



Greenwood Cemetery

AN APPROVED ARBORETUM

presents

# WREATHS — *across* — AMERICA

December 18, 2021

Petoskey | Michigan



WREATHS  
— *across* —  
AMERICA

## What is Wreaths Across America?

In 1992 an owner of the Worcester Wreath company found himself with a surplus of wreaths nearing the end of the holiday season. He had the idea to place them at the graves at Arlington National Cemetery. As word got out, a number of other individuals and organizations stepped up to help.

This became an annual tribute and went on quietly for several years, until 2005, when a photo of the stones at Arlington, adorned with wreaths and covered in snow, went viral. Suddenly, the project received national attention and momentum grew every year from then on. In 2007, the Worcester family formed a non-profit 501c(3) organization, Wreaths Across America.



Meanwhile, Greenwood Cemetery superintendent Karl Crawford said he heard about the organization’s mission to “remember, honor and teach” on the news one morning.

“I thought it was something we should do. I had no idea of how much work it would be and I never thought about having to raise money. Some of my crew suggested we ask for donations and the community took over and supplied the funds.

Crawford said he is pleased and honored to be a part of a community that gives so well to honor veterans — even coming out in below zero weather and knee-deep snow.

“It started out as my project in 2013,” he said. “It is way bigger than that now. It belongs to the people of the Petoskey area.”

The wreaths will stay up in the cemetery until spring so people driving by can see all those wreaths sticking up out of the snow all winter, and remember.



# A Sad Story

**T**hat soldiers and sailors die in war is no surprise to anyone. It is a fact borne out from wars since history began to be recorded. It is a fact that we are acclimated to: someone's son or daughter died in WWII, or Vietnam, or in Desert Storm. We attend a veterans program at a local cemetery to hear their names read, we clasp our hands over our hearts and stand at attention. And then we go back home to grill hot dogs, spending the day as we would any other holiday, putting the thoughts of the tolls of war behind us.

For others, attending the same program, hearing the name read, their loved one's name read, breaks their heart ... one more time. Pride mixed with tears, thankfulness that their son or daughter or spouse is being honored and sad that there is a reason for them to be. Their loved one left with a wave and a heartfelt goodbye; they came back home in a flag-draped casket. The hopes, the dreams, the prayers, the sleepless nights, all culminated in a casket, and a cemetery, and a rifle salute, and "Taps," and going to a home with an empty bedroom and memories, and never-to-be-fulfilled dreams.

A father, Howard Vincent O'Brien, wrote an article in a newspaper when his son went off to World War II. It is what many folks around the nation were feeling, whether they could express their words on paper as well as Mr. O'Brien did or not.

Young Donel O'Brien signs up for war in 1942

## “So Long, Son

*There was no band, no flags, no ceremonial. It wasn't even dramatic. A car honked outside and he said, "Well, I guess that's for me." He picked up his little bag, and his mother said, "You haven't forgotten your gloves?"*

*He kissed his mother, and held out his hand to me. "Well, so long," he said. I took his hand but all I could say was "Good luck!"*

*The door shut and that was that—another boy gone to war.*

*I had advised waiting for the draft—waiting at least until he was required to register. I had pointed out that he was not yet of age. He had smiled at that, and assured me that his mind was made up. He wanted peace, he said. Without peace, what good was living?*

*There was finality in the way he said this—a finality at once grim and gentle. I said no more about waiting.*

*After the door closed behind him, I went upstairs. I went to what had been his room. It was in worse chaos than usual. His bureau was littered—an incredible collection of things, letters, keys, invitations to parties he would not attend.*

*Clothing was scattered about—dancing pumps, a tennis racket, his collection of music, his trumpet gleaming in its case.*

*I went then to my room. On the wall was a picture of a little boy, his toothless grin framed in tawny curls—the same boy who had just taken my hand and said, “Well, so long.”*

*Not much time, I thought, between the making of that picture and the slamming of the front door. Not much more than a decade.*

*Suddenly, a strange thing happened. Objects came alive, whispered to me. The house was full of soft voices. They led me up to the attic—to a box of toy soldiers, a broken music rack, a football helmet, a homemade guitar, schoolbooks, class pictures, a stamp album, a penny bank with the lid pried off...ancient history, long hidden under the dust.*

