediately put to work preparing our planes, the P-39 Air Cobra, for combat. A few weeks later, we moved to the East Coast, as there had been reports of German submarine activity off the coast.

In July 1942, we moved to England, where our P-39s were replaced with British Spitfires, which were a better fighter.

In November, we sailed to Oran, Algeria, as part of the invasion of North Africa. During the African campaign we moved several times, eventually landing at Tunis. In July 1943, we moved to Palermo, Sicily, where, during a German air raid a bomb landed about 100 yards from our bomb shelter! We then flew up to Corsica, from where our pilots did fighter sweeps over that part of the Mediterranean and southern Europe, which was just 100 miles away. In early spring 1944, our Spitfires were replaced with P-51 Mustangs, with which our own pilots would escort bombers on long-range missions.

In Corsica, I had a scare which could've cost money. One night, on guard duty, I thought I heard someone running toward me. I yelled, "Halt!" and the footsteps stopped. I had my hands in my field jacket pockets, one hand holding a flashlight and the other a .45. Luckily, I had the flashlight out first because there stood a cow. The sound of her four legs walking had sounded like a man running. Had I killed the cow, I would've had to pay for it.

On May 14, 1944 (Mother's Day) we were flown to Italy. Some of us rode in a B-17 bomber, which had been stripped of its guns and was being used for transport. While the engines were being started, the crew chief showed me an ad by the Boeing Aircraft Co. showing a B-17 in flight with its tail sections almost cut off by the wing of a German Messerschmidt fighter. The photo had been taken from one of the other planes in the formation. The ad explained that the B-17 had returned safely to base, and then went on to brag about the sturdy construction of Boeing products. The crew chief pointed out the number on the plane's tail in the photo and then had me look at the radio call number on our plane's instrument panel: the numbers were the same.

During this flight, I was permitted to ride in the bombardier's seat, which was in the nose of the plane. I took some interesting pictures and enjoyed my Mother's Day brunch of cold C-Rations at 10,000 feet over the Mediterranean.

In August 1944, a shipload of us were taken back to the States as manpower for B-29 units. At that time, quite a few B-29 were being produced. After three weeks at home, I reported to the Lincoln, Neb., Air Base for reassignment. While there, I landed in the hospital with an attack of malaria. The doctors also treated a skin condition I developed just before leaving Italy. They finally cleared it up, but were never able to identify it.

In April 1945, I was assigned to Paine Field near Seattle, which was where I finished out the war. I was mighty thankful when it ended.

Robert Armbruster

As told to Katie Agard,
Cedarburg High School

Air Force Navigator

After being inducted into the U.S. Army in Milwaukee, and taking physical and mental examinations, Mr. Robert Armbruster was recommended for the U.S. Army Air Corps. He passed the Air Corps exams and was immediately sent to Florida for basic military training.

After completion, I was sent to the University of Alabama for college training in such courses relating to flying as physics and spherical geometry. While in Alabama, I had 15 hours of flight training and flew solo at the end of that time. The next stop was the Air Force Classification Center. After three days of testing, I was classified as a navigator.

After pre-navigation training in Texas, it was on to advanced navigation. With the air war escalating in Europe and in the Pacific, there was a great need for navigators. It was imperative to get pilots and navigators quickly into action. The "crash course" included studying and flying from five in the morning until midnight or one the next morning. Without any books on navigating three other men and I had an officer studying with us for the entire time in the classroom and on 18 training flights.

Since good flying weather was critical, most training bases were located in the southern states, especially Texas. During this time, I was also trained to be a weather officer. I communicated with other planes using blinker lights during time of radio silence. I then trained with a crew of 10 men at Mountain Home Air Base in Idaho. Each crewmember learned his specific tasks as part of the total crew. The pilots also had practice flying in battle formation.

(above) Bob at home on leave and (left) with his crew and their B-24.

The crew training in Idaho lasted two months. Upon completion we received a new B-24 Bomber which had only a few flight hours on it. The crew flew to England by way of the North Atlantic.

My first stop was the 8th Air Force Base in England called Horsham St. Faith, now known as the Norwich International Airport. It was a permanent British base that had two-story brick buildings. They issued bicycles to the airmen because the base had a one-mile runway and a long road that circled the perimeter.

The B-24 airplane was the most-produced airplane during the war. There were over 19,000 built. The planes had an average life span of 147 days. The B-24 had a 110- foot wingspan and could hold 3,500 gallons of gas. A short bombing flight would be five or six hours but most of ours were eight or more hours.

On a typical mission from our base in England, 30 planes would take off at 20-second intervals. Later the planes assembled formations above the clouds. It required almost an hour to assemble 300 B-24s over the east coast of England. Then the planes would usually fly to a point over an island in Holland where they would then be joined by over 700 B-17 bombers. At this point 1,000 planes then separated to proceed to their individual targets in Germany, France or Belgium.

I was stationed in England near the end of the war. Our targets were usually German air bases. The Germans had the first jets of the war. These were dangerous to Allied planes because of their speed. The British usually bombed at night while the Americans flew during the day. When I returned from my day mission, the British would head out on their night mission.

Many potential dangers awaited the crews on their eight-hour flights. At 20,000 feet altitudes, the weather could be 40 to 50 degrees below zero. There was no insulation in the planes. To keep warm, I wore a heated flying suit, helmet and oxygen mask. To keep my hands from freezing, I had to wear two pairs of gloves. As the plane approached the target area, protection for the crew was necessary. We had to put on a 40-pound flack suit and a steel helmet.

On one mission, my plane was hit by antiaircraft fire and our crew had to fly back on three engines. On a bad day, the Eighth Air Force could lose 40 to 60 planes. The Eighth Air Force lost 4,015 bombers during World War II.

Mr. Armbruster now has his own family and is a successful jeweler. He keeps in touch with many of his fellow Air Force officers even today and attends reunions in the United States and in England.

Joe Demler With Laurie Arendt

Prisoner of War in a German Concentration Camp

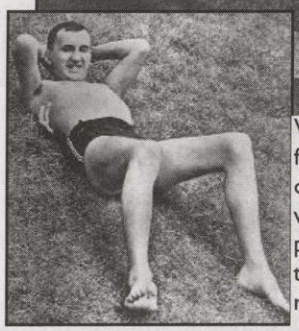
Fredonia native Joe Demler is probably the most photographed P.O.W. of World War II. After his liberation, the photo seen below appeared in numerous national publications, including "Life" magazine.

Ten days after I graduated from Port High School, I was inducted into the Army. After 17 weeks of training, we were sent overseas. We were sent to Metz, France, where we joined the 35th Division, which had been in the Battle of the Bulge and was so depleted that the officers were sergeants, and we were the replacements.

The next morning, we trucked up close to the Belgium-Luxembourg borders where we went into action. On Dec. 29, 1944, in a farmhouse that was our outpost, a Mark IV German tank blasted its 88mm guns through the walls of this stone house. We had no air or tank support from the Americans because of the dense fog and snow. The only choices we had were to be killed or surrender. We chose the latter.

We had no idea what was ahead for us. There were rumors that Hitler wanted all prisoners killed. There were two companies of about 360 men captured with me. After our capture, the German guards took all of our personal belongings and started to march us off toward Germany.

The first food we received was when we stayed on the top floor of a hospital in Prum. We received one pound of cheese and a few crackers for 10 men. On this diet, we worked repairing bombed-out railroad tracks.



When Joe Demler was freed after three months of captivity (above), he weighed 70 pounds. The photo to the left was taken months after he returned to the States.

They had us work at night so the American flyers couldn't spot us. Still, there were nights when we were bombed and strafed by our own planes. After a week, we went to Gurlstein where we did the same work, but this time we had 1,500 POWs. They kept us in a warehouse with no heat, water, beds or blankets. We slept on the floor in six-foot bins. The guards would kick us or butt us in the ribs or heads with their guns.

When we had the tracks repaired at Gurlstein, they moved us to Lemburg, our first actual POW camp. At the train station, we were loaded into boxcars where there wasn't room to lie down. We could either sit or stand up. We were on the train with no food, water or toilet facilities, and because we were locked in, it was impossible to tell how many days had passed. Men were dying all around us. The trip was so long because the American planes were flying overhead and if the train engineers spotted them, they would unhook the locomotive and let us sit out in the open as targets while they took cover in the nearest tunnels.

When we arrived at Lemburg, we went to the camp hospital, which was run by two American doctors who were also POWs. The first thing they did was give us a piece of bread and a piece of sausage. The doctor said I had pleurisy and put me to bed.

During captivity, we tried to talk about the good times we had back home and about food. We wondered if our families had been notified by the War Department that we were missing in action or if they knew we were POWs. We prayed a lot, and I still pray every day for the POWs that died during our captivity. In the eight-man section I was in, only three of us survived. I thank God I was one of them.

As more prisoners were brought in we would hear rumors of American troop advancement and our liberation was in sight. On March 29, 1945, we were liberated by the First Army. By this time I weighed 70 pounds and was too weak to get up at all. We were taken to "Lucky Strike" Army Hospital, and I was given blood transfusions and penicillin every three hours until I was strong enough to be operated on. At that point, they removed more than four quarts of fluid from my lungs and a rib to put in a drain. I was later told in the 48th General Hospital that if we hadn't been liberated, I could only have lived for about three more days. They gave me 45 vitamins a day and when my blood count was high enough, I could go back to the United States. I spent an additional seven months recuperating at Kennedy General Hospital in Memphis before I came home.

I've tried to always look ahead and not dwell on the past. I consider every day of my life as a bonus day. It is not easy for me to talk about the war, but I do it so younger generations will learn something that they maybe don't know about World War II. My hope is that they will never have to experience what my generation did. We live in the best country in the whole world; don't ever take your freedom for granted.

Eugene Juergens As told to Laurie Arendt

Paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne

World War II paratroopers in the 82nd Airborne made drops from gliders. Many crash landed, while others were taken out by traps set by the Nazis, such as sharpened trees surrounded by land mines. Such was the "routine" for Grafton's Gene Juergens during his tour of duty.

We landed behind the Normandy beaches five hours before the invasion forces hit the beaches. Our role was to disrupt communications and draw fire power away from the beach. It was just plain mayhem. Our glider crash landed, killing our pilot, co-pilot and the rest of the men in the glider. There were three survivors - the three of us that had been sitting in the tail.

We made sure we were all right and then surveyed the area. We could see that there were quite a few German snipers waiting for us. We took the bulletproof vests off our pilots and the liner out of one of our helmets so it would sit lower on our heads. We took turns strapping them on and while one of us would stand out in the open, the other two would shoot at the snipers in the trees.

I have a picture that we took right after we took care of the snipers. We were absolutely not supposed to have cameras, but I had one. I had found an old binocular case and kept my camera in there. I piled a bunch of cigarettes on top of it so nobody could see it. When an officer would come by and ask to use my binoculars, I could then open it up and say, "Sorry, but I just keep my cigarettes in here."

At one point, we couldn't use our radio because German snipers had shot our wire. We had to re-string the wire across a road, but a machine gun was covering this road. First one guy tried running across and then the second, who soon died. I was next in line and I said to my commanding officer, "If you had my stripes and I had your bars, would you go?" He threatened a court marshall if I didn't, so I pulled enough wire off the spool, hooked this wire to my belt and threw the empty spool high in the air as a target. I was able to cross the road with the wire intact. For this I received the Bronze Star medal.

At one point, I actually became a co-pilot on a glider. We'd lost so many pilots in Normandy that they were short-handed. I said to the pilot, "How am I possibly going to learn how to fly?" He taught me on the way over the English Channel into Holland. It was kind of like watching your dad's feet when you learn how to drive a car. He radioed in that he had a co-pilot (which was me) and that he was teaching me how to fly. After we successfully landed, he reached over and pinned his wings on me. I still have them.

The photographer had never seen anyone dressed like this and posed Eugene so his paratrooper boots could be seen. The boots had a slanted heel so that if the paratroopers landed in a tree, they would slide off the branches.

Eugene Juergens after crash landing on Normandy Beach. Note the "binocular" case at his waist.

I also remember that once we were sent out on foot to take care of a German tank that was sighted nearby. We took a bazooka and I shot at its treads. It stopped the tank all right, but all of a sudden the tank's turret started to rotate and they were looking for us. I didn't know what to do, so we reloaded the bazooka, aimed at the spot right between the turret and the tank and fired. All of a sudden, the lid opened and we saw an arm waving a white flag. Pretty exciting stuff for a 19-year-old kid!

I could not kill anyone face-to-face, and I remember once I had a German prisoner. I stopped by the side of the road and had him get out of the jeep. I told him to "go home," but I think he thought I was going to shoot him. I said it again, and he didn't know what to do. Finally, he saluted me and off he went.

Eugene Juergens now shares his experience with local schools, churches and other organizations through a slide show and discussion. He is pleased that so many people are interested in hearing about his experiences.

Joan Guy Morter

As told to her grandson, Rees Morter, Cedarburg High School

World War II Army Nurse

My grandmother, Joan Guy Morter, enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps Service in 1944. She was sworn in as a Second Lieutenant and went through an orientation period before being sent to Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Ind. At that point, the 122 General Hospital was formed and she and the others attached to the hospital began preparations for mobilization to Europe.

After about a week we were assembled to go overseas. Along with another hospital group, we were put on a troop train for New York. The train ride (not my first, but almost) was memorable because the days were very hot and we wore wool uniforms. There was no air conditioning and we could only open windows. The soot and dirt came from everywhere. The latrine always had a line and the heat ... well, you get the picture. At one point, we were bused to a hotel in Gatlinburg, Ill., for food and showers.

(l-r) Army Nurses Jane Rouke, Patricia Patrie and Joan Guy on duty in England, June 1945.

We finally arrived in New York and the port of embarkation. Our ship was one of the greatest troop carriers of all time, the Queen Mary. The nurses, officers, and VIPs were all on a top deck. The accommodations were not the most luxurious; there were seven women in one of the large linen closets. Water for bathing was out, and only salt water could be used. I didn't get sick and I enjoyed every minute of it. Our top deck was shared with Princess Julianna of the Netherlands (her children were in the United States for safety), and Paul Gallico, the best selling author of "Snow Goose" and a war correspondent.

We landed at Glasgow, Scotland and after a train ride nearly the length of England, our unit arrived at Kington, England, in the Black Hills on the Welsh border. The hospital had been a former quartermaster corp. station, and was ill equipped to be a hospital. I hardly ever remember being warm in England except when I was working in the sterilizing room and the steam autoclave was running. Not having a terribly discriminating palate, I didn't find the food so awful. I do remember there was a large amount of mutton as well as sprouts and cabbage.

We were there only a few days when we received our first troop train of wounded. There were very few supplies, let alone very much equipment to perform surgery. Everyone had to pitch in. The doctors in the community gave us supplies.

Our hours were long. There was no such thing as a time clock. I was a scrub nurse and everyone worked until our cases were completed and we were set up for the next day. Most of the surgeons were outstanding. Our major cases were removal of shrapnel, which had the most remarkable ability to travel, and the most devastating could frequently erode blood vessels resulting in spontaneous bleeding. Sometimes the bleeding went unnoticed until the patient went into shock, which then became an emergency procedure.

The major bombing of London and the English countryside was over prior to 1944, and the time we were there. I was able to go to London twice and traveled as much as I could. Edinburgh was the most multi-national place I have ever been in. It was very crowded with service people from most of the countries involved in World War II. It was a great place for relief and recreation. I kissed the Blarney Stone in Ireland and saw the Beleeck pottery and china factory. At one time, a group of us took a jeep and went to Stratford-Upon-Avon to see a Shakespeare play.

Victory in Europe on May 8, 1945 was a very big celebration that called for much jubilation and libation. I was on duty and remember coming off and going to breakfast in the mess hall only to find a dentist trooping and tip toeing through the tulips on the table tops!

Our hospital unit quickly came home on re-deployment to the Pacific. The war with Japan was still on and we originally had so much difficulty getting the hospital into a functioning mode that all the operating personnel were designated to pack in their bed rolls and box sheets, pillow cases, instruments, silk and catgut sutures and needles, nearly anything loose. The sheets have long been used, but the surplus curved needles have come in very handy during the past 50 years.

Col. Thomas J. Makal, ret. As told to Laurie Arendt

Battalion S-2 during World War II

Milwaukee native Tom Makal enlisted in the Wisconsin National Guard in hopes of receiving a military academy appointment in 1936. He was commissioned as an officer and was part of the mobilization of the 32nd Division of the Wisconsin National Guard to serve in World War II. Mr. Makal ended up serving our country for 48 years, retiring as a Colonel in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. He is currently writing his autobiography.

The 32nd Division was called to active duty on Oct. 15, 1940, and ordered to Camp Beauregard, La., for one year of training. The war was going on in Europe and in the Far East. Japan was rattling its sabers of war. In August 1941, Congress extended - for an indefinite period of time - the 32nd Division's original one-year, federally activated tour of duty. After reorganization, the 32nd Division early in April 1942 left for Australia for action in the Pacific. Our battalion, as the 985th Field Artillery, a separate battalion, ultimately ended up serving in the European Theater.

On Sept. 2, 1941, after 13 days at sea as part of one of the largest convoys ever to leave the United States, we steamed into Oran Harbour, North Africa. After debarking in the harbor, the units were moved to a large tent camp area outside the city limits of Oran. My unit was situated in an area with the dustiest dust, a multitude of flies, the worst water and an awful stench of urine thousands of years old throughout the area and in the cleanest-looking villages.

The war in Africa was moving away from us and our heavy artillery battalions were not to be committed into action. Our units were ordered to move to the Port of Algier, where we boarded the SS Charles Carroll, bound for Italy.

Our battalion participated in the attack on Mt. Cassino and worked our way through "Purple Heart Valley." My duties involved visiting and checking the battalion and battery observation posts. I visited the firing batteries, assisted the fire-direction crew and when directed by the battalion commander, visited the artillery sections of the Corps and Fifth Army to the rear. At these installations I would get updated target lists, recent photos of enemy artillery units and installations that were on the target list.

First Lieutenant Thomas J. Makal, Field Artillery, 1940. Tom ultimately served our country for 48 years before retiring.

On June 4, 1944, the Allied Forces entered the "Eternal City" of Rome, which was also the first foreign capital to be liberated. Our battalion remained in position near Valmontone with the Germans in range long enough for our battalion to expend 30 rounds on our 155mm Long Toms. At night, "Lantern Joe" and all his brothers of the German Air Force would drop their bombs on the Allied positions. The German army was now rapidly moving all its troops to the hills north of Rome.

The following day, the news flashed around the world that France had been invaded by the Americans and the British - a strategic second front had been opened. All of the men of the battalion were happy, thinking there would be less pressure on us. None of us realized what lay ahead for us. We would serve in Italy.

Before this move, I was ordered to meet with higher headquarters officers to discuss our route through the city. Because of the narrow street width in Rome and the width of our towed guns and our tractors, a route along Via Della Fornaci was selected. This route, however, passed in front of St. Peter's Square, and required clearance from Vatican representatives before we could proceed. Barricades were set up along the formal entrance of St. Peter's Square and we were instructed to pass by without stopping and to move at a fairly good speed.

On June 12 our battalion moved into Rome, passed the rail yards, which had been destroyed by bombing, and continued on to Via Della Fornaci. Along the route through the city, military policemen flagged the units on, so we passed St. Peter's entrance at more than 30 miles per hour.

On the move through Rome, we noted that there was no shelling or bombing damage in the city. This was because Rome had been declared an "open city," which preserved its historical sites.

For much of the route, the natives lined both sides of the roadway and cheered, yelling "Viva Americana," waving American flags and throwing goodies at the soldiers in the uncovered vehicles. Even though the convoy did not stop, some appreciative citizens did manage to get a few bottles of wine to the troopers as we passed through. All the girls were out in front of the lines waving and cheering the men of the battalion.

Ron Kuta

As told to Nicole Hansen, Grafton High School

Air Force Radio Relay Repair

Ron Kuta's interest in the Air Force began while he was still in high school. In 1959, he joined the Civil Air Patrol in Milwaukee, and only five days after high school left for basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. He went to electronics school in Mississippi where he learned radio relay repair. After training, he was sent to France. He spent three years there, experiencing the effects of when the Berlin wall went up and the French- Algerian War. He came back to become a member of the Air Force Reserves and later the Army Reserves for more than 22 years. Ron says he'll never forget the experiences he's had.

I can't complain. The military did a lot for me. During all of my service time, they actually paid for all of my college education. It took me 11 years to get through it all, and at the time I thought I'd never finish. But you get to a point when you say to yourself, "Wow, I'm almost done."

Leaving home was hard as well. After only a few months of being away my parents bought a new home and when I came back to visit, I had to constantly ask where everything was. So much had changed for me. There was also a time over Christmas when I was just lying around in my bunk at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi when a friend asked me if I wanted to go home. So we did. We drove 24 hours to Milwaukee. We could only stay for 14 hours, but our parents were definitely surprised and happy to see us. You do a lot of goofy things like that. I also joined the Drill Team at the base and had a lot of fun.

Ron was a member of the Drill Team at Keesler Air Force Base.

Working at the base in France was also an incredible experience. When I first got to Chambley AB, France, I discovered the equipment I was trained on was not the same equipment at the base.

While staying in another country like France, I had to remember that I was the guest and had to understand and accept the culture there. I stayed in a dorm room with three other guys and spent a lot of time walking from the room, to the base and to the school for classes. However, we were close enough that we could also walk to the beach. It wasn't until a few years later that I finally bought a car.

Many things changed for me, however, when the Berlin Wall went up. There were more people at our base then and we had to stay in barracks. The Cuban Missile Crisis was also going on at that time in Europe but without television and newscasts, none of us knew we were so close to nuclear war. That time was all a blur to me.

I was later shipped to the Etain Air Force Base where I met a friend I went to high school and training with. It was there that we made the paper with our "mascot" Bugsy. We found him on our doorstep and kind of "adopted" him. We built him a home that looked just like ours only smaller with radio antennas and all. I also got to see a lot of sights and travel around the country a bit. I missed home a lot though, especially since the only form of communication I had at the time with my family was through letters.

Ron's mascot, Bugsy.

When I finally came home, I was out of the air force for about three years. Then I joined the Air Force Reserves at Mitchell Field and became a Loadmaster on C-119 airplanes. I flew to Alaska, Washington and many other states while I was involved in this. By this time I was married and had a little girl. My wife didn't want me flying all over any more so when I heard about the Army Reserves I decided I wanted to join. I started as a lowly E3 and retired 22 years later as a Chief Warrant Officer.

Once again, the Army helped me to pay for many things, including retirement. I've served over 27 years of active Veteran and Reserve years, and it was well worth it. As for my time in France, I'd never regret any of it; in fact, I'd do it again if I could. It was a pretty big deal for someone who didn't plan on going to college, at least not right away anyway. It gave me a chance to grow up a little bit.

For awhile I was commander of the Rose-Harms Legion Post in Grafton and from there I became Ozaukee Commander for all seven Legion Posts in the county. We try to do as much as we can for the community by raising money and then giving it away again to various charities and schools, providing scholarships, and helping other veterans in the area.

Ken Grigas

Interviewed by Ashley Rabuck, Ozaukee High School

Worked with Pershing Missiles during the Cold War

Ken Grigas was drafted in the Army in January 1971 where he spent two years. He went to Ft. Polk, La., for basic training, followed by advance training at Ft. Sill, Okla. He was ultimately assigned to the Pershing Guided missile system, which was named after WWI General John Pershing. Ken was a Launch Control Specialist during his time in the service.

On duty in Germany.

About 100 of us trained together in the United States, and after a year of stateside duty, I was sent to West Germany in January 1972, along with many of the men I trained with at Ft. Sill.

We were assigned to a NATO Luftwaffe base. The Luftwaffe was the West German Air Force. About 4,000 German and British allies were serving as part of this base, which was in the Rhineland near Aachen, which is west of Dusseldorf and Cologne on the Dutch border.

Because of my German language ability, I often served as our unit's translator. I learned German from my mother, who was a German war bride. She met my father in Germany, which was where he had been stationed, after World War II. My mother was five months pregnant with me when she left Germany, so you can say that I was made in Germany but born in America.

With my German heritage, I found it easy to blend in when I looked like and could sound like the people. The Germans were largely favorable toward us because we were a deterrent, but there were pockets of anti-war and pacifist sentiment when I was stationed there.

Our duties were to provide custody, safety and security to a battery of four Pershing missiles which we had ready to fire in 15 minutes. We would be given notice in the event of a Soviet attack on Western Europe. The notice for a missile launch would come from the Pentagon via the European Army headquarters at Heidelberg.

Our missiles were pre-targeted on Russian ground and armor troops. If launched, we hoped they would deliver a massive knockout punch. Mercifully, World War III didn't happen.

Ken with his machine gun.

The Pershing missile was a surface-to-surface, field-artillery guided missile system armed with nuclear-tipped warheads. It was developed and deployed in the 1960s, and had a range of 400 miles. It could be either stationery or mobile. The Cold War, which lasted from 1949 to 1990, prompted the United States to deploy nuclear weapons in Western Europe. This was to stop the blustering and expansionist Soviet Russia, which then possessed superior ground forces.

I did have a positive experience in the Army, and my service time afforded me individual growth, experience development and maturity. While on leave, I was able to travel throughout Germany, Holland, Belgium, France and England, which greatly broadened my horizons. The highlight of my leave experiences was the several days I was able to spend at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, Germany. Thankfully, I left the day before the Black September attack on the Israeli Olympic team.

I was discharged in January 1973 when my tour was up. I was ready to get out and be a civilian; I didn't want to be a soldier for a big part of my life, but in hindsight, perhaps it was something I should've considered.

Most recently, as co-founder of the Ozaukee County Military Historians Club, Colin Sandell [page 156] and I seek to instill Americanism and give combat veterans venue to share their testimony. Our hope is that their experiences will be passed on to a wider community beyond other veterans.

Steve Shock As told to Laurie Arendt

Army Infantry and Battalion Driver

Serving in the military was the last thing on Steve Shock's mind in 1970. He'd just married his high school sweetheart, bought a screamin' burnt-orange metallic 1970 Plymouth GTX and had finished his tool-and-die apprenticeship.

Most of the guys that thought they'd be drafted would enlist ahead of time. Being drafted was the furthest thing from my mind, but in the process of getting married and settling down, I received my draft notice. It was rather traumatic; my wife, June, and I didn't know what we were going to do. We were getting into the regular routine of young adulthood, and had to face the separation of me being in the military for two years.

Steve Shock in Germany, 1971. His unit was preparing to cross the Rhine River.

Those of us who were drafted all hoped that we wouldn't serve in combat. I thought that because I had a skilled trade I'd be put into engineering or maintenance. In the Army's infinite wisdom, they decided to put me in the infantry so I could make things go bang.

I then ended up in what I considered to be the armpit of America - Fort Polk, La. I got down there in the middle of winter and went through a January ice storm. It was hilarious - the storm closed the whole post down, it was a disaster for them. We began training, which included specialized training in jungle warfare. We wouldn't know where we were going until we received our orders.

I was pretty lucky. Some of the guys were sent off to the West Coast disembark point for Southeast Asia, which meant Vietnam. The United States was changing its strategy at that point, which included winding down infantry involvement. It was a relief that I was being sent to Europe.

Once I arrived in Frankfurt, Germany, I was assigned to the Third Armored Division. They asked where I wanted to go. I picked the town closest to Frankfurt. My permanent duty station was Friedburg, an old German army post now used by the United States and which was also the same post that Elvis Presley had been assigned to. I ended up in the First Battalion of the 36th Infantry.

Because of my size they strapped a radio on me and I became the platoon radio guy. I never looked at it as a job, but as an adventure. I never considered making the military a career, and I wanted to do the best I could and stay out of trouble. I wanted to bring my wife over, which meant I couldn't screw up.

My wife ended up coming over about a month after I arrived. We had a one-room efficiency in a little town called Bad Nauheim, which was where Elvis had a special hotel built. It eventually set in that we were together in Germany. It was hard because we didn't speak much extended German (that is, beyond "Ein bier, bitte."), but we'd venture out. I bought a used Volkswagen for $150.

I worked regular shifts and had most weekends off, so we did a lot of traveling. We went to Oktoberfest and had a great time. You weren't supposed to take the steins off the grounds, but I stuffed a few in my coat. I was clanking around trying to be quiet, and we made it to the train without getting caught. I opened the train window because I wasn't feeling too hot, and some old German lady was complaining about the window being down. I made a motion showing her that, if the window wasn't down, she'd have something in her lap. She moved on.

I eventually became the battalion commander's driver, which I liked better because it made me responsible to the top guy. Our commander, Lt. Col. Winfield Holt, was a good guy. I kept myself starched up, boots shined, never came into work all schlupped up. I was an older guy, not an 18-year-old punk.

Because I was a driver, I got to go off on little jaunts near the east-west boarder. We could see the fence and guards towers. It would get me thinking about how what we were doing was pretty serious stuff. We'd go into training areas and see shot-up pillboxes, bombed-out towns and tank hulls. I realized that a lot of people were killed in those places.

After awhile I actually started enjoying myself. We became more comfortable in Germany and were getting by. I ended up getting out of the Army in 19 months because they just had too many infantry people. Ten days after we returned home, I was back at work as a tool and die maker.

Tim Schoessow

As told to Dustin Webb, Homestead High School

Battalion Operations and Air Defense Artillery

Tim Schoessow is a Mequon-Thiensville native. He was drafted into the Army in April 1972 during the Vietnam War and served in Germany in Battalion Operations and as an Air Defense Artillery man.

I boarded the bus in Port Washington, they drove us to the airport where we got on a plane headed to Fort Leonardwood, Mo., where I attended two-and-a-half months of basic infantry training. We were told that 10 of us would fail basic and not move on, but our group of young men must have been of higher caliber, because we only had five that flunked out.

After basic training, I moved on to advanced individual training (AIT) at Fort Bliss, Texas. I spent about nine weeks learning how to operate a Vulcan antiaircraft gun, which was a six-barreled gun that could be towed on a trailer. Finally, I was sent over to Germany, where I served in Battalion Operations HQ.

Tim served during the Vietnam era, but was stationed in Germany.

Our unit took part in exercises called Reforgers. Reforgers were mass movements of troops out into the fields as if we were mobilizing for actual battle. During these training exercises, which lasted about three weeks at a time, we brought out the tanks and we stayed in tents in the field. I remember when things were all packed up and everybody left, the post looked like a huge ghost town. On one of these reforgers we had a medical unit come out and set up their tents. One minute the tents were standing, the next minute they were up in flames as a result of a grease fire from one of the camp stoves that had been set up.

At one point, we watched a Cobra gunship helicopter take off. All of a sudden it just fell straight out of the sky and landed on top of a German car carrying four German civilians. There was a giant explosion and the four civilians were killed. The pilots luckily only had back injuries and were able to survive. The car, on the other hand, had been squashed so bad that the only way you could identify it was by its gas cap which read, "Opel."

Most of my wartime memories are from leave and base experiences that we had as a battalion. When we were allowed to leave the base, we were taken into a small town on a bus and dropped off for a period of time. We would usually go to the pizzerias, the closest thing to American food that we could find. One of these pizzerias that I remember had a waiter that could set a complete table for four in under a minute. It was amazing to watch him toss out the plates and silverware. I remember watching German television, which was not all that interesting. One of the television shows that I remember watching was "Gunsmoke" dubbed over in German with a western accent.

Similar to back home, there were antiwar protests going on in Germany as well. One of my roommates, who was drafted, was an antiwar supporter. He constantly complained about having to serve in a war he didn't believe in. All over the base were signs that warned against any involvement with these protests and severe disciplinary action would be served if we were even caught near them.

I remember listening to the radio the night they announced Lyndon B. Johnson's death in 1973; he was responsible for escalating the Vietnam War and sending us over in bulk in the first place. The troops that had survived Vietnam had been brought back to Germany where they would either finish out their term or head home.

I returned home in 1974. Things had changed quite a bit. Gas for example was 35 to 40 cents a gallon before I left; when I returned it was $1 a gallon and was being rationed because of an oil embargo. In Germany gas was more than $3 a gallon, which was very expensive.

Although Mr. Schoessow did not serve in combat, his role in the military was crucial to supporting America's role in the Vietnam crisis. He has no hard feelings toward the United States government for being drafted. The draft was suspended four months after he was called to serve. He believes that they should have kept the draft instead of suspending it. Many people that were drafted felt that it was unfair to make them serve in a war that they did not believe in. Mr. Schoessow, on the other hand, feels that his military service was part of his job as an American, and he is still active as a Reservist.

Stephen Frank

As told to Harrison Sklar, Homestead High School

Heavy Equipment Maintenance

Between the years of 1963 and 1978, many of this nation's men were drafted to fight a horrific land conflict in Southeast Asia. The conflict in Vietnam is, was, and always will be a confusing period in American history.

Vietnam was not just a place for ground-pounding troops. Many of us serving at this time became what we now call Vietnam-era veterans. We were the men and women who served, but did not go to Vietnam. Not everyone in war can be a hero, but all those who served deserve recognition and respect.

After graduating from high school in Upper Michigan, three of my high-school friends and I enlisted into various branches of the military. With my uncles and father as Army veterans, I didn't put a second thought into the branch of service I should join in 1969. I enlisted for a three-year tour of duty in the Army. Basic training was a real eye opener for me.

> "I was supposed to rotate into Vietnam, but tragedy hit me close to home. I missed my rotation into the field because my father died.
>
> While I was on leave at my dad's funeral, my rotation came up and I missed it. One of the men at my post said it 'must not have been meant to be.'"
>
> - Steve Frank

After basic training, I was quickly off to Fort Eustis, Va., the home of the U.S. Army Transportation Training Corps. I was in the last class trained to fly the CH-37 A "Mojave" cargo helicopter. The Army was phasing out the CH-37s. After I completed my training, I was transferred to the last post in Germany with these helicopters. However, I never flew a CH-37 in Germany. I was placed in a heavy equipment maintenance unit.

Much of my unexpected assignment was upgrading current heavy equipment. American equipment was plagued with problems in the dense jungles of Vietnam. Often these problems were fixed when my unit upgraded or repaired the equipment. This job was not without its dangers. Germany itself was a hotbed for Cold War activity. Western Germany and Eastern Germany were hostile and separated by thin barbed wire and the infamous Berlin Wall. Walking along the East/West border was only allowed with an armed escort, and our barracks were locked down every night.

Germany was not all bad for me though. In my free time I was able to see the sights of Europe. I saw many of the historic castles of the Rhineland.

I was supposed to rotate into Vietnam, but tragedy hit me close to home. I missed my rotation into the field because my father died. While I was on leave at my dad's funeral, my rotation came up and I missed it. One of the men at my post said it "must not have been meant to be." One of the three men that I enlisted with died in combat in Vietnam. I carry that fact with me every day.

My unit in Germany was unremarkable. Food was tolerable to me, but then again I'm not too picky. Some meals were good and others bad. Getting up and doing my job was the main focus of the tour. The only time we had any fun was when we'd go out in the field. The United States and West German military forces staged maneuvers and my unit was in the field for those operations. The artillery units were much different from my unit. They marched to the beat of a different drummer. Their rules were a little more relaxed.

Each morning reveille was played by our company bugler along with the "Star Spangled Banner." The artillery unit played, on their stereo, Jimi Hendrix's "Star Spangled Banner." The Artillery unit's commanding officer had no problem with that type of thing.

My officers were a little different. My first sergeant was a "by-the-book" type of guy, strictly military, but he was personable and easy to get along with. My commanding officer, a captain, was not someone you wanted to deal with. He liked to be a pain, and he enjoyed it. He was a real SOB, period. One of my first lieutenants had come from combat in Vietnam. He had been a corporal and was promoted through a field promotion.

When I completed my tour in 1971, coming home was great. I was amazed at how much the world had changed in three short years. I specifically remembered a difference in television commercials. I missed my family the most and was very glad to be back. After coming home I screwed around five or six months until I moved to Ozaukee County to work at Pioneer Container, which is now International Paper.

Both of my uncles worked there and helped me get the job. I've been working there since. It had been a long three years in the Army. I am proud to have served my country in such a turbulent and difficult time.

John Czerwinski As told to Laurie Arendt

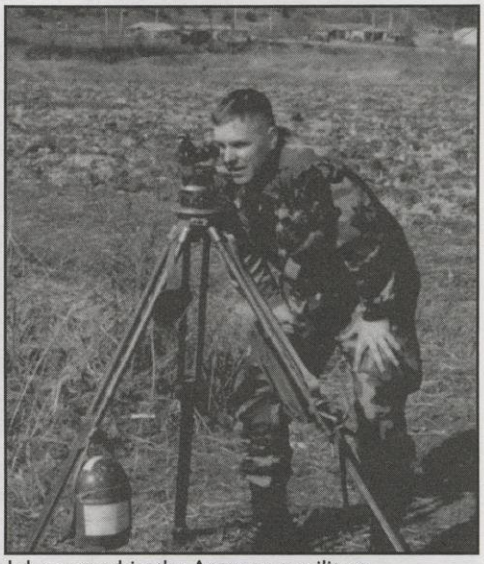
Member of a Lance Missile Battery

Like many veterans in this book, Grafton native John Czerwinski found that his military experience was a good one. He spent 10 years in the military, serving as both a Reservist and in the full-time Army.

I first enlisted in December 1982 for all the reasons that most people enlist - I needed money for college, I felt a sense of patriotism and it was something exciting to do. I was part of the 1152nd Transportation Co. out of Milwaukee, which was an Army Reserve unit.

I went through college ROTC at UW-Milwaukee. I received a Reserve commission as a Second Lieutenant and for a short time I was assigned to the 715th Military Police Company out of Chicago. I had a normal six-year obligation post-graduation through the ROTC program.

I really did enjoy what I was doing, and I served as a combat military policeman, which meant that we did more field missions. I decided to go active duty in 1988. My MOS [military occupational specialty] changed to field artillery, and I was assigned to a Lance missile battery in Crailsheim, Germany.



John served in the Army as a military policeman and in field and gun artillery.

I liked Germany. I spoke what I called "restaurant German." I could say enough to eat, drink and find a place to stay, but I couldn't hold a conversation. I do remember once when we were out in the field, we stopped at a local gasthaus. There were some guys at a table playing sheepshead and I sat in for a hand. They were surprised that an American knew how to play "shupsenkoft."

I went active duty because I knew I'd be able to go overseas and it was a way for me to grow personally and professionally. It was different than I expected because when I went into field artillery, I thought I'd be going to a gun battalion. Instead I was assigned to a missile battalion, which didn't require the same kind of training. We weren't in the field as often or away as long. It was actually a much easier assignment.

During Desert Storm, 52 percent of the American artillery force in Europe went to the desert. I was part of the group that stayed behind. We basically stood down our training and went into 24-hour security on post. It was a difficult time for those of us left behind. I'd trained basically my whole adult life to be a soldier and there was a war going on and I couldn't serve. I even volunteered to go down. I had friends in the desert and I was stuck in Europe. No soldier wishes for war, however, when you can hear the guns firing in battle, you want to be there. You don't want to be part of the 48 percent left behind pulling security, ash and trash.

After Desert Storm, the military started to downsize. Our unit was eliminated and we were all sent elsewhere. Ninety-nine percent of the officers in my battalion received their first choice for duty back in the United States. You filled out a dream sheet of where you wanted to go. I got my fifth choice, which was South Korea. I later found out that they were very short of First Lieutenants there - if you even considered going to Korea, that's where you'd be going. I was looking for an assignment with the 101st Airborne, the 9th Infantry, Saudi Arabia/Southwest Asia ... I didn't necessarily want to come home. I wanted an assignment with a good unit on the "frontiers of freedom." I wanted to be where the rubber hit the road so I could test my abilities. I ended up at Camp John C. Pelham in Son Yu Ri, South Korea.

It was an awesome assignment, a great experience. I had never received any training on gun artillery, and I was assigned to a M198 Toad Howitzer battalion even though I didn't have the training. I got to Korea just before the Christmas holidays, and things were slow. My sergeants and fellow officers trained me up in gun artillery in about two weeks.

Camp John C. Pelham is very close to the DMZ. Because of where we were stationed, our off-base movements were quite restricted and we had very limited time off post. I did a lot of running, and it wasn't uncommon on my runs through the hills to come across a Korean farmer with an old-style plow and an ox. Korea could be very cosmopolitan and very Third World. I participated in the Eighth Army downhill skiing championships with a buddy of mine, and that got us off post. We couldn't get a pass, but we could get a free trip to a new Korean ski resort. We went skiing and enjoyed the local hospitality.

Andrew Holzer As told to Laurie Arendt

Served during Operation Restore Hope

Grafton native Andrew Holzer joined the Marines with the hope of seeing the world, and he did just that. He also experienced the most intense two-and-a-half minutes of his life while on duty in Mogadishu, Somalia, on a routine convoy.

On my 21st birthday, we were supposed to hit Singapore but instead ended up heading toward the Persian Gulf. I was excited because we were supposed to be going to a command post, Camp Doha, that my brother, Nick [page 141] had helped build. I thought that was pretty cool and was looking forward to it, but at 2 a.m. that morning, they woke us up and said that the plans had changed: We were going to Somalia.

Andrew (left) and Chris Z., in Mogadishu,Somalia, 1994.

We were on the USS Ranger. The F-14s flying over Somalia that that everyone saw on the news were flying off the USS Ranger. At that point, we never actually set foot on shore. We floated back, which included a stop in Australia where our detachment had its picture taken in front of the Sydney Opera House, and then went on to Pearl Harbor. I remember my dad flew out to see me and he came on board for a Tiger Cruise, and floated with me from Pearl Harbor to San Diego.

After that I reported to the Marine Corps Security Force Battalion Atlantic, and I had my choice of stations along the East Coast. I picked Norfolk, which was the second time I made contact with "hallowed ground" because it was where my grandfather had gone through boot camp there. I joined the Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST Co.), which interested me. I was actually stationed out of Norfolk for the rest of my tour, but we headed to Somalia a second time, but not before I came home on leave and got married.

We arrived in Mogadishu after Black Hawk Down, which happened on Oct. 3, 1993. We made a point of taking our convoy past the downed Black Hawk helicopter to show that we were still there. By the time I arrived, it had been stripped down to the frame. The people there had nothing - they'd wait for our garbage truck to leave our base and then they'd forage inside our garbage.

Our convoy on Jan. 31, 1994 was headed toward the Ethiopian Ambassador's compound, but we had to first take a sick Marine to the hospital. As soon as we were out of the gates, something seemed different. The "taxis" in Mogadishu were Toyota trucks, and they usually have at least 30 people riding in them. Up front there is the driver and a passenger who would take the fares, and he carried a gun. When they would see Americans, they would normally put the gun down and put their hands in the air. I remember distinctly that this time, the passenger didn't do that.

We travelled in a convoy with a lead, follow and tail gunner in HMMWVs with "limos" [armored Suburbans] in between. If there was a threat, the HMMWVs would move and shield the limos. I was almost always in the tail gunner position, but I wasn't this time. This time, I was riding directly behind the driver as internal security.