*The voices led me on to a filing case and a folder stuffed with pages and report cards, letters, among them the wail of an exasperated teacher: “Though he looks like an angel...” telegrams, passports, a baptismal certificate, a ribbon won in a track meet, faded photographs (one taken on the memorable first day of school), a bit of golden hair.*

## **DONEL O'BRIEN, AIR NAVIGATOR, LOST OVER REICH**

Lt. Donel O'Brien, 23, navigator on a bomber and son of Howard Vincent O'Brien,

Chicago newspaper columnist, is missing in action, his father was notified yesterday by the war department.

The bomber to which Lt. O'Brien was assigned failed to return from a raid over Germany, Feb. 10.



Lt. Donel O'Brien.

Lt. O'Brien, graduate of New Trier Township High school, had been a musician and newspaper reporter. He was an employe of the City News bureau when he enlisted in the army two years ago. His home was at 790 Bryant av., Winnetka.

*I sat down and thought how time had flown. Why, it was only yesterday when I held him in my arms! That, somehow, made me remember all the scolding's I had given him, the preachments, the exhortations to virtue and wisdom I did not myself possess...*

*I thought, too, of that last inarticulate “good luck,” that last routine handclasp; and I wished that I had somehow been able to tell him how much I really loved him. Had he perhaps penetrated my gruff reserve?*

# HOWARD V. O'BRIEN'S SON IS REPORTED AS MISSING IN ACTION

Howard Vincent O'Brien, a summer resident of Harbor Point whose column "All Things Considered" appears weekly in the Graphic, was informed on February 27 that his son Donel, a lieutenant in the Army Air Forces, is missing in action.

The youth, navigator on a bomber, was listed as missing on Feb. 11, his 23rd birthday, after he failed to return from a raid over Germany staged the previous day. He had enlisted before his 21st birthday after a short but brilliant career as a trumpet player in the Chicago Civic Orchestra and several dance bands.

"There is a chance, of course," his father said, "that he may be a prisoner. One hopes—but not too much."

Lt. O'Brien was born in Evanston on Feb. 11, 1921.

After his schooling, he served for a while on the staff of The Chicago Daily News, then spent several years in New York in the show business. Later he became a reporter on the Kansas City Star, then on the City News Bureau. In his leisure hours he devoted himself to composing and arranging music and orchestral playing. He resigned from the News Bureau to join the Army.

In his application at the News Bureau, he wrote as his ambition: "To become a critic and an able reporter, capable of writing on any subject."

Next week the Graphic will have a reprint of the column written by Howard Vincent O'Brien on Jan. 8, 1942, when his son, Donel went into service.

*And then I thought, what fools we are with our children—always plotting what we shall make of them, always planning for a future that never comes, always intent on what they may be, never accepting what they are!*

*Well, curly head, you're a man now, bearing your bright new shield and spear. I hated to see you go out of my house and close the door behind you, but I think I would not have halted you if I could. I salute you, sir. I cannot pretend that I am not sad; but I am proud, too. So long."*

Donel's enlistment date was February 1, 1943. He enlisted as a private and soon became a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army Air Corp. Whatever time it took for him to be trained for his role in a heavy bomber, it all met an end on October 2, 1944, in a plane that never made it back to base from a bombing run over Germany.

Donel's plane was bombing a target in Germany while some father's son was shooting at him with an anti-aircraft gun or flying a Messerschmidt with guns blazing straight at him. And this time, the young American did not walk away. He did not make it back to base. His body was interred in a military cemetery in Belgium. The father's words, "Good luck" did not hold. His "luck" was thwarted by a German's bullet.

The Emmet County Graphic recorded the obituary of this young man. The family had ties to Harbor Springs before the war.

## Lt. Donel O'Brien Killed On Raid; Father Notified

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Vincent O'Brien, of Chicago and Glenn Drive, Harbor Springs, have been notified by the War Department that their son Lt. Donel O'Brien, of the Army Air Forces, had been killed in action February 10.

Lt. O'Brien, navigator on a bomber, had been reported missing Feb. 11, his 23rd birthday anniversary, after he failed to return from a raid over Germany.