The next sound we heard was the crack of an AK-47 and then three shots from a 50-caliber machine gun. The party was on. According to the State Department investigation, we took 11 counts of fire on our way from the compound to Airport Road. Our tail HMMWV engaged most of the threats, but I do remember when we hit K4 Circle, a RPG [rifle propelled grenade] was fired and it missed the tail HMMWV, instead hitting a taxi and blowing it up.

We made it to the airport in about two-and-a-half minutes. Thirty-three Marines started on the convoy and 33 came back. We wanted to return on the same route that we came to show that they couldn't mess with us, but we were instructed to take the bypass back - the longest, dirtiest route. Everybody was on edge.

My wife, Kay, was back home and was to give birth to our daughter any day. She was always, always watching the news. I remember thinking, "She's wigging out back home." Everybody waited in line to call home and when I called her I said, "Everything is okay, nobody was hurt." She said, "What are you talking about?" I told her to go turn on CNN because it happened right where the CNN reporters were staying. She did, and I told her not to believe a word they were saying, which was a good thing. They were reporting that U.S. Marines had fired into a group of Somali relief workers.

Joseph Jakubicz As told to Laurie Arendt

USAF Tactical Air Control Party (Special Operations)

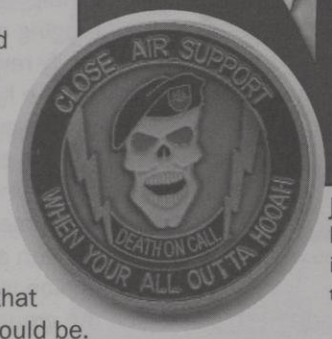
It is not surprising that Joseph Jakubicz enlisted in the military. He is a descendant of General Braxton Bragg, who led the First Wisconsin in the Civil War. He is also the descendant of a WWI German navy captain. His parents also served in the military; his mother was career Navy and his father was shot down over North Vietnam.

There was never any question that I would go into the military. I chose the Air Force because they had cooler models in the window of the recruiting station. I was guaranteed a job as an inventory management specialist, and I cross trained as a security policeman. While I was stationed at Soesterberg Air Force Base in the Royal Netherlands in 1989, I saw a video of some guys falling out of airplanes on four wheelers who wore cool outfits and neat hats - it was the Air Force's ground combat personnel, and that's what I decided I wanted to do.

It required about two years to become combat ready, and we trained in Air Assault, Airborne and SEAR training. We also went through Ranger School, which I refer to as the "United States Army Starvation and Sleep Deprivation Training." At one point, we were on a long ruck march and I started hallucinating - I was trying to change the channels of the backpack of the guy in front of me. It was also quite interesting to be an Air Force guy in Army training. They messed with me pretty good, but it was all in good fun.

When we finished training, we were all very motivated and totally convinced that we were bulletproof and that no woman could resist our charms.

The perceptions we had of combat were what we learned by shooting at each other with something like Laser Tag and watching movies. We wanted to experience actual combat.



Joe carries this coin with him. His unit also left the image behind enemy lines to show they'd been there.

I actually got to see what combat really was in 1993. The majority of our missions occurred when something bad happened. We were typically deep in enemy territory. I found that combat was nothing like what I had trained for or thought it would be. No amount of training can prepare you for an actual firefight.

It's not like in the movies where you hear gunfire, then a grenade, then more gunfire. It happens all at once, and we were taking fire from all directions. Our mission had changed from our objective (which was snatch up a guy and his buddies) to trying to keep our friends alive. We were in an area that was near a large weapons bazaar and there were women and children with grenade launchers aiming at us. Pretty much anyone who wasn't in our uniform was a target. We were working on "muscle memory," that is, just doing what we had to do to get out alive, which none of us thought we would do. After that initial combat mission, we no longer tried to get combat orders.

I later served in Haiti and later in Southwest Asia. After one mission there, we boarded a Rich International Airlines (something that worried me when we got on board and the pilot introduced himself as Richard) DC-8 modified cargo plane. We left the theater of operation, refueled in Sicily and had landed at Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany. I think we stopped to drop off cargo; it was just our team on the plane.

When we took off again something didn't seem right. I could see strobe lights outside the left side of the aircraft. I asked one of our team members, Woody, what was going on. He told me the plane was on fire and leaned back. I could see sheets of flames going past the window. I remember thinking, "All the crap we went through and now we're going to die on this plane." I'm Catholic and I couldn't remember the Hail Mary or the Our Father. Our chutes were packed away and the loss of control was terrible. It was almost worse than combat.

Rich got on the intercom and said that we were experiencing "in-flight problems." A short while later, the plane lurched to the right. Woody said, "Sir, the fire is out ... the engine fell off." We ended up returning to Ramstein, dumping our fuel and making an emergency landing. The airline paid for us to stay in a hotel (castle) in a small town about an hour away. We took full advantage of it, considering what we'd all been through.

I was discharged in 1998 and anything I do now will seem boring in comparison to what I did. I am very proud to have served with the best men from every branch of service that America has to offer. I am now a member of the V.F.W. and the American Legion. If I had to do it all over again, I would.

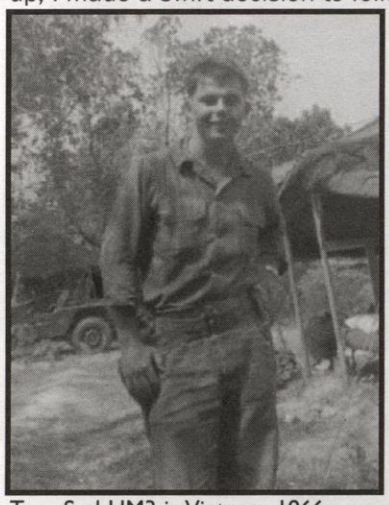
Anthony Szal

With Kevin Sandell,
Cedarburg High School

Hospital Corpsman in Vietnam

Thiensville resident and former Vietnam corpsman Anthony Szal has quite a story to tell. Only five months after graduating from high school, Anthony Szal joined the United States Navy, where after a long process, he became a hospital corpsman in Vietnam. He was assigned first to "C" Medical Battalion, then to "F" Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, Third Marine Division. On June 11, 1966, he and his squad were walking through a grassy area when suddenly a squad-member stepped on a land mine, critically injuring much of the crew. Although he had been trained how to treat other patients, Szal had never fathomed being injured himself.

The Huey helicopters were nearly overhead. Their echoing engines and the blasts of firing rockets resonated through my ears. I glimpsed ahead and saw the colors of a rocket exploding a few hundred yards away. Following behind two squads, I waded across the river and as we approached the spot where the two squads were to divide up, I made a swift decision to follow the second squad heading right. That decision may have saved my life.



Tony Szal HM3 in Vietnam, 1966.

No more than a few seconds passed until I heard a massive explosion from behind. Could it have been a rocket? A grenade? My feet stopped and I promptly turned my head to see what had happened. Bodies, American bodies, were strewn about. Somebody had stepped on a land mine! As my mind tried to comprehend the chaos unfolding before me, I stood motionless in terror. Suddenly, the screaming and yelling ricocheted through my ears, and I recognized that I had to do something. Hurriedly, I ran back only to see Marines crying for help, blood oozing out of every cleft. While my squad scampered around triaging and bandaging the squad-members, the familiar hum of the Hueys hastily reverberated throughout the woods.

Before the helicopters finally took off, laden with wounded combatants, I noticed the squad's other corpsman tending to his wounds as well. I wiped my brow, sighed in exhaustion, and sauntered back to where I left my equipment in that quick scramble. Unexpectedly, a green flash threw me to the ground. The world around me turned black. After what seemed like an eternity, but may have only been a few minutes, my eyes opened, revealing a world of disarray and confusion like I saw only several moments ago. Looking down, I saw my leg throbbing in massive soreness as I lay on the ground. Pleading words started leaving my mouth. Although the images surrounding me were still foggy, I managed to continue handing out bandages and other medical essentials to the other members of my squad. To keep my head clear, I declined morphine for myself.

Ann-Margret visited "Charlie" Med in 1966. Szal stood no further than an arm's length from the star.

Finally, the helicopters arrived at the scene of more bloodshed. After finally being hoisted into the bay of the Huey, I gazed around from my resting position and saw only two other marines on board defending the machine guns. As the helicopter elevated into the musty air, the door gunner rotated and asked my permission to fire on the earth below, as backup if there happened to be some Viet Cong beneath the trees. I nodded. A few minutes passed and then a young man's face appeared over mine and inquired if I was OK. I gradually reached up and pointed to the corpsman insignia on my collar and concurred.

Once on the ground at the hospital in Da Nang, I saw my squad's captain being unloaded from another medevac. That one glance happened to be my first time witnessing the captain. Along with all the other wounded men, I was immediately wheeled to an operating room. Hours passed and as I began my recovery that day, thoughts of gratitude towards the doctors, the Huey gunship crew who rescued me, fellow squad-members, and even blood donors rebounded throughout my spirit. I began to think to myself, "I'm really lucky to be here. Really fortunate."

Three months had passed since that horrific misfortune and yet, after being flown from the Philippines to San Francisco to Great Lakes Naval Station near Chicago, I began to make significant progress in my recovery efforts, although I needed to endure a slew of surgeries. However, it was not until November 1966 that I learned I was being awarded the Purple Heart and Silver Star for my heroism on that day in June.

Alan "Ron" Binns

Interviewed by Mark Buechler, Ozaukee High School

Ammo Carrier and Plotter

Grafton native Ron Binns served in the Marine Corps from April 1969 to October 1970.

I did not elect to go but was drafted to go into the Vietnam War. At the Induction Center in Milwaukee, volunteers were needed for the Air Force and the Navy. I did not volunteer, hoping I would get into the Army. Once that need was met, then the Marine Corps asked for six volunteers. They got three and announced they would pick three more. I was the first name called.

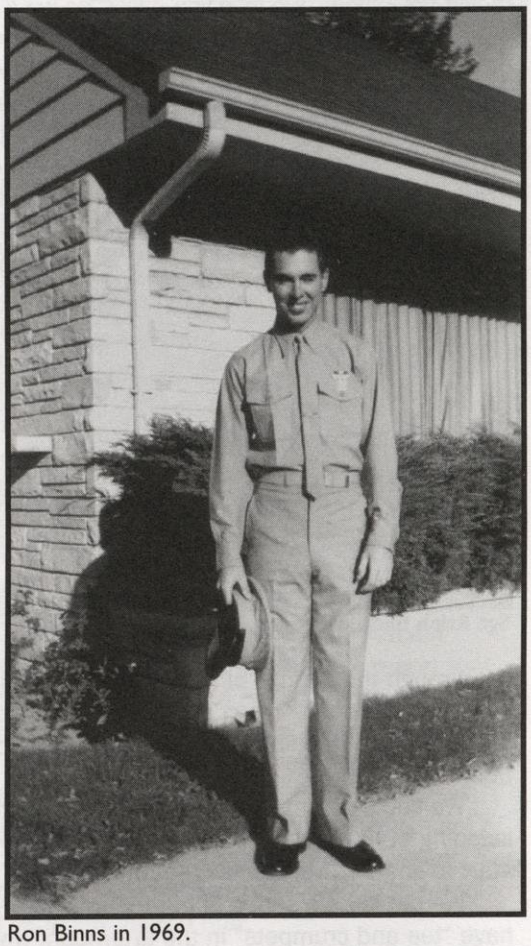
I was sent to Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego. Calif., for 11 weeks of boot camp. It took four weeks to break each one of the guys both physically and mentally. The remaining seven weeks were used to build us up to the standards of the Marine Corps. Boot camp trained me to become very disciplined and put me in the best shape of my life. I went into boot camp weighing 135 pounds and, after all of the physical training, I came out of boot camp weighing 150 pounds.

After boot camp was completed, I did not go directly to Vietnam. I actually had six months of training before I participated in the war effort. At that time, most Marines were taken to Vietnam by boat, however I went over in a commercial airplane. First I arrived in Hawaii, then Okinawa, Japan and finally Vietnam. I was stationed out of An Hoi, about 35 miles southwest of Da Nang, Vietnam.

My first job was to carry ammunition for our 81mm mortar unit. After five months of carrying heavy ammo and military gear, I worked my way up to the plotter position. This job was to calculate where our rounds should go and give directions to the mortar crew. All I had to carry now was my plotting gear and a pistol.

There are two different seasons in Vietnam, cool and rainy or hot and humid. During the rainy season, there was just mud everywhere. On some days, during the hot season, the temperature would reach up to 120 degrees and I would break into a sweat just standing up.

One day, one of our patrols went out of the compound about 50 yards and hit a booby trap that blew to pieces the first soldier of the patrol. The only way of identifying him was his dog tags. The enemy was very resourceful with our lost ammunition and scrap metal materials to make traps that would kill our own soldiers. Throughout my time in Vietnam, I provided mortar defense for the infantry.



Ron Binns in 1969.

One day my fellow soldiers and I were sitting at our camp and there was a big explosion in the middle of camp, but luckily the area was empty and there were no injuries. By the time we all got ready to fight, which was a matter of a couple of minutes, there was no one to be found. It was a very strange experience for me.

During my time in Vietnam, I had a chance to go on leave, but I did not go because I just wanted to get my time there over with and be done. Another reason that I did not go on leave during my tour of duty was the adjustment of having to come back to Vietnam. After watching others go through this after returning from leave, I decided I did not want to go through it. Plus, the first thing I was going to do when I got home was to buy a new car from the money I had saved.

When my enlistment time finally ended and I could go home. I decided not to go home to Grafton right away like most people would have done. Instead, I went to Las Vegas then New York to visit with some old friends. When I did return home, I went back to the same job that I had before I went to Vietnam as a textile worker, where I eventually became a dye master (currently called a textile colorist).

After the war, most of my Vietnam buddies had difficulty adjusting to civilian life and I have lost contact with them.

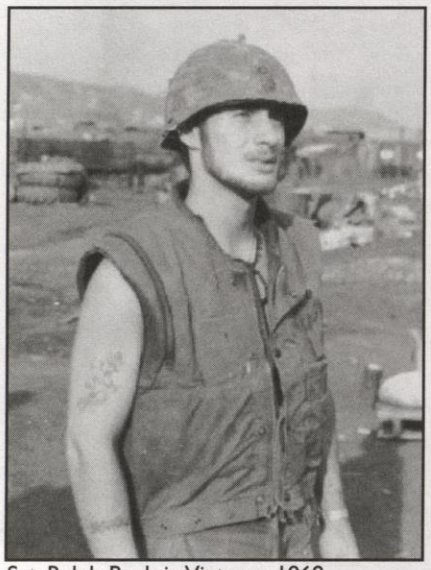
Ralph Beck As told to Laurie Arendt

Member of the Marine Air Group in Vietnam

Grafton resident Ralph Beck enlisted in the Marine Corps with the expectation that his draft notice was on its way (he enlisted about five days before it arrived). A friend once asked him, "Are you the way you are because you were a Marine or were you a Marine because of the way you are?" He thinks the answer is that he had the personality to become a Marine, and the Corps simply fine-tuned who he was.

I spent about 18 months at the Ky Ha chopper base. It was a fairly secure area where it didn't feel like there was a war going on. I flew 163 missions as an aerial gunner attached to the UH-34D Squadron. I remember part of our job was to extract the recon forces. We'd high-tail it in, pull them into the chopper by their collars and they'd be yelling, "We love you guys!" as we got out of there.

I later went to Phu Bai and then volunteered for transfer up to Khe Sanh in late January 1968. I had no idea what I was in for when I volunteered as a replacement. As far as I know, I was the only person in the area who was at Khe Sanh during TET in 1968.



Sgt. Ralph Beck in Vietnam, 1968.

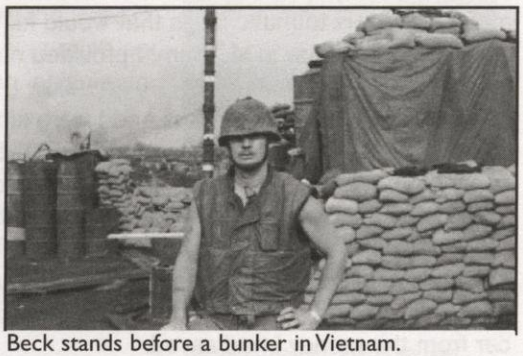
At the time, it was the most besieged fire base and when we arrived, it looked completely desolate. We were being waved in from a bunker. I soon learned why. It wasn't a matter of if Khe Sanh would get hit each day, it was when. Any airplane or chopper was a magnet. There wasn't a building left above ground because they'd all been blown up. When we did go outside, we spent most of our time looking for some place to run. Fog was our best friend because then the enemy couldn't see their targets. I soon realized that the last thing I wanted to be was a C123 or C130 pilot. Before we abandoned Khe Sanh, the planes wouldn't even land - they'd do skid drops to get supplies into the base. By July, Khe Sanh was abandoned.

I remember at one point, we were living above ground in a bunker we called the "white elephant." We had piled a lot of stuff on top of the bunker - and created air spaces in between so that if anything did hit us, it would hopefully explode in the airspace before it got to us.

We always slept with our clothes on, and I always carried an M1 bayonet with me. It was more of an all-purpose, handy tool than a weapon for me - I used it to open my C-rations, for example. One night my bayonet fell through the springs of the bed when I was sleeping. We all heard the "wumpf, wumpf" of incoming shells and dust started coming down on us. I went to get up and because my bayonet was stuck in the bed, the bedframe came with me! A buddy of mine stayed behind to help untangle me and we were the last two guys out of the bunker.

We could see the Viet Cong trenching right outside the base. Once, the corpsmen had stethoscopes and were listening at the walls of our underground bunkers. It seems the artillery personnel saw one of their aiming stakes start to shake. They discovered tunnels being dug under the base perimeter.

We did keep a sense of humor - my buddy Zem and I would have "tea and crumpets" in the afternoon, which was really the tea and cookies from our C-rations.



Beck stands before a bunker in Vietnam.

I never really had any problems from my experience, though once I developed a case of "rubber legs" and couldn't run when I was trying to get out from under a truck and into a bunker when we were being shelled. After I was transferred from Khe Sanh to Quang Tri, I was afraid to go out in the open. At Quang Tri, they would hold movies outdoors and I couldn't get myself to go for more than two months. Even when I got back, I'd retract my head into my shoulders like a turtle.

When I reflect on my experiences, the things that I remember are the things I feared. I'm honored to have had the opportunity to serve in the United States Marine Corps. We've got it good - people in other countries haven't progressed past the ox carts in 2,000 years.

I've been to The Wall in Washington, D.C., and I always look at those names and wonder what those 58,000-plus people could've done with their lives had they come back.

Eugene Mayer

As told to Julie Preisler, Ozaukee High School

Worked in a Supply Depot

Eugene Mayer is a native of Fredonia. He was working at Steffens Plumbing and Heating when he was drafted into the Army at age 24.

Basic training was such a different way of life from civilian life. It really woke us up. The first night was kind of scary. We got in late and they pushed us like cattle. We had a mean drill sergeant. Every morning before breakfast, he made us do the monkey bars and shave. If we didn't, we had to do the low crawl and pick up cigarette butts. During the eight weeks, we learned hand-to-hand combat, how to handle grenades, use a bayonet and practice shooting. I got an award for being the best sharpshooter.

I flew over to Vietnam in October 1967. I was there for 14 1/2 months. The first year in Vietnam we lived in tents and this was during monsoon season, so it rained for three months straight. We dug a three-foot trench all around our tent so the water would collect in there and our tents would stay dry.

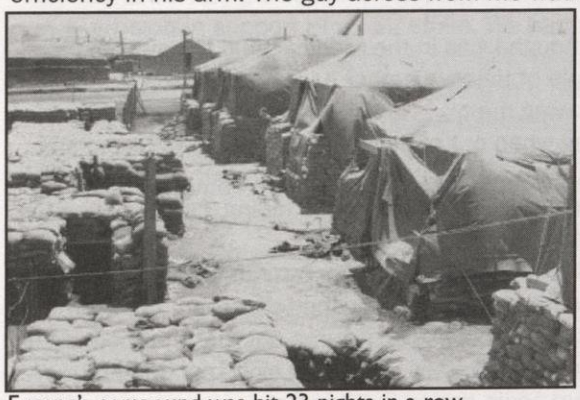
Eugene on Nov. 25, 1967.

I worked at a supply depot. We were centrally located and that was where everybody came and got their supplies, such as food, clothing, and bedding. The supplies came in at Cam Ranh Bay and then were trucked up to us and we distributed them. The supply depots were the biggest targets because the Viet Cong wanted to destroy our supplies so we wouldn't be able to function.

After working all day, we'd occasionally pull guard duty and watch for the Viet Cong, who would cut our compound's fence wire. Some guys fell asleep on guard duty and the Viet Cong slashed their throats.

The Tet Offensive happened in February. Our whole compound got hit 23 nights in a row. The Viet Cong broke through the wires and Claymore mines. They wanted to get at the supplies and cut us off. They weren't more than 1,000 feet from our tent. I could see the whole sky was lit up from ammunition.

One night, a mortar round came in and hit one of our fuel tanks. Shrapnel went right through one of our lockers and hit the guy next to me in the shoulder. He ended up in a Japanese hospital and lost 20 percent efficiency in his arm. The guy across from me was killed outright. We found out from the intelligence report that our whole company was supposed to be wiped out, but luckily it never happened. Four people from our company were killed. Every night after that, we wore our flight vests because ammunition wouldn't go through them.



Eugene's compound was hit 23 nights in a row.

A couple weeks later I broke my arm when a whole set of lockers fell over and my hand was between them. I waited four days in the hospital before it was set because they took care of the more seriously injured first.

I also traveled to the Air Force base which was twenty-five miles away and unloaded bombs. Every day we used forklifts to unload four-foot long napalm bombs from a semi. We had to be very careful because they ruptured easily. The first week a brand new, 10,000-pound forklift was purchased and the colonel wanted to drive it. I learned in training not to extend the forks all the way out, but the colonel didn't know that and he broke the boom on it. I couldn't tell him what to do because he was the highest rank and I had just gotten there. Our boss was very upset because now we would have to wait for parts to be ordered to repair the forklift.

Seven days before we left, I was soldier of the month, so I had a three-day pass. One of my buddies was a truck driver and he told me I should go along on a convoy run to get the supplies, so I did. On our way, the bridge got blown up in front of us so we had to drive around it. We barely made it through all the mud.

In November, we got sent home. When we arrived in Washington D.C., I kissed the ground. I was so glad to be home, but it was a real adjustment back to civilian life. The first night home the fire whistle went off in town for the firemen's practice and I jumped out of bed like I was still in Vietnam.

Dave Ronn

As told to Brad Bannon,
Ozaukee High School

Army Medic

Dave Ronn was born in Clouquet, Minn., and grew up in Milwaukee. As Dave began to grow older he also began to get a bit of a cocky attitude, which helped him to run into a little trouble with the law. I start by saying that because without Dave ever having this run-in with the law, his great courage and abilities may have been missed, for he may never have gone into the Army. He enlisted on Dec. 15, 1967, and that is where his memories unfold.

As I first began to decide what military branch I wanted to go into, I had a few encounters. At first, I approached the Navy recruiter. I walked in and before I could say a thing, he looked up at me and said, "Just keep going young man, I don't even want to talk to you." Second, I stopped in at the Air Force and the recruiter basically said the same thing. I then walked past the Marines because I didn't want anything to do with them! Finally, I stopped at the Army recruiter. He was reading the paper and smoking a big cigar. He handed me a pre-test to see if I could get in. Then he said I would be accepted. The next day, I took my three-hour written exam, had my physical and picked a field to go into from about five to six different options. I decided to go into the medical field for my Army life.

Dave Ronn spent 15 years in the service, first as a Medic in Vietnam and later as a recruiter.

As I went through medical school, I got pretty close to six other guys that were also in the medical field. After schooling, we were sent to paratrooper training at Ft. Benning, Ga. We then received 30 days of leave when we finished our training.

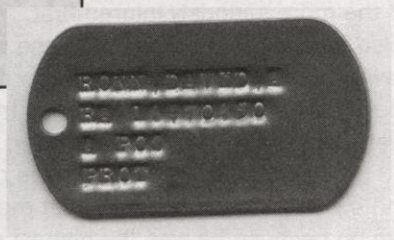
After we returned from leave, we met again in Oakland, Calif., where we finally got on a plane and flew over to Vietnam. After we arrived in country, the other six were killed on duty. I'm the only one of us seven alive today.

The last one was killed on the day before his departure. He went to the rear area to process out of country, and that night they were mortar attacked by the Viet Cong. The next morning, before I arrived at the rear unit, they found him lying in a compound and couldn't find anything wrong with him. Then they found a small hole in the back of his head where a piece of mortar shell had entered.

As I arrived, they asked me if I knew of anyone that was part of his unit. I did, so I told them that there were a couple of guys down there that I knew. This is when I discovered that my good friend had been killed. I then volunteered to take him home and give him to his mother. That had to be the hardest thing I've ever done in my life.

I can honestly say that even though I was in the medical field to save others, they also had saved my life a couple of times, whether it was because of a gut feeling they had or by physically saving me.

One day we were out patrolling when out of nowhere we started taking sniper fire. Of course, I was perturbed that we were getting shot at, so I stood up to find out who was shooting at us. With everyone else on the ground hiding, I stayed standing, trying to find out where he was.



All of a sudden the radioman ran up behind me, jumped on my back and pushed me down. As we went down I heard two clinks. It turns out that the radio on his back took two rounds. After that close encounter, I never stood up again during live combat.

Another close call that I had was when a unit was under fire and needed a medic. Some guy and I volunteered to go, so we jumped in a jeep and took off. As we got close to the area, we jumped out of the jeep. As we were doing this, the windshield took three to four rounds and shattered. We were able to get to the unit and help them out, but we were sure close to being picked off right there.

Before I left from Vietnam, I met many great guys and we had many great times. Whether it was gambling or the free concerts, we all somehow found a way to ease the tension. The worst part of being a medic was losing great guys like that. And let me tell you, any type of injury you can think of, I saw it.

I live in Cascade, and I am a truck driver for USF Logistics in Saukville. I have three kids and a great wife.

Finally, I would like to say one last thing to all veterans: Welcome Home!

Al Richards As told to Laurie Arendt

Forward Observer in Vietnam

When Al Richards was drafted in 1966, he presumed he was going to spend his two years somewhere in Vietnam. He also had a feeling that he would be wounded, but that it wouldn't be serious. He was right on both counts. Al is now State Vice Commander for the American Legion in Wisconsin.

I had received a draft deferment to attend college, but had to leave after my first year because I didn't have enough money to go to school. My draft notice came almost a year to the day after I left school. I was ultimately sent to Ft. Riley, Kans., as part of the reactivated 9th Division. While in Kansas, we did a lot of training specific to what we could expect in Vietnam. The conditions in Kansas did mimic Vietnam during the dry season; Kansas was the only place where you could have mud up to your neck and dust blowing in your face at the same time.

The guys in my division all trained together and we all left together. When we got to Vietnam, certain positions called for certain rank, and I made sergeant in the absolute minimum amount of time. I remember that they allowed us to wear our stripes early, even though we didn't get paid for the rank. I guess it was to show leadership.

I was a forward observer once we arrived in Vietnam. My role was to call in the artillery, helicopters and support if required. It required me to be able to navigate with a compass and a map, and my experience as a hunter in Wisconsin came in handy. I also had to lug a radio around on my back, which wasn't all that fun.

During the day we acted as a rifle platoon - a duty we learned once we arrived - and at night we would go out on ambush missions. It was a hit or miss proposition - we'd maybe run into the VC every 10 to 20 missions. Essentially we would keep going around until we sprung a trap or walked into an ambush and then we'd all hit the ground (or the water in the rice paddy). We waited to get shot at.

Al Richards in Vietnam, 1967.

We were issued M-16s in Vietnam. They tended to hang up and we had to be very particular in keeping them clean. Once we were on a mission in support of an air strike. We had surrounded a village and were intent on watching for VC trying to leave the village. All of a sudden I heard something behind me, turned and looked and saw a VC running *into* the village. I did the big whirl around like John Wayne, aimed my M-16 at him and fired. Click. Nothing happened. He looked at me, I looked at him and he started running back to where he came from. By this time, the guys around me started firing at him, but he got away without getting hit.

The first time I was wounded was on a place we called Boobytrap Island. My buddy and I saw some kids in an apple orchard. He went over to pick an apple and tripped a boobytrap, which the kids had put there. I had turned around and was kneeling on a small dike when it went off, but it caught me in the neck. I found out many years later that I still have shrapnel in my neck.

They were able to take care of me back at our base, and while I was healing, they wouldn't let me go out on missions. A good friend of mine took my place and led my squad out on a mission. They were in a 14-foot boat with an outboard motor, but they motored into an ambush from both sides. Most of them didn't make it back, and I would've been with them had I not been recuperating back in camp.

There was a standard joke that the VC would always watch for the guys who were giving orders and target them. We were going through a rice paddy and I had just yelled at my squad to spread out when I was hit. It felt like I had gotten kicked really hard in the shoulder, and it flipped me over on my back. I remember I could see the bullets skipping around us in the paddy's water. A buddy of mine came over to see if I was OK, and he ended up getting shot. We both laid there until the medic arrived, and both got out alive.

The VC would soak their bullets in feces before using them, and I ended up having part of my shoulderblade removed due to infection. The bone in my arm was shattered and so was my ball-and-socket joint. My range of motion is now limited but it is not something that most people notice. I learned new ways to do old things, but I really can't swim anymore. That's been hard because I grew up along the Milwaukee River and can't ever remember not swimming. The doctors gave me the bullet, but I've since lost it.

Jerry Zeckmeister

As told to Kara Voigt, Ozaukee High School

Military Truck Driver in Vietnam

Newburg resident Jerry Zeckmeister enlisted in the Army in 1969, two years after graduating from high school. His intentions were to get a skilled trade as a wheel and track mechanic, but he ended up getting sent to Ft. Polk, La., for infantry training. Soon, he would be in a commercial plane with many others on his way to Vietnam. Once he arrived, he was assigned the job of driving a military truck from one area of Vietnam to another. When he thinks back on his experience, it seems like just a bad dream.

I stepped off the plane and almost fell over from the heat. It was at least a sweltering 120 degrees. I noticed something different right away. The atmosphere was not at all like in training. The men here were more relaxed with what we did. I was immediately given my job, which was driving a large truck filled with an M-60 tank and other equipment. I had to do this task several times a month, always with a partner.

Awarded medal in Vietnam

Gerald Zeckmeister

Sp/4 Gerald Zeckmeister, 21 year old son of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Zeckmeister of R.1, Saukville, has been awarded the Army Commendation Medal for meritorious achievement while engaged in military operations at the Demilitarized Zone in Vietnam.

Jerry's achievement was news back home - he still has the original clipping.

Many times, it wasn't bad, getting from point A to point B without any hassle. Several times, my partner and I were shot at, but we always made it out okay. One trip in particular I will never be able to forget. I was driving a 10-ton heavy-duty truck, with my partner by my side. We were headed north when I glanced up to see a line of 20 to 25 Vietnamese civilians lined up across the road.

When we were about 150 feet away, I hit the horn, trying to get them to move, but they didn't. As I slowed to stop, my partner urged me not to. He told me to just hit it, so I did, and the truck raced ahead. We ran them over, killing women and children, but as I looked back, I saw a bunch of Vietcong soldiers in my rearview mirror. They started firing at us and I almost lost control of the truck. It had been a set-up. If I would've stopped, my partner and I both could've been killed. He had saved our lives. That was one thing about being in Vietnam. The guys were like a family. They were your friends, you depended on them and they covered your back.

I was one of the lucky ones. I didn't see a lot of action, but I knew that I had killed people, especially on night patrols. Some guys from the Marines would come to our camps and randomly pick a couple of us guys to go with them, usually the smaller ones.

Even though they were called night patrols, they sometimes lasted days. We would go out into the jungle, searching for the enemy. We never really saw them, but when we were fired upon, we would fire right back. Because we didn't have tents or anything, we would have to sleep on the ground. There was always the risk of getting bit by snakes. There were a lot of guys who got sick from this.

After a year, I was able to leave. A bunch of guys and I got on a plane and headed back to the United States. Our welcome back was not a happy, grateful one, though. As we stepped off the plane, many people were throwing stuff at us and calling us baby killers. We did not get a lot of respect from anyone, and felt very out of place re-entering society, after being gone for what seemed like forever.

Jerry atop his truck in Vietnam.

I went on to spend a year in Germany, fulfilling my three years of being in the Army. After I got out, I got a job and eventually married and had two children. I am currently very active in the VFW, and the American Legion. I am a very patriotic man, always have my flag flying in front of the house. I think some of that patriotism rubbed off on my daughter who decided to join the Army National Guard. I am not regretful of joining the Army, although it wasn't a pleasant experience. I think that if I wouldn't have done it, I wouldn't have the patriotism and concerns for our military that I have now.

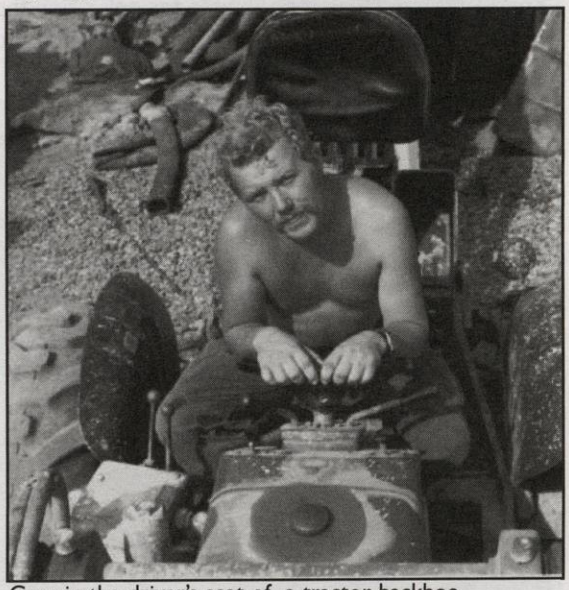
Gary Schlenvogt

Interviewed by Jason D'Amato, Ozaukee High School

Heavy Equipment Mechanic and Operator

Gary Schlenvogt enlisted in the United States Army in 1969. He had a good friend named Jerry Doll who was killed in the TET Offensive of 1968. From the death of his friend Jerry, it opened Gary and his friends' eyes to what was really going on in other countries and why they needed to support their country in the war.

Our lottery numbers were so high and didn't have much of a chance of being picked, so two friends of mine and I went into the Army under the two-year plan. We went to the reception station in Fort Campbell, Ken. When we arrived at Fort Campbell, we were asked where we wanted to go. The three of us agreed: We wanted to be sent to Vietnam. The interviewing sergeants thought we were crazy, but going to Vietnam was our main objective for going into the service.



Gary in the driver's seat of a tractor backhoe.

Once I was done with my basic training for Heavy Equipment Maintenance at Fort Leonardwood, Mo., I was sent to Germany to serve. When I got to Germany, I filled out a form called the 1049 so that I could be re-stationed in Vietnam. It took about four months for my papers to go through, but after the papers finally went through, I was sent home for about a period of 44 days to do the extension (break) over Christmas.

Once Christmas was over, I was sent to Vietnam in January 1971. When I arrived in Vietnam, I was stationed at Whiskey Mountain, which is right out of Phan Thiet, Vietnam. After I arrived at Whiskey Mountain, I was put in the Heavy Equipment Road Building Engineering Battalion.

It was a different lifestyle than I was used to living. We would end up sleeping in bunkers or holes in the ground that were usually made of wooden sides and a wooden roof covered with sandbags. In the compound that we would sleep in there was a guard tower where we would keep guard, watching for Viet Cong.

One of the first nights I was there, we had some incoming rounds and were being shot at. In other words, I think it was more of a type of harassment than anything. That night was the first time at the age of 21 that I spoke to God and prayed because I was terrified out of my mind. We made it through that night, and the next day we continued building a road called the QL One Highway through South Vietnam.

This earthmover was used to build the QL One Highway through South Vietnam. Gary was driving it when this photo was taken.

There was not much activity going on, it was slowing down more and more. There was still a lot of fighting going on and we were always being protected from the VC. It still wasn't completely safe.

After we finished building our section of the road in 1971, I was transferred to another unit to extend the QL One Highway even further north. I was stationed in the central highlands of Vietnam and there was a lot more VC around in that area.

At times when we came back to camp from building the highway, there would be bullet holes in the equipment. The VC would be shooting from a far distance trying to pick someone off. The shooting never got so bad that I would have to return fire on the VC. We finished building the road toward the end of 1971. Since I finished helping to build the highway, I was sent home two days before Christmas.

I am proud of my accomplishments on receiving a Bronze Star for heavy equipment performance in the line of duty.

George E. Kern

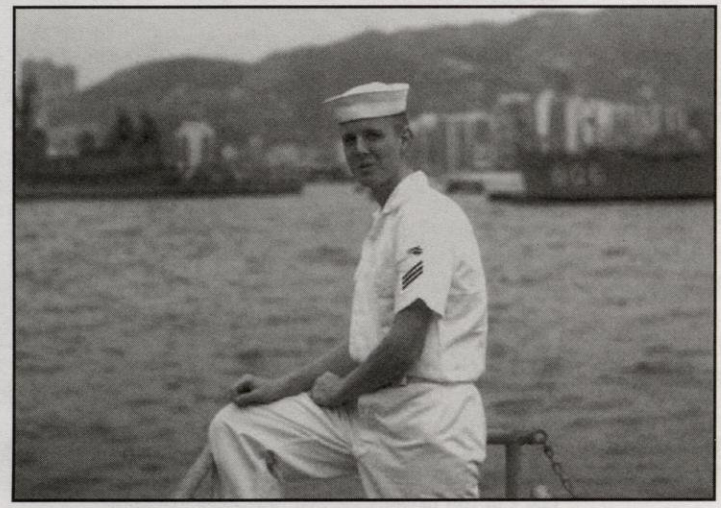
As told to Matt Hille, Homestead High School

Radio Operator on a River Patrol Boat

Born in the harbor town of San Francisco, George Kern enlisted in the Navy at 17. He was fresh out of high school and was following in his brother's footsteps right into the Navy with a strong sense of patriotism and responsibility for his country. Ignoring his friends' influence, he also enlisted in the Navy's Radio School.

I spent six months in radio training, where the Navy made me an assistant instructor due to my knowledge of typing and Morse code. After completing the training, I was assigned to a PBR [patrol boat river] boat on the rivers of South Vietnam. Arriving in Vietnam was not so much scary, but it had more of an eerie feeling.

My boat was assigned the job of patrolling the rivers and inspecting North Vietnamese boats for contraband and weapons. I was responsible for delivering top-secret messages to the captain and sending and intercepting messages. I myself was not involved in actual hand-to-hand combat, but my boat was involved in what was nicknamed "Operation Zippo Lighter."



George Kern traveled around the world as part of the Naval Reserves. Here he is aboard ship in Hong Kong harbor.

This operation required our boat to cruise down the rivers of northern Vietnam. We would burn enemy trenches with large flame throwers on the sides of our boat.

During Operation Zippo Lighter, I witnessed many tragic events. I saw one woman die after explosives that were strapped to her back in an attempt to damage our forces blew up.

Throughout my time on active duty, which was a total of six years, I wrote a letter to my family every day (something I'd promised my mother) and kept in close touch with them. I numbered my letters because sometimes the mail wouldn't leave the ship for about a month and they would get all the letters at once.

Because I was in the service for such a long period of time, I was also able to travel a lot - I have visited just about every country in the world.

One trip that I went on was to Okinawa. We were to pick up a BJU [beach jumper unit] and take it back to Vietnam, but a typhoon was coming so our ship was ordered out to sea, which is the safest place for a ship to to be during a typhoon. During the process of exiting the harbor, we ran into an uncharted reef, which caused us to lose one of our propeller shafts, our sonar dome and an anchor. We had to be towed to Japan where we spent three months in dry dock while repairs were made to our ship. It was a good thing that the reef was uncharted. If it had been charted, our captain would've lost his career.

During our stop in Japan, I was able to visit Nagasaki in August 1965, which was almost 20 years to the day of the dropping of the atomic bomb. My fellow sailors and I were wearing our uniforms during our visit. On the day we were there, the Japanese were having a memorial service for those who died in the bomb blast, so they were not very excited to see us there. I also was able to see many objects that were damaged in the blast, which was very interesting.

I returned to normal service after we left Japan. I was in the Philippines when my service ended. At that time, I was sent to a receiving station until I was transported to Manila. I boarded a Flying Tiger airliner in Manila which took me back to San Francisco. I received a number of medals during my service career, including the Vietnam Service medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary medal, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign medal, the National Defense medal and the Naval Reserve medal, which I earned due to my decade of service with good performance. I also made many close friends during my days in the service and I still keep in close contact with many of them.

When I got back to the United States, I wanted to be a veterinarian, but unfortunately my father died and I ultimately had to change majors. I became an accountant, a career that I am still in today.

I am a member of V.F.W. Post 9207. Through my military experiences, I have come to learn to live every day like it is your last, and if it isn't, that's just one more day to live.

Bob Batty

As told to Becky Karr,
Cedarburg High School

Sentry Dog Handler

After receiving his draft notice in 1969, Bob Batty volunteered to be a Sentry Dog handler in Vietnam. Once over seas, he served proudly, he and his dog, patrolling the perimeter of army bases to watch for signs of Vietcong intruders. He remembers two specific experiences during his tour of Vietnam.

I had to ride shotgun; we were taking a dog handler down to a place called Phan Rang, which was down on the coast about 25 miles. During the day, we were fairly safe. In the jeep, it was one of the sergeants, a dog handler, and me; I was along solely to ride shotgun, literally shotgun (I had an M-16 and we were all armed). We felt like sitting ducks, just the three of us and the dog in his crate.

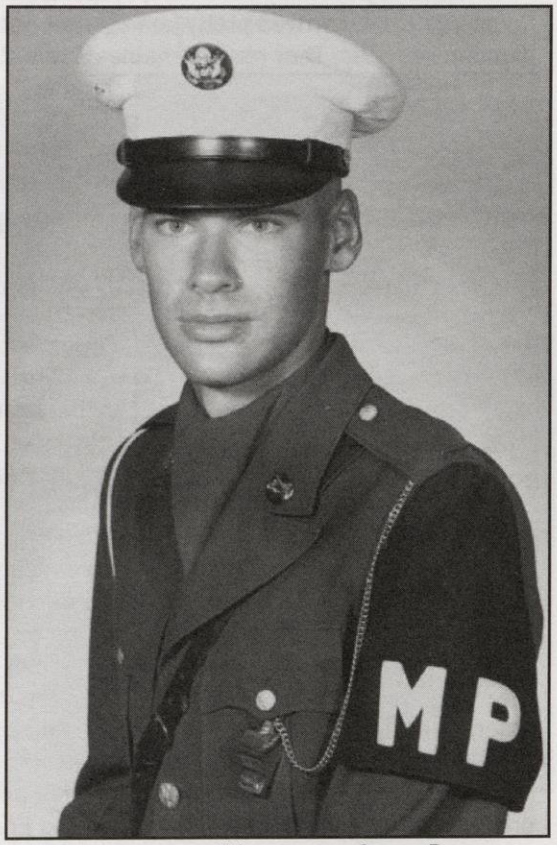
We were in just a jeep and we were riding along the coast as we went to Phan Rang, a little village with an army compound almost right on the beach. It was an offloading point for tankers; tankers would pull up and they'd offload oil and that kind of stuff into storage tanks that were on the base, and they would pump that stuff in. The army was simply there to protect it.

Our handlers walked the perimeter at night on that base, so one guy was going home and this guy traveling with us was being assigned down there. I had a couple of days off, so they suckered me into riding shotgun.

We got to Phan Rang late in the day. We offloaded the handler and had to stay the night. The VC owned the countryside at night. We stayed in the barracks there. Nothing happened. We got up, the sergeant and I drove back; we drove back with the handler who was going home.

A few days after that, one of my buddies came up to me and said, "You guys were in Phan Rang on Tuesday, right? Did you know they got hit on Wednesday night? The night after you were there?" I learned that some VCs had put several rockets in the compound and blew up the very barracks we had stayed in.

The mission of a Sentry Dog Handler was to prevent Viet Cong sappers from infiltrating the perimeter of a compound. Usually we patrolled behind barbed wire and sometimes behind big lights that shone out on the perimeter. One of the scariest things that ever happened to me while I was on duty occurred while I patrolled the ammo dump.



Bob Batty was sent to Vietnam as a Sentry Dog Handler. He worked with two dogs during his tour.

I had Rex, a good German Shepherd, at the time. We [Sentry Dog Handlers] had trained with the dogs and the dogs had been trained to alert on people, but would also alert on animals. We could tell the difference. When Rex had the scent of an individual, he would hit the end of his leash really hard and go right forward, and his ears would go straight up (you know how a German Shepherd's ears go straight up). We were always told that if you looked right down the line on the dog, between his ears, down his nose, then that's where the intruder was.

There was this huge bush that had grown up in the middle of this "no man's land" between the concertina wire. It shouldn't have been there; it should have been removed, but nobody had taken it out.

I remember one night I went walking up the wire towards that end, and, all of a sudden, Rex hit the end of the leash hard, harder than I can ever remember, with his ears straight up. As he hit the end of the leash, I heard a gun bolt go forward, click into place and it wasn't mine. I just remember, I went flat out; I hit the ground and pulled the charging handle on my M-16 to put a round in it. Just as I did that and brought my weapon down, Rex dropped the alert and that was it. Whoever was there backed off and went back out again. The next day, we found out the wire had been cut in that area. So somebody had come in, some VC, probably to plant satchel charges.

Batty continued to serve until winter 1970, one month after his extended term began. He now lives in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, with his wife and two children. He currently serves as the Post Commander for the Peter Wollner Post in Cedarburg and as the Adjutant for the Ozaukee County Council.

Dan Grotkiewicz

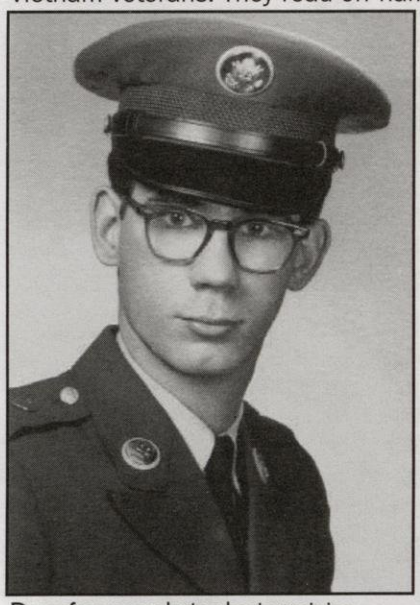
Interviewed by J.B. Pike, Cedarburg High School

Army Clerk

Dan Grotkiewicz currently lives in Grafton with his wife Carol, his son Mark and his daughter Sarah. He has held multiple positions with Peter Wollner Post #288 in Cedarburg and is currently First Vice Commander for the Ozaukee County Council. He was drafted into the Army and ultimately sent to Vietnam.

Looking back at my service to my country, I would call it ordinary. However, there are things that do stand out in my memory from the day I received the letter that started with, "Greetings."

My military career started on Sept. 22, 1967, and I still have the list of names of those who were inducted with me. On my first day of service, I reported to the Induction Center, then boarded a bus headed for Ft. Campbell, Ky. We arrived pretty late at night and were greeted by Drill Sergeants, many of whom were returning Vietnam veterans. They read off names and we'd fall in. Our buses [of recruits] were there also, and they were put through the same routine. As a company was formed, off it went.



Dan after completing basic training.

The things I remember most about basic training were the Pugil Sticks, which looked like huge Q-Tips that were well-padded at both ends. Wearing a helmet with face guard and hockey gloves, two combatants would enter the training ring and whack each other silly. CBN training also proved interesting. Wearing a gas mask, we'd enter a chamber. What they used there was just plain tear gas. Upon removing the mask, the gas would immediately start to sting our eyes and irritate our throats. We'd have to answer questions like, "Who's your momma?" and "Spell your name." I never made it past "Gro."

Marches were usually long. We'd leave in the morning and get back late in the evening. On some occasions, other companies would set up sneak attacks on the marching unit. You'd have to deploy and put your training into action. Planes would fly over and drop bags of flour, representing a gas attack.

Everything we did during basic training, from sleeping to showering, was done as a group. If one guy messed up, everyone messed up. This might have been the hardest lesson to learn, but also the most valuable. It taught us the buddy system, looking out for one another.

When training reached the infiltration course, you knew Basics were over. I remained at Ft. Campbell as a company clerk, and later received orders to Ft. Bragg, N.C., another basic training facility. I finally received orders for Vietnam and was assigned to the 41st Engineer Co., located in Vung Tau.

Arriving in 'Nam, I found it to be very hot and dusty. The airport was full of activity. My time at the 41st was brief; I received orders to report to the 82nd Engineering Battalion at Long Binh, which is not far from Saigon, the capital. My duties were then changed to Morning Report Specialist. It was a nice, safe place to be. A lot of field soldiers got a breather in Long Binh. We had bars, restaurants and live entertainment: Country and Western with an Oriental accent.

Some of the domestic help in Long Binh. These workers cleaned the hutch, did the laundry and general housekeeping.

I only recall being called out to the perimeter two or three times. The last one was the most serious. Enemy activity was located across the road from our perimeter. On the other side of the road was a hill about 10 feet high and, beyond that, a cemetery. From my bunker, I could see a head pop up and look around. The final time the guy popped up, he had a rocket launcher and fired. It looked like slow motion. Seeing the flash and the flame, I could tell the rocket was heading toward my position. The best I could do was grab my helmet and, like the rest of us in the bunker, head for cover. Then the explosion - a near miss, but way too close for the likes of me. The higher-ups had enough of this game and called in air strikes. By morning the last shots were fired and plans to bulldoze the hill were underway.

Peace talks were going on and Nixon started pulling troops out. In August 1969, I was at the Departure Center turning in my gear. I boarded a C131 transport for home with my final destination as Ft. Lewis, Wash.

I have no regrets of my service to my country. A returning hero? Not in my viewpoint. There is a wall in Washington, D.C., with names etched in granite of heroes who gave more than me in Vietnam.

John Spencer

As told to Eric Broman, Homestead High School

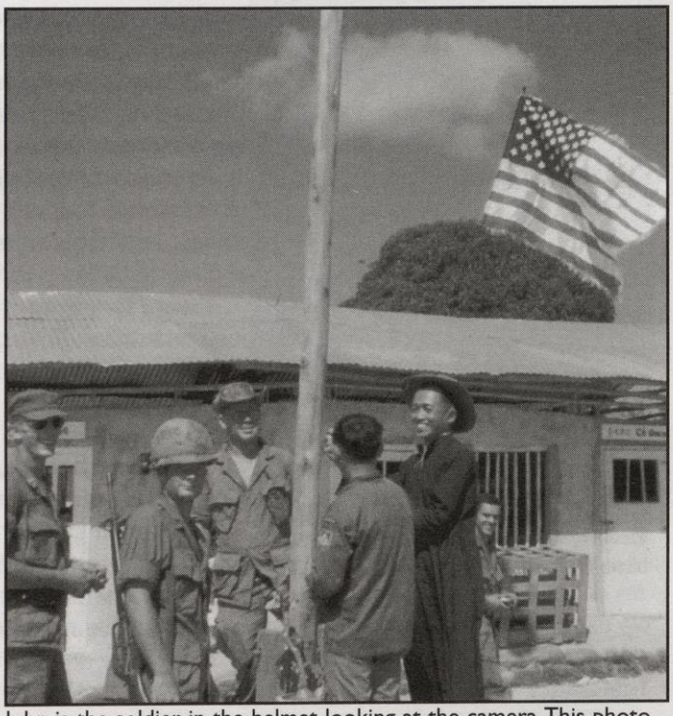
Reaction Platoon Leader in the 198th Light Infantry Brigade

When nineteen-year-old John B. Spencer enlisted in the Army in September 1965, he volunteered to serve his country in Vietnam. Wondering if he was tough enough to survive what lay ahead, during the next three years he more than proved his ability to close with and destroy the enemy. Vietnam medals and plaques of honor hold prominent places in his office and in his heart, for his 1967 to 1968 Vietnam tour of duty forever changed him into a stronger man. Joining the Army was everything he expected and more.

While many nineteen-year-olds actively evaded the draft, I chose to enlist in the Army, mainly looking for an exciting alternative to college. Beginning with basic training and progressing into Advanced Individual Training, I earned my commission as Second Lieutenant, Field Artillery at Ft. Sill, Okla. I had no idea how much this training would change me from an undirected teenager into a focused, capable leader.

I vividly remember springing an ambush as my first taste of combat in Vietnam. As a platoon leader, I planned, organized, directed and controlled the ambush. Three VC passed through our ambush site; my platoon immediately killed two of them with a hand-detonated Claymore mine. I shot the third VC with my M-16 as he tried to escape across the river. We took no casualties.

In another instance, a helicopter gunship pilot (my classmate at Officers Candidate School) offered me a ride on a combat air patrol. When I got on the fully loaded gunship, the pilot realized it was too heavy. I got off and boarded his wingman's gunship instead. It was also too heavy to fly, so again I got off, even though I only weighed 160 pounds plus my 50 pounds of gear. Finally, both gunships took off without me. Less than 30 minutes later, the wingman's gunship was shot down and most of the crew died. Death stared me in the face, and I thanked God for the chance to live.



John is the soldier in the helmet looking at the camera. This photo was taken during a village pacification project located 20 klicks south of Chu Lai on Jan. 2, 1968, just before TET.

Another time, pinned down with enemy sniper fire, I called Tactical Air and asked for an air strike. The Forward Air Controller called in two F-4 Phantoms, which are military fighter jets. The Controller marked the enemy position with a smoke rocket and told us to stay low in the rice paddies. The first F-4 dropped bombs behind us, and I worried that they might hit us. Instead, the bombs hit the enemy target exactly. The next F-4 shot 20mm cannons, and empty shell casings rained down on us. The cannons also hit their targets, effectively eliminating further sniper fire in that area.

Finally, I remember gunfire and explosions waking me in my base camp quarters, signaling the start of the TET offensive. Grabbing my M-16 and ammunition, I ran toward the TOC (tactical operations center). A huge flash of light filled the sky, and it looked like a huge atomic bomb explosion. Within three seconds, a shock wave knocked off my steel helmet and threw me to the ground. For a moment, I thought I was dead. Stunned, but alive, I realized that an ammunition and fuel dump had exploded after being hit by 122mm enemy rockets. Many Americans died in that explosion.

Returning home as a First Lieutenant after three years in the Army, I resumed my studies at Carthage College and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration. Through the years, I served my community in Zion, Ill., as park board president and later as Mayor of the city. Currently, I'm an owner of Oceanaire, Inc., a manufacturer of portable air conditioners, and I live with my family in Mequon. My Bronze Star and Combat Infantryman's badge on my office wall offer daily reminders of my Army experiences that took me from boy to man in a few short years.

Ken Yass

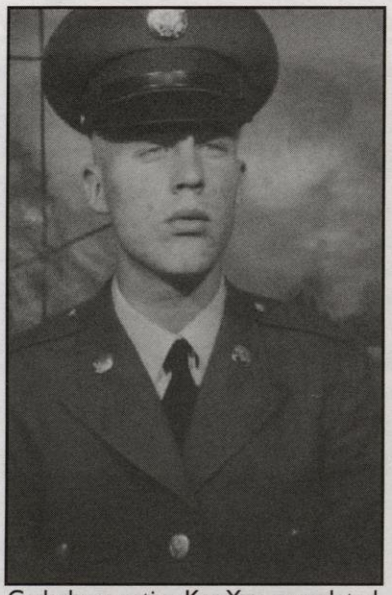
Interviewed by Vijay Prasad, Homestead High School

Army Cook

Ken Yass spent three years in the Army after leaving high school. He had hoped to gain more experience and become a mechanic, but the Army had a different service path in mind for him.

When I enlisted, I had hoped to be a mechanic, but I couldn't because I am color blind. They required me to choose a different field, so I chose to be a cook. On my first day of service, I took a train from Milwaukee to Ft. Leonardwood, Mo. There I endured boot camp, which wasn't as grueling as I thought it would be. My instructor tried to be hard on us, but this harshness served a purpose.

After surviving basic training, I was sent to advanced training at a cooking school, also at Ft. Leonardwood. Once I completed that training, I was sent to Korea.



Cedarburg native Ken Yass completed basic training in March 1963.

Most of the time, I worked as a cook in the mess hall. We would alternate shifts, typically on a week or so basis. One week we would have to get up early for the breakfast shift and work until noon. The next week, we would come in at noon and prepare for supper. I didn't really mind either shift.

I also did some cooking in the Officers' Club. This was a little bit different than working in the mess hall - it was more short-order, restaurant-style food.

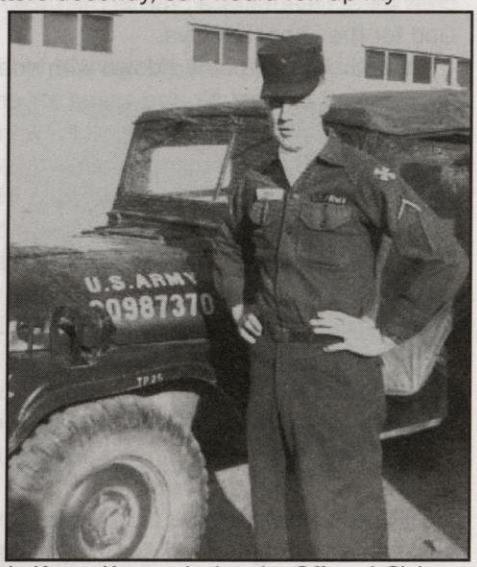
I remained registered to one unit during the 14 months I served in Korea, but I served in four or five different places. They liked the way I handled my cooking, so if they were short handed at a particular place, they would often send me to fill in.

Except for my time in the Officers' Club, most of what I prepared was in mass quantities. Baking was really rather easy because we had giant-sized equipment, such as cookie sheets, so we were able to bake quite a bit in a short time. I remember I also became quite efficient at cracking eggs - I could do two in each hand at one time. Because I worked as a cook, I could eat whatever I wanted. I didn't gain any weight though - when I was in the service, I was 6'2" and only 155 pounds.

After serving in Korea, I came back to the United States for some R&R., and I spent that time at home. I was required to report back to Virginia. One thing I do remember about my time in Virginia is that we had a big mixer that we used for mixing the batters, and once in awhile it wouldn't mix the batters decently, so I would roll up my sleeve, stick my arm in the batter up to my elbow and do it manually. That batter sure felt funny.

From Virginia, my unit was sent to Vietnam, and we arrived in Cam Ranh Bay. My first impression of this area was that it was all sand and it looked like a desert. In fact, at Christmas, we had a tent set up with a big barrel on it for showers. The barrel had a tree limb with decorations and if you took a black and white photo of it, the sand in the background actually looked like snow.

We ended up serving in several places in Vietnam. At that time, there weren't any permanent buildings and we did much of our cooking with butane in tents. It was much different than the facilities we had in Korea.



In Korea, Ken cooked at the Officers' Club. Here he is on his way to the club in 1964.

I never saw combat in Vietnam, but I was fired upon numerous times. I also never had any training in firing a machine gun. Once we were fired upon when I was being transported by helicopter. The pilot told me to grab a machine gun and start firing. I didn't know what I was doing but I did it.

Looking back, I don't know why I didn't became a civilian chef. I do remember that I didn't know what I wanted to do when I returned home and a cabinet maker job opened up. I decided to pursue that field, and I've been doing that for 26 years. I now work at Cedarburg Lumber as a woodworker, and I recently joined the Grafton Legion Post.

Donn "Charlie" Brown

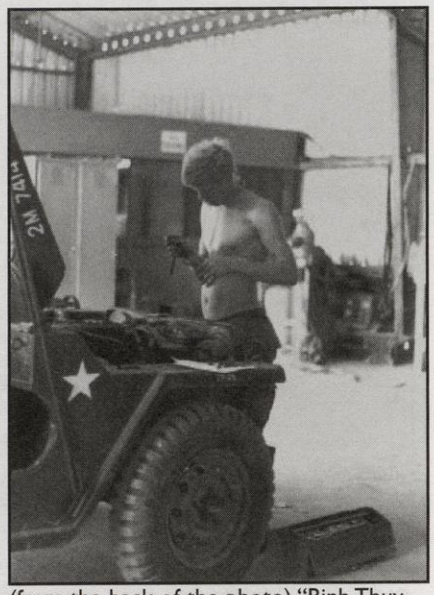
As told to Chandler Forbes, Ozaukee Homeschool Student

Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic

I have known Charlie for most of my life through my church. He's the kind of guy who wears a suit and sneakers at the same time, and has everyone's respect. He's always willing to share with the youth about how God has changed his life from his days in Vietnam and shaped him into the person he is now.

I was drafted into the Army in March 1970, when I was 19. I went to boot camp, which was an interesting experience. I was thrown together with a bunch of guys my age. Boot camp was a lot of rigorous physical exercise which I liked. I enjoyed the running, the pushups and such. While in boot camp I met some good guys and some not so good guys.

After basic training, I was sent to Fort Sam Houston in Texas. There I went through training to be an Operating Room Technician, which is a form of a Medic. I didn't enjoy this much though I learned quite a bit. So, I wrote a letter to someone in charge (I don't remember exactly who) and requested that I be switched to a different area. I thought that perhaps I might be able to somehow use my experience from working with the phone company. So in September 1970 I was sent to a small army depot near Stockton, Calif. where I became a Truck Mechanic. I used this training throughout my Army career as a Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic.



(from the back of the photo) "Binh Thuy, March 1971. A candid shot of me at work. The photographer was very lucky to get this shot!"

In December 1970, I was shipped to Vietnam, where I stayed for all of 1971. There I drove convoys and did a lot of things involving trucks. I never saw actual combat. While driving convoys we would be fired at and during the day in the compound we would get fire. These, however, were just random acts meant to harass us. This is something that you don't hear a lot about.

Almost everyone in the military who was stationed in Vietnam either smoked dope, drank or both. While I was over there I participated in this. Unfortunately this was the lifestyle over there. I was preserved by God while I was over there. Occasionally rockets would come into the compound and take out a building. I lost some friends that way. I remember while I was there I heard that a buddy of mine, who was stationed somewhere else, was killed and that just really hurt me badly. I remember having to pull guard duty once every week, which meant I had to stay up all night in a tower overlooking the compound. The Viet Cong would sometimes sneak up into the towers at night and kill the men on duty. So, there were alarms devised to go off when someone came up the ladder.

The specific problem with the enemy in the area where I was stationed was that you really didn't know who they were. We were in the south so we really weren't fighting the North Vietnamese. Our enemy was the Viet Cong. These men were, by day, the guys walking around on the street. They were even in your compound helping you out. At night, they were the ones firing at you. There was one time when we were playing a baseball game and the enemy - for no reason - started shooting small arms fire over our heads. So there we were laying on the ground trying to crawl away from this. The Viet Cong would do things like this just to harass us.

I remember the lack of respect that we got coming home. I didn't go through the harassment that a lot of other veterans went through, but I remember basically hiding the fact that I was a veteran. I got married a month after I returned and my wife and I went to meet with the pastor. Before we left she told me, "Don't mention that you are a veteran because he is against the war." That burns me up to this day that he would despise the war so much that he would have a problem with a drafted man just doing his duty. I sacrificed a year of my life and when we returned home we were in shock. It was like culture shock - suddenly everything was different again. Yet you were almost ashamed to have been in the war. It still hurts to this day that someone would dislike the war so much that I couldn't even mention it.

Charlie and his wife were high school sweethearts. He tried to keep up something of a correspondence with her while he was in the Army though he didn't do very well. However, she waited for him and they got married once he returned home. Charlie and his wife Sue live in Saukville and have two daughters. He recently retired after working for Ameritech for 31 years. He is a youth leader, musician and works with media arts at Portview Christian Center.

Raymond Ronchetti

As told to Sara Young and Emily Wilson, Cedarburg High School

Attack Helicopter Pilot

Raymond Ronchetti attended Pennsylvania Military College, where he participated in ROTC. After graduation, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant, obliged to serve three years of active duty. He went to Vietnam in 1966.

While in Vietnam, I flew armed helicopters. We worked out of a place called An Khe, which was in the central highlands of Vietnam. I was with B Troop 1/9th Calvary, First Calvary Division for six months. As more and more units were deployed to Vietnam, experienced pilots were infused into these new units to provide them with combat experience and to help train the new pilots. After the first six months, I was assigned to the Fifth Special Forces out of Nha Trang, which was in central Vietnam. Ironically, most of the operations we had at that time were up north.

Ray served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam. He received a number of commendations and medals for his service.

I thought very highly of officers and enlisted men. You form very close relationships and friendships there. I have nothing but good to say about them.

There was one experience I wrote an article about [for *Aviation Digest*]. It was a night mission that went wrong. The flight I was leading was forced to stay out longer because we had troops on the ground, and they were under fire. We had to provide cover fire. When we landed, we were literally out of fuel. That was probably one of the hairiest situations we had.

I got shot down once, and that was probably when I was most scared. My wingman provided cover while we were on the ground. We never drew any fire when we were on the ground, but it was a scary experience until they pulled us out. We landed in a rice paddy and were stuck there until another helicopter picked us up. They came in with a CH-47 Chinook helicopter and lifted the damaged gunship out. It was a little scary in "Indian" country.

I received two Purple Hearts for wounds received in combat. I also received an Air Medal with V Device for Valor, an Air Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters representing 650 combat flight hours and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

The first time I was wounded we had a North Vietnamese regular who was running through a cemetery. I came in and hovered 15 feet above him. I wanted my door gunner to "dispatch him." I thought he would run, but he didn't. He was probably about the bravest guy I ever saw. He had an AK47, and he turned around and just started to shoot back. He never moved; he just stood there. One of the bullets hit me in the leg. Fortunately he got away. Any one that brave deserved to live.

The second time I was providing cover for another helicopter. We were flying low, between palm trees near a village. The Vietnamese had what we called spider holes; they were holes in the ground covered by vegetation. You couldn't see them, and suddenly they'd slide the cover off, and they'd have a machine gun there. They caught me when I was down between the trees, and I got wounded in the face. Bullets came through and tore up the windshield, and I was hit with shrapnel. The medical service was excellent and I recovered from my injuries.

My opinions changed in Vietnam, from the standpoint of war. It's hard to explain. The bottom line: If we are to fight a war, we are to be totally committed, and we weren't in Vietnam. Politics got in the way of the Vietnam War. And I feel extremely strongly about that. It was like fighting with one hand tied behind your back. Any one who has experienced combat will tell you that because of it they know more about themselves than they ever would have had they not had the experience. Vietnam was something I would never want to do again. But I wouldn't want to trade the experience of having done it.

After the war, Raymond Ronchetti worked with the BF Goodrich Company in Ohio and moved to Wisconsin in 1970. He is presently executive vice president of Milcut, where he has worked since 1971. Mr. Ronchetti currently resides in Cedarburg with his wife. He enjoys hunting, fishing and golfing and is the proud father of three children and grandfather of five.

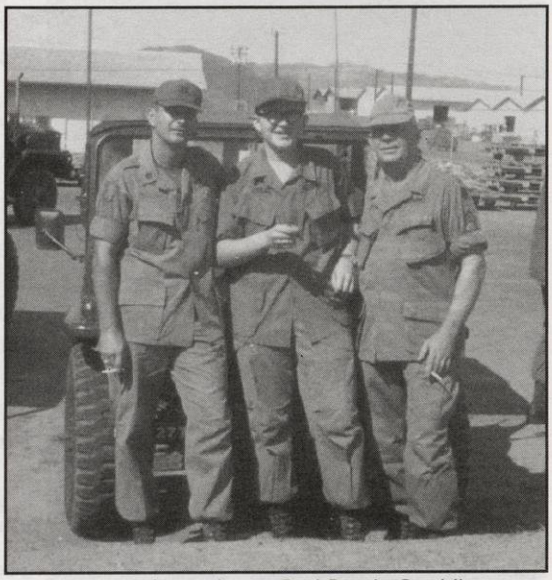
Rev. Dr. Janis Kinens

As told to Jay Holcomb, Cedarburg High School

Company Draftsman

Rev. Dr. Janis J. Kinens, a Lutheran pastor from Kalamazoo, Mich., served 13 months in Vietnam: September 1968 through October 1969. Pastor Kinens and I met each other in his office at Advent Lutheran Church in downtown Cedarburg.

I arrived in Saigon, like most of us did, then transferred to Qui Nhon. I was originally drafted as a truck driver, but the sergeant noticed that I had taken two years of art in college. He called me into the office and asked me if I wanted to be the company draftsman. I said no, because I hadn't ever drafted in my life, and I didn't think I would be of any use. He said that I was the best choice of the people there, so I agreed. I drew battle diagrams, road signs for the base, briefing charts, maps, etc. Often as a favor, I also drew souvenirs. I loved what I did as far as my job.



Pastor Kinens (center) near Red Beach, Qui Nhon, Vietnam with his company commander and sergeant.

I vividly remember the day that we landed in Vietnam. I looked at the calendar and realized that I had more than one year there. There was no place to run, no place to go, I couldn't take a plane or a taxi or car and just leave. That was an overwhelming feeling of helplessness. At that moment I decided that, in order to survive mentally, I would have to condition myself to accept living without control of my life. And that's what I did somehow. Every day was a challenge, but every day was one day closer to going home.

Everyone had a "short timer's calendar." I remember when I started mine. I was standing in front of the PX [post exchange] and I knew I had a year and some weeks to go. I thought "My God, how am I going to do this?" I decided to make a big calendar on my wall to count down the days. But instead of marking the days with 'X's, I pasted magazine clippings, so when the calendar was filled and it was time to go home, there was a panorama of my experience. I did that literally until I left. It helped the time pass.

About a month after I got there, while on break, I heard someone shout "Hey Kinens, there's someone from Michigan here." I was interested because I was from Kalamazoo, Mich., so I went outside. There stood a young guy with dark hair and a big smile. He jumped off the jeep and we shook hands. We decided to be friends because we were both from the same state. Then he left. About two weeks later, I was called into work because an ambush had taken place. After I had been there for a couple minutes someone handed me a helmet with a hole through it and said that it belonged to "that kid you met from Michigan."

That haunted me until this year, when a small miracle occurred. A man who heard my story in one of my sermons was headed to Washington D. C. When he arrived, this man went to a database and looked up the man that I had befriended. From my sermon the man knew that the soldier was from Michigan, and had died sometime between September and November in Quin Nhon. He found the soldier's name, Curtis Edward Braatz, and told me. I searched for 'Braatz' on the Internet yellow pages in Charlotte, Mich. There were three or four names listed, and on a hunch I called the first one. A man answered. I asked him if he knew Curtis Braatz. There was a pause. He said "Yes, he was my brother." That was a very important closure moment for me. I have kept in contact with his family, particularly his mother. She is relieved to know that after 30 years, somebody still cares.

An item of great importance to me is a Seiko watch I purchased in Vietnam. I wore it for many important occasions in my life: my marriage and each of my five daughters' births, to name a few. But eventually it broke. Many years later, on a whim, I attempted to have it repaired. I ended up consulting the Internet because it was too old for the local stores. I found a company in another state that specialized in older watches and sent the watch. About two months later, I got it back fully repaired, with a note. The repair man thanked me for the opportunity to work on such a fine watch. He didn't charge me anything because he felt that the service I had provided for the country was worth far more than the watch. That meant a lot to me.

The Vietnam War was misrepresented in the United States. This produced mixed feelings toward the returning soldiers. Some received praise, others hostility, but most were completely ignored. The opposite of love is not hate, but indifference.

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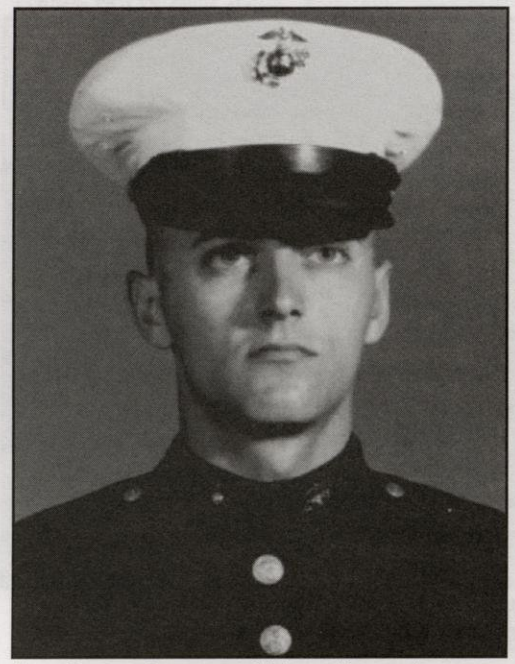
Tom Cannon

As told to Lydia Borowicz, Cedarburg High School

Mountain Warfare in Vietnam

In December 1967, Tom Cannon gave up his coveted place in the first-year class at the University of Wisconsin Law School to enlist in the Marines. A recent graduate of Marquette University, he wanted to help America honor its pledge to defend South Vietnam from Communist aggression. Cannon is proud of his service as a U.S. Marine, especially in light of the brutal human rights violations and genocidal massacres that followed in the wake of the Communist takeover in Southeast Asia.

I was attracted to the Marines because they had a reputation as America's elite warriors; they were the gold standard by which the world's military forces were measured. If I was going to go into combat, I wanted to serve with the very best. I admired the history and traditions of the Marine Corps as embodied in that famous photograph of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima during World War II.



Tom Cannon interrupted his studies at the University of Wisconsin Law School to join the Marines.

Marine Corps boot camp was the most demanding military training in the world; its purpose was to prepare us for the stresses of combat. The Drill Instructors made sure we were in great shape.

I arrived in Da Nang on Aug. 17, 1968. We were rocketed by the North Vietnamese on my very first night in country. I was assigned to fire direction control in a 155mm howitzer battery up at the Demilitarized Zone. My job was to ensure that requests for artillery fire were accurately directed to the target. Working with maps and charts, I calculated the correct calibration of the guns (range, deflection, elevation, and powder charge) to make sure that our rounds fell on enemy rather than friendly forces. Precision under stressful conditions was essential, and my work was double-checked by a colleague in the battery and then triple-checked by the battalion fire direction center in the rear.

Most of my time was spent out on remote firebases in the Truong Son mountains along the Laotian border in western Quang Tri province. The Air Force would blow off the top of a mountain by dropping a 10,000-pound "daisy cutter" bomb.

Then we Marines would be dropped by helicopter onto the mountaintop and, within a few hours, our battery was set to fire. Each operation lasted about 60 days; we spent that time in these isolated and vulnerable outposts praying that we wouldn't be overrun by the enemy. When I wasn't doing fire direction control, I filled sandbags and hauled 95-pound artillery shells from our landing zone up to the guns. At night I served on perimeter duty because our operations were conducted deep in enemy territory.

My battery was hit by artillery, rockets, mortars, recoilless rifle, and small-arms fire on numerous occasions. The artillery and rockets were the most frightening; they sounded like freight trains roaring down on us from the sky. It was traumatic to see my friends killed and wounded. The worst part of war was the gruesome things I saw in combat: blood, gore, severed body parts.

We had other things to worry about as well: heat that reached 130 degrees in the summer, monsoon rains that were nearly constant for six months of the year, malarial mosquitoes that attacked us at night, and the ubiquitous presence of rats. In Vietnam I encountered brown bears, water buffalo, a man-eating tiger, a scorpion, wild monkeys and a poisonous bamboo viper snake. I left Da Nang on Sept. 2, 1969, the day Ho Chi Minh died. The heat, stress of combat, lack of sleep, and the unchanging diet of C-rations caused my weight to drop from 185 pounds to 137; I lost 26 percent of my body weight in Vietnam and looked like a scarecrow when I returned home.

My experience in Vietnam proved exotic and maturing. The tropical jungle and mountains were very different from the topography of Wisconsin, and traditional Vietnamese society was unlike anything in America. I developed a fatalistic attitude about life because of my close brushes with death. I realized that when your time is up, there is nothing you can do to avoid dying. It doesn't matter how smart or how strong you are when that incoming shell with your name on it explodes. Facing death at a young age and dealing with forces beyond my control diminished some of the assurance I had before Vietnam. I also learned that each day is a precious gift meant to be treasured. Whenever I think of the war, I remember how grateful I am just to be alive.

Charles Queen

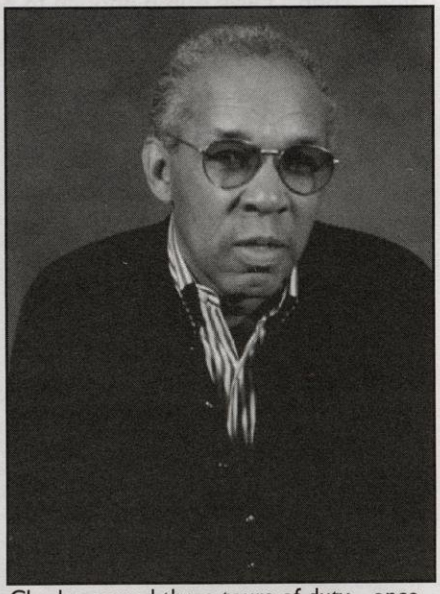
As told to Paul Bersch, Homestead High School

Meteorologist

Mr. Charles Queen served in the military from 1947 until 1970, fulfilling a childhood wish to become a soldier. He served during Korea and participated in the Vietnam War, working for the Army and his country as a truck driver and later as a meteorologist. He traveled to Germany, Japan, England, Vietnam, and the islands of the South Pacific during his military service. This is his story...

I volunteered for the Army at age 17. I always wanted to be a soldier. Most kids wanted to be a fireman, but I wanted to be a soldier. Why the Army? It seemed like the tougher branch of the service.

After basic training, I was sent to Alabama for truck driving school; I didn't know how to drive yet. Next, I was sent to Scott Air Force base in Illinois. They sent me to the South Pacific to an island named Tinian, where I transported bombs left over from WWII to be detonated. It was my first duty.



Charles served three tours of duty - once in Korea and twice in Vietnam.

In 1950 I was discharged from the Army. My friends and I started messing around with drugs, and if I hadn't rejoined in 1951, I might have ended up like them. After rejoining I became a meteorologist, a job I've continued for the last 45 years. One of the important jobs a meteorologist does is to provide weather data for the artillery. They need to know the temperature, dew point, wind speed and direction to fire accurately. I used weather balloons, slide rules and other equipment to get my measurements.

In Vietnam I didn't actually serve in a combat unit, but my commander wanted everyone from cooks on up to have experience in the bush. We'd participate in patrols, and if we saw a group of the enemy smaller than us we'd go get them, but if there were more of them than us we'd let them go.

While away I used tape recorders to stay in touch with my family. It was comforting listening to their voices. Once I got to meet them in Hawaii for eight days during my "rest and recuperation" time. Sometimes the military would fly my family out to me during leave.

In Vietnam it was too dangerous to leave camp and explore, but while I worked in less dangerous areas, I could travel around and see whatever country I was stationed in at the time.

My time in Vietnam was unique. I served two one-year tours of duty in Vietnam, and for the first three months or so, I was scared because we didn't know what would happen. The next six months we stopped caring, but the final three months we'd start being cautious again because we wanted to go home safe.

Base camps in Vietnam were sprayed with Agent Orange, which would kill everything in the campsite. It wasn't too friendly to people either; I later found out that exposure to Agent Orange gave me diabetes. Without vegetation, the ground became dusty. Everything you own is dust; it's just one dust bowl in camp. Huts for us to sleep in were made of tin, and we slept in cots. Sandbags were placed as protection for us to hide under in case of enemy fire.

We'd sleep under mosquito tents to avoid being eaten alive in our sleep, and every night the beds needed to be checked for scorpions. Vietnam has two seasons: hot and rainy. During the hot season you can't wait for the rain, and during the rainy season you can't wait for the heat. Vietnam was a beautiful country anyway, especially from the air.

One day someone's mom sent him an ice cream freezer, but it needed coarse Morton salt for it to function properly. I wrote to Morton Salt Company, telling them that we were soldiers in Vietnam, fighting for our country and so on. One day a helicopter dropped off a 500-pound pallet of Morton salt. We couldn't believe it. We had ice cream.

Every night the enemy would try to take the artillery guns, so before it got dark, everyone was allowed to fire any weapon they wanted for one minute to check that they worked. They called it the "mad minute," and it sounded like a war.

I retired from the Army in 1970. I enjoyed my time in military service; I even wanted my son to join. The military makes a man out of you, it gives you something to work for, and it straightens you out. I still call some of my friends from the service; they live across the United States now. I recommend the military to the next generation of young people.

Dr. Gregory "Sandy" Custer

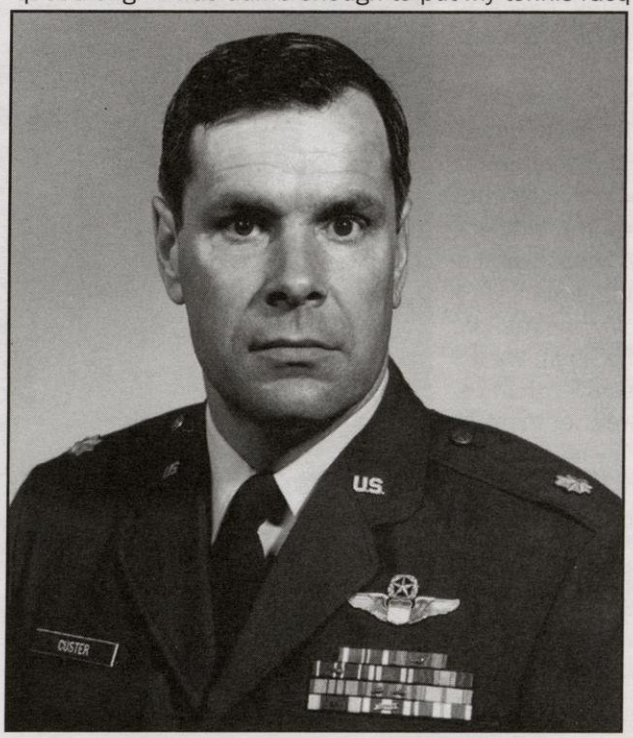
As told to Kate Hansen, Cedarburg High School

Cargo Pilot and Flight Instructor for Vietnamese Pilots

Only a few weeks out of college, Gregory Custer received his draft notice and immediately enlisted in the Air Force. While serving in Vietnam, he trained Vietnamese pilots to fly cargo planes.

I was at the University of Wisconsin, and at the time there was a heavy draft. When I graduated from college, I received my draft notice the same month. So I went to the Air Force, and at the time, they were only taking pilots, so I became a pilot even though I didn't know the difference between an elevator and an aileron.

My recruiter said, "You're going to Texas for officer training school in April. You ought to take your tennis racquet along." I was dumb enough to put my tennis racquet in my bag and head down to Texas. I started officer training school and got laughed out of the place by the upper classmen. I had a lot to learn when I went off to OTS [Officer Training School].



Dr. Custer flew as a pilot first during the Vietnam War and continued to fly as part of the Wisconsin National Guard.

I thought I avoided the war in Vietnam. I had done well in pilot training, and I was able to pick the airplane I wanted to fly. I picked a large cargo plane and flew all over the world. But two years after I started that, I was chosen to be an instructor pilot to train Vietnamese pilots to handle cargo. I ended up going to Vietnam as one of twelve instructor pilots in a flying school.

Before I went to Vietnam, I was sent to Texas for a month and a half to learn how to fly the airplanes the Vietnamese would learn how to fly. They were different airplanes than the ones I had been flying around the world.

I then went to survival training in the state of Washington. There we learned how to act in case we were taken prisoners. They put us out in the mountains of Washington, and they told us where we would be picked up ... five days later. When I finished survival training in Washington, I flew to the Philippines, and I went jungle survival school for a week. There we didn't have a long trek; we stayed two days in the jungle. At that point we were done training and headed to Vietnam. It was almost four months from when I left my other job until I arrived in Vietnam.

We were challenged to train 300 Vietnamese pilots. The first pilots that we worked with were transitioning from other airplanes; they were pilots with lots of experience. After the first 20 or so students, we began training people to fly airplanes who had literally never run a power lawnmower. It was really a challenge. By the time we trained about 60, we were down to people who could never fly an airplane.

We flew cargo, some people, food, artillery and once in a while, we would bring bodies out. Several times in the course of a year, I came back with bullet holes in the side of my airplane. One time we were on a short final to our home base. We were about a half-mile away, when a round came through the windscreen in my airplane, and it lodged right behind my head. If I hadn't been bending over, it would have hit me in the head. The mechanic dug the bullet out of the seat, drilled a hole in it, and I put it on my dog tags. It became a good luck charm for me, and I carried it for the 18 years that I flew after that.

It was an ugly war, and a lot of the criticisms from this country were valid. In general, the kids over there fighting the war were good kids, doing hard things and doing something for their country. I met and saw a lot of great people. Vietnam was a beautiful country, and I had the greatest job to see it. Overall the war made me appreciate what the people before me had done.

Since the Vietnam War, Dr. Custer has flown in the National Guard, gone to dental school and started his own practice. He currently resides in Mequon where he and his wife Jean have raised their four children.

Harvey Salger

As told to Melissa Pendergast and Callan Schoonenberg, Cedarburg High School

Forward Air Controller

When Harvey Salger realized that military service was in his future due to the Vietnam conflict, he knew right away that he did not want to be drafted into the Army. Consequently, he finished college and joined the Air Force in 1962 to become a pilot.

In order to be an officer, you had to be a college graduate. I went to school at Southern Illinois University. Because it was a state university, every man under the age of 25 had to go through ROTC. Then, after you became a junior in college, you could choose whether you wanted to get out or not. By that time, I had gotten my draft notice from the Army, and I decided that I did not want to go into the Army. So, I stayed in ROTC, joined the Air Force and became a pilot, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Flying was my first love.

After retiring from the Air Force, Harvey became a CPA.

In Vietnam, I was a Forward Air Controller. We would fly over the area, spot what we thought were targets or enemy positions then mark them. We would mark them with white phosphorus rockets. White phosphorus meant that when they would hit the ground, they put up a big white smoke. If you hit where you were aiming, then you would tell the fighters that were behind you to drop their bombs on the smoke. We flew low, over the enemy all the time. We got shot at a lot, although, it was generally with small arms like rifle fire, similar to what is used for deer hunting.

I was there for a year. I flew 382 missions, and I was lucky that I didn't get hit, at least not enough to worry, not enough to knock me down. The first and most dangerous period was when you first got there because you didn't know what you were doing. The last month you were there, was also very dangerous because you were so involved in your head in going home that you did things that were not safe anymore. You had to make sure you forced yourself to stay where you belonged during that last month. There were a lot of people who got through 11 months but not 12.

We had ridiculous rules of engagement. When we had a target, you had to throw out leaflets ahead of time saying that you were going to bomb them. If you are going to try to bomb a target, why would you tell them ahead of time? It didn't make any sense, although, the problem was that there was a lot of innocent people there too. Many times, people do not understand that in a war, innocent people get hurt more than the military. We always said it was like trying to fight a war with your hands tied behind your back.

When we were in Vietnam, we put netting over the bunks at night to keep the mosquitoes away from us, but quite frankly, it was to keep the rats off. They would run all over the netting at night, but it wasn't that bad. It was 98 degrees, and you had no air conditioning. You would go to sleep at night, and you would have to put the net down. Then, you would wake up in the morning, and everything would be wet because it was so humid. When the enemy would shoot at you, it would go "kutunk," and that's about all you could hear. Everybody would wake up right away and be on the ground. You got used to hearing what was outgoing and what was incoming.

I am glad I went to war, but I wouldn't want to do it again. If I had to, I would. I don't have any doubt about that. My concern is for future generations. I wonder if you really know how expensive freedom is. I enjoy my life, and I try not to worry too much about the stuff that I have no control over. I am very appreciative of the freedom I have. I know that the United States, no matter how many troubles we have, is the finest country by far, and no other country even comes close.

I stayed in the Air Force for 23 years. I ended up in Wisconsin because I was the commander of Air Force Recruiting for Wisconsin. After I got out of the service, I went back to school and earned a master's of science degree in taxation, which was totally different from anything that I have ever done in my life. So, now I am a CPA, and I do tax work. I still do that now. I also do wood carving as a hobby. I like to hunt and fish and do outdoors activities. Now, we have three grandchildren, two boys and a new little girl. They are wonderful.

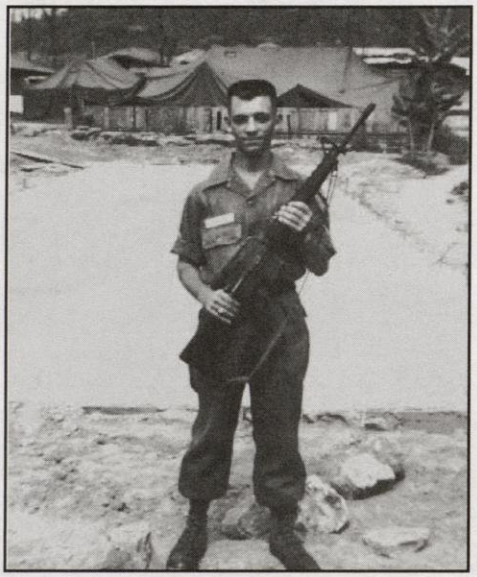
Kent Bolyard

As told to Melissa Pendergast and Callan Schoonenberg, Cedarburg High School

Prepared Travel Vouchers

Kent Bolyard enlisted in the Army in March 1966, finishing basic training just before summer. He found himself involved in Army finance. Kent survived the training and departed for Vietnam.

I trained on the M14, but I never fired at a human being because I was never in combat, but we were trained to. I didn't do too bad, having never fired a weapon before. In a war, it's either kill or be killed. Normally, I did my fighting with the typewriter. But, you never know what you're going to do in a situation like that. I am glad I never had to face it. It was the summer of 1967 when the base camp got hit. Then, I was in good shape because I was in my early twenties. But, you would have mud up to your ankles, and there was no way you could stay clean.



Kent Bolyard in An Khe, Vietnam, 1967.

My mother kept a whole mess of newspaper clippings, but I only remember some of them, like when the C130 crashed on take off. She remembers when our base camp got hit. It was on the news. They were in the car and my brother turned it off and my mother said, "Turn that back on." We were out all night. Right after that, we went on the perimeter sweep. We had an alert, and we had our assigned places on the perimeter, and we just stayed there all night. I guess one of the mortars was a direct hit on the jeep. I was pretty lucky.

You try not to get too close to people in war, especially if you were in combat because you would never know. You would learn to depend on each other. I do not stay in contact with the guys, but I would like to. I wrote home to my family-my mother, grandmother and brother, who is two years younger than me. They encouraged us to write regularly. All we had to do was write "pre-posted" where the stamp was. My parents are divorced, so my mother and my grandmother raised me. I imagine it was hard on the family at home. In Oakland, just before I boarded the plane, I called home, which I don't think I should have done, but I did. It was hard on my mom. At the time, a lot of churches, they would have prayers for some people, but they didn't mention Vietnam. My church did though, which helped a lot for my mother.

My job was to prepare travel vouchers for either PCS, which is permanent change of station, or TDY, which is temporary duty. PCS would be more or less the guys that were coming in. We would prepare travel vouchers; they would get paid for their travel. For TDY, guys went to Saigon in September and brought money back. They filled out a form stating where they went and how. In the states: what mode of transportation, the mileage. So, if you wanted to know the distance from point A to point B, they would give you the mileage.

In Vietnam, you put in long hours, working seven days a week, 10- or 12-hour days. They had a Red Cross center not too far from us, showing nightly movies. They had what I guess you could call bars, but they kind of separated the E5 and below from the staff sergeants on up. They had separate clubs for them. I was quite involved in Chapel. I did everything from playing the organ to whatever I could do, and it helped. That's what kept me from the drug and alcohol route. So many men went into drugs and alcohol, and they formed their own organizations, and they stuck by themselves. They had organized prostitution. I stayed away from that.

After Vietnam, I went to Germany for the rest of my tour. I worked in finance. It was good duty. In fact, I left the division on my birthday in October. It was a good birthday present, and I will never forget when that plane took off. It was not quiet, everyone was cheering. There are certain things that you will never forget, and that's one of them. The sound in that airplane was amazing. Seeing my family was probably the best thing when I got back from war.

After the service, I went back to work at AO Smith, which is Tower Automotive now. It was so quiet that I couldn't sleep. I was used to having artillery going off twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, and the helicopters were always taking off. You get used to that racket, and I just couldn't sleep. I joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars and about two or three years ago, I joined the American Legion Post in Cedarburg. Now, I am retired from Tower and I work at Dairy Queen in Grafton. I love it. It's fun.

Something positive that I got out of Vietnam was the sense of duty. I would do it again if I had to. You have to support your country.

Chris Kanios As told to Laurie Arendt

Patrol Duty in Vietnam

When Chris received his draft notice in 1966, he went and talked to a recruiter to see what his options were. He enlisted for three years instead of being drafted for two years. Upon arrival at boot camp, he soon found out that his expectations and reality were two different things.

I played bass in a rock and roll band at the time, the Van-tels. When I received my draft notice, I talked to the recruiting sergeant. He said I could get into the Fifth Army Band at Ft. Sheridan in Illinois. I bit it hook, line and sinker, but lo and behold, I ended up at Ft. Lewis, Wash. I never got anywhere near an Army band.

I received my highest test score for radio code. In the Army's infinite wisdom, they decided I should be a combat engineer. During basic training, that was what I trained for. I even did half of the advanced training as a combat engineer. But at that time they decided they needed company clerks more than combat engineers, so I was sent to clerk typist school and I became a company clerk in a signal battalion.

This picture was taken when Chris returned home after getting out of the Army. He was disheveled and quite tired, but glad to be home.

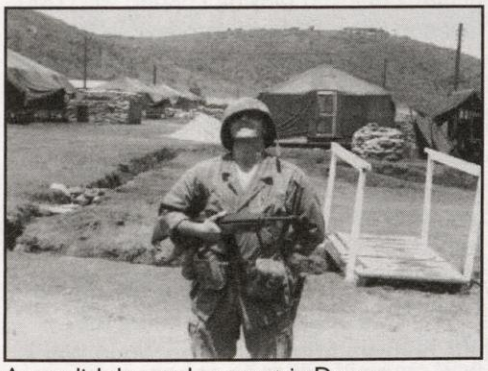
We arrived in country at Da Nang and traveled in a motorcade to Pleiku, which was our "base camp." I use that word loosely because it was just a bunch of equipment with no perimeter. During our first two weeks in base camp all we did was fill sandbags and build bunkers.

During those first two weeks, somehow or another our food supplies hadn't gotten there. All we had was Spam - Spam and bread for two weeks. They sent C-rats [rations] and the regular foods that the cooks were to prepare. Each of us received a case of C-rats. even though they were notoriously lacking in taste, they were better than Spam, which I don't like anymore.

When I got over to Vietnam, I was a company clerk for about a month, but then they decided they needed switchboard operators, which is what I became. I hated it - I didn't have the training and I didn't like running a switchboard. But they put you where they need you, and you don't really have any say in it.

Between being a switchboard operator, pulling guard duty and KP, it seemed like I was always coming off one shift and immediately going back to work. At that point, I had a bright idea. I volunteered for patrol duty, because when you came back, you didn't have to do the other jobs.

Some patrols were one-night patrols; some were three-day patrols. We would more or less patrol a different sector on each patrol to discover troop strength and troop movement, which was hard. They were sneaky little son-of-a-guns, and there were a lot of tunnels. Our patrols were basically supposed to be recon and we weren't supposed to make contact with enemy. That's not always how it worked.



A rare lighthearted moment in Dragon Mountain Base Camp.

After about six months, I was sent to the forward area at Dak To. I went up in a C-130 [airplane] with a switchboard rig, and because I had never trained on it, the captain had to help me set up. But that came after the mortar attack that was happening when I arrived. The forward area was not that far from Cambodia, and they were fighting the VC [Viet Cong] and the NVA [North Vietnamese Regulars]. We were shelled much more often up there.

I returned to our base camp about three months later, and by that time they'd built wabtocs, which were prefab buildings with corrugated roofs. After living in the forward area, those wabtocs were like the Hilton for us.

The hardest thing about the Vietnam experience was the friends that you left behind. It's something I don't think kids really understand now. When you are fighting in a war, it is just luck. If your luck isn't there, you will die. If you are lucky, you live.

As far as my military service is concerned, it did a lot to help me grow up. I don't know if it had to do with being in Vietnam or being away from home. As a veteran, I would recommend the military to any one of my kids.

Chris is Commander of V.F.W. Post 7588 and serves as District Six Adjutant and Senior Vice Commander.

Howard Hinterthuer

As told to Jenee Dellegrazio, Grafton High School

Army Medic with the 101st Airborne in Vietnam

Howard Hinterthuer was 21 years old and a senior in college when he went into the Army. He had a 2S deferment from the draft until his senior year. He lost his deferment and was shifted to 1A, which meant that he was very likely to be drafted. Instead of waiting to be drafted, he enlisted, but as a medic. After basic training, he went on for further medical training.

At that time, if you received 900 out of 1,000 points and scored well on the physical fitness test, you could attend clinical specialist school. I qualified and attended Madigan General Hospital in Ft. Lewis, Wash. I studied a number of specialty medical areas and completed advanced studies in emergency medical treatment.

Howard served as a medic in Vietnam.

In December 1969, I was sent to Phu Bai, Vietnam (I Corps), near the DMZ. I was in the 101st Airborne, Screaming Eagle Division (more commonly known among us as the "puking buzzards") Air Mobile Unit. We didn't actually parachute out of airplanes in Vietnam, but we did fly around in helicopters a lot and sometimes jumped out of them without parachutes several feet off the ground.

I had my own aid station in the artillery division, and in this mini-clinic I treated everything from bug bites and rashes to sick calls and psychological problems. Three times a week, I would perform "MEDCAPS" with the help of two translators. MEDCAPS (medical civilian assistance program) were intended to help the Vietnamese deal with things like leprosy, foliculitus and pediatric ear inflammations, which were sometimes due to bugs stuck inside the children's ears. I also performed medcaps in the Imperial capital and the Hue hospital where we attended to lepers. These particular medcaps were created by the Army in an effort to increase popularity and love for the United States. We also did medcaps in the hamlets. We occasionally encountered sniper fire traveling to and from MEDCAPS, and there were frequent rocket attacks on our base camp by both the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] and the VC.

One of my most frequent missions was as a medical non-commissioned officer on the Realistic Artillery Proficiency Evaluation (RAPE) team. We flew to fire bases up and down the Au Shaw Valley to assess many things, but my job was to inspect field sanitation and help the medics with advice and supplies. I loved flying there. From the sky you could see the explosions from combat illuminate the clouds.

Sporadically through the night on these firebases, the men would hold "Mad Minutes," in which guns were fired exuberantly in an effort to exhibit aggression, power and dominance. This was almost as terrifying as the swarms of insects that could be heard for miles. During my visits, I particularly enjoyed playing Frisbee with Don Kalso, an NFL football player prior to being drafted. But when the rainy season hit, it became impossible to transport food and supplies to the hills, and they were taken over by the enemy. Many of the men on these hills were killed or wounded.

Eventually I was able to go home. I had romanticized the departure from Vietnam, envisioning celebrations, excitement and pure bliss. Once the plane was able to leave (the monsoons postponed our take-off for days), it was anything but euphoric. As the sun went down behind the plane in a sky with a beautiful array of clouds, the inside of the plane was completely silent. I could only contemplate the symbolism of the sun and my situation, but could never sense a feeling of tranquility or resolution.

I arrived back in Ft. Lewis, where we were served a steak dinner. We were then told not to wear our uniforms due to protesters who would throw rocks at us and call us "baby killers." This was difficult for us, being the children of World War II veterans. We were taught for years about patriotic heroism from a glorified World War II perspective, and the rejection did not seem real.

I was discharged from the Army in July 1971 with an Army Commendation Medal and a Bronze Star. The medical training I received was top-notch and it served me well during my 15-year career as a nurse. Since leaving Vietnam I remained in contact with one other person who served with me. Sadly, he died at age 40. In recent years, however, I did talk with the family of a soldier I knew in Vietnam who was killed on his last mission prior to his scheduled rotation back to the world. I hope I was able to help heal his family's hearts. Like me, he was just a few years beyond boyhood.

Chuck Ellmauer

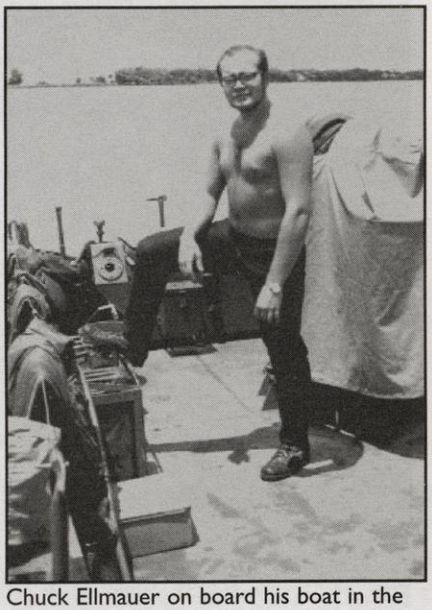
As told to Theresa O'Byrne, Port Washington High School

Gunner's Mate on the Mekong Delta

I had the privilege to interview a Vietnam veteran by the name of Chuck Ellmauer. Mr. Ellmauer served in the Navy from 1968 to 1972. He spent three years in active duty in Vietnam.

I enlisted in the Navy a few months after graduating from Cedarburg High School in 1968. I was undraftable because I am the only son but I was no better than anyone else so I enlisted in the Navy for the adventure and to get new experiences. "Join the Navy, see the world" was what they always say.

I trained in Illinois and California. They never told us how fast the boats sank when they were full of holes or how bad they run when the engines are shot out. In Vietnam I spent most of my time on the Delta area. If you find Saigon and slice South Vietnam through Saigon everything south of there was my territory.



Chuck Ellmauer on board his boat in the Delta, 1968.

In the dry season you couldn't see above the banks when standing on top of the boat and in the monsoon season you couldn't see the banks standing on the same spot. The jungle was so thick that you couldn't see five feet into it.

There were huge mosquitoes there that I swear could suck the blood out of a steer in less than 15 minutes. There were spiders as big as dinner plates and leeches that when we went into a canal covered in trees would drop off of the trees like they knew that there was warm blood underneath them. Then there were huge snakes and to this day I still hate snakes. But Vietnam was pretty and it was quiet. It was a lousy place to have a war, if there is such a thing as a good place.

As a gunner's mate I shot the big guns. Mostly twin 50-caliber machine guns. I was the highest up on the boat, and the biggest target. Our boats were 50 feet long and eight feet wide. Our jobs were 24/7. There was no "safe" area, only "safer" areas. When you were on a boat you could run but when you were on a base they knew where you were.

I met Admiral Zumalt, Chief of Naval Operations in Vietnam. I met him in Cambodia as he was passing around ice cream to the men. I asked him, as politely as I knew how, to leave because he was a danger to himself and to the men. If they knew that he was there we would all be in trouble, but he left shortly after I talked to him.

There were many ways that we stayed in touch with people at home. We wrote a lot of letters. During my first tour I visited a Mars station and I was able to call home. I had three minutes and was radioed into Pfeiffer's in Saukville and they got hold of my mother. That was the only time I ever talked to anyone from home the whole time I was in Vietnam.

We also got a lot of care packages from home. We always needed the little things like Chapstick and 6/12 bug spray. We could never have enough 6/12 bug spray. For entertainment we killed snakes, played card games, listened to the radio and wrote lots of letters. It might take a week for a letter to get home but could take months for us to get letters. Sometimes you didn't hear from home for a long time then one day you'd get 10, 20 letters from home.

As soldiers we were not allowed to feel anything politically about the war. The media abused the situation and talked about it everyday and every night. They only publicized the negative things like casualties. If 1,000 troops were in battle and five soldiers died, they only talked about those five. The other 995 soldiers who were lucky enough to get out alive were never mentioned. It was our job to fight for the country. We could not voice any anti-war sentiment because we were in the middle of it. We fought so that the kids back home could complain and hold protests, because they were free.

I once tried to go to the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C., but I couldn't do it. I have men on the Wall. This made me want to bring the Wall to me, to my home. I worked two years to get the Wall to Port Washington. I had help from literally thousands of people, and finally in 1998 my dream was realized. More than 50,000 people came to see the Wall. Having the Wall at home gave me a chance to finally say good-bye to my men.

I wasn't the only one who couldn't face my monsters. We paid our respects to everyone who had ever served and that was the reason I brought the wall to Port. That was the best thing I could have done for my country, and myself.

MSG Joe Josephson, ret. With Laurie Arendt

U.S. Army Special Forces Green Berets

In putting together this book, I was contacted by Cedarburg veteran Skip Volkmann. He told me, "You must ask Joe Josephson to be in the book." I am happy to report that Mr. Josephson, a former Cedarburg native now living in Virginia, indeed agreed to be part of our project. This is his story.

I enlisted in the Army for the First Infantry Division in Germany. I enlisted because, when I was young, the servicemen of WWII were my heroes and I wanted to be one of them.

I joined the Army in 1948, retired in 1969 and spent most of my military career with the U.S. Army Special Forces Green Berets. Prior to this, however, I had served with the Fifth Regimental Combat Team in Korea. When I returned, they were recruiting for Special Forces, so I volunteered.

MSG Joe Josephson, ret. joined the Army because the men of WWII were his heroes and he wanted to be just like them.

I discovered that the organization and mission were different in the Green Berets than in a normal infantry unit. We were cross-trained in operations, weapons, communications, medical and demolitions. I particularly enjoyed working with a small Special Forces team of 12 men.

When I first went into the Army, the WWII veterans told me not to get close to anyone. I held that belief while I was with the Fifth Regimental Combat Team during the Korean War. When I joined Special Forces, I found it to be much different than the regular infantry because of the smallness of the teams and because we were often operating in such isolated areas. We had to depend on each other more so, and a special bond was naturally developed.

In Vietnam I was with SOG (CCN) whose mission was long-range reconnaissance into Laos and Cambodia. Seventeen U.S. Special Forces soldiers were killed on Aug. 23, 1968, in the top secret Command and Control North (CCN) outpost in Da Nang when three North Vietnamese Army (NVA) sapper companies executed a well-planned night attack, featuring a daring infiltration into camp. It was the heaviest Special Forces' loss in a single incident in Special Forces history. I also served in Special Forces camps at Aro, Ha Thanh and Kham Duc. These were the in the First Corps Area during border surveillance.

I served in Vietnam as part of Special Forces. It was different than my experiences in Korea, where I spent most of my time above the 38th Parallel around the Punch Bowl Area. The countries were different because of their weather and terrain, but the tactics were also different. In Korea, there was a main line of resistance, and in Vietnam there was none. They were two different wars.

My main memory of 21 years in the military is the bond that is created between those who face combat together. Words cannot express nor do they seem adequate when one tries to face combat together.

The memories of Korea and Vietnam have faded over the years yet you always remember these friends even though you may have been separated for years. It's hard to express how you feel. It is a feeling inside that I believe only soldiers can understand.

After I left the service, I spent 10 years at Augusta Military Academy (AMA) as the Senior Army Instructor and Head Football and Basketball Coach. After leaving AMA, I went to Miller School for 13 years as Commandant, Athletic Director, Head Football and Basketball Coach. After I retired from my coaching career, I did volunteer work with the Virginia Military Institute basketball program.

I went into coaching because I had always enjoyed athletics. The planning, discipline and organization that I had in the Army helped me to become a good coach. I also wanted to be like my Cedarburg High School Coach Vince Cibik. He was my idol.

Mr. Josephson earned a number of decorations, including two Bronze Stars of Valor, the Purple Heart, Air Medal and Army Commendation medal and the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Master Parachutist Badge and 19 additional service medals and citations. He and his wife, Jo, have three adult children and they have been parents to four foster children. Their son, Mike, retired as a Navy Senior Chief Air Traffic Controller.

Ray Clausing

As told to Jesse Jastram, Homestead High School

Member of the 173rd Airborne in Vietnam

Ray Clausing served in Vietnam with A Co., Fourth Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade in 1968 and 1969. The following is an account of one of his life-threatening experiences.

We were humping heavy in the boonies for quite some time when we were assigned to secure the perimeter of a fire-support base that included six 105 howitzers and a full crew of artillerymen. This duty for us seemed easier because we stayed put and were resupplied with C-rations, etc. We were able to get mail and even write a letter. When the "slicks" [resupply choppers] came in we would run up to them and give our letter to the door gunner; sometimes they would have a pouch hanging on their gun for our mail. That was the only way to mail a letter from the field.

That raining, foggy night around 3 a.m., it sounded like we were getting hit with artillery that was landing inside our perimeter. Most of the guys headed for their foxholes. I stayed out and took cover next to a bunker. Trying to see through the smoke, I hear someone holler, "They're inside the perimeter!" The Viet Cong got one of the guns, our communications bunker, command post and most of the foxhole positions on one side of the perimeter.

(left) Ray in training as part of the 173rd Airborne. Helicopters were used in Vietnam, making troop movement safer and jumps were not needed.
(below) Two examples of propaganda leaflets dropped by the Vietnamese Government/Allied Forces, which included American Forces.

CHIẾU HỒI

BINH SĨ TRONG HÀNG NGŨ VIỆT CỘNG

SAFE-CONDUCT PASS TO BE HONORED BY ALL VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND ALLIED FORCES

MANG TẤM GIẤY THÔNG HÀNH
nầy về công tác với Chánh Phủ
Quốc Gia các bạn sẽ được :
- Đón tiếp tử tế
- Bảo đảm an ninh
- Đãi ngộ tương xứng

NGUYỄN VĂN THIỆU

TẤM GIẤY THÔNG HÀNH NẦY CÓ GIÁ TRỊ VỚI TẤT CẢ CƠ - QUAN QUÂN CHÍNH VIỆT - NAM CỘNG - HÒA VÀ LỰC - LƯỢNG ĐỒNG - MINH.

The hill of this fire base had a long, low plateau on one side with heavy trees at the bottom, which went up to the next ridge. This is where we thought these human bombs (the VC blew themselves up) came from. In preparing for a second wave, the artillery unit lowered the barrels of the 105s and proceeded to fire a new, special round developed for the close combat of Vietnam. It was called a "beehive round." This round had about 700 one-inch-long darts with three little fins. It would definitely slow down humans at point-blank range.

It was hard to call in for air support with our communications bunker out. The only radio we had was a PRC25 to relay messages to another infantry company farther away. When the sun finally came up, we found 13 VC bodies inside our perimeter, all about 13 to 15 years old. They had tourniquet wires tied around their armpits and legs, tied real tight to shut off the blood flow so they could keep crawling at you, even if you blew their limbs off. They carried hand grenades and AK47.

They also had very few items of clothing on, just a rag tied around their crotch. They all wore satchel charges, which looked like a flour sack tied around their waists with explosives and a string to pull for a trigger.

We had about 10 killed and 40 wounded. All the officers of the infantry unit and the artillery unit were gone. The highest remaining ranks on the hill were a buck sergeant or E5. We checked out that valley and found about 60 enemy ruck sacks, all bloody but the VC had dragged the bodies away.

Thank the Lord, had it not been for the beehive round, we could have easily been overrun. We fired those rounds for about 20 minutes. Because our company had lost all its upper command and was way down in total manpower, Charlie Co., which was also down on men, came and joined us. The next day we went on heliborne assault to a heavily invested VC area. B-52 bombers pounded the area before we got there. Our job was to check out the area. The bombs left craters 20 feet deep and 30 feet in diameter, with dust and small fires everywhere. It was very hard to walk in and it smelled.

We moved from this area at night and were ambushed by VC with artillery, machine guns, etc. A grenade landed nearby and wounded eight of us. When the dust-off [medivac chopper] came in, I looked at where I was lying and thought if I would have reached out with my right hand, I could've caught that round. The Lord helped me through that one. I received my Purple Heart, spent four months in a hospital in Japan and volunteered to go back to 'Nam to finish my tour.

Now when I hear the "Star Spangled Banner" I still see the rockets' red glare from the bombs bursting in air. God Bless America!

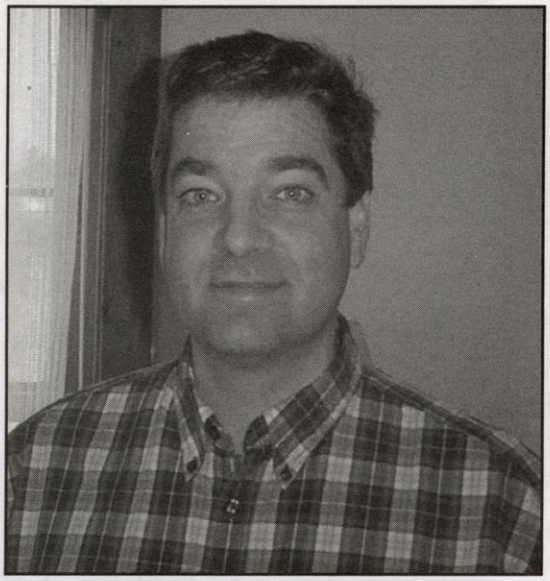
Theodore "Ted" Baker

As told to his nephew Aaron Garoutte, Cedarburg High School

Hospital Headquarters Company Commander

Former Mequon resident Theodore "Ted" Patrick Baker enlisted in the Army Reserve to help pay for his college tuition. Ted became the commander of a combat support hospital in the Medical Service Corps. One night he received a call, ordering his unit to Fort Ord in California where they would prepare for Desert Storm.

Once we arrived in Fort Ord, Calif., we all basically had to re-learn how to handle people who had come into contact with biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. We had to learn what to do if their clothes or skin were contaminated and how to protect ourselves from becoming infected. We never thought any modern nation would use such a weapon on other human beings. We had 15 stations (in which we learned the proper procedures for handling patients suspected of being exposed to chemical and biological weapons) a day that we had to pass. It was hard, but by the end people really understood how to deal with a "chemical" patient.



During Desert Storm, Ted helped wounded Iraqi soldiers, many of whom were forced to fight.

We used a rubber suit with charcoal masks and gloves. We then would have to strip the patient and spray him with a mixture of water, detergent and bleach. You couldn't forget that they were patients, and there was most likely something else wrong with them; they've been hit with shrapnel or a bomb exploded and they got glass in their leg. The training also helped to calm people's nerves about what they were about to do, although some were still scared. I remember one big guy, 6'5" 300 pounds, who shouted back at me when I gave him an order, and instead of really coming down hard on him like they train you to, I looked him in the eye and saw he was scared out of his mind. So I pulled him aside and talked to him for about 20 minutes and calmed him down. After that he was one of my best soldiers throughout the whole war. It was really rewarding to see this guy become part of the solution and not a problem.

During the war, events ran smoothly. Most of the people we treated were Iraqi soldiers who were forced to fight. They had so few supplies, that after the U.S. bombings, some were drinking oil and break fluid just to get some fluid in them. All of them, for the most part, enjoyed their stay at our hospital and were sad to leave. The people we treated at our hospital loved it so much because they probably had more luxuries at our hospital than they had at home. Many of them had soda for the first time with us. The only problems we had were with some of the top Iraqi military officials who just caused problems the whole time. Luckily we didn't treat many of them.

One of the scariest things I did was to go out ahead of the front lines and set up the stakes for where the hospital was going to be. I had to figure out where we were going to get our water, how we were going to clean it, and what we were going to do with used or "brown water" as we called it.

I took a team of three people in a helicopter with me. We had a little UH-1 helicopter with a very experienced pilot, but we were still defenseless. The three of us were going to quickly stake out this hospital and then get out of there as fast as we could. I had 500 rounds of ammunition on me, about 20 hand grenades. We just didn't know what would be out there; they couldn't tell us. Thank goodness one of the guys was a Green Beret, who decided to go back to school to be a pharmacist. He was my head security officer. The other guy, my first sergeant, was an accountant, a great guy, but you know, an accountant. Thank goodness for the Green Beret. None of us got any sleep the night before. I remember a guy scheduled to go with me said, "I don't want to go." I said, "Look, I have a family, and I'm going anyway. I wouldn't ask you to do anything I wouldn't do myself. Don't worry; it's fine." We went down there, laid out the stakes and left. The Iraqis didn't try to blow up our chopper. Everything went fine.

After the war, Ted was discharged. He currently lives in Batavia, Ill., where he and his wife of seven years are raising three boys: five-year-old Patrick, three-year-old Christopher and one-year-old Stephen.

Doug Arendt

As told to Collin Schaefer, Grafton High School

Military Policeman

Mr. Arendt joined the United States Army for very specific reasons. When he had finished his high school career he had no money for college. Wanting to be either a policemen or a music teacher he decided to join the Army to, one, get money for college, and two, advance in a possible law enforcement career after service.

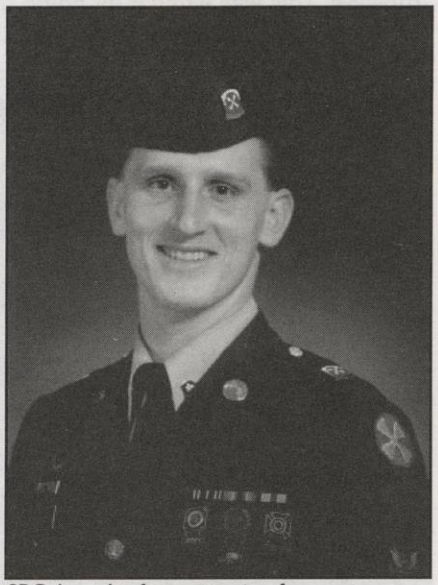
During my service time I was able to see more of the world than more people see in a lifetime. When I first joined the service my first stop was Alabama for boot camp. At the recruitment center, they asked for volunteers to go to Korea, so I did for my first year of service.

During my eight years of service, I got to experience some things most people can only dream about. I swam in the Olympic Pool in Seoul during a SWAT team training exercise for the 1988 Summer Olympics. That day is an entire story all by itself.

I experienced Hurricane Hugo's destruction and devastation in the Virgin Islands because our company was sent their to relieve the civilian police officers. Although all of these things are not positive, and I assure you there are many more, I did something many only think about and for that I have achieved an ultimate goal.

After I was discharged from the Army, I joined the 32nd Military Police Co., which is part of the Wisconsin Army National Guard. A few months after I joined, we were activated in support of Operation Desert Shield. The funny thing is that the Army company I'd been discharged from when I left Ft. Polk, La., the 258th MP Co., was never activated and stayed in the United States.

I traveled many places but one place in particular sticks out in my mind: Saudi Arabia. It was dry, and hot and the country smelled. When we arrived, we entered yet another receiving station, which was much like a small city. We then got our camp assignment, which was about 12 miles from the Kuwaiti border. It was sand as far as you could see, for miles and miles, nothing but sand.



SPC Arendt after returning from a one-year assignment in Korea, 1989.

A freehand drawing done by an Iraqi POW. The prisoner approached Doug during food distribution and was looking for something to trade. Doug happened to have his Walkman and the Madonna tape in his pocket.

When we got to our camp we had to dig bunkers. I, being one of the bigger guys in our platoon, did a lot of the digging, one pickaxe in each hand swinging like a machine. We also had to dig many other things such as holes for latrines and showers for our entire platoon to fit in.

Our assignment was to create, maintain and man a prisoner camp. We had 16,000 prisoners of war, including some Republican Guards. For the most part the prisoners were content to be there. One prisoner knew how to draw, and he drew two pictures for me in exchange for the inner sleeve of my Madonna "Immaculate Collection" tape. Remember, this was the 1990s.

As I said earlier, I had wanted to be a policemen but one memorable moment in Saudi made me change my mind. Over a berm, a sand hill was our garbage site. I was homesick and so I wanted to be alone to remember and reflect. I started singing to myself and that's the moment when I realized I would go home and change my college major from police science to music education.

I never regret joining the Army and enjoyed serving my country, however it did have a definite end for me. I served my time and did what I had to do and did it well. I rose to my expectations as well as those of my superiors. Many young people believe the Army is all about shooting and killing people. This is not true. I luckily never had to draw my weapon during my service. It is never anything to look forward to. I also never saw any direct combat during my service.

For me there was life after the Army, I did it to help me later in life, paying for my college. It was a positive experience and I urge young people not to rule it out as an option.

Lynn Fyhrlund

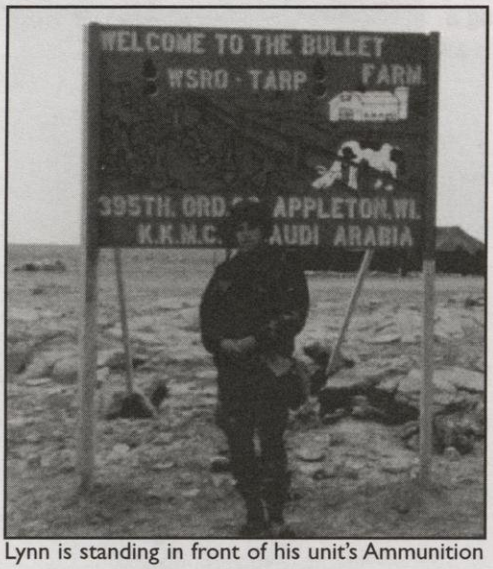
Interviewed by Heather Erickson, Ozaukee High School

Ammunition Specialist in Desert Storm

I interviewed Lynn Fyhrlund who served in Desert Storm in the Army Reserves as an Ammunition Specialist in the 395th Ordnance Co.

I left on Jan. 8, 1991 from Volk Field in Wisconsin and landed in Belgium, where we sat on the plane for five hours. Then we landed in King Fahed Airport north of Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Upon landing, we were informed by the military personnel running the airfield that if we heard a siren, we were to don our gas masks and clear the runways. This was when it hit home that this was for real.

From here, we were shipped to Khobar Towers where we had to spend the night in the parking garage. In the morning, we got our first meal which, I believe, consisted of eggs, goat's milk, and a little bit of ham. Then we actually got to go into Khobar Towers where we stayed for a week. While we were there, we were able to pick up our unit's equipment (vehicles, tents, etc.) that came by ship across the ocean.



Lynn is standing in front of his unit's Ammunition Supply Point (ASP) in Saudi Arabia.

In the early morning hours of January 17, we were awakened by our Commander telling us to put on our chemical suits. I began listening to the radio when there was a break in it, and they said that there were reports of possible bombing in Baghdad. They then said they would go back into music until more information was received. I can remember they then played Mötley Crüe's "Same Old Situations" and then they then broke off again to a news report saying that the war was actually starting. Then I witnessed the first actual SCUD missile interception, which happened by a Patriot missile in Daharan.

On January 19, we left Khobar Towers and went to King Kahlid Military City, which was built for war situations. It is 42 miles south of Hafir-al-Batin. We replaced an Ordnance Company at Theater Storage Area 4 (TSA4). We built bunkers, set up tents and put up concertina wire. My job here was an Ammunition Specialist. We basically would receive, issue and store ammunition. In the end, it became the fourth largest open-area ammunition storage site in the history of the United States military. It covered 54 square miles of rocky desert with 360 ammunition storage pads. We also had some problems here. There were approximately seven inches of rain in January, which turned the sand into quicksand. This made it hard to drive the big forklifts.

We didn't have much to do when we were not working ... so we made our own fun. We played cards and volleyball, lifted weights and played on our Game Boys. On Feb. 28, 1990 at 8 a.m., we heard that a cease fire was going to happen at noon. From that date until early April, I assisted in the turn-in of ammunition from combat units leaving the theater of operations.

Not going anywhere for awhile? Fyhrlund wasn't ... atop this disabled tank north of Kuwait City.

In April, I joined a task force in Kuwait, Task Force RIEM (Rehabilitation of Iraqi Equipment and Munitions). We assisted in the gathering of Iraqi munitions from the deserts of Kuwait. When we were pulling out of northern Kuwait, we had all kinds of extra water, so we loaded up a flatbed truck and a five-ton truck. We took the water to a Kurdish refugee camp at Safwan, Iraq. All the kids at the refugee camp came running up to the truck wanting water. They began pulling at my shirt and a Red Cross worker came with a broom and smacked them all away. The Red Cross worker then explained to the Kurdish people in the camp that they needed to figure out how to equally distribute the water and store the rest of it.

Around June 14, 1991, we were able to go on R&R in Bahrain on a cruise ship. Specialist Carl Zabel, a good friend of mine, stayed back because he wasn't feeling good. While all of us were enjoying the ship, Carl sickened and was hospitalized. He was diagnosed with pneumonia. He ended up dying, and I was sent home to be a pall-bearer for his funeral on July 4. I stayed at Ft. McCoy after this, and assisted in the recovery of personnel from Saudi Arabia until my unit came home. I never went back overseas, and my unit came home on Aug. 24, 1991.

Susan Samson

As told to Courtnie Paulus, Ozaukee High School

Assistant operations officer in Desert Storm

Susan M. Samson joined the U.S. Army as a way to venture from her small hometown in Wisconsin. She joined mostly out of curiosity to experience different culture groups and ethnic backgrounds. During her time in the Army, she got to travel and see the world and gained extensive leadership training and skills. She also acquired an unquestionable appreciation for the military and our country. She still remains under Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). Susan is currently a manager at Allen-Edmonds Shoe Corporation. She is also a member of the VFW Post 5373 and the American Legion Post 412.

I attended the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, where I was a member of the ROTC Department. I was active duty for about nine years. Throughout my career in the military, I was able to travel and see the world, which was one of my major goals after completing college. By participating in the military, I felt I had the best opportunity to achieve that goal.

I was a commissioned officer, which led me to be assigned to the Signal Corps. I was able to see various countries through the Signal Corps. I traveled to Germany, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia (during the Persian Gulf War). I had six major assignments starting right after college. I was able to get leadership experience. During my first assignment with the 26th Signal Battalion, I was the leader of my platoon and also was the only female in the platoon. Initially, I got to experience a leadership position, which was really fun. During my second assignment with the 210th Field Artillery Brigade in Germany, I was able to experience another unit mainly dominated by men. However, it was a great experience to be in a combat arms unit. My next assignment led me to South Korea. I spent 12 months there, but it was a fantastic experience to see the different cultural aspects of the country. The landscape was beautiful and very different from that of other countries I had been to so far.

Susan Samson of Port Washington.

My fourth assignment took me back to Germany. Here I was the Battalion Logistics Officer where I was basically responsible for logistics, maintenance, and transportation within a battalion. I spent about two years there. It was a different type of Signal Unit because here we had the responsibility of maintaining fixed station signal equipment or satellite communication towers.

From there, I was notified of the Desert Storm operation and was deployed to support that mission. I was assigned to the 6th Signal Command when I arrived in Saudi Arabia. Here my job position was an assistant operations officer. I helped with planning, executing, and monitoring communications during the Persian Gulf War. I was located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in a small residential area. It was beautiful and was built for the Bedouins, or homeless people of the desert. They were built to house these people; however, the village was new and empty so this is where we were housed. While we were in this city, we made sure we abided by the customs of the people living there. By this I mean wearing the traditional robe attire and the women covering their faces. I spent about six months here.

A unique experience I encountered in Riyadh was when I was eating with a Saudi family that lived there and the women were not allowed to come in and eat with us. They cooked the food for the guests and remained in the kitchen until we were done eating our meal. Only after we were done were they able to come out and introduce themselves. Immediately after though, they returned to the kitchen and were allowed to eat our leftovers only. It was just another culture I was able to see while in the military.

After Desert Storm, my final assignment was back in Germany again. Here I was assigned to the 22nd Signal Brigade. One position I maintained there was an Installation Director or City Administrator. This was an interesting position since I was in charge of all community operations and functions.

Overall, my experiences in the military were great ones that I would do again given the chance. It was a great opportunity for me to travel and be able to get out and enjoy the cultural diversity of the world. I enjoyed every moment of my time in active duty and I acquired many skills that I have used throughout my time after duty.

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Helen Berndt Retzer

Interviewed by Brad Bannon and David Miller, Ozaukee High School

Aerospace Physiology Support Specialist

Helen Retzer enlisted into the Air Force after graduating from Port Washington High School. Her job in the Air Force during Desert Shield and Desert Storm was a support officer involved with aerospace physiology working with the U-2 flights.

When I was in eighth grade in Port Washington, I found out exactly what I wanted to do. One of my teachers, Bruce Kehl, would often talk about his military experiences, and that's when it really clicked for me. I didn't know which branch of the military I would serve in, but I didn't want to go into the Army. During my senior year of high school, I enlisted in the Air Force under the delayed enlistment program.

I went into the Air Force under the "general program." I would be given a job when I finished basic training. Most recruits were given jobs that I didn't necessarily want: cooks, security police, etc. I was fortunate to be assigned as an Aerospace Physiology Specialist, and was sent on for four weeks of technical school at Brooks Air Force Base in Texas.

Helen finished basic training in 1991.

During technical training, I learned how to run and be a team inside the hyperbaric chamber (simulated dive chamber). The chamber was used for treating medical problems, such as the "bends." We would go down to a certain depth (i.e., 60 feet) and we would stay there for a certain amount of time, following a chart for coming back up. It was similar to diving in water, but there was no water. The chamber had a large oxygen concentration and pressure. The further down we went, the more oxygen it had.

We were also taught the hypoberic chamber, which is used for simulating altitude. Our training and role with the hypoberic chamber was similar to the hyperbaric chamber. We would teach pilots about the effects of altitude and how to recognize symptoms of hypoxia, which is a lack of oxygen. When the pilots fly at high altitudes, they typically have a pressurized cabin so they don't need oxygen masks, which is similar to what we experience on a commercial airline. But if the military pilots lose pressurization, they needed to know how to identify it.

We also had to learn and later teach how to do parachute landing falls (PLFs). Depending on where we were stationed, there was a possibility that we would be teaching parachute jumping and parasailing.

I was assigned to Beale Air Force Base in California, and my job required me to work with the U-2 crews. Among other tasks, we dressed pilots in their pressure suits and tested their performance. We would also hook them up to a portable oxygen tank and take them out to the flight line. We would also check out everything, including their seat kit, parachute and radio. After the flight, we would recover the plane, unhook the pilot and bring him back to the Physiological Support Division to undress him and take the suit for a postflight check. We also did the training with the hyperbaric and hypobaric chambers, as well as a vertigo-simulated cockpit.

Helen practices suiting up a pilot.

When I completed my training, I was sent to some of the most amazing parts of the world, including Saudi Arabia, Korea and the Mediterranean. Saudi Arabia was a very hard place to adapt to because it was just so different than anything I'd ever seen. When I went out in public, I had to wear an "abya," which is a black robe that went to mid calf. I was not required to cover my face.

During my time in the Air Force, I found out what I was really all about. The true me came out, and I am very glad that I was able to travel to different parts of the world to experience many different things. With these experiences, my life was shaped, and I became a much better person. Someday I hope that I can have a positive influence on someone else like Bruce Kehl had on me.

Helen now lives in Cedar Grove with her husband, Brian, who spent two years in the Army, and their two children, Elliot and MaryJo. Brian's military separation date was one day after Helen's, and they both returned home in September 1994. They "met" each other on Thanksgiving 1994, though they had been in the same graduating class, and were married in 1995.

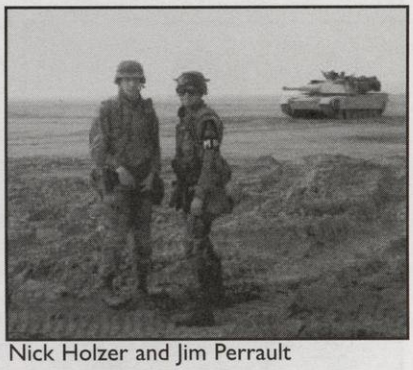
Nick Holzer

As told to Kristin Schouten, Homestead High School

Military Policeman in Desert Shield and Desert Storm

Nick Holzer served from 1988 to 1992, including during Desert Storm. He joined the Army when he was 17 and served in countries such as Germany, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait.

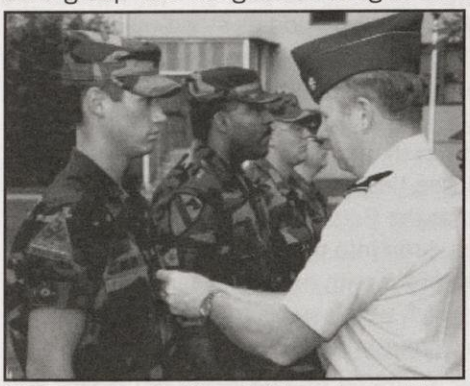
One day I just decided I was going to join the Army. I knew I didn't want to go to college, and I had to do something. I chose the Army because my father also served in the Army and I wanted to be a military policeman. During my first few days of boot camp, I felt that this experience was going to be kind of easy. At first we were not intimidated by our drill sergeants because they were very relaxed and nice with us at the reception station. However, as soon as I arrived at my training company I was bombarded from all sides with drill sergeants yelling and screaming orders. It was no longer as easy as we had expected; our feelings changed in a matter of 12 hours. During basic training we had to pass a physical fitness test; this included the most sit-ups and pushups we could do in two minutes, and a two-mile run. We were divided into age groups; this told us how much we had to do for the test. We had a certain weight we had to maintain according to our height; if this wasn't done we would be put into the "Fat Boy Club."



Nick Holzer and Jim Perrault during Desert Storm.

After basic training I had nine weeks of schooling. For my first assignment I was stationed with my platoon at a nuke depot in California, my platoon and a couple of others were stationed there to protect the site. For my next job I went to Germany where I was assigned to the 503rd MP Co. with the Third Armored Division. I did patrol work, field duty and, for six months, was assigned as as a bodyguard for a general.

When we were assigned to go into Saudi, we first landed in a harbor in Saudi Arabia right below Kuwait. We then moved through the Saudi desert around Kuwait and invaded Iraq. My platoon's mission was to capture enemy prisoners of war and secure them in a cage, which was made up of razor wire strung around in circles attached to posts in the ground. The war only lasted 100 hours; I was awake for 96 of those hours. During this time we had one group inside the cage doing the paperwork for each prisoner, one group assigned to area security and the third group was assigned to bring in the new prisoners. My platoon alone brought in more than 3,000 prisoners.



Nick receives the Kuwaiti Liberation medal.

Once our platoon ended up forward in the battlefield with the scout vehicle; we had actually driven too far up. My platoon and I called our Lieutenant to explain the situation; he then called up the Major to assess the situation. In the end we set up the cage right in the middle of the battle.

Life in the Army consisted of bad food, combat, humorous moments and practical jokes. The food was tasteless. Since we were out in the middle of nowhere we had almost the same thing every day. If we became friends with a cook then we could trade them for some better food. The only shortage we had was when we ran out of food and we couldn't feed all the prisoners. Soon the British came in with crackers and sardines for them.

My friends and I would play lots of practical jokes on each other; for instance, we would fill up people's boots or helmets with sand or if there was somebody we knew was a sound sleeper, we would carry him out into the night on his cot so he would wake up outside. Another event that was not funny at the time but seems funny now happened at night when we drove into an area with blinking lights. We figured it was a just a landing strip, as it turned out we drove right into a mine field. It took us over two hours to back each HMMWV out one by one. We actually ended up driving through another mine field another day. While on patrol, we happened to come across a Patriot battery. Even though they were happy to see us, they told us we were probably the luckiest guys out there because we just drove through a mine field to get to them. We were very careful to drive out the same way we came in.

After my short four years in the Army, I moved back home to Grafton. I joined the Grafton Volunteer Fire Department where I am still a firefighter/EMT. I finished my Associate's Degree in Police Science and I work for the Sheriff's Department, where I am also a member of the SWAT team. Being in Desert Shield/Desert Storm took me away from so many everyday things, like the smell of fresh-cut grass or a home-cooked meal. I loved my time in the Army and the people in it. If I had the chance to do it all over again, I'd do it in heartbeat.

Paul "Butch" Tutas

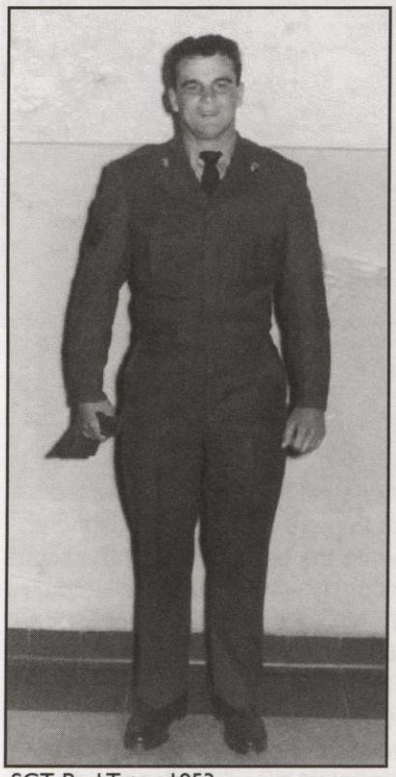
As told to Matt Andris,
Port Washington High School

Radiation Test Subject and Member of the Rhine Rhinos

Paul Tutas graduated from Port Washington High School in 1950. Shortly after his graduation he worked at several odd jobs, including a deliveryman, and working at a country club. After getting laid off as a milk deliveryman he decided to enlist in the U.S. Army.

I decided to enlist because the Korean War had started and I thought it was my patriotic duty. I enlisted in December of 1950, was sent to Ft. Sheridan in Illinois, and then shortly thereafter I was shipped off to Fort McArthur in California for basic training. Boot camp wasn't that hard; playing sports in high school had kept me in good shape. It was a lot of running and marching, which wasn't that difficult.

After basic training I left Fort McArthur and was assigned to a Quartermaster Detachment at Fort Worden, Wash. I remember the large guns that protected the country's west coast against invasion. At Fort Worden I was attached to an amphibious support regiment.



SGT Paul Tutas, 1953.

Shortly after I arrived, I was assigned to be a clerk typist. It was interesting because when I took typing tests in high school, I would end up with a minus typing speed because I was a terrible typist. In fact, after I came home from the service, I went to Spencerian Business School and I had to cheat to make 40 words a minute.

After I became a typist, I was promoted from Private to Corporal. In March of 1951, I was transferred to Camp Desert Rock in Nevada. There I was assigned to Operation Tumbler-Snapper, a series of nuclear bomb tests in the Frenchman Flat and Yucca Flat in the deserts of Nevada. I was involved in four test bomb drops.

I was used to test how radiation affected soldiers in combat. I was given a piece of film to put in my jacket to test the radiation and was sent in as close as three miles from ground zero. The "higher ups" told me to cover my neck and back and stay down, turn around and cover my eyes. Even after doing that, I could still see the light from the blast. One of my buddies stood up after the initial blast, which contained extreme heat, and he was knocked on his back by the second blast. After the bomb drop, the commander marched the troops through Ground Zero.

To date, people still ask me if I glow in the dark.

While at Camp Desert Rock, I had free time to do as I pleased. My buddies and I traveled to Las Vegas and stayed at the Golden Nugget, which is still in downtown Las Vegas. On one of my trips, I ran into movie star Constance Moore at the Flamingo and had a picture taken of me with her on my lap. On another trip to Vegas, I got to see Tempest Storm, a stripper with a 41-inch bust, which was insured for $1,000,000.

After I finished with Operation Tumbler-Snapper, I was transferred to Germany in 1952. I was glad to get out of Washington. I had volunteered to go to Korea but I ended up in Germany. There I was assigned to the 36 Engineer Parts Supply Unit, a supply unit similar to the one I was in at Fort Worden in Washington. I received the occupation medal for World War II in Germany.

While in Germany, I also joined a base football team, the Rhine Rhinos. I was placed on temporary duty, and went around to all the military bases in Germany. When I was in the league, I played against Bob Toneff, an All American from Notre Dame and later an All Pro for the San Francisco 49ers.

I was discharged from the Army as a sergeant in January of 1954. I joined the American Legion and remained very involved in it after leaving the Army. I have been the Sergeant in Arms, Finance Officer, and the Post Commander.

Mr. Tutas is currently Post Commander of the American Legion in Port Washington. His time in the Army has helped him in the Legion by teaching him regimentation, office procedure and accounting. He currently resides in Port Washington, where he lives with his wife, Bev, who was also his high school sweetheart.

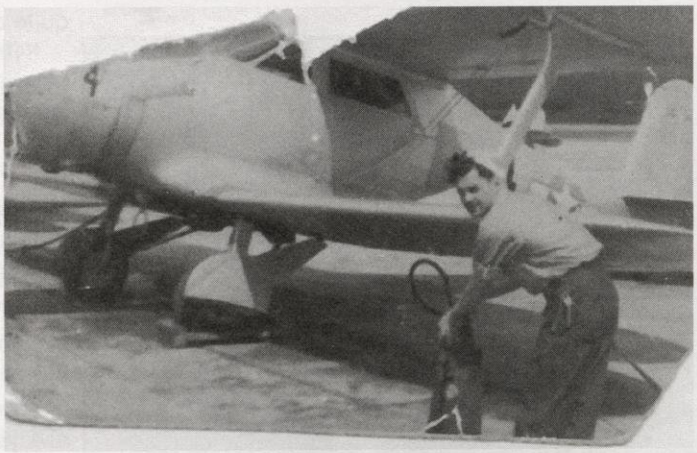
Max Ruffert

As told to Lydia Geis, Grafton High School

Third Class Petty Officer in the Navy

Max Ruffert was born in Milwaukee. He was given five deferments before he was drafted in 1943. He served in the Navy for two years as a Third Class Petty Officer. He was stationed in Norman, Okla., for one year and at an air base in Livermore, Calif., before coming back to Milwaukee in 1946. Max was offered a promotion to Second Class, but he decided to stay home and work at Milwaukee Gear, where he retired after 45 years of service.

Boot camp was very rough; I learned to watch and listen. On the third or fourth night, we had a fire drill, and my buddies and I didn't know what was going on. Suddenly, we heard, "Hit the deck, boys!" and we had to get out of our rooms. Some of the boys weren't even dressed! Then we had to run around the barracks; we were being punished for not being ready.



Max carries this picture with him in his wallet.

In training I was stationed at Great Lakes in Illinois, and one of the first things we needed to learn was how to swim. Fortunately, I knew how, but some of the guys didn't. There was a large pool and on either side there was a whirlpool. We would have to get in and swim; it was very treacherous swimming. This training was very important though, because when a ship goes down, you have to make sure that you're at least a half a block away because the suction is so intense it'll pull you right under.

I was very fortunate I was never in a situation like that. Many boys were and died, and many also died of hypothermia in the cold water or were attacked by sharks. In California, we were allowed to jump off the fantail of the ship and swim in the ocean. When we did this, there would be guys with machine guns on either side of the ship who watched for sharks. If they saw one, they'd yell "Shark!" and blow it out of the water.

After I finished boot camp I went to Norman, Okla., to service airplanes. I was an instructor, because I wasn't afraid of heights. I gave exams to pilots and made sure the cadets did their jobs right. If the men failed, they were "washed out," meaning they couldn't come back again.

I also flew double-winged planes, like carrier planes. These were very clumsy planes, and very difficult to fly. Every 100 hours the planes were flown, they would get torn down completely, right down to the frame; we did this to make sure they ran correctly. But when the planes came out of the hangar they were like brand new airplanes. For my safety, every time I went up in the air I had to go get a parachute. I remember the first time I went up, there was a big sign across mine: "Parachute doesn't open, don't bring back!"

I also had family in the service. My four brothers enlisted and were also serving. Two were in the Marines, one was in the Army, and my younger brother was also in the Navy. Any family that had a son in the service got a blue star to hang on their window. If the son would die, they would get a gold one. My family got five blue stars - fortunately no gold ones - although two of my brothers were injured.

I returned home in 1946 with wings for flying more than 250 hours in the air. I went right back to work at Milwaukee Gear, from where I retired after 45 years. In 1947, I married my wife and we moved to Grafton in 1957, where I joined the Rose-Harms Legion Post. I've been working at the Post for 46 years now. I am the Sergeant at Arms with a rifle squad and I do all the funerals for the military men. I really work hard to ensure that our veterans get the honor they deserve at their funerals. Earlier this year, we were contact by a veteran's daughter in hopes that we would be able to do his funeral even though he wasn't a member of our post. We told her we would, and she later wrote letters to the local newspapers that said just how much it meant to her and her family.

I would like to see all our young boys, right out of high school, go into the service to learn how to be independent; you realize how much America and your home really mean to you. I would also like to see all veterans wear an American flag pin on their lapel. There's no better way to show people that you are a veteran and you care about our country.

Dan Buechler Interviewed by his son, Mike Buechler, Ozaukee High School

Retired Major with 24 Years of Service

My name is Mike Buechler and I did my interview with my dad, Dan Buechler. He is 53 years old. He served in the military for a total of 24 years. He started off in the Air Force for four years during the Vietnam War. After the war, he joined the Army Reserves. He put in 20 years there, along with serving in Desert Storm, before he retired as a Major in 1995.

It was Sept. 11, 1968. I was being drafted to go to war. However I decided to just join the Air Force instead of being forced to go to war. The Air Force was going to give me a free education and delay the inevitable. I had six weeks of basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. Basic training for the Air Force wasn't quite as intense as the other branches of the military.

Dan Buechler in November 1970.

I had two Drill Sergeants, Sgt. Metcalf and Sgt. Martin. I went to school for Doppler radar navigation for B-52 bombers and KC-135 air refueling tankers. I stayed in touch with my family through mail and a call every now and then. The food was pretty good and we generally had enough supplies. To entertain ourselves, we often played cards or went to dance clubs, movies, NCO [Non-Commissioned Officer] Clubs and worked on cars.

When I got to go on leave, I went home just like everyone else. The military took me all over the place. I went to Texas, Mississippi, California, Alaska, Guam, Okinawa, South Dakota, and some other places. There was always a disaster wherever I went. In Biloxi, Mississippi, in 1969, Hurricane Camille passed through killing many. In Los Angeles in 1971, there was an earthquake, and in Rapid City, S.D., I found myself in the middle of a flood when a dam broke in a heavy rain storm.

In December 1972, my service for the Vietnam War was over and I got to go home. I took advantage of the G.I. Bill and enrolled at UW-Platteville. I graduated in May 1974 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Technology.

In June 1976, I joined the U.S. Army Reserves. My service in the Air Force was not too bad and I had a good time with my fellow airmen. I guess that is what made me want to join the Reserves. I wanted to join the Air Force Reserves, but the Army Reserves was closer to home. I worked my way up through the ranks in the Army Reserves in the Field Artillery Branch. I went from Sergeant to Major in 20 years. We did many years of one weekend a month and two weeks of annual training to teach artillery procedures.

During Vietnam, military reserve units were rarely called to serve. However, when Iraq invaded Kuwait under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, the 84th Training Division of Milwaukee was mobilized in January of 1991. I was the mobilization officer for the Field Artillery Instructor Training Committee of Manitowoc.

We loaded all of our equipment, including M109-A3 Self Propelled 155mm Howitzers, by semi and travelled to Fort Sill, Okla. Our training unit of 100 men and the equipment was packed up and shipped out in four days. Our mission was to train soldiers that were going into combat how to use the Howitzers and other Field Artillery equipment. My biggest stress was when our activation orders called for up to one year of active duty. Luckily the Persian Gulf War was over in six weeks and we were back home after two months of active duty. Many of the U.S. military personnel lost in Desert Storm were the result of friendly fire or accidents. More than 100 U.S. soldiers lost their lives.

While in the reserves, I met many good people with whom I am currently still friends. Looking back on my military career, it was a mostly rewarding experience. I believe that all young people should serve their country in this way or something similar. Every so often, I attend an Army Reserve party for the 84th Division Rail-Splitters Field Artillery Unit. After Desert Storm, I went back to work at A.O. Smith/Tower Automotive, employed as an Industrial Engineer. I have a wife of 23 years, Joyce, and four children.

Gordon Bley As told to Laurie Arendt

Army Truck Driver

Gordon Bley was working as a truck driver for the cannery when he was drafted. Over-the-road trucking wasn't new to this Belgium resident and he was pleased to find himself with the same type of job he did in civilian life. While he was drafted at the end of 1950, he didn't have to report for basic training until Jan. 15, 1951 because the Army didn't want to take his company of new recruits right before Christmas.

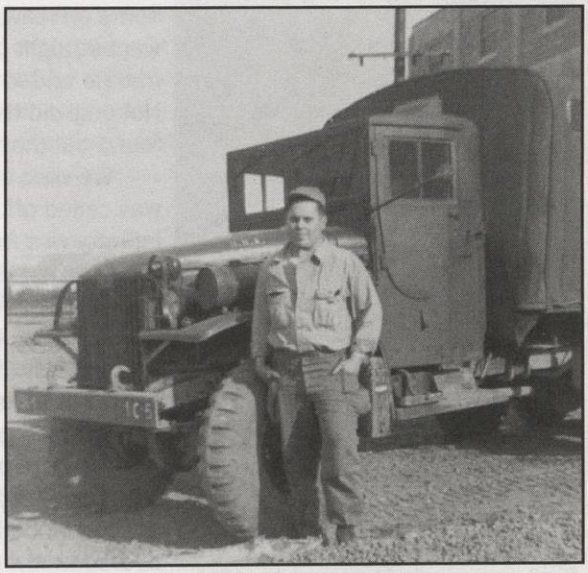
When you're drafted, you don't have much choice as to where you're sent. You have to go where they need you. I ended up doing basic training in Camp Carson, Col. It wasn't a bad place to be. I liked Colorado and I was surprised because I didn't know there was such rough country out there. My trip to basic was really my first time out of Wisconsin.

I originally started out as a ground trooper but later became a truck driver. I also ended up not continuing on with those in my initial basic training group because I came down with pneumonia. That was actually somewhat fortunate because I think they went to Korea.

Instead, I joined up with a National Guard unit from South Dakota and ended up doing my tour in Alaska. From Colorado, we took a troop train to California and boarded a troop ship. We did maneuvers back into Canada.

That was really rough country. We had a couple of wrecks and brought extra equipment along in case we broke down.

When we arrived in Alaska, we didn't have barracks so we stayed in a tent city until real barracks were built. Those tents were cold - we had seven men in each tent and two stoves. Our showers were even in tents. Thankfully, we were able to move into our barracks at Ft. Richardson, and our quality of life improved greatly.



Belgium native Gordon Bley and his truck.

I was a truck driver, and I drove an old GMC. It ran well, but it was an older manual truck without any hydraulics. My job was to carry troops, supplies and whatever needed to be moved. My truck also acted as the mess hall if the troops were in the field and the payroll truck on payday. I also took soldiers to a lake about 40 miles away from us for rest and relaxation.

During summer, we really had it easy in the motor pool. We had sunlight about 10 hours a day. The winters weren't that bad, even considering we only had two to three hours of sunlight a day. I saw the Northern Lights and we would watch the frost line move down the mountains as it got colder and colder. When it was really cold, we'd take turns staying up at night in the motor pool. Our job was to start the trucks at regular intervals so they wouldn't freeze up. When it was really cold, we'd let the engines run all night. We did that four or five times.

We also did a lot of night maneuvers. We were on alert because of our proximity to Russia. This was during the Cold War, and there was a big fear that Russia would try and take back Alaska. We were surrounded by tundra which, in the summer, would've made it impossible for Russia to land. But in the winter, the tundra froze and it would've been quite easy to land planes. We were that close to Russia, but never received combat pay. Winter meant we were on alert 24 hours a day because of this threat.

I remember some of the friends I met in Alaska. There were some people from home, including John Paulus. I also made friends with a guy from Tip Top, Ky. He had intuition like I'd never seen in my life and he was so easy-going. He'd play cards and send the money home. Sometimes he wouldn't play, and he'd just say, "Ah, the cards aren't with me tonight." One night, he talked me into playing instead and he said he'd help me. I won $500 that night.

We shared the same cadre room and I was helping him pack for maneuvers. He turned to me and said, "This is my last trip. I'm not coming back." I asked him what he meant and he said, "We're going to crash."

I didn't believe him, but by the time I put my truck back in the motor pool and got back to my barracks, his plane had gone down. It crashed into a mountain and there were no survivors. Because it had a beeper, they had a general idea of where it was, but they never found it. Not even to this day.

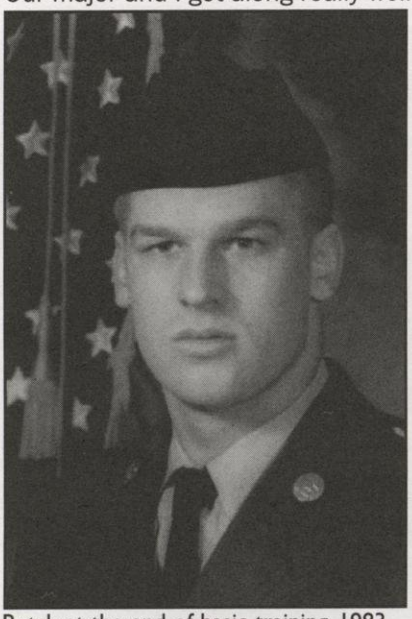
Dean "Butch" Arendt As told to Laurie Arendt

Heavy Wheel Vehicle Mechanic and Recovery Specialist

My brother-in-law Butch enjoyed his time in the military. He enjoyed his training, and though he didn't get to travel as much as he'd hoped, the Army provided a positive experience for him.

I picked the Army because I didn't want to go into the Marines and be a "groundpounder." My basic training was at Ft. Knox, Ky., which was where the movie "Stripes" was filmed. We stayed in the same barracks, trained on the same obstacle course. At one point, our whole platoon almost ended up getting dropped, just like in the movie. I did well, though, and ended up in the top two percent of my battalion. I had a lot of fun.

I originally joined to travel ... and I got to Kansas. I had a chance to go to Europe, but ended up staying put. Our major and I got along really well and he went off to school to become a lieutenant colonel. While he was away, I received change orders to be reassigned to Germany. I had actually gone home on leave before heading overseas when he came back to Ft. Riley. He went straight out to the field and to the Headquarters Battalion in search of me. He ended up having new orders cut to bring me back. I was pretty ticked. Not only did this not allow me to leave for Germany, but when I returned, I found out that they didn't have any room for me!


Butch at the end of basic training, 1983.

We were never sent anywhere, though we did once start mobilizing and it was called off. We were part of the First Division, which meant that if the infantry was mobilized, we would be part of the first group to go.

I trained as a heavy wheel vehicle mechanic. Most people picked small-wheel, but I knew that it was easier to move up in rank in heavy wheel. It was harder, but you worked on all vehicles. I became a recovery specialist, which meant that I was on call if another unit had a problem and couldn't handle it. For example, if there was a rollover, I'd go out with one of our vehicles and get it.

We were once on a 45-day Reforger in Germany (the only time I got out of the country) and I remember one of the five-ton wreckers hit some black ice and landed on someone's house. The wrecker went right in the home's bedroom - the homeowner wasn't too happy, but at least no one was hurt - and I was called in to get it out. Another time we were called in when an armored personnel carrier rolled into a ravine.

Because of what we did, we were rarely around for chow time. Back then, they still gave out C-rations, and I remember we'd put the cans on top of the engine block to heat them up. One time, however, I forgot about lunch and we ended up with Spaghettios all over the inside hood of the truck.

I came home every chance I could, and back then I drove a Jeep. I'd get a Jeep full of buddies, we'd work all day and then we'd all pile in and drive from Kansas home to Wisconsin. One Christmas, we got pulled over and nearly got arrested. We were still in our fatigues because we'd just left the Motor Pool. We even still had our weapons under the seat. I think those officers in Iowa thought they'd pulled over a Jeep full of Rambos.

When it was a slow day at work, the heavy wheel mechanics would just hang out.

It took about 12 hours straight through at 65 MPH, but we'd always try to cut it down, and once made it in 11 hours and 20 minutes. The Jeep was brutally cold in the winter, and the guys would all put on their Army issue cold weather gear before we'd head home. The Jeep just had a cloth top and vinyl windows. In the winter weather, if I didn't hang my head out the side window, I couldn't see where I was going.

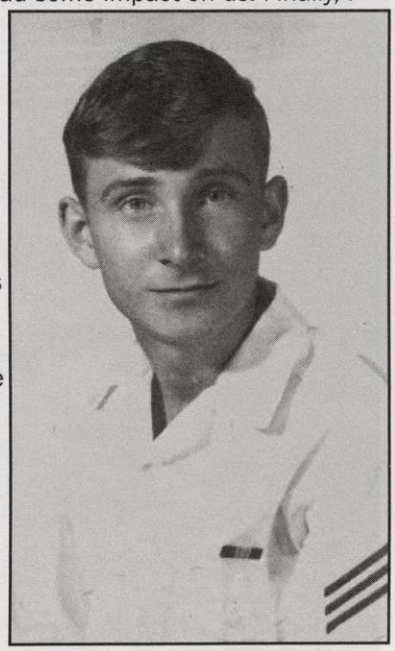
Looking back, I wonder why I didn't stay in. It crosses my mind at least once a year. If I had stayed in, I'd have almost 20 years and would be close to retiring. I always wonder where I would've ended up, if I would've stayed in the Motor Pool or went on to do something more organizational or administrative. I guess I'll never know.

Bob Ponton As told to Laurie Arendt

Naval Welder on the USS Yosemite and USS Cascade

Like many draft-era veterans, New York native Bob Ponton chose to enlist before he was drafted in 1968. The current Grafton Village Trustee enlisted in the Navy with his cousin, Gord. The two cousins went through basic training together at Great Lakes Naval Base in Illinois.

Both Gord and I knew that we were certain to be drafted. I chose the Navy for a couple of reasons. First, I knew they offered schooling that the other branches of service did not. My dad, as well as my Uncle Gord were both Navy veterans. At family picnics they would tell stories, and I'm sure that had some impact on us. Finally, I just liked the Navy uniform (and it didn't require wearing a tie).

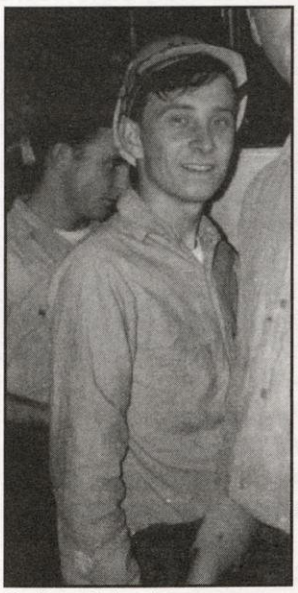

Bob Ponton, Naval recruit, 1968.

Before I went in, my Uncle Gord sat me down and we had a long talk. He told me that you have to do things you don't understand, and that there will be sidewalks, toilets, showers and drinking fountains that you won't be able to use in basic training. It was all part of boot camp, and the correct answer was always, "Yes, sir" even when it seemed to make no sense. He explained that the chain of command was absolute. He was right, and I soon learned that the discipline in boot camp was predictable.

One time I failed to shave - which you were supposed to do on a daily basis - and a young lieutenant called me on it. I ended up doing something called "Happy Hour" (which was neither happy or an hour) with our Marine Drill Sergeant. It was August, and my experience lasted about two hours. He had me drill with my heavy, old rifle, and when I got to the position where I was holding the rifle with my arms straight out, he'd light a cigarette and smoke the entire thing before he ordered me into the next position. I did Happy Hour once and decided I would never do it again.

After boot camp, I went on to train as a welder and steelfitter and was assigned to the USS Yosemite, which was a tender/repair ship. We were literally a floating factory and did maintenance and repair work for ships in the fleet. I worked with steel an eighth-inch thick up to armored plate. I was later assigned to the USS Cascade, and did the same job. I typically worked 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. like a normal job.

During my time in the Navy, I went on two Mediterranean tours. My favorite place was Malta, which had the clearest water I'd ever seen. I was a Vietnam-era veteran, but I never saw any combat.


On board the ship.

With that said, my scariest experience was a hurricane we encountered in the North Atlantic. We encountered 50-foot waves and we could feel it, even though we were a 520-foot ship. Our captain lost his personal vehicle, a '63 Chevy station wagon. We lost a few trucks and some of the handrails were also torn off.

One of our ship's vents was torn off and I had to go out and fix it in the middle of the hurricane. They put a life jacket on me and attached two small flashlights, which I thought must've been light to read by when I died. They tied a rope around my waist and I went out to do the repair. It was pitch black outside, except for my flashlights and the yellow lights from the bridge.

As we climbed the first wave, I used c-clamps to start attaching a piece of sheet metal. When we broke over the first wave, the water pressure was so high that it pulled me back and I slid under a gun turret. It was a good thing I was wearing that life preserver because it acted like a big cushion.

Every time we'd climb a wave, I'd get my breath back, attach a few more c-clamps and then run like hell to get under the gun turret before we broke over the wave. It took me 20 minutes, but I finally finished the repair and was able to go back inside.

Bob finished out his tour of duty and was honorably discharged from the Navy. He and his wife, Lynn, were married mid-way through his tour, spending their first year of marriage as newlyweds in Naples, Italy. They are now the proud grandparents of their first grandchild.

Louie Bertoni

With Jamie Price,
Port Washington High School

Air Force Radio Mechanic

Mr. Louie Bertoni is not only an esteemed member of Van Ells-Schanen Legion Post 82, but a true gentleman as well. He now lives in Port Washington, but first enlisted in the military from his Milwaukee home 53 years ago. He joined the United States Air Force because this branch involved the radio technology that he found interesting.

I enlisted in the military in March of 1949 because during this time, finding employment was difficult. I thought that I would have to join the service at some point in my life, so I chose to enlist at that time. I joined the Air Force because I wanted to pick the service that I could contribute to in the areas that I found interesting, which were electronics and radio. I went to basic training for the Air Force in San Antonio, Texas.

I then signed up for radio school, which took me to Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, Ill. I studied radio mechanics for almost a full year at the base before I got my service orders to go to the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska. I was disappointed; I would've rather gone to Europe.

Louie in 1950.

I spent almost a year in this region, and the first island I was stationed at was Amchitka. The island was maintained as a landing area for aircraft in distress that needed to make an emergency landing. There were only 54 men on the island including radio men and one mess sergeant because this task did not require a great amount of manpower. We never had any airplanes making an emergency landing, so life on the island was somewhat dull. Fellow Air Force members and I would often roam about the island looking at Quonset huts and sunken LSVs from World War II.

I remember once I went into the abandoned officer's club, and it was as if someone said, "The ship's here - let's go!" You could see the lines where the drinks had been in the glasses and there were still cigarettes in the ashtrays. The former soldiers' dogs also ran wild - they were afraid of us and, at night, we were afraid of them because they roamed in packs.

There were warehouses full of abandoned supplies - I acquired a pair of boots and a parka with a liner. I guess it just cost too much to recover and move everything, so they just left it there.

We only had one generator going for us, but some of the lines to the abandoned areas were still energized. Once I swore I heard a compressor running for an abandoned cooler.

Supply planes would bring shipments in about once every three weeks to this island. It was a pretty quiet and lonely life, and I was transferred to another one of the Aleutian Islands called Adak after about six months on Amchitka. Adak was an island that hosted both Navy and Air Force troops, so there was a bit more activity. Adak had a larger base which even held a movie house. I spent six months on Adak before I was shipped to Cape Cod on the east coast of the United States.

I spent the remainder of my time as a Radio Mechanic at Cape Cod. I worked at a transmitter site where we would send messages at a very low frequency to Guam and other U.S. bases in that area. The transmitter was of such a low frequency that the antenna field was a mile long. That transmitter is now in the Smithsonian Institute because of its uniqueness.

I was awarded the standard medals in the Air Force such as the Marksmanship medal and the Good Conduct medal. I was discharged from the Air Force and returned to Milwaukee in November 1952. I worked for the City of Milwaukee as an electrician for the remainder of my career.

My time in the service was really more of a career than a battle. As a radio mechanic my area was communication, whereas my brother was fighting on the front lines in Korea where he was face to face with the opposing troops. My position as a radio mechanic was almost like having a job in the service. My time in the service is not one of excitement or hair-raising episodes and I did not participate in any battles, but my job was essential to keeping the rest of the war effort running as smoothly as possible.

I have been a member of the Port Washington Legion Post 82 since I retired and took up residence in the city. As a chaplain for my Post my duties are to open and close Legion meetings with a prayer and performing funeral rites for our passing veterans, including the gun salute.

Howard W. Rokus

As told to his grandniece Nicki Rokus, Ozaukee High School

Aviation Electronics Technician

Howard Rokus joined the Navy when he got out of high school. He wanted to go earlier, but his parents wouldn't sign for him to go at age 17. The year delay ultimately made him ineligible for the G.I. Bill, though he still enlisted.

Going into the Navy, I thought it would be one big party. The first week of being there we had a "G.I. Party." I thought, "Wow! Party already?" and I believed it was some big, fun party. But as it turned out, I was so wrong. We cleaned the floor with toothbrushes.

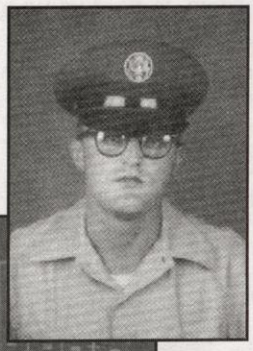
Howard on deck in Kobe, Japan.

My mother would often write me while I was in the Navy. She would write once a week. For a while, I did not receive any letters from her, and I started to wonder what was going on. Three days before my mother's death, I was notified by the USS Hornet's Chaplain that my mother had cancer. The Red Cross told my family they didn't know where I was, and she was buried the day before I got home.

I got out of the Navy because I did not like the on-board living conditions; the base living conditions were no better. We could not have civilian clothes on base and we had to store them off base in a "locker club."

I left the Navy in 1959 and went to college for a few years. I joined the Air Force in 1961. When I was on emergency leave for my mother's funeral, I stayed in Air Force barracks in Okinawa and saw how nice they were compared to the Navy. The food was also excellent. There was not a day that would go by that we would dread eating, though I do remember walking back from the mess hall, having someone ask us what we ate and not being able to tell them.

My job was working on the planes and I would repair them in flight. The flights lasted up to 16 hours, and our planes had bunks in the back where we could sleep when the equipment was working. My shortest flight was 15 minutes, and that was when we lost one engine on takeoff. We ended up dumping all of our fuel over Sacramento, Calif., and we came back to base. We flew along the west coast in circles because I served during peacetime. Once a year, we'd notify the States that we'd picked up Santa Claus and his reindeer from the North Pole. We would actually report it to our Wing Commander.



(right) Airman Rokus, an Airborne Early Warning Radar Repairman, 1961 (below) Army National Guard Sgt. Rokus, Combat Area Surveillance Radar Repairman, in the 1980s.

The only time I saw action was south of the border. Twice in Tijuana, cops pulled guns on us. These were the scariest situations I had been in. I visited France. The people were some of the rudest people I had met, though the food was very good.

In the Air Force, we had our own room, a television, a refrigerator, and we could wear civilian clothes while not on duty. There was no promotion in the Air Force, so I decided to return to civilian life.

There were a lot of close friendships that I made with some of the guys in the Air Force and Navy. Though we no longer keep in touch with each other, I think we all know and remember the close friendships even though we have lost track of each other.

Thirteen years later, a neighbor persuaded me to join the National Guard. He wanted me to go in as a medic because I was a state-licensed EMT, but the recruiter put me into a Maintenance Company because of my electronics background. I enjoyed the travel that came with the National Guard, and I traveled more with it than with the Air Force. I went to Germany, France, the Pocono Mountains, Kansas and California during annual training.

To this day, I collect military items and belong to many veteran organizations. I guess once you are in you never really do leave. I retired after 23 years as an "E-6 forever." I stayed in that rank for 12 years due to the many interruptions in my service. I first went in in 1955 and retired in 1992, so it took me 37 years to get in 23 years of "good time" service in the military, and I am now officially retired.

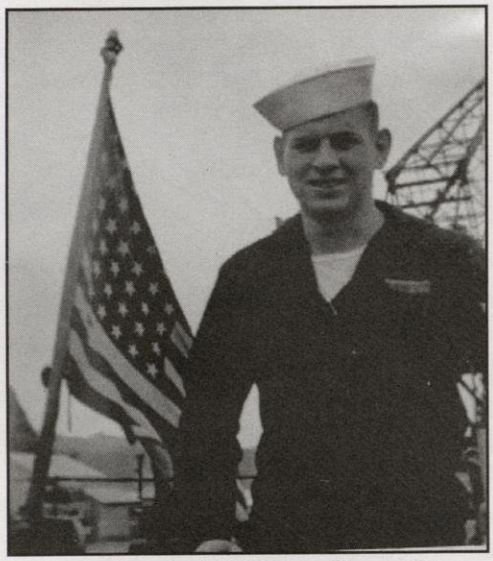
Donald "Skip" Volkmann

Interviewed by Anna Beno, Cedarburg High School

Naval Engineman during the Korean War

Born on May 9, 1932, Donald Volkmann was raised in Cedarburg, where he has lived all his life. He attended Cedarburg High School and graduated in 1950. Two years later, he followed his father and brother's footsteps into the Navy.

I had always thought of joining the Navy. My father and my brother had been in the Navy. In fact, my brother was still in when I enlisted. That had nothing to do with why I enlisted; I just always wanted to join the Navy. I joined in February, 1952, and after basic training at Great Lakes, I went to San Diego, Calif., for Class A Engineerman school.



Skip served on the USS George Clymer. This photo was taken on its deck.

After finishing school, I was assigned to the USS George Clymer as an Engineman. The ship was named after George Clymer, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The ship was being built for the banana trade by Ingalls Shipbuilding in Mississippi, but the government took it over before it was completed.

Our first destination was Japan. The Clymer was a troop ship that carried assault personnel and equipment. Our ship had landing craft to land troops and equipment on the beach. We hauled troops and equipment between Japan and Korea. We hauled prisoners to POW camps, and our landing craft hauled wounded to a hospital ship. We also trained South Korean troops in landing operations.

I can tell you about the one time they sent us out in our boats, to look for LVTs, which were like tanks, except they were open on top and could go thru the water. We went way up a river - at least we thought it was a river - and we found the LVT's in the mud flats. They couldn't move because they were sinking in the mud, and they had to wait for the tide. We talked to the Marines in the LVTs for a couple of minutes, and we were going to leave, but then we were high and dry. The tide had just started going out. We had to wait until the tide came in again, to float us up off the mud flats so we could get out of there. That's the only time - that I know of - where I was shot at. A bullet went over the top of the boat.

After about 17 months the ship came back from the Far East. I was sent to Advanced Engineman's school at Great Lakes. Upon returning to the ship, I was put in charge of the After Steering Engine room, two diesel generators and two auxiliary diesel fire pumps.

I made four trips to the Far East during my four years. I was in about a half-dozen Japanese ports, Taiwan, Hong Kong, about four or five South Korean ports, the Philippines, and the best: Hawaii!

Skip took this picture of troops aboard the Clymer.

The nicest part of military life is that you always have a lot of friends - a lot of guys. They're all your age, so you don't have to look very far to find someone to go out with. It was kinda fun. But many a night, I leaned on the rail, looking at the lights of a far off city, and wished I would be there.

I am proud that I served in the military. I believe that it is something that most people should do, and I am a better guy for having been in. I joined the Naval Reserves for four years during the 1960s, and I attended submarine school, earning my "Dolphins." I have also received the Good Conduct Award, National Defense Award, Korean Service Award with two battle stars and the United Nations Medal. About a year ago, I also received the Korean War Service Medal, which was awarded on the 50th anniversary of the Korean War from the South Korean government. I am also proud that I have a son and daughter, who served in the Navy.

After leaving the Navy, Mr. Volkmann began his career as a trucker. He has been a retired teamster for five years. He currently resides in the Town of Cedarburg with his wife Norma. The Volkmanns enjoy visits by their son, daughter-in-law, two daughters and four grandchildren. Mr. Volkmann has been a member of both the Cedarburg American Legion and the Cedarburg Volunteer Fire Department for more than 50 years. He is also proud of having donated well over one hundred pints of blood.

Marty Wegner

As told to Jillian Murphy, Homestead High School

Aviation Mechanic

Marty Wegner joined the Navy after graduation from Grafton High School in 1952. When I asked him why he chose this branch of the service, Marty said, "In the Navy, I always had a bed." Instead of thinking of joining the Navy as a chore or certain duty, he thought of it - and still believes it to be - just one more part of his development into adulthood.

After a two-week Army training program at Camp McCoy, I decided I did not enjoy sleeping in foxholes. Instead of enlisting in the Army for two years, I chose to join the Navy for four years. During boot camp, which was 13 weeks long, I had the measles. Instead of receiving lots of rest like a sick man should, I had to scrub the floors and do manual work in isolation while I was unable to attend classes.

I trained at two service schools in Norman, Okla., and was later stationed in Pensacola, Fla., with a few men from my training in Oklahoma.

For Naval boat training, Annapolis, Md., was the main city for cadets; Pensicola was considered the "Annapolis of the Air." From 1953 to 1956, I fixed the planes at Pensicola for the cadets. I became a Third Class machinist mate and worked alongside the electricians and the communications workers to fix the planes. My main duty was to maintain the weather plane that checked for different weather conditions, such as squalls coming through Florida, on a daily basis and decide whether or not the training cadets could work on their flying techniques.

Aviation Mechanic: ready, willing and able...

I have pleasant memories of my time in Pensacola; nothing bad happened to me. However, when I think back to Navy food, I do remember that other than the eggs, the meals were not completely inedible.

For base entertainment, we would attend movies that played about every other day. Additionally, one or two times a year we would clear out the hangars and have a festive dance with a big band. I also tended bar at the Cadets' Club. The three different clubs on base were the Cadets' Club, the Officers' Club and the Enlisted Men's Club. The Blue Angels did an air show at our naval base about every other year. In my scrapbook, I still have an article about a show they did while I was there.

I had a good friend named Jim in the service. As for both of us ... our numbers never came up during the Korean War, so we both served stateside. I married my high school sweetheart in 1953 and we lived in Florida. Like me, Jim also married while he was in the Navy. Later on in our service, Jim and I and our wives all lived together in a rented farmhouse in a suburb of Pensicola. Together, we helped the farmer with his chickens, peas and watermelons.

Marty Wegner in Pensicola, Fla.

I remember at one point we were sent up to Tennessee to work on some planes on a base up there. We only had a few inches of snow on the ground, but because of it, our group could not return to Florida. I called Jim more than once to have money wired up to Tennessee. Worried about what we might be doing, my base captain had us sent home immediately.

Before I enlisted, I had started an apprenticeship to become a machinist. When I returned to Wisconsin, my apprenticeship was no longer available, but the Navy helped me find a new one. I returned in March 1956 and lived with my wife in her father's house. I started my apprenticeship in September of that year.

Although I am a Korean War-era veteran, I never actually traveled to Korea. During my service, I did not think about combat in Korea. In my opinion, I think the American people backed the Korean War more than the Vietnam War. Like most Americans, I think the war in Korea really wasn't a war, per se. At the time, they were calling it a police action. From my point of view, the Korean War was about the North versus the South. I don't think the problems between the North and South were ever actually solved, and I don't think anyone ever truly won.

Thomas F. Paul

As told to Katie Scheuermann, Ozaukee High School

Military Policeman in the 148th Military Police Company

Motorcycle-riding, Milwaukee-area resident Tom Paul changed his life around when he decided to enlist in the Army. It was 1969 and he was only 18. Though training and life in the Army was brutal, he eventually made it through. Because of his high test scores on the aptitude tests, he was assigned to the Military Police and stationed at Ft. Carson, Col. Perhaps his most prominent memory was Operation Chase, or "Cut Holes and Sink 'Em."

I had experienced many unbelievable events at this point in my life when I received orders to escort nerve gas to the ocean. But nothing in my life ever compared to the dangers and fears every one of us had instilled deep within our souls.

Saukville resident Tom Paul was a military policeman during the Vietnam era.

Life in the Army had taught me that you were never able to look into tomorrow and know that you'll be alive to see it. I never knew what the future held for me. I remember holding my breath each month when I looked at the list posted for men to be shipped to Vietnam. Any one of those days it could've been me. I lost many good friends to the Vietnam War, and it still amazes me today that I am here to relive my experiences. Speaking of unexpected assignments ... I had three weeks that I will never forget.

There was some leftover nerve gas from World War I which had been stored in steel "coffins." The coffins' contents had begun to leak inside, forcing them to bulge. The coffins were filled with artillery rounds, and the warheads were loaded with nerve gas. There were also a few liquid mustard landmines inside the coffins, which made the 418 coffins even more deadly.

Our mission was security for the train containing the nerve gas. It would ultimately travel from Anniston, Ala., to Sunny Point, N.C. Rabbits and pigeons were kept on board so if one died, we could be on alert for a gas leak. At one point, a rabbit died ... because the longshoreman and I overfed it.

The nerve gas wasn't the only problem crossing our minds, however. This was considered a very controversial operation because we were disposing of it in the ocean. Every town we stopped in or passed through was a potential hazard.

The time I recall most was when we passed through Georgia. College kids swarmed everywhere, protesting. Many of us were afraid they would cause a problem to the train and those of us aboard the trains. Because this was such a high-risk operation, the slightest problem could make our hearts race and our palms sweat. Just the thought that one open coffin could wipe out the entire state of Alabama sent chills down my spine.

Eventually, some of the tension eased as we arrived at our military ocean terminal, Sunny Point. Our plan was to load the gas onto an old Liberty ship, the LeBaron Russell Briggs, which had been outfitted with scuttle valves. I was able to witness the sinking of the ship. I remember it like it was yesterday. We all stared in awe as divers opened the scuttle valves and the ship sank to the depths of the ocean. We had a heavy burden lifted from us, and I felt relieved as I realized how lucky I was, how lucky we all were.

So, my fate ended up positive, but how easily it could've been quite dim. Life and death were always moments away from each other during the Vietnam era. You never knew whether you'd be sent to Vietnam or on a deathly mission within our country like I was.

After that experience, my life was never the same. The war changed us all, for better or for worse. Sometimes, we do what we have to do because there's no other way out. Other times, we do it because it's in our hearts to be patriotic, loyal and faithful to our beloved country. I served as SPC Thomas F. Paul, 148th MP Company, 502 MP Battalion, Fifth Army from Jan. 6, 1969 through Jan. 7, 1971.

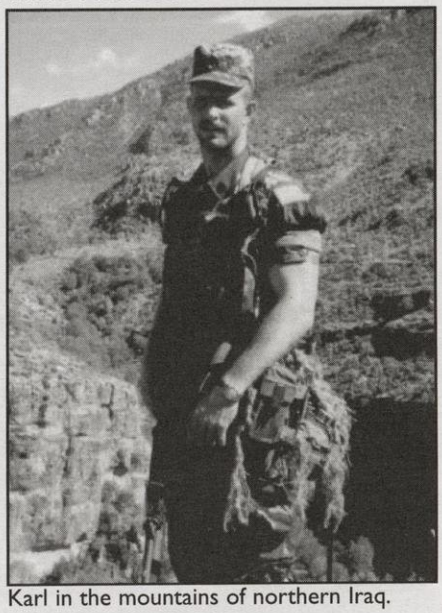
Karl Bloecher

As told to Dave Graziano,
Ozaukee High School

Sergeant First Class in the Special Forces

Soon after high school, Karl enlisted in the Army with a friend of his. This must have been the most important decision of his life, because the Army took him all over the world and allowed him to see the things not everyone gets to see in a lifetime. He served in Grenada, Desert Storm, Operation Provide Comfort and Somalia.

Soon after high school, I enlisted in the Army with a friend and we went through 16 weeks of basic training. As soon as that was finished I spent eight months in Special Forces training, which was broken down into three phases. Phase one was land navigation, which was basically using a compass and finding your way if you were to get lost in the woods or in foreign territory. Phase two was weapons training. There I learned how to disassemble and assemble weapons, determine the ranges of all the guns and which guns would be effective, and which would not. Finally, phase three was pretty much all about teamwork; you wouldn't accomplish very much if you didn't know how to work with members of your group as well as other groups.

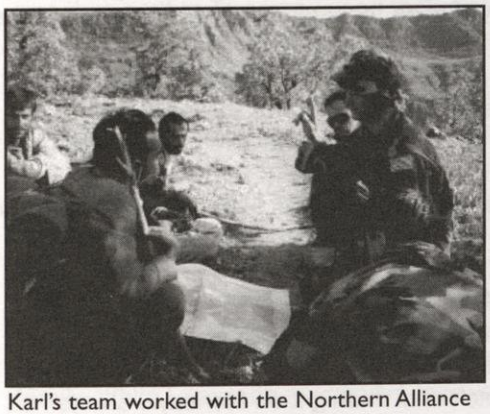

Karl in the mountains of northern Iraq.

Boot camp to me was very tiring and it included a lot of sleepless nights. Another thing that I remember is the amount of yelling and screaming that went on during AIT [advanced individual training], which, in my case, was infantry training.

After that I went through numerous schools and other types of training, including jump school, leadership school, dive school, sniper school and SEARS school. In jump school, I was trained how to jump out of an airplane. That was very exciting to be able to jump out of a plane for the first time. Leadership school basically taught me how to get along with others and to work well in groups. I learned how to do underwater missions and direct myself underwater using a compass. Sniper school was very intense. There I learned sniping operations and how to execute them. SEARS school was a place that taught you how to survive if you were to be captured or if you just happened to get lost and needed to know how to survive on your own.

My training also provided me some rather unique experiences. One that was sort of amazing was when a medical student placed an IV in my arm ... wearing night vision goggles. It worked!

While I was in the service I traveled to many different countries around the world, including: Italy, Turkey, Norway, Belgium, Germany, the islands off of Sri Lanka and India, Scotland, Northern Iraq, Southeast Asia, Thailand and Laos.


Karl's team worked with the Northern Alliance freedom fighters while serving in northern Iraq.

I also kept myself occupied by joining the Army's sports teams. I was on the ski team for two years while I was in Italy. It was a fun experience for me, and I met a lot of good guys who were also on the team. I was on the boxing team and had my nose broken three times, but it was still a good time.

For me the service was very gratifying and it made me a much better person in many different aspects. Most of the people that come out of the service were in much better shape than when they started. In my case, I didn't have as much of a physical change as some people because I was on the track and cross-country teams and lifted weights while in high school. I do think that I am now more disciplined than I used to be. It also really made me pay much more attention to detail because that was the sort of thing we were taught.

When I returned from active duty, I joined the National Guard for three years and the Reserves for about a year, which meant that I gave 16 years of loyal service to our country, including taking part in Desert Storm. The first job that I had when I returned was as a shingling supervisor at JT Roofing, and I have been doing roofing for about seven years since returning home. I now own my own business, Small Town Roofing Inc., which is going great for me. I have learned a lot from my experiences. I have no regrets and only good things to say.

Harold Walsh

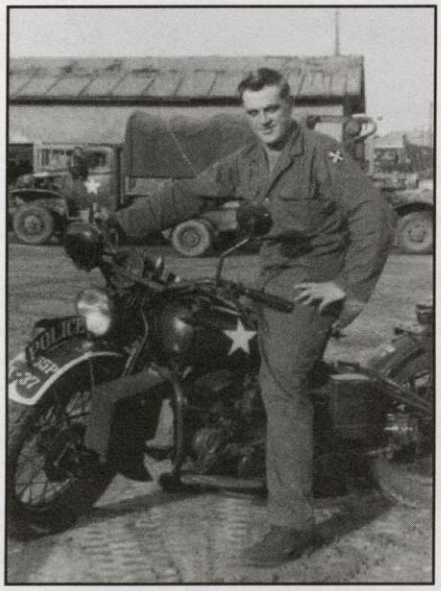
As told to Michelle Silbersack, Grafton High School

Army Mechanic

At age 18, Harold Walsh registered at the draft board like any other young man, but he did not know where this would take him.

In November 1950, I got my "greetings" from the government to be inducted into the Armed Services. We took a bus, went to Milwaukee to the induction center and were examined. From there, we shipped to Ft. Sheridan, which was where we did our Army induction. We stayed three days, and then on Sunday we were transferred to Camp McCoy near Sparta.

We were supposed to go into a transportation company, but when we got there and were unloaded they divided us among a chemical company and a smoke generator company. We were all disappointed because most of our crew was from all along the lakeshore: Appleton, Green Bay, Sheboygan, Fond du Lac, Howard's Grove, Sheboygan Falls, Oostburg, Cedar Grove and all the way down to Milwaukee. Most of us were what you'd consider to be farm boys; we figured it would be nice to be in the transportation outfit.



Harold served five months in Korea as a Motor Pool Mechanic for a Military Police company.

Then we split up. We were there for training for about a week. Then one day a guy came in while we were having a class. He whispered to the instructor that we should fall out and meet at one o'clock. We got news that we were going to be shipped out on Sunday and go to Ft. Knox, Ky.

Well, we loaded up, it was snowing and cold. We figured that down in Kentucky it would be nice. We got to Kentucky and there was two inches of snow. They had no snowplows, and it was a disaster. We were unloaded, and went to our barracks. There were no furnaces, kitchen setup or anything. That night we slept in sleeping bags with overcoats in order to keep warm.

The next day they set up the furnaces and everything. It was two weeks until Christmas, so they let us go. We would start basic training after Christmas. The Captain then made the announcement that half the troops could go home for Christmas and the other half for New Year's, but it was your choice which holiday you wanted to go home for.

When we got back, we started our basic training. For six weeks we did not leave our base. The first thing we did was go to the barber and get all of our hair cut off. That one thing I noticed right away - it didn't matter if your folks were millionaires or if you were the poorest guy in the country - we were all treated the same.

We then started our basic training. Every morning we had reveille at 6 a.m., and then we went to the mess hall and ate what they served us. Then we went back to our barracks and cleaned them up. Everything had to be cleaned. At about 8:30 a.m. we would go out on our road march or go to our classes ... wherever we were going to have training for the day.

We were not allowed to have any civilian clothes, radios, pictures or anything out. You just had your footlocker and your bunk. Our bunks had to be made "hospital style." When they came through and inspected, if they threw a half-a-buck on the bed, it had to bounce.

After basic training, we were put back into the transportation department and hauled to Ft. Knox. That summer, I was picked to go to mechanic school. When I had finished with the 10 weeks of school, I was put into the motor pool. By then, I was allowed to have my own car, so I was able to come home to Wisconsin every other weekend. I would be done on Friday night, and I wouldn't have to be back until midnight on Monday. I always had someone to come home with me and they paid my expenses to come home.

Once they asked for a detail to unload a million dollars of opium off a train into the gold vaults. I was on that detail, so I got a chance to work there and see the gold on the shelves. We stood 10 feet apart and handed the stuff to each other. There was a guard between each man and we weren't even allowed to move our lips.

We spent the rest of the year shining up trucks and doing this and that. The following year, they called a group of men to go to Korea and nine of us mechanics were picked. I spent about five months in Korea, and on Oct. 6, 1952, my time was up and I could come back home.

Phil Hirschel

As told to Laura Olson and Iveta Miglane, Homestead High School

Storekeeper on the USS Proteus AS19

Phil Hirschel served in WWII from April 26, 1943, to Jan. 16, 1946. He was put to work on the USS Proteus AS19. His job assignment was to be the Storekeeper for the supplies on the Proteus. Eventually he earned the rank of First Class Storekeeper aboard the USS Proteus. Unlike other men in service, he lived in luxury. It wasn't the best life, but as he said to us, "It was as good as it gets for the Navy."

I spent about three years in the service and was never in combat. I will tell you that I never enlisted in the Navy, but I wasn't drafted either. I boarded a bus to go sign up, and it just so happened that I met a man by the name of Frank on my way there. He was just a great guy. We talked for a little while and I asked him, "Well, what are you interested in enlisting in?"

He said, "The Navy. What are you considering enlisting in?"

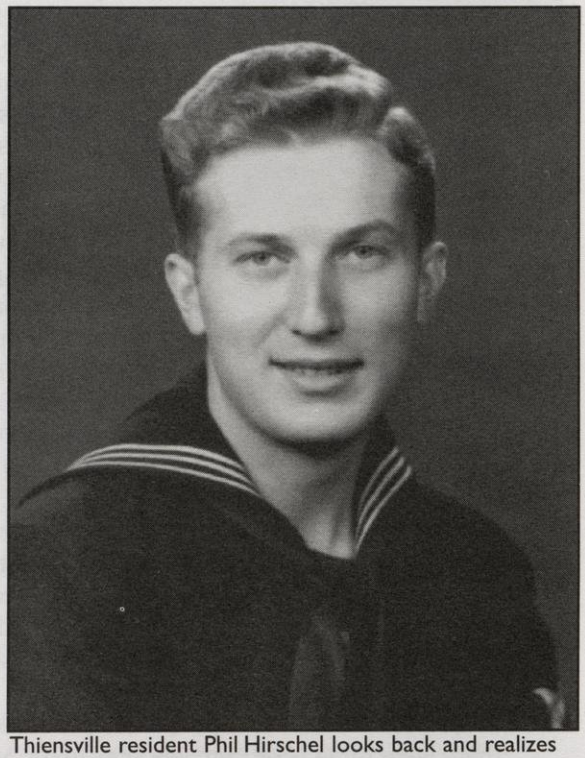
I told him I didn't know yet and that I really didn't want to be a part of any of it.

As soon as we arrived, I entered a line to be interviewed. The Army officer looked at my profile and passed it on to the Navy officer. He must have seen my face, because he looked up at me and said, "What's wrong with the Navy, Phil?"

I told him that, to be honest, I really didn't want to have a role in any part of the war. He told me that because of my background I was needed in the Navy more than in the Army.

He then said, "Please take a step over there!" I did so, and to whom do I happen to run into, my old buddy Frank from the bus. He was sitting there laughing hysterically at me.

From then on we were sent to boot camp. I passed a test we were required to take at the time, meaning I was suitable for a Third Class Storekeeper rating. I was out of boot camp and sent straight to the Navy.



Thiensville resident Phil Hirschel looks back and realizes that his "choice" of service branches was a good one.

I was put in charge of two barracks of rated personnel. I was then sent to Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, where I stayed for awhile. I then went to Goat Island where I was assigned to the USS Hughes, which was a destroyer. The USS Hughes was not in good condition. After being assigned to the USS Hughes I was sent back to Goat Island and transferred to the USS Proteus ASI9. I was one of the first people to be assigned to the Proteus.

I stayed with the Proteus for quite some time and sometime near the end of my Navy years we, my crew and I, travelled through the Panama Canal and up to the East Coast of the United States. You would think the Panama Canal was not all that big because it's man made, but we arrived there and to our surprise the canal was massive. We went through it and were very excited about the experience. At one point, the outside temperature had dropped so dramatically that the men had to wear their winter coats. It was really an interesting experience.

We headed further east on our ship, which was loaded with a great amount of explosives; we were a "floating explosion." We docked our ship on the East Coast, and it was Christmas. I decided to take a leave and go visit my family. While I was with my family I received a letter concerning my discharge. It said that I was to report back to the ship. I arrived, walked in the office and down to my locker, where I took out just one change of clothing. I didn't take anything but clothing from my locker. I had even left a priceless gun in there. Now that I think back, I really wish I had taken it with me.

I had been honorably discharged, and there was nothing left for me to do but go home to my wife. A while after I was discharged from the Navy the Proteus was completely remodeled. They split the ship in half, and then put in a new middle part to make the ship even bigger. It's amazing what they did with it.

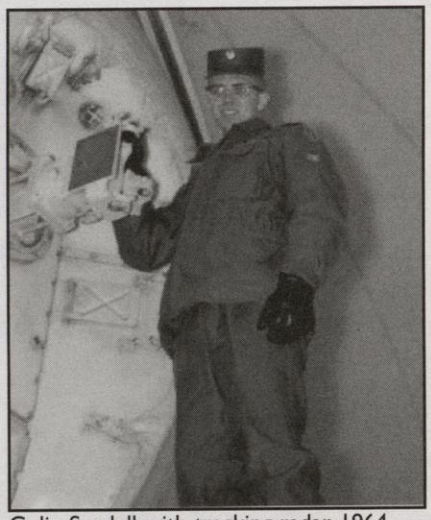
Colin Sandell

As told to Brady Austin, Cedarburg High School

Nike Missile Radar Operator

Mr. Colin Sandell was raised in Glendale, California, and grew up viewing military service as both a duty and as inevitable. Recognizing the benefits of serving, Mr. Sandell chose to enlist before he could be drafted.

I knew that I wanted to go into the Armed Forces after high school because I really didn't know what I wanted to do in college. I originally wanted to enlist in the Navy's Polaris submarines. As I am colorblind, however, I was not allowed to sign up for the Polaris program. I then went to the Army recruiter and found out about the Nike missile opportunity. I was guaranteed getting into the Nike missile program and also of spending at least six months in any U.S. metropolitan area. I wanted to leave home, and I picked Milwaukee because my mother was from Milwaukee, and we did have some relatives here, so I thought, "This is far enough away from home but it's not going to be total separation from reality." As it turned out, I spent the rest of my three-year enlistment here.



Colin Sandell with tracking radar, 1964.

The first time I recall hearing about Vietnam was in basic training. One of the drill sergeants was very upset with the recruits, as they are paid to do, and he was saying, "If you people don't...do better, you're gonna end up killed over in Vietnam!" Vietnam did not start heating up until July 1965, which was when I got out, so I missed the war and everything else that went into building the war.

I arrived in Milwaukee on Oct. 19, 1962, and was sent to the Waukesha Nike Site on Davidson Road. On the 22nd of October, the Cuban Missile Crisis began. It was quite an exciting time. The closest period we've ever come to nuclear war, this was a full-scale, toe-to-toe, nose-to-nose showdown with the Russians over them putting ballistic missiles into Cuba.

When I was at the Waukesha Nike site, my job was to operate radar equipment. The purpose of the Nike Hercules site I was stationed at was to shoot down Russian long-range bombers heading to Milwaukee or Chicago and to neutralize the atomic or hydrogen bombs that these planes carried. The missiles could knock them down far enough away that the planes would not wipe out the very area that we were defending, but we probably would have leveled Sheboygan or Manitowoc or Fond du Lac. The missiles were kept in what we call pits, not silos, about a mile south of the main base. All of us needed to have a secret security clearance to be stationed at these bases, but we also needed to have a need-to-know, so we in radar never got down to the missile area and people in the missile area never got up to the radar area.

There were three Nike Hercules sites in the Milwaukee area, and every third week our battery [site] was on high alert. During the other two weeks, we performed maintenance on equipment, which took a beating because of the extreme temperature changes here and because we had these old tubes instead of transistors. Thank God we were never attacked, as these tubes would frequently fail in a major way.

We constantly prepared for the "real thing," and one of the things we did was play war games with Air Force B-52s stationed at K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base in the Upper Peninsula. They would make simulated bombing runs on Milwaukee and we would track and pretend to shoot these guys down while they were trying to evade us. That would go on for three or four hours every night.

Sandell with an inert, actual-size Hercules missile, 1964.

Once a year, we were also sent to Fort Bliss for SNAP (Short Notice Annual Practice). We would fire two missiles under wartime conditions. It wasn't like a space shuttle, where the rocket lifts off gradually and builds up speed. This thing just went *pshueeww*, Mach 3 in seconds. In June 1964, the National Guard took over the Waukesha site, and all the rest of us were dispersed around the world. I was eventually recruited by a lieutenant at the Milwaukee Nike headquarters to come and work for him in a public relations role. I didn't want to do it, but he said, "There isn't much opening on the outside for shooting down airplanes. You can learn a lot doing this job." And he was right. He turned out to be one of the most influential people in my entire life. He, unfortunately, was killed in Vietnam, but we became very, very good friends.

Eugene Cebulski As told to Laurie Arendt

Motor Machinist Mate on a Destroyer Escort

At 16, Eugene Cebulski wanted "to be part of the show." He asked permission from his parents to enlist, but they said no because he was the only boy in the family. At 17 he put the pressure on and his parents let him go. They presumed that the military wouldn't want him because he had flat feet, but he was accepted.

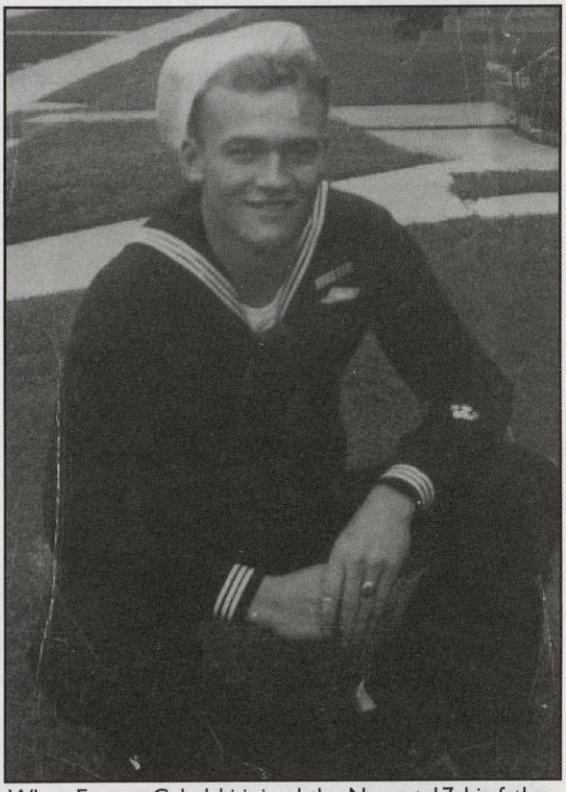
I first wanted to join the Marines, but they didn't want me. I then went next door to the Coast Guard, same deal. I went to the Navy and they said, "Sure!" I had a natural draw to water and wanted to get on a carrier in the worst way.

Back then, they wouldn't take you if you had flat feet, and the test was that they would make you stand in water and then walk around and check your footprints. My friends showed me how to walk so it would look like I had arches. The doctor noticed and asked me why I was walking a little funny - I told him it must've been because the floor was cold.

After boot camp, I was assigned to submarine duty, which was one place I didn't want to be. As it turned out, I was four inches too tall. I ended up in a Destroyer Escort Group.

I was green as grass when I entered the Navy. I remember when I got out to the Norfolk Navy Yard. I was standing on the pier looking for my ship and I saw an officer walking toward me. I asked him if he knew where my ship was because "all I can see is this grey wall right here." The officer told me to look up - the "grey wall" was actually the side of an aircraft carrier and I was standing under the flight deck. I must've turned 25 shades of red. Once I got on board, the guys kind of took care of me because I was so young.

As a Motor Machinist Mate, I was in the Engineering Division (the Black Gang) below deck. Our main duty was to supply, monitor and service all power, electrical, steam, refrigeration and fresh water equipment. I also was known as the "oil king" for refueling the ship with diesel oil, up to 50,000 gallons at a given time.



When Eugene Cebulski joined the Navy at 17, his father had to grant permission. Eugene's aunt wrote out a permission slip for his father, a Polish immigrant, to sign. Eugene now has the permission slip hanging in his home.

To produce fresh water, you had to add starch and brine to make it palatable. Three times we were without water for seven to 10 days because our brine pumps broke down. We had just enough water for cooking. At one point I drained two to three gallons of water from the steam lines and used it for sponge bathing, etc. Because stealing water was a serious offense, I was in deep doo-doo after awhile, for I was about the only clean guy aboard. Nobody ever found out how I got so clean. Our captain was always on the alert for rain clouds. If it did rain, we would run top side, shed and and soap down for our "shower." Having only salt water soap to use, some would soap down and it would stop raining. The soap would harden after it dried, leaving those guys a mess.

We served in the Atlantic and the Pacific. The ship was painted differently to blend to the color of the ocean water we were sailing. While escorting convoys, we would also zig-zag, and it seemed to take forever to reach our destination.

The destroyer escort came to existence as a less expensive ocean escort against a submarine threat. We did convoy duty, antisubmarine and air-sea rescue. Our main objective was to keep enemy subs from reaching the convoy. One of the worst places was the Straits of Gibraltar. Sonar readings were never dependable because the terrain was granite. So before we would usher the convoy through, we would depth charge on both sides of the Straits just in case they were waiting for us. Even then they managed to torpedo some of our supply ships. Spain was supposed to be neutral, but any time we saw a Spanish fishing boat near our route, we knew the enemy subs would be in the area.

I sailed all over the globe during World War II and not until I sat down and looked at a map did I realize how many miles were covered and where I had been. We got the job done when and where it was asked of us.

Gene Hadler

As told to Melissa Staley, Grafton High School

Company Mail Clerk in the Marines

Boot camp can be a scary experience for anyone, especially someone who just left the farm for military life. Gene Hadler was the youngest of a family of 10 that already had two brothers in the service. Gene served in the Marine Corps from December 1944 to October 1946 as a Mail Clerk.

Back then a student, upon reaching the age of 18 during the first semester, could finish that semester but would be drafted at the beginning of the second semester. There were two other boys in my class at Grafton High School that were already drafted. With this in mind, I enlisted in the Marine Corps because it meant I could choose where I was going to serve. This was really critical for me personally because I knew I became easily seasick on boats.

Gene finished boot camp in 1945.

I remember my first days in boot camp very well. I thought I'd made the biggest mistake of my life. We were at Paris Island, S.C. I didn't know how to swim and I didn't expect that kind of physical and mental abuse.

For the first two weeks, a typical day consisted of waking up at 4:30 a.m. and being constantly on the go until about 8 p.m. Calisthenics lasted for two hours at a time and there was plenty of marching. The drill sergeants were very harsh; there was a lot of yelling. Some even resorted to throwing people against the wall if they were out of line.

Things were much better after we progressed on to our training at the rifle range. The problem that we encountered on the rifle range was that because of us new recruits receiving a lot of shots, the rifle strap hurt quite a bit.

I personally was a bit shaky on the rifle range, but soon became a master with my rifle. I was one of only two people in a 70-member platoon who ended up as a firing expert.

First and foremost, discipline was an important part of boot camp training. South Carolina gets heavy rains, and even in rain-flooded streets, we'd keep marching.

After my 13 weeks of boot camp, I made the long journey across the country to Camp Pendleton, Calif. I remember that Texas took so long to get through.

Once I was stationed in Camp Pendleton, I found my military experience to be quite enjoyable. My mail duties granted me a liberty card, which was a permit to leave the base at any time. My sergeant gave it to me with the instructions to "use it, but not abuse it."

As a mail clerk, I would report to the post office every morning, and we would sort out the mail for the different companies. My companies were service and operation, and once we'd finish sorting, we'd take the mail out to the respective barracks.

Our standard of living was quite nice. We wore standard uniforms of green wool and brown khaki. Our sleeping quarters were the standard military barracks and the food wasn't even that bad. The best food I had, however, was at the Separation Center at Great Lakes in Illinois. I spent one year of my service time at Great Lakes where I was treated very well.

Some of my best memories are of the good men that I met while in the Marines. Although I have never contacted any of them, I will carry those memories with me forever. The military experience was an important part of my life, and it helped shape me into the man I am today.

I dedicate my memories and participation in this project to my older brother, Private Frederick L. Hadler. He was killed in Normandy while serving with the United States Army.

Marceline Hilgart Paulin

As told to Kaylyn Forbes,
Ozaukee Homeschool Student

Clerk in the Womens Reserves of the Marine Corps

In 1943, 20-year-old Marceline Hilgart, residing in Grafton, enlisted in the Women's Reserve of the United States Marine Corps. She joined because she wanted to see other places besides Wisconsin, and it was the patriotic thing to do.

Looking back, I know that "boot camp" was intimidating, but I enjoyed it. We did a lot of marching, and classes were very interesting. This was at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

During my basic training, another woman Marine and I had to do guard duty. It ran from 6 p.m. until 6 a.m. the following morning. We had to walk around our compound and if we saw someone walking, we would have to call out, "Halt, who goes there?" Luckily for us, we never saw anyone. We also had to go through a room filled with gas. We had gas masks on, and just before we got to the door, we had to take them off.

After boot camp, I was sent to Washington, D.C., where I worked in the Company office. When the news came that the Women Marines could sign up to go to Hawaii, I signed up. We went by train to San Diego to the Marine base there. While there, we had to jump off a 15-foot diving board. Since I could not swim, a Marine was there with a long pole and pulled me out.

We went over to Hawaii on a luxury liner that the United States government had taken over. I never got seasick, but I ate enough soda crackers to prevent it.

In Hawaii I met another woman Marine named Kay Myers from Minnesota. We would take the "Liberty Bus" that ran from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. It took us in to Honolulu to the YWCA. We would go to the beach, go roller skating, take dancing lessons (I still have two left feet) or go out to dinner. Kay and I decided to learn how to make a hula skirt.

One time in town we met up with two Hawaiian girls who took us on a walking tour of Oahu. We were restricted as to where we could go. Also while on Oahu, Kaye and I made friends with three young Army fellows who were stationed at Scoffield Barracks. One of them had an old Model T Ford. We had a great time driving around in it.

Grafton native Marceline Paulin served in Hawaii.

One thing we had to do was write to our parents that if anything happened to them or my sisters and brothers, I could not come home. I told my dad and he said he understood, as he was a World War I veteran.

Kaye and I were discharged at the Marine base at El Toro, Calif. We were given our train tickets to return to our hometowns: me to Grafton and Kaye to Morris, Minn. After a couple of weeks at home, we met in Chicago. We made plans to go to South America, but that never materialized. She and I worked in the Navy Office and lived in one room at a private home. Since we could not find suitable living quarters, I came back to Grafton to my old job at Grob Brothers.

I have a sister, Valeria, who joined the Marines in 1949. She stayed in until retiring as a Colonel in 1984. I also have a brother, Bill, who joined the Marines in 1942; a brother, Fred, who joined the Navy; and a brother, Jim, who joined the Air Force.

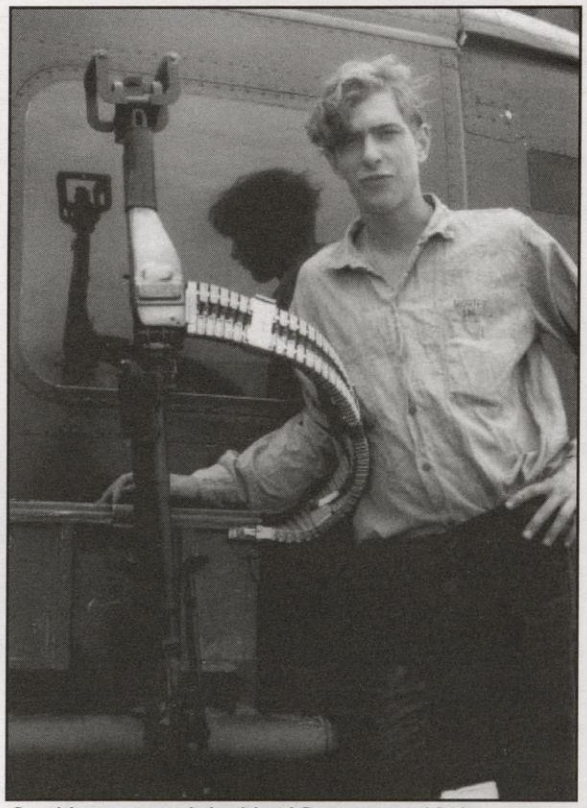
In 1981 I joined the "Women Marines Association." This is a group of all Women Marines who have ever served in the Marine Corps. We have chapters throughout the United States. I belong to the Wisconsin chapter. We receive a listing from the national association of all who belong. I found the name of someone I knew in Hawaii. I contacted her and we agreed to meet at the convention in Washington, D.C., two years ago. We enjoyed reminiscing about our times spent there. The Women Marines has a national convention every two years. This year it will be in Minneapolis, Minn. Lee and I plan on going.

Guy Morter As told to his son Rees Morter, Cedarburg High School

Shipfitter Second Class Petty Officer

My father told me about many of his experiences, his struggles and memories of Vietnam. Although I am only 15, I still appreciate the people and events that took place to ensure that our country, as well as the countries around us, would be free from harm. I respect what my father did, and I am proud to be called his son.

I grew up in Mequon and graduated from Homestead High School in 1968. The following year I enrolled at MSOE to avoid the draft. I wasn't there long because my reasons for being there were wrong. That year was a very tumultuous time in our country's history, as well as my own. Our local papers were filled with news regarding the Vietnam conflict and stories of many of my schoolmates who were injured or had died over there.



Guy Morter joined the Naval Reserves in 1968.

Frankly, I was scared of what lay ahead for my future. A friend of a friend recommended that I look into the Naval Reserves, and that turned out to be the best advice I received in my life at that time. I distinctly remember being herded through a pre-draft physical in downtown Milwaukee. I was absolutely sure the good doctor would find something physically wrong with me, which meant that I could get a deferment. He did not, and I was promptly classified as 1A.

Some of my best friends came armed with personal physician's papers stating that they were ineligible and most got off the hook, but not me. So I had to go, but I knew I didn't want to fight in some God-forsaken jungle only to wind up dead or maimed. Out of self-preservation, I enlisted in the United States Naval Reserves just to get through the event and put it behind me.

I signed up four days before I was to be drafted in the Army. All in all, it turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life. The sad part of the whole event was that not once did I ever feel that there was a purpose to our mission. All the death, danger and expense of the conflict was, for the most part, unjustified and nothing like the contribution that my parents [Joan Guy Morter, page 100] and future father-in-law [Robert Struhar, page 55] made during World War II. Not once did I feel a sense of patriotic reward.

The good part of the experience was the opportunity it gave me to grow up and be a man. I was exposed to many different attitudes and cultures both through my shipmates and the places we visited while on tour. I got to see a great many places I only read of in books: Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong, to name just a few. More importantly, I learned how to function with a team and understand a little more about human nature, which are lessons I have used and will use my whole life.

I do have a favorite story to tell as well. One night on board ship another shipmate and I were hungry. The problem was that the kitchen was closed for the night. I decided to improvise so that we could get something to eat. I took a hot iron and put it upside down in a vice. When the iron was hot enough, I placed some ham and bacon on the top (actually the bottom of the iron) and cooked it. It worked very nicely.

However, a problem arose with our "stove" the following day. A petty officer on the ship went to iron his shirt with the same iron, and the grease from our bacon stained his shirt. We were never confronted about this little incident, and it remains one of my favorite memories.

When my time was up, I actually considered re-enlisting for six years. The Navy was going to give me a big bonus and a choice of duty stations. Japan would've been my preference. After some careful deliberation, I opted out ... and not until Sept. 11, 2001 did I ever regret it.

My father married his high school sweetheart, my mom Susie, and they had three wonderful children: Molly, Andy and me. With the help of my mother, my father returned home to start a successful lamp manufacturing business in Grafton.

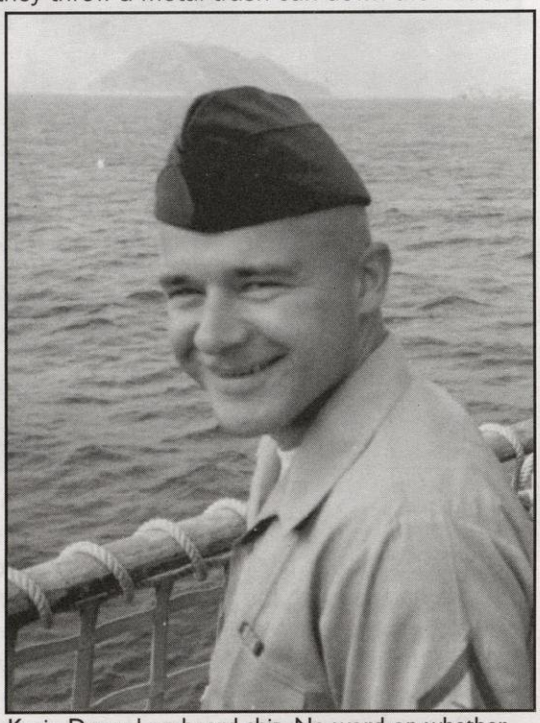
Kevin Dressel As told to Meghan Hesse, Homestead High School

Heavy Equipment Operator in the Marines

In 1982, Kevin Dressel joined the Marine Corps to wear the "neat uniform" and to serve his country. Mr. Dressel remembers his first days in the service as "scary."

They drove me down to the airport in Milwaukee where I then boarded a plane and went to San Diego for boot camp. Once there, they loaded us up on a truck and told us, "Sit down and shut up!" I remember they drove so fast on the roads out there that I thought the bus would tip over.

We arrived at the base and they started yelling at us, "Everyone off the bus!" This was at around 2:30 in the morning. We had to stand on these yellow footprints and face forward. The drill instructors were telling us what to do, where to go, and to "shut up, don't say a word!" To wake us up they threw a metal trash can down the middle of the squad bay at 5:30 in the morning. I just decided not to quit. I had a bad back and my dad thought I wouldn't make it. That sort of thing keeps a recruit going for 13 weeks.



Kevin Dressel on board ship. No word on whether he was a "Wog" or a "Shellback" when this photo was taken.

After boot camp, I was stationed in Kaneone Bay, Hawaii. I was a heavy equipment operator and used forklifts, bulldozers and backhoes. Among many other assignments, I helped the Air Force clear land for their antennae fields. During my service time, I went on several floats to the Philippines, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Africa.

In Kenya, we stayed out in tents ... in fields where there were lions. It was kinda scary, but they didn't bother us. I also remember one of our maneuvers in Australia. There were a lot of flies out in the field. When we'd wake up in the morning and brush our teeth, our entire backs would be covered with flies.

One of the saddest times I experienced while in the Marines was on my last float. I was already off ship when it happened. We would go down cargo nets on the side of the ship and one of the Marines fell off. We had a memorial for him on ship with his rifle and gear.

We did have some fun times, too. On board ship there was Wog Day, which is when you cross the equator. There is an actual ceremony that you go through on Wog Day. The first time you cross, you're called a "Wog." You crawl around the ship on your hands and knees through garbage and anything they could find to spread on the deck. They took pieces of fireman's hose, crimped it together, duct-taped one end and slapped the Wogs' butts while yelling whatever they wanted at you. But the next time you cross the equator, you become a "Shellback" and you get to do that to the new Wogs.

Other memorable times included the "Royal Baby." We'd take the guy with the biggest belly, grease his belly up and push our faces into his belly.

When we were on base, we'd spend a lot of time at the enlisted club, which was a place where there would be live bands and music. We would sit around, talk and drink. We also went bowling quite often on the base. You make a lot of nice friends and you say you're going to keep in touch, but you never do.

When I think back on my time in the Marines, there were a lot of good times. I got a lot of respect for doing things on my own. It made me a better person, it taught me to take pride in my work. It also taught me to have respect for my fellow man and the people in the service. It makes you patriotic.

If I would've thought ahead and stayed in, I would've been retired this year. But you don't think about that. It's "do your time, and get out." But it's really not that bad. I think it would be a good thing for everybody right out of school to do at least two years of service.

In the years following his service, Mr. Dressel worked as a material handler for an installation company in Illinois and now works with Dickmann Manufacturing Company. He lives in Grafton and is married with two children. He is also an avid bowler with a 215 average. He is also a member of Rose-Harms Legion Post 355 in Grafton.

Bill Prahl

Interviewed by Kelly Block and Margaret Lucas, Homestead High School

ADR3 Aviation Machinist Mate Third Class

Mequon native Bill Prahl was in Naval Aviation during the Vietnam era. He had a good service experience and if it were not for his family farm, he would have considered staying in the Navy. He enlisted at 17 because he always had an interest in the Navy. He had many fascinating and funny stories to tell. His first squadron VW-13 flying the EC121K and then VA-15 on the carrier USS Franklin D. Roosevelt working on A1H Skyraider with Sixth Fleet.

Boot camp ... that was something else. We all had colds and coughed all the time because it was winter. We marched and were put through the paces. We had to tie our clothes on clotheslines and if they weren't tied right, our clothes would get cut off and trampled in the dirt. We would have to rewash and re-tie the clothes to the line until we got it right. In our boot camp company, they gave us Christmas off so we could leave. I brought a bunch of dirty clothes home and my mother said she never saw such gooey handkerchiefs in her life.

It may not be a tractor seat, but Bill looks pretty comfortable in the cockpit of his plane.

In my second squadron, VA15, you could be the lowest-ranking person in the Navy and still be able to tell your commanding officer that he could not fly. For example, if I, as the plane captain, had a feeling my plane could not be flown safely, I had the ability to ground the plane.

One day the commanding officer of my squadron hopped on my aircraft (503) and he was ready to fly it. When he was giving 503 its high-powered turn up, I noticed that there was hydraulic oil coming out from beneath the engine. I gave him the "thumbs down" and he gave me the "thumbs up." I shook my head and gave him another thumbs down. He left the aircraft and was not happy. Later, he caught me in a passageway and he said, "Prahl, you knew I wanted to fly. Why didn't you let me fly?" I said, "Well, sir, when you gave 503 the high-powered turn up, I noticed hydraulic oil coming from the engine. I wanted my plane and you to come back safely because when you are flying there is no Cloud Nine to park on and wait for a mechanic to come."

We had fun with the new guys on board. We'd send them off to find pad-eye covers or buckets of prop wash, of which neither existed. Pad eyes were the round openings where we'd secure the planes to the deck and prop wash is the air movement behind the spinning propeller. But we'd all play along and they'd spend hours searching for it before they'd catch on.

Once while we were in Rome, I went on liberty and took one of the Navy tours. When I got back, the guys told me that someone had come to see me while I was gone. I said, "Yeah, sure, OK. Ha ha." Finally, I went to the pilot's ready room and asked if anyone had come to see me. I was told, "Yes, another Navy man came to see you."

I thought if this guy was in the Navy, then he and I both have the same duty section. The second day, I had the chance to go on liberty again, but I decided to stay behind. My visitor turned out to be my second cousin, whom I didn't know very well.

He was on a destroyer in our task force. His mother had written my mother and found out where I was. Then his mother wrote him a letter saying that we were in the same area. I showed him all around the carrier and my aircraft.

On my next liberty, I went to his destroyer and he showed me around. The sailors wondered what a guy from Naval Aviation was doing on a destroyer.

Bill makes sure that 503 is ready on the deck of the USS Franklin D. Roosevelt CVA42.

Bill Prahl returned home to his family farm in Mequon, which has been in the family since 1844. He is married, has three children and remains an active veteran.

LeRoy Paulin

As told to Margot Dedrick, Grafton High School

Aviation Ordnance First Class in the Navy

LeRoy Paulin, a Grafton native, served in the Navy during World War II. Throughout his military service he was stationed in Maui, Corpus Christi, and Norman, Okla. He spent his time in the United States and was preparing for the invasion of Japan when the war came to an end. He still has his wartime diary of his experiences.

On Dec.7, 1941, I was playing cards at a local tavern here in Grafton. All of a sudden an announcement came over the radio that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. At the time I didn't even have a clue where Pearl Harbor was, but I soon found out.

As more and more of the boys I knew were being drafted, I decided to enlist. In July 1942, I went to Milwaukee to take the written and physical tests for the Air Force. I passed all of the tests except the vision test, making me ineligible for that branch. So I decided to ask my father, a World War I veteran, which branch to join. My father told me, "if you want to walk, join the Army; and if you want to ride, join the Navy." So I chose the Navy.

Grafton native LeRoy Paulin took his father's advice when deciding which branch of the service to join.

A few months later, I was sent to Great Lakes Naval Training Station for boot camp. After only 30 days of training, I was assigned to naval aviation. From there I was sent to Naval Technical Aviation Training School in Norman, Okla. The surroundings there were pretty barren; there was mud in the morning and dust in the afternoon. My training was complete in about three months, and I was promoted to Petty Officer 3rd Class.

Next, I was off to San Diego where I worked on WWI submarines for a short while. It was a dirty job chipping rust and working in very small compartments. After San Diego I was sent to San Francisco where I was assigned to shore patrol, another job I didn't enjoy much. Luckily, I was soon put on the pre-war liner the USS Kenmore, later designated as the President Garfield.

On April 16 I arrived at Pearl Harbor. I witnessed much of the aftermath of the attack, just a few months prior. In fact there were still bodies being recovered. This was a very gruesome site. We were all issued gas masks and ordered to be in by 6 p.m. at night because of the fear of another attack by the Japanese. A little over a week later, I flew to Maui where I was assigned to the Carrier Aircraft Service Unit 4 at Puennene. Here I was promoted to Petty Officer 2nd Class on Aug. 1, 1943, and I was later made a crew leader. My duty was to prepare air groups for combat.

One month later I was selected to help start the Carrier Aircraft Service Unit 32 at Kahului, where I served until Nov. 5, 1944. During this time I got the chance to meet some famous people including: movie star Chester Morris; Butch O'Hare, Congressional Medal of Honor winner and namesake of O'Hare field; Ken Cotton, an All-American football player; and Commander Bob Isley, who also had an airfield named after him.

When I later returned to the main island, my time at that particular service unit came to an end. I said goodbye to a young girl who I became acquainted with at church services. She sang in the choir every Sunday night. Believe it or not, we still correspond 58 years later.

In addition to meeting some famous people and a young lady, I also met some fellows from Ozaukee County. In San Diego, I met Elroy Tiegs and Earl Hennings. I ran into Johnnie Mueller and John Bartol, a friend from Boy Scouts. I ran into Russel Blumenberg and Fred Port at Pearl Harbor.

On the way back to the States, we had a scary experience. We were the lead ship of the convoy. We never really expected any problems, however that day I was going up to the top deck when there stood a Marine with a machine gun ordering us back down. We were informed that there was a Japanese submarine in the area. I went down to a lower part of the ship but I decided not to go down too far because I didn't want to be caught way down in the bottom, in case our ship was hit. Later the "all clear" signal sounded, and the captain announced that the convoy had sunk the sub. When we hit port, we were told to say nothing about it. I never did tell until 30 years later.

My military experience taught me some valuable lessons. I learned discipline because during my time in service I always had to obey my officers. Also, I am a strong believer in military preparedness. I believe that Pearl Harbor was a prime example of how the military was not prepared at all for the attack.

Neil Mertz

As told to Julie Barnes,
Homestead High School

Strategic Air Command Firefighter

Mr. Neil Mertz, a Milwaukee native, enlisted in the Air Force at age 19. He served for four years: 1952 to 1956.

I went in with a buddy of mine. The following month, I would have been drafted. My friend's aunt worked in the Draft Board Office and she had seen our names coming up. I decided it would be better to kind of pick what I wanted to do in the Air Force over just being a foot soldier. I enlisted without consulting or telling my parents.

I still remember my first days very well. From Milwaukee we took a train to San Antonio. We ended up at Lackland Air Force Base, right out of San Antonio. There, we received our shots. I don't remember how many, but maybe 25 to 30 different kinds of shots over a period of two to three days. We were still in our civilian clothes; we were not yet issued our military uniforms or work clothes. We were there about 10 days, then we transferred to Shepherd Air Force Base, which was in Wichita Falls, Texas. That is where I took basic training. [We were] living in a tent - this was January. I came down with pneumonia... I remember it real well.

Neil Mertz (left) received an award for his heroic efforts on the runway. He feels very good that he was able to help someone in distress.

Three or four months later, I was transferred to Biloxi, Mississippi. It was called Keesler Air Force Base; it was a typical military, government-run operation. While we were waiting to be control tower operators, they had jobs for us to do. The sergeant said, "Does anybody know how to run a buffer?" I raised my hand and said, "I do." I went with a truck and we went to the officers' club. They were going to have a party there that evening. Well, I turned it [the buffer] on and I was going real well. I was going kind of close to the wall and all of a sudden, I pulled the plug out. So now, instead of thinking, I forgot the switch was on. I went over and plugged it back in. At this time, the thing starts spinning and put a hole about the size of a dinner plate in the wall. If you're only in the service a short time and you don't know what's going on. I thought possibly I'd end up in the brig. Well, I cleaned up the mess very well ... and never said a word to anybody.

I went there to be a control tower operator, [but] I found out they had too many. Now I was going to be a radio operator. About two weeks before we were to graduate, they had too many radio operators. We were going to Austin, Texas, Bergstrom Air Force Base, which is a SAC (Strategic Air Command) base. We had a choice of what we wanted to do. This friend of mine, who still is a good friend of mine, living in Menomonee Falls said, "I got a buddy of mine that's in the fire department. He likes it." So I went in the fire department and I went out and waited for this friend of mine. He said, "I made the fire department!" I said, "I did too." Since then, for 50 years, we've been good friends and we go to reunions together and the whole bit.

They had different parts of the fire department. One was the crash crew, which worked the runways, taxi strips with the planes coming in. The other part was the structural, which meant the buildings, the houses, the barracks and that kind of stuff. In SAC, we had a lot of fighter jets and refueling tankers. From our base, the big planes could fly to any place in the world.

A plane came in and the pilot ran off the end of the runway and the plane was on fire. I was able to get on the wing, get the fellow out. When I did, just a second or two later, the ejection seat went up. Not realizing (I was twenty years old) I could have lost my arms and everything else... I know definitely that if that seat had gone [with the pilot in it] ... he would not have made it. That kind of thing makes you feel good, that you could help someone. I received this trophy-like thing for what I did. When I left, I left it in the Chief's office.

After the four year obligation of his enlistment was fulfilled, Mr. Mertz returned to the Milwaukee area. He continued to use his skills acquired in the Air Force, as he joined the Milwaukee Fire Department for nearly 30 years. Mr. Mertz enjoys spending time with his friends from the service and has the opportunity to do so at reunions. In all, Mr. Mertz summarizes his experience in the United States Air Force by saying, "If I would not have gone into the service, I would not feel as strongly about the United States, the flag and everything else I do today. If anything really ever changed me, that did ... I really grew up as a person."

John Orth

As told to Kate Matichek,
Ozaukee Homeschool Student

Nuclear Weapons Specialist

John W. Orth is a veteran of the Vietnam War. He was a Nuclear Weapons Specialist. He served in the Army from October 1962 to October 1965 and was discharged as a Captain. He was stationed in Albuquerque, N.M.

I am an ROTC graduate of Marquette University, and joined up because we were paid $28 a month for three hours a week, which came in very handy at college. I came from a very disciplined and patriotic family. My father was unable to participate in World War II. My two brothers and I believed it was a duty to serve our country. Allen was a helicopter pilot and my other brother, Donald, was a transportation officer in Vietnam.

After boot camp I went to Albuquerque, N.M., and remember thinking, "This is going to be terrible in the desert," but within two weeks, my wife and I learned to love it there. We learned how to speak Spanish and went skiing in the mountains of the Santa Fe area. I learned how to fly fish for trout. The trout streams in the mountains were beautiful and smelled of Pinon trees. We also enjoyed studying New Mexico history. We lived in a two-bedroom adobe house with our daughter, and we made many friends from all over the United States.

John receives a promotion in Albuquerque, N.M.

My job assignment was to teach radiation safety. Due to the severe consequences of any accidents with nuclear weapons, we required all students to score 100 percent to pass the course and be qualified as nuclear weapon specialists. I studied the biological effects when human bodies are exposed to radiation from nuclear weapons and was also a member of a nuclear weapons emergency team. Our responsibility was to quickly respond in the event of a nuclear weapons accident. I also served as Radiation Safety Officer at the nuclear weapons test center in Tonopah, Nev.

In Tonopah, I participated in an international scientific experiment called Project Roller Coaster. We were to establish the biological hazards of plutonium. Our hypothesis was that plutonium was more toxic that heavy metal poisoning, and the experiment was designed to identify the biological mechanisms for plutonium toxicity. We had an area called Ground Zero where the nuclear weapon was set up and many wagons with animals; seven types of animals and 10 of each kind. We put one close to Ground Zero, 100 yards downwind of the weapon, and the remainder were evenly distributed downward, up to two miles away. On each wagon we put air filters to measure plutonium exposure. On hour after the nuclear weapon was set off, we sacrificed one of each kind of animal from each wagon to see how far the plutonium had travelled within each animal's system. We repeated this process in four, 12 and 24 hours and one-day intervals until we were down to one animal. The last animal lived until it died naturally. Several of the donkeys lived five years longer than their normal expected life span. The results were classified as Top Secret until 1985, when the Soviet Union was changing, and Project Roller Coaster data was then unclassified.

I remember when President John F. Kennedy was shot. I was instructing 20 officers when a staff sergeant told us. No one could talk for several minutes. That night, watching the news on TV was very sobering. There were concerns regarding the transition of government. The military went on high alert in case of Russian attack. A special meeting was held in secure headquarters under a mountain where nuclear weapons were stored because we thought we would be Russian targets. It was a very traumatic experience.

In Washington, D.C., there is a memorial for the veterans who died in Vietnam. I saw a replica that went across the United States and half the people that I served with have their names on it. I started to cry and couldn't stop. When I visit Washington, D.C., I don't have the strength to visit the Wall.

During my service, I received the Armed Forces Chemical Award, for nuclear ordnance. After my military service, I went to the University of New Mexico and received an MBA degree. We moved to Chicago and I worked for Nuclear Data Corp. I eventually moved to Grafton, and throughout the years I have had several different jobs in the medical equipment and computer industry. I am now a computer consultant and chairman of the technology committee for St. Joseph School. I have three children, Lisa Marie, Peter J. and Gregory. Peter and his wife, Maureen, have two children, Connor John and Ashley Marie.

My motto for life is, "When you stop learning, you start dying."

Dan Czerwinski

As told to Jenee Dellegrazio, Grafton High School

Aviation Electrician

Dan Czerwinski graduated from Grafton High School in 1986 when he was 18 years old. He enlisted for four years in the United States Navy, choosing boot camp in San Diego, Calif., instead of Great Lakes, Ill. After returning from active Naval duty, he later joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard. He is currently the vice commander of Rose-Harms Legion Post 355 in Grafton.

I chose San Diego instead of Great Lakes because I enlisted in November, and Great Lakes was extremely cold at that time of year. Boot camp lasted for eight to 10 weeks, and was really not that bad.

From there I went to "A" School in Memphis, Tenn. I spent six months in Memphis studying a selected trade. I trained to be an electrician. This prepared me for the Naval Air Station in Key West, Fla., where I ultimately spent 3.5 years with the VAQ-33 Squadron; also known as the Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron. I was an Aviation Electrician, an E-5 Petty Officer, Second Class.

Dan Czerwinski in 1986.

My job was comparable to a typical "nine-to-five" job. However, my squadron and I spent much time doing other work. After Hurricane Hugo hit Puerto Rico, we spent months gathering rebuilding materials and other forms of aid to send to the civilians there.

Our squadron was also responsible for training other squadrons. In "war games," which were intense simulations, we would always hold the role of the "bad guys." Since this training was crucial for other squadrons, it meant that we would never be sent into combat, even when war broke out in the Middle East during Desert Storm.

The best part about our position was our ability to travel. I traveled to up-state Florida, Puerto Rico, numerous locations in California and we had a 30-day detachment in Hawaii. I was also going to travel to Scotland, but that was cancelled because the departure date was around the same time Desert Storm began. Even though I served during the Desert Storm era, I did not serve overseas. The greatest effect this war had on me was that the possibility for the end of my obligatory service might have been "frozen," that is, I would've had to remain in the Navy until they decided to let me out. Fortunately, that didn't happen.

Our overall quality of life in my squadron was very good. Life in the barracks was very enjoyable. My unit grew very close and enjoyed many parties and nights out on the town. Probably my most traumatizing experience was going to fix my alarm clock and having a bunch of cockroaches crawl out. Cockroaches were a definite problem that we constantly dealt with as part of life in Florida.

My favorite service experience happened with a buddy when we were off duty in Puerto Rico. We went to gamble, and I told him to put $50 aside in his wallet so we had cab fare to get back to base. He wasn't doing very well (and we'd both drunk a lot of rum) and not only did he spend his money, he also spent our cab fare. No taxi driver would take us home, and we ended up walking in the general direction of the base. We went to a hospital in hopes they could help us, and they called the police. While I initially thought we were going to be arrested, instead, we ended up with a series of rides in police cars until we were dumped back on base the next morning.

By the end of my service, I received unit medals for Meritorious Unit and Battle-E Commentator. After I left the Navy, I used the electrical skills I had learned while serving to get a job as a field service technician for Johnson Controls, which is where I now work.

In May of 1988, I joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard. This requires a commitment of one weekend a month and two weeks a year. I have since transferred to the Coast Guard Reserve. Through this I have felt the same sense of teamwork and brotherhood as in the Navy, yet nothing can compare to the immense amount of brotherly relationships I experienced back during Desert Storm. The friendships I made can be compared to a "brotherhood of arms." Teamwork played a large role in this and, with the help of the Internet, I still keep in touch with a few of the men I served with in the Navy.

Richard Engert

As told to Ashley McDougall, Cedarburg High School

Army Engineer

Richard Engert married his wife, Marilyn, 28 months prior to the draft for the Korean War. Shortly before the draft, Mr. Engert purchased a house in Milwaukee. He was working at Hercules Powder Company as a chemist.

We had just bought a house in Milwaukee. I had been drafted and had no choice. I had already enlisted in the Air Force, but the draft notice came before I was sworn into the Air Force. It was something I did not want to see come forward, but I had to go, so I lived with it.

I was lucky. I stayed in the Army. The Marine Corps needed Marines. They went down the line and counted every sixth one-I missed by one. I didn't want to go into the Marines.

I was inducted at Fort Sheridan, Ill. It was the fourth of January and cold. Then I went to Fort Leonardwood, Mo., where I had regular Army boot camp for eight weeks of training. The first day you get set up. They give you your clothes and stuff for your bed. Then you go to a barracks and wait. The next day was the bad day. That is the day you get all your shots and physical. Basic training is dirty. Especially when you crawl through the mud everyday. Every time I went through the combat course, it rained the night before, and it was all mud.

Richard served his tour of duty in Alaska.

After that, I had eight weeks of supply training. Then I went to Granite City, Ill., where I had 16 weeks of mechanic training. After completing training, I was told my outfit was going to Korea.

I didn't go to Korea; I went to Alaska. I was lucky. Half my outfit went to Korea, and the other half went to Alaska. Because we were engineers, we were assigned to the Air Force. We built runways and worked on the DEW line. I was twice fortunate. I didn't go to Korea, and I didn't go into the Marine Corps. If I was in the Marine Corps, I would have gone to Korea. I know that.

I spent December in California waiting to ship out. In January I went to Alaska. That was the time of the dark. You would get a half hour of sunlight and the rest of the day was dark.

We were in the mountains. That's where we built the runway, right in the mountains. Alaska has a funny thing: At about ten o'clock in the morning until six o'clock in the evening they get something called ice fog. It's a layer 100-feet thick, and it's pure blue above with the sun shining. It's nice and clear on the ground, but hides all the mountains. Standing far enough away I could see Mt. McKinley at the base and the peak. I couldn't see the middle of it.

I loved Alaska for skiing. We always went skiing in the winter. In the summer we panned for gold. We fished for grayling. We hunted partridge, bear, mountain goat, etc. Those were my free weekends.

I stayed in touch with my family through letters. I was married then. When I was on leave, I enjoyed coming home. I missed my wife. We were only married for two and a half years.

I was awarded the standard medals you were supposed to get-the National Defense and Service medals for being satisfactory in your service-no court marshals or anything else that was derogatory to their way of thinking.

I liked it once I was there. I would have liked to stay in the Army. I was a corporal, and the only way they can keep you in is to give you another rank, but they already had too many sergeants. I was separated; it wasn't considered discharge at that time. You were released to serve eight years in the Reserves.

After the Korean War, Mr Engert remained affiliated with veteran organizations. He is currently a member of the Peter Wollner American Legion Post 288 and the Forty and Eight.

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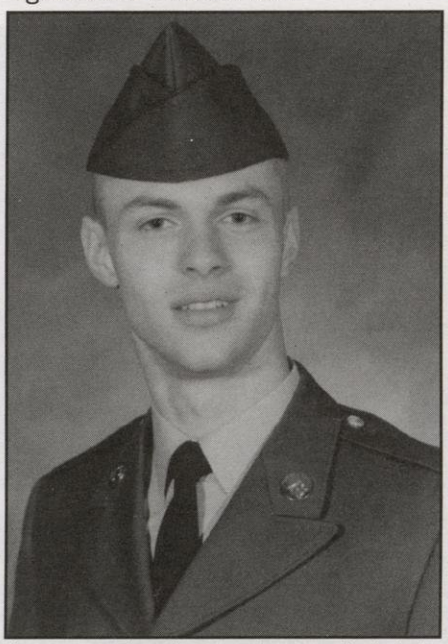
Rodney Kison

As told to Ashley Beason, Cedarburg High School

Military Policeman

Mr. Rod Kison was drafted into the Army on March 4, 1968. He served two years as a Military Policeman in Washington, D.C., and was honorably discharged on March 3, 1970.

I completed basic training in Fort Campbell, Ky. and advanced training at the Military Police Academy in Fort Gordon, Ga. Thereafter I was assigned to the 519th MP Battalion in Washington, D.C. I served the duration of my career in that unit, stationed at Fort Meade, Md. This was a new battalion, established shortly before I was assigned, to work with Washington officials in curbing the marches against Washington, the Pentagon and various nearby military bases during a time period saturated with protests throughout the United States waged by citizens against the Vietnam War.



As a stateside military policeman, Rod dealt with protesters in Washington, D.C.

Serving as an MP stateside was an interesting experience. We were sent to Washington several times, staying in the Pentagon, the Department of Interior and other federal offices while the marches were scheduled to go on against the Capitol. We had to restrain the crowds, people our own age. The only difference was we were in the service and they were not. Although it was difficult, it was a job I was drafted to do and felt it was my duty. We also visited military bases on the east coast such as Ft. Dix, N.J., Ft. Belvoir, Va., and others to prevent the burning of the facilities and protests against war.

We were not allowed any weaponry except tear gas in combat - attempting to curb the crowds. We had to be careful of people with little children, babies especially. We had very strict orders not to do physical harm or be abusive, something that could just instigate them and create a more radical response. We tried to prevent them from doing damage. Our job was simply to disperse them from the facilities as best we could. Our officers were right behind, supporting us.

I felt Vietnam to be a senseless combat. I did not believe we had a strong mission there, but I did not resist the draft. There were many in my age group who fled to Canada. I felt living in the United States and being an American, you were called with the responsibility of serving.

While in Washington, we also did MP duty right on the post. There was a stockade there to hold servicemen who had gone AWOL and needed to be retrieved. They built minimum and medium security stockades on the post to deal with those servicemen. That was very difficult, dealing with gentlemen of your age group who obviously had different feelings. In addition to working the protests against the Vietnam War, which subsided after I had been in Maryland for awhile, I was responsible for stockade duty. I was given Acting Sergeant rank in less than a year. That gave me the authority of one of the squadrons in charge of one of the stockade shifts. For the last nine months of my term, I was in charge of traffic control at Ft. Meade, Md. It was just like serving as a police officer here in a community. I was in charge of traffic control during the morning and afternoon rush hours, and during the daytime I received normal police duties like traffic control or watching for speeders. I ran radar on the state highway that ran through the fort. My service gave me a respect for law enforcement. Being young, I think any normal young person is tempted to resist and it gave me an appreciation for what can be done within a community.

Coming back, having served your duty, was a difficult adjustment. I think so often we have heard that you came back and were just thrust back in the mainstream of your life to try and put it back together. It was difficult because there was no end to the war, no end to the conflict like other major wars, where there was a definitive end and the country celebrated. Friends came and went during that period. There were a lot of us that were drafted or volunteered, knowing they would be drafted.

I don't regret the time that I did serve. I felt it matured me as a young individual. All of us knew what we were there for. We knew our purpose. It taught me to appreciate America and what it stands for.

Mr. Kison now resides in Jackson with his wife. They have one son, a student attending the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. An active member of the Peter Wollner Legion Post 288 in Cedarburg, he keeps close ties with veterans programs through his work as Director of Grants and Contracts at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

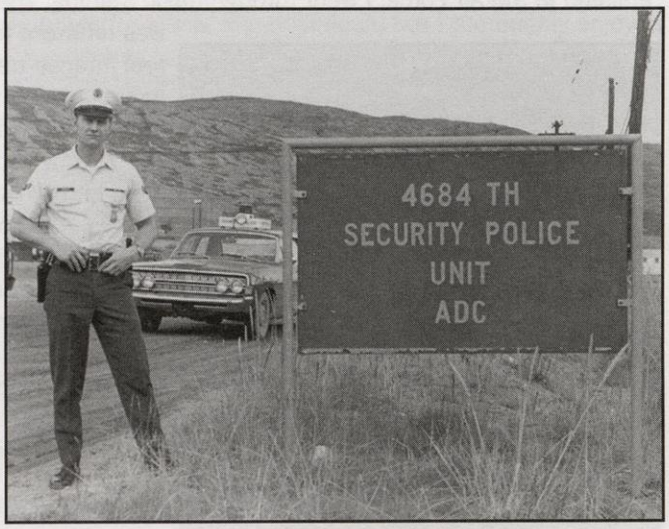
Scott Enders As told to Rob Luft, Ozaukee High School

Air Force Security Police Officer

Scott Enders started his career in law enforcement as a member of the Air Force Security Police in the Air Force. The Vietnam-era veteran used his experience to build a foundation for his civilian career - that of an Ozaukee County Deputy Sheriff.

I was living in Brown Deer when I was drafted into the Army. A short time later, I enlisted in the Air Force. I felt the Air Force had the best career opportunities for me, and I ended up serving from January 1971 until May 1974. My service was during the Vietnam War, but since I didn't serve in Vietnam, I am what they call a Vietnam-era veteran.

My journey started in Milwaukee. At 4 a.m., we started our induction. I received a physical and filled out a lot of paperwork. The instructor in Milwaukee told us what to expect when we got transported. Later on, a group of about 10 of us were flown from Mitchell Field down to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. We registered there and filled out more paperwork. We ate a meal and were taken to our bunks at about 2 a.m.



Scott served as a Security Police Officer while stationed in Greenland. It provided a strong basis for his future civilian career.

Our training was quite good. There were classroom lessons, obstacle courses, running and marching on a daily basis. Our drill instructor was strict, but taught us a lot. When I was done with basic training, I learned how to become a security police officer; that particular schooling was five weeks long. We trained with many weapons, that being the M-16 rifle, the .38 cal. revolver, an M-60 machine gun, grenade launchers and shotguns.

I kept in touch with my family through phone calls and with a lot of letters. During basic training we could have two phone calls a week. The food was real good, and we ate in a mess hall.

My first duty assignment lasted six months. I was stationed at Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Michigan. We guarded nuclear weaponry. We also patrolled in police cars. We did everything a regular police officer would do.

My second duty assignment was at Sondrestrom Air Force Base in Greenland. It lasted two years. Our mission in Greenland was base security in support of the DEW (Distance Early Warning System) Line. The DEW line in Greenland consisted of three large self-contained radar (DYE) sites which were located strategically across the center of Greenland to warn the United States of attack from the north. The DYE sites were manned by radar personnel residing inside the structures year round. The base and air strip were used to fly supplies and personnel to and from the DYE's and was also used as a bomber refueling stop to during World War II

The weather at Sondrestrom was bitterly cold in the winters with an average temperature of about minus 10 to minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit. For a couple of months during the summer - usually June and July - the temperatures could get into the 70s. The midnight sun never set during the short summers, which could play havoc with our sleep cycles. An Airman's tour in Greenland was remote and isolated, but the Air Force took good care of our morale, providing us with dinner/dance clubs, a full-service gymnasium, movie theatre, photo lab, service club with pool tables, etc., bowling alley, plus many other recreational facilities. The base has been since turned over to the Danish government, who have converted it to a popular resort used 12 months out of the year. I have great memories of my tour at Sondrestrom Air Force Base.

I came back and served the rest of my time at K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base, which is located in Michigan. I met a lot of people while I was in the service. I still see some of my old friends today.

I was discharged when I was stationed in Michigan - the date was May 15, 1974. I didn't know what I wanted to do when I got home. My dad told me to do whatever I was happy doing. I knew I had a lot of police experience, so that helped me somewhat. I got a job as a police dispatcher in Brown Deer. I was later hired as a deputy for the Ozaukee County Sheriff's Department, and have been a Deputy Sheriff ever since.

Eugene Gannon

As told to Kevin Pegelow, Homestead High School

Member of a B-18 Bomber Crew

Eugene Gannon enlisted in the military on Dec. 4, 1940, and served in the United States Air Force and Army Air Corps as a Chief Crew Flight Engineer. The reason he enlisted was because the draft was in force at the time and he was single without an essential job. He saw an ad in the paper and was always an airplane buff so he decided to enlist.

I chose to participate in the Air Force for the adventure of it and because I wanted to see the world. Once enlisted in the Air Force, I went through basic training. The training was not real technical because the Air Force was different from the infantry, and I was flying planes so I didn't need real intense training. My first few days in the military, during peacetime, were not real hectic. I would go to work at 8:00 a.m. and had Saturday afternoons off and all day Sunday. It was a real easy going, slow pace. When I had off, I would go sightseeing and swimming in the ocean in Honolulu and Waikiki with my buddies. I would also fly along on a plane that would go to other islands.

Eugene's interest in airplanes helped him decide which branch of the service to join in 1940.

I had stayed in contact with my family very little. The only way that I stayed in contact with them was by letter and after the war started the only way I could stay in contact was by using V-Mail. I never had any contact by phone. I was overseas for 38 months and I never talked to my family once. During the war, our families never actually knew where we were. When people would write to us, their letters would go to the Army post office and the post office would forward the letters to us.

When I was on the job I felt nervous a few times when I was being shot at, but the emotion that I mainly felt was not to have any fear and to just do my duty. When I was in Hawaii, I was stationed outside of Pearl Harbor at Wheeler Field.

My only combat mission was on Dec. 7, 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor. I was sent up to be a gunner on a B-18 Bomber. I searched for the Japanese fleet but I never found them, which was fortunate because my crew was under powered as far as machine guns were concerned.

While I was in the military I made many close friendships, some of which still continue to this day. Before the war I lived in very nice, beautiful barracks. I had good food, and there were nice big showers and baths. After the war started and I went out to other islands, I lived in a tent and at night we had no lights. We also showered by catching rainwater in barrels. I slept in a cot with no pillows and only a blanket or two. There was not much there, and there were not many comforts. The food that I had received was not too bad. There was a cook in most cases, but there were times when I lived off of C-rations, which were prepackaged food from the military. My rations consisted of crackers, cheese and sometimes bacon. It wasn't anything real great to eat, but I always had enough to eat.

I was never injured during the war. I did not go on leave until I got back to the United States when the war was just about over. Back in the States, I was able to go home for 30 days before returning to the service. The day that service ended for me was on Sept. 4, 1945. I had already been back in the States for eight or nine months and was stationed at Scotfield, Ill., where I was later discharged.

MSGT Gannon flew on one combat mission, which was in response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

After the war was over, Mr. Gannon went into business with a partner and they ran a restaurant and a bar for a few years. After marrying his wife, Ruth, he sold the bar and went to work for sales and marketing for 30 years at Miller Brewing Company. Eugene finally retired in 1979 and continues to live in Mequon. He says he continues to enjoy life and his many grandchildren.

Stanley McDowell

As told to Laura Braza, Homestead High School

Radioman on the USS General C.C. Ballou

At 17, Stanley McDowell enlisted in a pilot training program that allowed him to attend Western Michigan College - at the expense of the United States Navy. It initially gave him an opportunity to realize his dream of attending college. Several months later, the program was discontinued and he was sent to a nine-week boot camp.

After boot camp, I was sent to 20 weeks of Naval Radio School at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Upon graduation from school I was assigned to the troop transport USS General C.C. Ballou, where I gained a new job as a radioman and a new identity as "Scars McDowell."

I worked on a schedule of four hours on duty and four hours for sleep, It was difficult, but I thoroughly enjoyed my service during World War II. In fact if I were given the opportunity to enlist again, I would do it in a heartbeat. The Navy allowed me to see the world.

"Scars" McDowell (left and below left), served as a radioman on a troop transport ship, the USS General CC. Ballou. He saw many ports and travelled around the world while in the Navy.

I remember vividly the entire ship's mad rush to get shore leave as soon as the Ballou pulled into port. The USS General C.C. Ballou visited ports around the world. Usually the troops were given only about 12 hours on shore but we made the most of it, trying the food, meeting many people, and seeing the legendary sites in the areas. I had the opportunity to visit ports all over the world, including Marseilles, France, the Suez Canal in Egypt and Calcutta, India. I remember each of my trips to these ports; these places opened my eyes to the world. I saw places, people and cultures that I would never have been exposed to had I not enlisted.

I always considered myself extremely lucky to get a position in the Navy. I think that soldiers in the Army saw a much different side of the war than we did. I can still recall our first few days out of port when there would be fresh eggs and other food. Even after several days on the water, we still ate freshly cooked meals prepared by the cooks and bakers on the ship. The Army troops didn't have it so lucky.

The Ballou did not see combat during the time that I spent on it. The closest that we ever got was navigating through a minefield in the water. Everyone was serious and quiet that day; I'll never forget it.

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The USS General C.C. Ballou (AP-157).

I met some wonderful guys on the Ballou. For example, the ship had a mascot, a dog named Buddy that was given to the captain by his wife before leaving. I still chuckle even now to recall how we taught the dog to do his business in a certain part of the ship so that we radiomen would never need to clean it up.

The ship even had its own band, which was perfect for raising morale and cheering up the crew. My most vivid memory, however, was a telegram received when the Ballou was en route to Marseilles, France. It came on Aug. 14, 1945. The telegram announced a United States victory in Japan. The attitude on the ship was pure joy; I'd never seen anything like it. The celebration meal alone - I still have a copy of the menu - included roast tom turkey, gravy, oyster dressing, layer cake and cigars.

I received a number awards during my time in the Navy. These awards include the American Area Campaign medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign medal and the World War II Victory medal.

I returned home after my discharge, completed college and entered the Ready Reserve in case I would ever be needed to fight again. I was never called upon, but I made sure that the story of the Ballou is not forgotten. I put together a pamphlet about the Ballou's part in World War II and the Korean War; a copy of it is in Grafton's USS Liberty Memorial Library. I have also organized annual reunions for those that served on the Ballou.

After 21 years of satisfactory federal service, I retired on Oct. 5, 1969 with the rank of Lieutenant Junior Grade.

Agnes Kais Granicki

As told to Sarrah AbuLughod,
Ozaukee Homeschool Student

Statistical Clerk in the Navy

Agnes Granicki grew up in Milwaukee during the 1940s. When she was 20 years old, she decided that she was ready for something new and so she signed on with the United States Navy.

When I went to register, I learned that I had do be 21 years of age to register without parent consent, so I went back home and had my mother sign the papers. When I asked her father for his consent he got out the family Bible and had me swear that I wouldn't just be entertainment for all the GIs. I swore that I would return in the same condition I was leaving in.

I was sworn into the United States Navy on my 20th birthday in downtown Milwaukee. The ceremony was held at the Plankinton Arcade [now part of Grand Avenue mall]. After the ceremony, I took my mother out for her first hamburger and French fries.

Yeoman Third Class Agnes Kais, 1945.

After I was sworn in, I boarded a train and was sent to New York. Once I arrived, I attended Hunter University, which at that time was a college for women only.

I shared a room with four other women and, to this day, I clearly remember the inspections. A Lieutenant would come in with white gloves and inspect the whole apartment. The only time we were caught was during the first inspection. The Lieutenant took her white glove and wiped the top of the rod that held up the shower curtain. She found dust, and we ended up with "detail." This meant that we went out with a little pick and went through the grass picking up all of the cigarette butts. This was no fun. Never again did the Lieutenant find dust on that rod or anywhere else!

On the papers I wrote that I wanted to go into communications. When they found out that I was of European descent and that my family had living relatives overseas, I was to remain in the States.

We were sent to Washington D.C. in 1945, where I became a statistical clerk at the Navel Gun, which was right across from the Wave barracks, where I served as a Yeoman Third Class. My job was to catalogue and organize information. The Navy's ships were catalogued down to the screw. All of the information was filed in cabinets. If something went wrong in a certain area people would call us and we would know where to look for the information.

I stayed at a base in Washington, D.C. When I first arrived, some of the older women advised me to stay friendly with the men guarding the gates. Each time we were allowed to go out we would ask the guards if they needed anything or if they wanted a hamburger. It soon paid off. In my free time I went to movies and attended picnics. The best Thanksgiving I ever had was in Washington, D.C. I never experienced such a feast (even since World War II) as we had Thanksgiving 1945.

One of my biggest fears was getting in trouble. I certainly didn't want to embarrass myself or bring shame to my parents. I remember once when I was in Boston, Mass., I was detained by the Security Police because I didn't have my hat on my head (I was actually carrying it). As punishment, one of the SPs made me get into his vehicle. He actually only took me for a ride around the block before letting me out ... he was having a good time at my expense. I was with three other people at the time, so I was pretty safe in that respect. If we really did get in trouble or were penalized for some reason, we would have to turn in our ID cards, which had our photo on them.

Once, my friend, Lorraine Riley, and I were returning to our barracks (we had snuck out early because our Lieutenant was gone) one afternoon. Henry Fonda and Gene Kelly stopped and asked us where we were going. We told the the Wave barracks. They said, "Come in, we'll take you." You can imagine our guards' surprise at the gate when they saw us in the back seat. What a thrill that was for us!

Soon after the war I decided to go home to my family. I missed my mom's cooking even though the food in the Navy was good. I just wanted to go home. I spent 13 months in the Navy. I have very fond memories of that time. I really felt good in my uniform and marching behind our flag. I was discharged from the Navy when I had enough points, but had I known then what I know now, I might have been a 20-year veteran. Who knows?

Agnes now lives in Port Washington. She has five living children, 14 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Merlyn "Sleepy" Scharnow

Interviewed by Katie Schoemaker, Ozaukee High School

Went into the Marines at 15

At a time when most teenagers are thinking about getting their driver's license and junior prom, World War II-era veteran Sleepy Scharnow did something completely different: he enlisted in the United States Marines Corps.

I was a troubled teenager, and it wasn't doing me any good to stay in school. I had an older brother, Lyle, who was serving in the Marines on the west coast, so I knew a little bit about the Marines and decided to join up. I then told the biggest fib of my life.

Of course they wouldn't take me if they knew I was 15, so I ended up with two birthdays. My real birthday was March 9, 1930, but I went down to the Notary Public and had my papers notarized saying that my birthday was May 18, 1927 - a day I picked for no particular reason except that it made me 18. I think it came down to the fact that as long as you paid the Notary a quarter, he'd notarize pretty much anything. He wasn't really paying attention, and I don't suppose anyone else was either because in early 1945, I was officially a member of the United States Marine Corps.

Fifteen-year-old Sleepy Sharnow, 1945.

My mom didn't know about what I'd done until the day I left; my dad didn't know until I was there and he wanted to get me out. My mom got ahold of me through the church and told me what he was planning to do, and I called him and told him to leave me alone and let me do it.

When I first enlisted, my brain was really going like a gyroscope. I remember thinking, "What the hell did I get into?" but the discipline of military life kind of slowed that gyroscope down.

I actually kind of enjoyed basic training. There were quite a few older men and during training, I'd see them kind of fall by the wayside. I was all of 15, so the physical aspects came pretty easy. Back in high school, I'd also had a gym teacher, Earl "Pop" Foster, who was a WWI veteran. He'd had wooden rifles made and he taught us the drills and commands. In fact, at one point there were two of us in basic - me and a former ROTC cadet - who would each take half of the platoon and call the cadences.

My age was never really an issue; nobody really got suspicious, though I always carried my birth certificate on me. Every once in awhile I'd bet a few scheckels with someone - particularly those guys who complained about having to serve and wanted to go home - that I could be out of the Marine Corps in a week, guaranteed. But other than that, my age didn't really play a part in it.

Sleepy drove over-the-road truck while serving in the Marines. Here he is at the wheel.

My actual job was that of an over-the-road truck driver. I had been hauling milk for Galles Dairy back in Port Washington on a part-time basis, and they saw that I had trucking experience. I was always stationed in the Carolinas, but we'd go down to Pensacola or wherever the ships would come in. The war had ended, and the ships were bringing supplies back. I actually had a military driver's license before I had a state driver's license. I was stopped once while I was home on leave and they accepted my military license, but I didn't obtain a Wisconsin driver's license until I was discharged and back home.

I had the opportunity to re-enlist after the year I put in, but I didn't. Instead, I took advantage of the 52/20 Club, which was where the government paid you $20 a week for 52 weeks. I later used the GI Bill to get an education in refrigeration and air conditioning at what was then the Milwaukee Vocational School. I'm a card-carrying refrigeration technician and a retired journeyman electrician.

I believe I am the youngest veteran that served during World War II in Ozaukee County. I know of one other underage county veteran, Mike Schmitz [page 7], and he has been a good friend of mine for many years. In addition to belonging to the Van Ells-Schanen Legion Post in Port Washington, I also belong to the Veterans of Underage Military Service. I also finally received my diploma from Port Washington High School earlier this year. Some of my buddies have been teasing me about why it took me so long, and I tell them, "Because I didn't cheat!" They get a good laugh at that.

Jack Eckert As told to Crystal Jushka, Port Washington High School

Career Member of the Coast Guard

Mr. Jack Eckert is an amazing Coast Guard Veteran. For 27 years he was able to travel all over the country. He enjoyed what he did and enjoys telling others about it.

As he tells it: I joined the Coast Guard on Nov. 16, 1948. I went in on a "kiddy cruise," which was supposedly three years. In 1951, my service was extended for a year because of the Korean War. I served about half of that year at which that time I got out. I was out for a couple of years and didn't go anywhere as I couldn't find a good job. I had the opportunity to go back into the Coast Guard. I stayed until 1975 when I retired.

Jack Eckert in 1971. You may recognize him now through his service as a member of the Ozaukee County Board of Supervisors.

As a kid I probably joined for the escapism. I was not a very happy young man. I was 17 when I joined and rather short. I had to eat bananas to make the weight. I really didn't know what I was getting myself into. Boot Camp for the most part was getting your shots, marching, going to classes with 80 other men with a Boatswain's Mate teaching us how to tie a bowline and a Gunners Mate that followed us around teaching us how to use our rifles. We did a lot of marching, marching, marching and rowing boats. We marched in Harry Truman's inauguration parade.

After boot camp, my first district was Boston. I was sent to the Merrimac River Station, which was run very strictly. It wasn't a very happy place. In October of that year, the Chief in Charge told me I was going to be sent to the Portsmouth Harbor Station. It wasn't nearly as strict as the first one. It was kind of easy and there wasn't much to do to do.

Since the Coast Guard allowed us mutual exchange of stations, I switched stations with another fellow. I went to work in the engine room of the Cutter McCulloch for a year. I was transferred to the Cutter Evergreen, which was, by reputation, the Coast Guard's worst criminal ship. The Executive Officer who was an absolute tyrant. As it turned out, there was a good bunch of guys on the ship. Everyone was so busy hating the Exec that we didn't have time to hate each other.

I finished up on the Cutter Frederick Lee, or the "Dirty Freddy." After a while they sent out a dispatch; all of us who were on extensions could get out. All I could see myself doing was bouncing from ship to ship, so I got out and hitchhiked home to Waukesha.

I tried to put a life together but that wasn't going anywhere; I went through many jobs. Then I met my wife and got married. The following January, I got a letter from the Coast Guard asking me to come back. I went back even though it wasn't good money. I was assigned to the Ninth District and the Sturgeon Bay Group. They reassigned me to Pilot Island Lighthouse.

As luck would have it, a fellow who lived on Washington Island was stationed in Milwaukee at the Lighthouse. He wanted to switch stations with me so he could be closer to the island. This was good because my wife was pregnant. The following winter I was transferred to the Cutter Mackinaw, and then back to the Sturgeon Bay Station. In early 1958 I went East to Groton, Conn., where I became an Instructor for three years. This gave me a chance to pick up the college credits I needed for officer candidate school. I took night courses at the University of Rhode Island and taught during the day. It took three years but I was selected. I was in the right place at the right time. I went through a lot of schooling during the next few years.

I spent my remaining career in the Coast Guard as an officer on several different ships and stations working. I traveled most of the time. After over 26 years, my wife told me that it was enough and that I had had a long career. She wanted out of that way of life. So I retired from Group San Francisco even though I had planned to stay for five more years. We moved back to Wisconsin and now live in Port Washington.

Mr. Eckert maintains a wonderful web site called Jack's Joint, which he calls "An Unofficial library of Coast Guard stories, articles, poems, essays and downright lies." Check it out at www.jacksjoint.com.

Gustav "Gus" Janssen

As told to Annie Shields,
Homestead High School

Aviation Machinist Mate Second Class

Gustav Janssen is a native of the Milwaukee area but he enlisted in the Navy to see the world. He encountered many wonderful experiences in the U. S. Navy Air Corps from 1943 to 1945. In his own words:

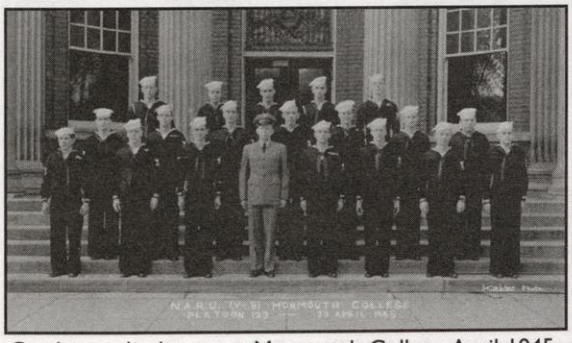
I volunteered to get into pilot training program and I passed all the tests, but I was rejected for having scars on my face from skin problems. But I have a motto I believe in, "If at first you don't succeed, then try, try again." So I enlisted in the regular Navy where I got my bluejacket manual. I had to memorize parts of this and take basic tests on the material. I scored the best on submarines and aviation, so I chose my first choice which was aviation. I trained and worked in some places around Chicago like Navy Pier, Glenview and Monmouth College. Here, I worked on the engines of planes. While we were flying the planes, men in training would aim at the plane, wait a bit, and fire at a long banner that was about a quarter of a mile behind the plane. They would blow the banners right off.

Gus Janssen joined the Navy to see the world - the farthest he travelled from home was Canada.

I had a few experiences like that; one was rather funny to me. We were supposed to be landing in Madison, but there was a January snowstorm. It started snowing so bad that we couldn't see the top of the capitol building. So we started to follow some railroads, and finally we were running out of fuel. We had to make a forced landing in one of the farmer's fields in Wisconsin Dells. We ended up staying there for five days in a very nice hotel. Because they know things like this can happen, we had a certain amount of money we could spend. It wasn't nearly as busy as it is in the summer, so it was very peaceful and quiet. That was my first time in the Dells. It's an interesting thing, I joined the Navy to see the world, but the farthest away I got from Milwaukee was Canada.

When new men came on our base, we would have a little harmless fun with them. There was an instrument on the planes that measured the air speed by how much air passes through it. So we took that gadget and we hooked it up to a little snuffbox. Then we would take a really fine, black-as-the-dickens powder and we had a mouthpiece from an instrument that someone could blow through. Then we would pick a new guy and say "Oh, he looks like he'd have a good set of lungs, I bet he could get a high air speed." So we got him to blow through this gadget, and as he's blowing he didn't realize it, but he was blowing the powder all over his face. Everyone around would be laughing and he wouldn't know why, so finally we would show him.

One prank we played was a little rougher than that. When we got a person who had never been in a plane before, we would tell the instructor to "give him a good ride." So we'd get him in and we would always adjust him a little on the loose side just so you could fit a finger in between him and the parachute strap. Then the pilot would give him a good ride, which was a couple of good loops and rolls.He would be looking around for something to grab onto because he thought he was going to fall out!



Gus Janssen's platoon at Monmouth College, April 1945. He is the center sailor of the last row.

I've made many friends, but we've all gone in different directions, I've seen a couple of them since then. My friends and I had this little saying, "The Marines get all the glory, the Army gets all the work and the Navy gets all the pay." When I hear about some of the sad things other people had to go through in the war, I really didn't have it that bad. We always had a place to sleep and the food was good.

As you can see, Mr. Janssen has made many friends and has had many great experiences from being in the Navy during World War II. His life has really centered around his experiences in the Navy. Since then, Mr. Janssen taught automotive aircraft engineering in many different schools, and he continues to work on fixing cars. Since the war, he married his wife Bee, and together they have visited all seven continents (some 61 countries in all).

Linda Dudash

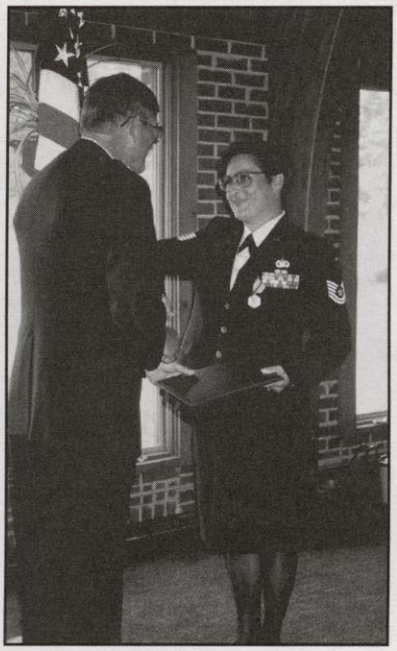
As told to Caitlin Tierney, Port Washington High School

Inventory Management Specialist

Linda Dudash of Port Washington, Wisconsin may have first chosen the United States Air Force because she liked the color of their uniforms, but she was to discover that there was many more reasons to join the service.

I believe basic training is something everyone should have to go through because it is mentally and physically challenging. After basic training, we took tests to find which job we would fit best in. I was told I would enter the supply career field.

My jobs ultimately included taking orders and getting parts for Transportation, Communication and several types of aircraft. I was first stationed in England for two years. I was part of an office where we kept stock on hand for supplies. I then traveled to Tucson, Ariz., for a year and a half. Here, I worked with heavy equipment. I then traveled to Upper Michigan, where I worked with the B-52s and KC135s (the flying gas station) in monitoring and supplying aircraft parts.



Linda Dudash at her Air Force retirement in 1998.

I continued to move around a lot throughout my Air Force career. From Michigan, I was then transferred to Italy where I was stationed at Sicily to supply parts to ground-launch cruise missiles. After a year I returned to the United States, and spent six years in Tampa, Fla. In Tampa, I was in a joint unit with the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines in communications, ordering parts in an office.

Finally, I was sent to Virginia for six years where I was responsible for ordering critical parts for aircraft. In this assignment, I was assigned to the flightline to order parts for the F-15 fighter aircraft. This was my last assignment, and I retired on July 17, 1998 with an effective retirement date of Sept. 1, 1998.

Because I was on the flight line during my last assignment, I received many temporary duties and assignments. I traveled to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Utah, Canada and Iceland. It was while I was serving these last six years that I experienced one of my biggest military thrills and was part of one of the earliest incidents in the War on Terror.

While I was on temporary duty in Saudi Arabia, a terrorist act took place. On June 25, 1996, the Khobar Towers (the compound in which Americans were housed) went down. A truck bomb exploded, killing 19 and injuring hundreds. The truck had tried to come in through the entry control point and it was turned away. The truck then parked outside the perimeter nearest one of the towers, detonated and demolished a tower.

I remember seeing the television flicker, the sliding glass bend, and blow up. Glass was shattered everywhere. Many people were injured and panic stricken. All that was visible was the dust that filled the air. A group of us went to where they were treating the injured people and tried to comfort them. The bombers were believed to have ties with Osama Bin Laden.

Linda awaiting her "ride" in a F15 fighter jet. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for her.

Also, while in Saudi Arabia, I took an incentive flight on a F-15, the Air Force's top air superiority fighter jet. This was the best ride of my life. This opportunity was offered to people who have been with the squadron a while. I turned the offer down at first because I hate to fly but I was encouraged to take it. I was very nervous entering the jet, but later I was very glad I took advantage of the unique opportunity. The jet went faster than the speed of sound while doing acrobats.

The best part of my 20-year career was the bonds I formed with others and all the different people I met. I still keep in touch with several people I was stationed with. While stationed I missed being with family, Wisconsin winters and Packer games. I am proud that I completed my full 20 years in the Air Force, which, at the time, was not common for a woman, and a true accomplishment.

Mildred Dickmann Brown As told to Laurie Arendt

Yeoman Third Class, V10 USNR

It was not uncommon for more than one person in a family to heed the call to duty during World War II. Grafton native Mildred Dickmann Brown followed her older sister and brother into the Navy in service to our country.

After I went through high school, I had started working at Grob's Manufacturing in Grafton. When I was 20, I decided that I was going to join the Navy and see the world. I later found out that I couldn't sign up for overseas duty because I didn't know how to swim.

I picked the Navy because I thought their uniforms were snazzy. I had to argue with my mother and father to get them to sign my papers, and they finally relented. Joining the Navy meant that I would take my first long trip away from home. I did basic training at Hunter College in the Bronx. There were many regiments of women in training at Hunter College and we were quite busy. We did do a little sightseeing, including visiting the Statue of Liberty, but we didn't have much time for that sort of thing. I do remember, however, that we had two weekends off because they were shooting a movie, "Here Come the WAVES" with Betty Hutton at the college. We were in the movie - we were the marching corps. I never actually saw the movie, but if it came out on television, I would watch it.

Mildred Dickmann Brown served in the United States Navy during World War II. This photo was taken in Dallas, Texas.

I then went on to Yeomans' School at Stillwater, Okla. I didn't find my training to be very difficult at all because I had taken all the commercial courses in high school and could type and do shorthand.

After I finished training, I was assigned to the Naval Air Station in Dallas, Texas. My job as a yeoman was to keep the books for the training planes. I worked a normal shift and had weekends off unless I was assigned to duty. I enjoyed my job, and it was interesting because I could see the planes that were damaged.

Our living conditions were comfortable and we stayed in big barracks. I guess the best way to describe it is as a big warehouse with beds in it. We each had our own bunk, and I remember I had a bottom bunk. We also had a small room at the front of the barracks and that was where we would stand watch. We would have to stand watch for two hours if our name was called. I also remember that back then, the services were still separated and the blacks and the whites were housed separately.

I actually met my husband while I was on duty. Two other Waves and I were walking upstairs to our office. I remember I looked back and saw a sailor watching me. Some time later he came top-side and said he was going to the PX [Post Exchange] and he'd be glad to pick up anything I needed. It was a novel way to meet and, although I didn't need anything, I said, "Gee, thanks. I do need Ivory Flakes."

From then on, we started going to movies on the post and would go to the USO shows. I remember we had quite a few movie stars come through the naval air station. I don't remember the girls that came through, just the fellas, particularly Billy Dee Williams.

My husband and I were married in our uniforms, though we didn't have a military wedding.

When I was sent to the personnel separation center, a lot of the fellas were already coming back because the war was ending. They put out a call for anyone who could type, fellas and girls, to come help get the papers ready.

After being honorably discharged I took advantage of the GI Bill and attended the College of Charleston in Charleston, S.C., for two years.

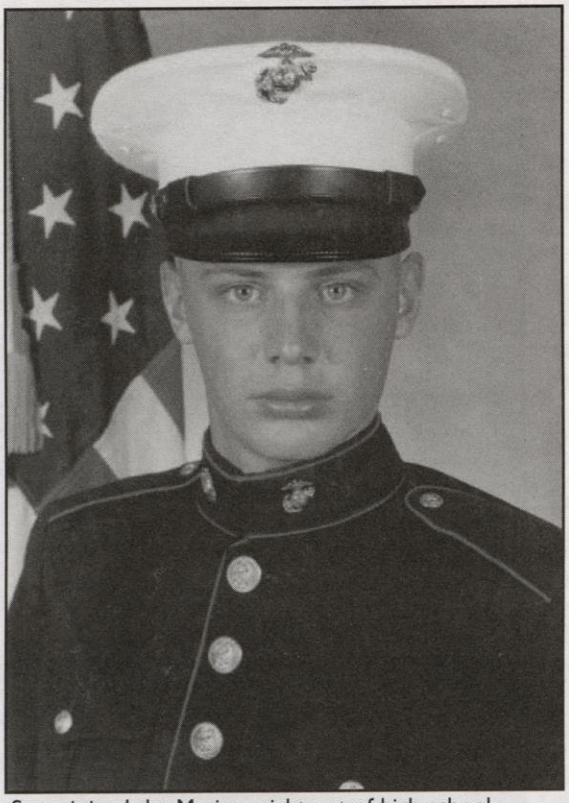
I was not the only person to serve in my family. My older sister, Lucille was a WAC and she served in Georgia. In fact, she served at the same center our father served at as a machine gun instructor in World War I. I also had a brother, Nick, who was stationed in Rhode Island.

Steve Volkmann As told to Laurie Arendt

Helicopter Mechanic and Crew Chief

At the point in which I interviewed Mr. Volkmann, he was adjusting to life "outside" the military. He wasn't doing too badly, considering he had retired from the military a mere day and a half earlier.

I enlisted in the Marines in June 1977. I was having some problems in high school and the recruiter gave me a pretty good line of bull. My dad had been an engine mechanic on transport planes during the Korean War, and I wanted to go into aviation mechanics, so that helped, too. I'd originally planned on joining the Marine Reserves, but when I got to boot camp, they told me that unless I went active, they could send me anywhere they wanted to. I called my dad at work and asked his advice, and he asked me what I thought I would do. I ended up going active duty for four years, which didn't hurt me at all. In fact, it was probably the best thing I ever did.



Steve joined the Marines right out of high school without ever thinking he'd retire from the military.

I thought boot camp would've been tougher than I found it to be. I didn't think it was hard at all. I then went on for Marine Corps Aviation training at Millington, Tenn. At the end of that training, we wrote out our "wish list" of where we wanted to go. It was either East Coast or West Coast, and you received whatever you requested. Marine Corps Aviation is a very small specialty, and regardless of where you go, you know someone because there's not too many people in it.

I wanted to go to Camp Pendleton because at that point, I was a schooled "Jarhead" and I wanted to put my training to good use. I worked on CH-46, Huey-1-N, AH-1-J, AH-1-T and Cobra helicopters.

We were deployed a few times, including an eight-month deployment on a helicopter carrier. I'm a "golden shellback," meaning that I crossed the International Dateline and the Equator at the same time.

I spent 30 days in Hawaii, went to the Philippines, spent four days in Africa, six days in Japan and one week in Australia. I was on the USS Neverdock, which was really the USS New Orleans. I enjoyed the trip, particularly Australia because it was one place I'd always heard about and never thought I'd get to.

When we were in the Philippines the guy in the bunk above me picked up crabs during his visit. He came back on the ship, walked over to our bunk, grabbed the laundry bag that was hanging on our bunk and threw it overboard. When he came back, I said, "What did you do that for?" He explained what had happened. I said, "That's too bad for you, but that was my bag." I had a whole bunch of new stuff in there, too.

After I was discharged from the Marines, I joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard and served as a crew chief with the 832nd Medical Company (AA) out of West Bend. The best thing about it was the flying, even local area flying. It's neat driving through the Kettle Moraine, but its even better to see it at 90 knots at treetop level.

We also did some travelling in the Guard. One of the funniest moments I had was on our way to a reforger in Germany in 1986. We'd left Volk Field and took a direct flight on a 747. When we got over to Germany, the First Sergeant in charge of the whole shebang was counting people as we got off the plane. I said to him, "You think we lost someone on the way over?" He said, "I just gotta make sure we have everyone here."

The most rewarding thing I've gotten of the military was the friendships I made. If you called someone from the Guard at 2 a.m., they'd be more than willing to help you out. When you live with people, work with people, you put your life into their hands more than civilians can understand. When we see each other now, we're still friends and we hee-haw over the same stories year after year.

The military is just like anything else: What you put in is what you get out. The more involved you get, the more fun it is. I'm satisfied with my military experience. I think the government got a good bang for their buck out of me.

Travis Tovar As told to his mother, Patty Flierl

Chief Petty Officer with the USS Jimmy Carter

My son, Travis, joined the Navy in 1987. He is now attached to the USS Jimmy Carter, a multi-mission nuclear submarine being built in Groton, Conn. When launched in 2004, it will be used to support the Navy SEAL program and will be capable of providing underwater support that is currently not available.

During my senior year of high school, I did not get accepted into the college I wanted. I started to consider what other options I had. I knew I did not want to remain in Port Washington because there weren't many opportunities and I really wanted to see more of the world. I worked at the smokehouse at Smith Brothers and Grant Smith used to tell me stories about being in the Marines, which I thought were interesting. I also got several pieces of mail from the different branches of the armed services, so I sent two of them in. I decided that whichever branch replied first would be the one I would look into. The Navy recruiter called first (he was Grant's brother) and I left Port Washington about a week after I graduated in 1987.

Travis is now serving as a Chief Petty Officer with the USS Jimmy Carter.

I liked accounting, so I trained to be a storekeeper because they do the purchasing, accounting and contracting for the fleet. The schooling was in Meridian, Miss., and another guy from basic training and I went together. Well, when we got to Mississippi, the class was not ready so we spent the first two weeks mowing grass, taking care of garbage, stuff like that during the week and had the weekends off. Once the class started, the three days were indoctrination and then the next two days they brought in people from all the different communities of the Navy. They told us about their communities and what opportunities were available.

The head of the Storekeepers school was a submariner and he talked about the submariner community and it interested me. Also, because the Submariners were an elite branch of the Navy, anyone who wanted to go into their community had to volunteer right away. I had to go through a screening process first, and upon acceptance, I was sent for training in Groton, Conn. I was third in my class so I got first pick of orders. I originally picked a ship stationed out of Pearl Harbor - probably because of the historical significance - but I ended up on the USS LaJolla, a 688 Class submarine, out of San Diego as my first tour of duty.

At that point, I considered getting out but my Senior Chief asked me to stay in. He said he would help me get a good job. He offered me an independent job that required me to be on call 24 hours but I turned him down. Then my detailer called and offered me a job in Washington, D.C., with the Department of Energy. I tracked nuclear weapons and supported the fleet. Ships would call for equipment or repairs that they needed and I gave the approvals. I worked with companies that contracted with the Navy, like Westinghouse and the Electric Boat Company. We handled anything that involved repairs or shipping of nuclear components. I was also responsible for assisting with the shutdown of Mare Island, a naval shipyard in Charleston. I did all the paperwork, tracked parts and history for the nuclear side of the Naval Reactors office. Now I am involved with the USS Jimmy Carter.

You know, it's tough sometimes. Being in the Armed Forces is the only job in the world where your boss gives you a moment's notice to say goodbye to your family and leave for months at a time and not always know where you're going and if you do, you can't tell anyone. It's hard when you're single but tough when you have a family to leave behind. I was out to sea when my daughter, Rebecca, was born and she was a month old before I got home. You don't deal with those kinds of stresses in civilian life.

I would like people to realize that while you can have a good life in the military, the people who serve in the Armed Forces are very underpaid for what they do and for what they give up to serve their country. People think that because you are in the military the things you need are free like medical care, dental care and housing. Well, we get subsidized on some of those things but that doesn't necessarily mean it's better and we don't always have the choices that people on the outside do. We don't always get to go home at the end of the day. We are gone for months at time, leaving our spouses to handle everything. The divorce rate for military personnel is higher than civilians. It takes a special kind of family to choose this life. I hope people think about that.

John Oates

As told to Alexandra J. Reddy, Homestead High School

Air Warfare Specialist

John Oates joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 17. Having served for twenty-three years, Oates was involved with the Vietnam War and the Persian Gulf War as a Senior Chief Petty Officer, Aviation Ordnanceman and worked specifically with aircraft weapons.

I enlisted Aug. 19, 1974 because of the admiration I held for my father and I had always liked the Navy when I was in high school. My first days of service are still vivid in my mind. I'd never really lived in a large city before my service and I flew from Montana to San Diego, Calif., for eight weeks of basic training.

Back then boot camp was quite hard, but in some ways it was quite easy for me because I had lived in a military type home because my father was in the military. In other ways it was difficult because I was also trying to get away from some of the strictness that my father had laid down in our household. Overall, boot camp was quite a learning experience. Well, the food was never good. But the thing I remember most about it is that it taught you discipline, which is something that I think today a lot of young people could use. My father was undoubtedly my greatest influence. My father taught me to always have respect for myself and others and above anything else, to always do what's right for our country.

This picture of John was taken aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln in 1995.

I encountered additional role models during my service. One of the first that I recall was my instructor who happened to be a Senior Chief Petty Officer. He was a machinist mate who worked on propulsion systems for the ship and while I was there he was advanced from Senior Chief to Master Chief. I thought that was quite a milestone, because I had never seen a Master Chief before. Now all of a sudden my basic training instructor obtained that position and he was my first encounter with someone of that high ranking.

After I was in San Diego, I then went on to Lamoore, Calif., for aircraft training where I learned how to service aircraft. Not long after my training, I saw combat in April 1975. I was just about to turn 18 at the time. I was involved with the Vietnam evacuation. I was sitting on the USS Enterprise in the Tonkin Gulf and from where we were launching our aircraft we could see the shoreline off on the horizon. I remember feeling kind of scared. Despite the scariness, I recall being in awe because at nighttime we could see the bomb flashes on the horizon. It suddenly brought to life what we were all about.

Later on in 1995, I was serving aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln when we had a fire on an A6E tanker aircraft. It was preparing for takeoff when the tailpipe exploded and blew shrapnel through the wing, severing fuel lines and starting an internal aircraft fire. The fuel tank required that they be de-armed of their explosive cartridges. My team and I raced in to de-arm the fuel tanks so that there was no possibility of blowing the tanks onto the carrier's deck, fracturing the fuel tanks and causing fuel to burn. The pilot also survived. The most memorable thing about this experience was that there was an investigative team who said that within three to six more seconds, the main fuel tanks would've ruptured and incinerated us.

The lifestyle of the aircraft carriers was an adjustment, but it was really no problem. We always had plenty of supplies. I was always on aircraft carriers, and each aircraft carrier held 5,000 men. It was a floating city. It had everything that you could imagine: ship stores, barber shops, a cold, medical and dental department, a clothing store, places where we could watch movies and things of that nature.

Throughout my 23 years of service in the U.S. Navy, I have earned many honors and recognitions as a result of my dedication. I was first awarded the E1, then the E2 and E3. My honor of Third Class Petty Officer began with one chevron. I eventually reached First Class Petty Officer, which is an eagle with three chevrons. The hardest thing to achieve in the Navy is Chief Petty Officer and it had always been my goal because my father had earned the rank of Chief. I did make Chief and eventually became Senior Chief Petty Officer. It was by far one of my greatest achievements. I was also an Air Warfare Specialist. I focused on jet engines, hydraulics, safety and other such things with aircraft. It is distinctive to get one of the Specialists honors and I had even earned two of them.

After 23 years in the U.S. Navy, John Oates returned home in 1995 to be united with his wife and son. Oates remarked that he was surprised at how much people have appreciated his service to the U.S. Navy and is proud of the service he has provided to the United States of America.

Lawrence Engel

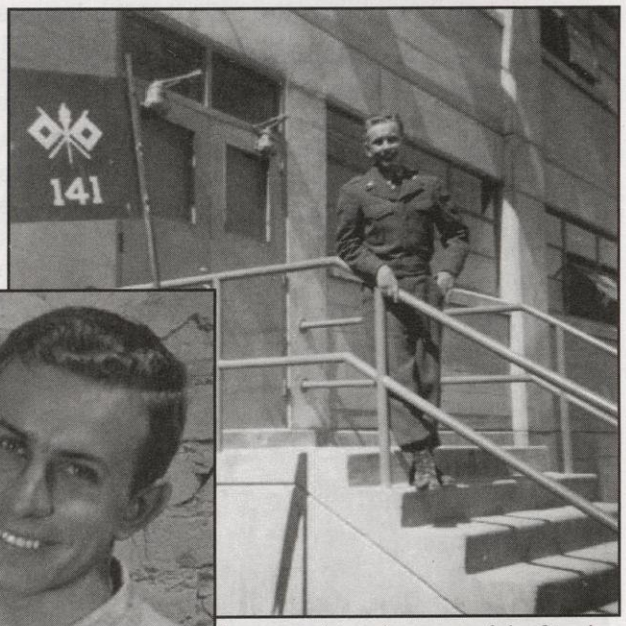
As told to Meg Gorski,
Homestead High School

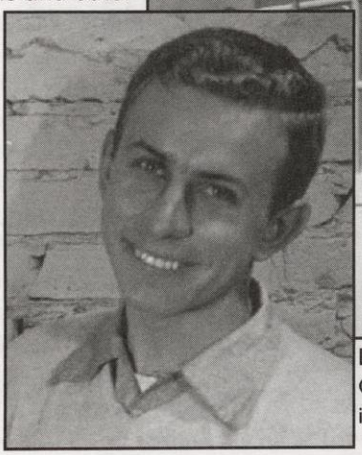
Radio Operator in the Army Signal Corps

A native of Grafton, Lawrence Engel now has the advantage of hindsight when reviewing his years of service in the United States Army. He was drafted in January 1952 at the age of 20 during the Korean War.

Some of my friends and schoolmates were being drafted at the same time, and duty in the Army seemed the right thing to do for the country. I arrived at Fort Knox to begin an urgent 16-week infantry basic training program.

Throughout these weeks, the recruits used rifles, bayonets and many other deadly weapons, crawled under barbed wire while bullets zoomed overhead and completed realistic and terrifying training. During these training situations, we experienced the frightening aspects of combat. In the dead of the night, unable to see our own hands, our company was led into the forest where we were informed that the enemy was near. Suddenly, flares burst through the darkness and there were explosions and other noises. We were ordered to charge. I fell and lost my steel helmet in the dark.





Lawrence (above) as part of the Signal Corps in 1952 and (left) in civilian dress in 1954.

Thoughts of being sent to combat in Korea always remained. We were always kept busy with physical exercise and chores. The Army taught me to accept and respect authority and discipline.

When the 16 weeks ended, our company, except for three of us, was sent to Korea. We three began a 12-week instruction to become radio operators. At the end of the 12 weeks, I was transferred to Fort Hood, Texas. During the year I spent at Fort Hood I made many close friendships.

After completing the required two years in service, I chose to be discharged and go to college. Before I left for Wisconsin, I requested that 10 of my closest friends come with me to Temple, Texas, the place of my departure. We all enjoyed one last night of fun together. We had followed the commands of our officers and endured the rigorous training together.

Now that I look back, I feel some guilt for not doing more for our great country. I feel thankful and fortunate to live in a land of freedom that so many people gave their lives to protect this precious gift. I wish I had been more enthusiastic in my earlier years to learn everything I could in volunteering to serve my country. I do want to share with today's youngsters the valuable lessons I learned during his service. Wars are horrible; but I would give my life to defend our country and freedom.

My life became quite busy after my discharge. Because of my years in the service, the government paid my tuition for college. I studied journalism at Marquette University. Without government financial aid, I never would have had the opportunity to receive such a fine education. After school I became a newspaper reporter, and I was unaware of the demands and pressure of the job. The dean of the Marquette Journalism School asked me, "Are you sure you want to be a newspaper reporter?" He added, "It is one of the most difficult and frustrating jobs. You should be a priest."

The concerns of the dean would be easy for anyone to understand after meeting Mr. Engel, for his compassion and kindness would not be so useful in the tough job of a journalist. He choose this high-pressure career anyway and wrote for newspapers in the Milwaukee area for the past few decades. He said, "I met many interesting and talented people." Mr. Engel and his wife, Joan, have six children, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Mr. Engel may feel as though he has not done enough for his country, but the kind of patriotism and sheer love for this country he demonstrates may inspire others to be great citizens.

Thomas E. Mohr

Interviewed by Steve Cadotte, Homestead High School

Aircraft Mechanic and Aircraft Electrical Specialist

Dec. 7, 1941 was a date that changed many young men's lives forever. One young man in particular was Thomas Mohr, a June 1941 graduate of Rufus King High School in Milwaukee. On that fateful day, he and his family sat by the radio and listened to the details of the attack on Pearl Harbor. When the call for war came he was willing to stand up and be counted, and enlisted into the Army Air Corps. Mr. Mohr would be stationed in 14 different stateside locations during his enlistment.

I remember hearing on the radio that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands. I was 18 at the time and not old enough to enlist in the military without a notarized letter of consent from my mother (my dad died when I was 17).

Tom at Chanute Field, 1942.

I was sworn into the United States Army Air Corps on Jan. 5, 1942, in Milwaukee, and sent to Ft. Sheridan, Ill. I was issued most of my Army uniforms and clothing, and received my first series of "shots." After three days, I was sent to Jefferson Barracks, Mo., for three weeks of basic training. This consisted of military courtesy, aptitude tests, more clothing and "shots."

In February I was transferred to Chanute Field, Ill., to take a course in Airplane and Engine Mechanics. I graduated in June 1942 and was made an instructor in Aircraft Electrical Systems.

In August 1941, I was transferred to Lincoln Army Air Base in Nebraska to teach Aircraft Electrical Systems for fighter planes: P-38, P-39, P-40 and P-51. I sent an engagement ring to my girlfriend, Gretchen Barnes, through the mail. I later found out that my dad had sent an engagement ring to my mother from Lincoln, Neb.

The Army transferred me to Washington University in St. Louis to take a course in internal combustion engines. This was part of the Army Specialized Training Program. Included in the course was the study of all types of engines, physics, chemistry, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus, English and history.

In March 1944 I was sent to the 97th Infantry Division at Ft. Leonardwood, Mo., and assigned to the Headquarters Battery of the Division's Field Artillery as an Airplane Mechanic. I would work on L-4s, the artillery spotter planes. I had my first airplane ride here. I was then transferred to the Division's 387th Infantry Regiment as a Rifleman. I was to "subdue" the enemy with my bare hands, trench knife, M-1 rifle and carbine .45 caliber pistol, bayonet, hand grenade and bazooka.

In June 1944, after D-Day, the Army transferred me to the Army Air Force Troop Carrier Command at Bowman Field in Louisville, Ky. There I served as an Airplane and Engine Mechanic. Squadrons were being assembled to be sent to the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations to fly "combat cargo" with C-46 aircraft. I took a furlough back to Milwaukee. Gretchen and I were married on Aug. 17, 1944.

In February 1945, The Army transferred me to Sedalia Army Air Base in Knobnoster, Mo., as an Aircraft Electrical Specialist. The base was used to train pilots and crews how to tow gliders and drop paratroops using C-47 aircraft. Bob Hope came to put on a show while I was there.

Four months later, I was transferred to Baerfield, Ind. This was a staging area for me to be sent to the South Pacific. On Aug. 4, 1945, we dropped the first Atomic bomb on Hiroshima. This was a great day for all of us, as we felt the war would soon be over and we would be going home.

I was then transferred to Kellogg Field in Michigan to recondition C-47 aircraft which had been used in Europe. In October 1945 I was transferred to Pope Field, N.C. This was the air arm for the paratroops and glider troops at Ft. Bragg. On Dec. 1, 1945, I was transferred to Chanute Field, Ill., to be discharged three days later. I had been away from home for 47 months and had a great reunion with my wife, who met me at the train station.

After leaving the Army, Mr. Mohr attended Marquette University on the GI Bill to earn his degree in Electrical Engineering. He would be happily married for 53 years until Gretchen died in 1997, and raised five children. Mr. Mohr offered some advice to today's generation: "The United States of America is the greatest country in the world. Don't ever let her down and when you are needed to protect her, do so gladly. Honor your flag and be sure and do your duty and exercise your privilege to vote."

We Also Honor...

Private Frederick L. Hadler
Company B, 28th Infantry, Eighth Division
United States Army
Killed in Action

Entered the service November 1943.
Trained at Camp Wheeler, Ga.,
before being sent to Europe in April 1944.
Left England and arrived on French soil on July, 4, 1944. Killed in Normandy on the first day of the Cobra Offensive, July 26, 1944.

Remembered by his brother, Gene Hadler.

First Lieutenant Lanny Ladouceur
Killed in Action in Vietnam

In memory of First Lieutenant Lanny Ladouceur
who served this country in Vietnam
and gave his life while on a helicopter mission
over Indo-China on May 19, 1970.
He leaves a memory of purpose in his service with his family;
his parents Guy and Marie Ladouceur,
his sister Lynette Ponton and his brother Ronald Ladouceur.
His influence touches all who knew him
as well as those who know of him.

Lester C. Behnisch
United States Marine Corps
World War II 1942-1943

In memory of Lester Behnisch from Cedarburg, Wisconsin,
who made the supreme sacrifice
November 2, 1943 on Bougainville Island
Lest we forget.

Remembered by MSG Joe Josephson, ret.

Frederick Manke
Army Tech Sgt.
9th Armored Division
89th Recon Squadron
World War II

Remembered by his brother, Rudy Manke.

Colonel Haney E. Ihlenfeld, ret.
U.S. Army 1914-1948
1914 Wisconsin National Guard
WWI Purple Heart Recipient
WWII Attained full colonel
Retired 1948

Remembered by his granddaughters,
Susie (Ihlenfeld) Fonder and
Sherie (Ihlenfeld) Reinders

Lieutenant Colonel John P. Ihlenfeld, ret.
U.S. Army 1956-1994
Lieutenant Colonel
Commissioned in 1956
1957-1959 Active Duty
Reserve Officer 84th Division
Retired 1994

Remembered by his daughters,
Susie (Ihlenfeld) Fonder and
Sherie (Ihlenfeld) Reinders

Col. Tom Makal, ret.
Army-National Guard
13 March 1936 - 19 June 1969
Completed 33 years of service
Active duty October 1940-February 1946,
510 combat days
Africa-Italy-National Guard 1947-1969

Staff Sergeant Ervin Karrels
United States Air Force
World War II and Korea

Thank you for helping to preserve American life as we know it with your efforts over the skies of Europe during World War II and the skies of Korea during the Korean War. Your selfless service and valor as well as that of the other men and women who fought along side you will not be forgotten. We will ensure that our children and our children's children know the sacrifices that have been made in the name of freedom and this great nation.

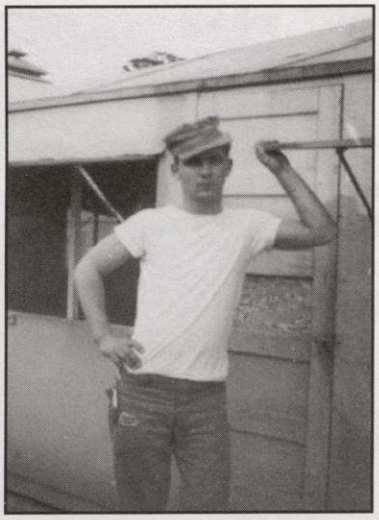
"For those who have fought it, life and freedom have a special meaning that the protected will never know." - Author unknown

Honored by CPT Jason and Kathleen Sepanic and Family

Staff Sergeant Ervin Karrels
United States Air Force
World War II and Korea

Dear Dad/Grandpa,
Thank you for your years of service in World War II and the Korean War. We'll forever be grateful for your bravery and all the sacrifices that you and the other men and women made for our country and our freedom.

Love,
Your Family



Merlyn "Sleepy" Scharnow
United States Marine Corps 1945-1946
Entered the Marines at age 15

Thanks Merle for what you did.
All of your Schultz cousins are proud of you.

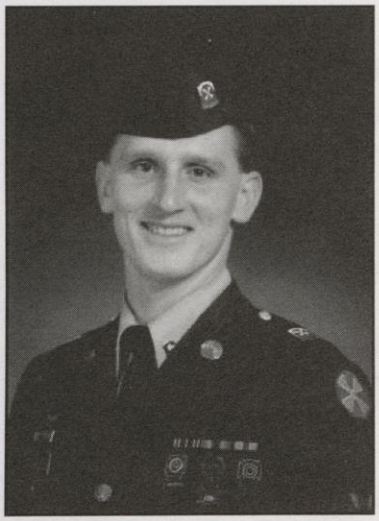
Honored by Merlyn's cousin and his wife,
Fred and Barbara Pahl

Dean "Butch" Arendt
United States Army
Heavy Wheel Mechanic

We're so proud of you for serving our country.

Honored by his mother and father,
Allan and Agnes Arendt

and his sister and her family,
Debra and Larry Newell and Alyssa, Connor and Ryan



Doug Arendt
United States Army
and Wisconsin Army National Guard
Military Policeman

We're so proud of you for serving our country.

Honored by his mother and father,
Allan and Agnes Arendt

and his sister and her family,
Debra and Larry Newell and Alyssa, Connor and Ryan

Clarence Groth
45th Infantry Division
World War II

In honor of our dad and grandpa
for his loyalty and service to his country
during World War II.
We are proud of you.

Honored by Mark and Diane,
and grandkids Brianne, Matthew, Ryan and Christina.

Robert Sanders
Second Division
United States Marine Corps
World War II
Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa

Thank you for serving.
We are so proud of you!

Honored by his family

Frank P. Buchholz
HQ Co. 64th Armed Infantry Bn
September 25, 1941 to January 4, 1946
World War II

To the greatest Dad of the greatest generation.
Thank you for your service to our country.

Honored by his children,
Ken, Allen, Barb, Mary, Pete and Bill

About our project...

The Ozaukee County Veterans Book Project was conceived on Memorial Day 2001 as a way to honor the men and women who have preserved our freedoms and maintained democracy as members of the United States military. Because of their efforts throughout many generations, we live in a country where we have many freedoms, and by that very fact, we often take these freedoms for granted.

This project was a multi-generational attempt to bring those that have served together with younger members of our community. The need for such a project becomes quite clear with this fact: Right now, between 1,000 and 1,500 World War II veterans pass away each day in our country. We must not forget what these men and women, and veterans of all ages, have done for our country. We need to listen before it is too late.

The Ozaukee County Council of American Legion Posts graciously and enthusiastically agreed to become the founding organization for our project and owns the rights to this book. This has allowed for the solicitation of financial contributions for the publication of our work. As a 100-percent volunteer project, no portion of the contributions given toward this book has been used for salaries or overhead.

In early fall 2001, all five county high schools and our county's homeschool students were contacted about this project. In January 2002, student volunteers began interviewing and transcribing the oral histories found in this book. Three of our five county high schools incorporated this project into their classroom curriculum and the students' work was graded and/or used as extra credit. Other students worked independently, though all students were asked to follow the oral history guidelines provided by the national Veterans History Project.

At the same time, all veterans from throughout the county were encouraged to tell their stories on a volunteer basis. Presentations were made at our local American Legion posts, Veterans of Foreign Wars of America posts and the Leatherneck Club. Our project was also covered in all local media outlets and word was spread via word-of-mouth. Students who wished to interview a family member in Ozaukee County who had served our country were encouraged to do so. We included veterans from all service eras who came forward by February 2002. Each veteran was also asked to provide a service-era photo or memorabilia for each page; if no photo or memorabilia appears, the veteran no longer owns such materials or did not have a service-era photo taken.

A set of books will be contributed to each of our five public school districts for use in the classroom and all public libraries in our county will receive a copy for their collections. Each participating veteran and student interviewer will receive a copy of the book. Audio tapes from our project will be submitted to the Library of Congress as part of the Veterans History Project. Background information, any additional transcriptions and related information will become part of the Ozaukee County Historical Society holdings.

It is our hope that this project will inspire other veterans to share their stories ... and friends, family members and the general public to listen.

Laurie Arendt
Editor and Project Founder

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What They Have Done For You

At evening when the sun has sunk in the West
And you have gone to your place of rest
Do you think of them in some far away land,
Who must ever keep a vigil stand?

Do you think of them who trudge on and on
Through mud and rain with shouldered gun?
Do you think of them who live by cannon roar,
Glad to give their all for but a night within your door?

Do you think of them who must kill to live,
Of those who gave all that men could give?
Do you think of them who live on hot beach sand?
In pools of blood, with broken land or shell torn hand?

Do you think of them who are taken by the foe,
To sweat and slave, such as you will never know?
Do you think of them who daily feel the captor's rod,
From toil and want of food, drop where they trod?

To give them now a helping hand cannot be done,
But one day with foe suppressed and victory won.
You can again receive those for whom you yearn
And with humble heart again a world peace learn.

But lest you be one of many who fail to see,
Pray the Lord that you might ever grateful be.
And while you wait for those honored few,
Think of them, for they lived, fought and died for you.

-Major Christopher A. Reinhardt, ret.

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1. Al Schanen's driveway, circa 1945.
2. Lynn Fyhrlund during Desert Storm, 1991.
3. Harold Walsh in Korea, 1954.
4. Fighter Pilot Elroy Bruss and his P51 Mustang in England, 1945.
5. Chuck Ellmauer, Mekong Delta, Vietnam, 1971.
6. Wayland Potter recuperates at Percy Jones with Peggy at his side. 1944.
7. Marine Corporal Kevin Dressel, 1986.

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