Lt. O'Brien, who was born in Evanston, had enlisted before he was 21. He resigned as a reporter on the City News Bureau in Chicago to join the Army. Previously he had been on the staff of The Chicago Daily News. He also had been a trumpeter in the Chicago Civic Orchestra and several dance bands.

To read the accomplishments of this young man at so young an age, it seems such a shame that he would be one of the many killed-in-action. He had so much potential in writing and in music. He was only 23 years old and had already achieved success. But what went on in the heart of his father when he died, went on in the hearts of mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and grandparents across this nation. Probably every mother and every father could have written Howard O'Brien's article—not on paper, but in their own heart.

Writers, pundits, and orators, put into words what we cannot. They give



*A marker bearing the name of Donel O'Brien in Belgium.*

our broken heart words to express its brokenness. Mr. O'Brien did not write a follow-up article after his son's death. It is too bad that he did not write to express his sorrow. But it is unnecessary in one way, because we all have an inkling of how he must have felt. Some, unfortunately, know exactly how he felt.

I include this article and these obituaries to remind those of us today who attend a Memorial Day parade or ceremony, but who have no skin in the game, to remember those who do. Those



who attend because their son or daughter or husband or wife cannot. It is good to remember the veterans and their sacrifice—the giving of their life. It is also incumbent on us to remember the veteran’s family, and their sacrifice—living life without their loved one, the one their hopes and dreams were wrapped up in.

Not every veteran that goes overseas to fight, dies. Many more come home than are killed. But many of those who do come home, are forever changed. In WWII they came back home with “battle fatigue.” Now they come home with PTSD. There is a staggering number of homeless veterans in our nation and far too many in our area. There are a sobering number of veteran suicides each year. They have sacrificed far more than we should ask of anyone for peace and safety for you and me. Let us honor them by placing a wreath—and saying their name as we do so. The national Wreaths Across America group says, “A veteran is not forgotten until the last time their name is spoken.” May we never forget—any of them, living or dead.

We have gathered here in Greenwood in December each year since 2013 to honor veterans. Let us not grow weary in well-doing. Let us not treat this as just one of those things we do for veterans. Let us come together, each and every year, to honor the veterans here, to remember their sacrifice, and the sacrifice made by their loved ones. 🌿



*People of all ages come to Greenwood Cemetery to honor veterans during Wreaths Across America.*



## A way to say ‘Thank you’

**T**he year 2020 and its daughter, 2021, have not been kind to a lot of people. Jobs in turmoil, food and household products difficult to get, heated debates over masks and vaccinations, schools empty with the students distance learning, fear over which variant of the virus is going to be most deadly, and ultimately, the death of some of our dearest loved ones.

In 2020, as we came together on December 19, to place wreaths, we did so in a whole new way for us. We didn't have a program with a singer and a speaker. We just met together at the Cemetery to honor veterans. For some, it was the first time they had been out with a group of people because of the pandemic. We required masks but there were no complaints. Those in attendance

were here for another reason than to fuss over a mask.

The day was a winter day scripted by the Pure Michigan folk. The air was chilly but there was a light snow falling. The ground was fresh, white, and beautiful. Volunteers came before the gates were open because they didn't want to miss out on anything. It was good to hear, after a dreary year, the laughter and joy in seeing one another again.

Men and women, boys and girls, trudged off into the snow-covered roads to place wreaths and to honor veterans. And they did. It didn't seem like much of a sacrifice, not compared to the WWII vets who froze their feet at the Battle of the Bulge. Or the Korean War vets who

froze their feet and fingers at the Choisin Reservoir.

Some attendees that day probably didn't know a single veteran they placed a wreath for. Others placed the wreath on the grave of a dad or mom, or a husband.

Because of the generous giving of so many friends of Greenwood, each year we accumulated excess funds to put toward the next year. Add to that the fact the Wreaths Across America folk gave a large discount if we paid for the wreaths "up front," we were able to purchase all of the wreaths necessary for 2021 without asking for any donations.

The letter sent out in October let everyone know that the wreaths for 2021 were paid for in full. We also let donors know that they could still send donations if they chose to. And many of you still sent donations. It says something about your desire to honor our veterans, to be a part of saying "Thank You!" To each of you who have given financially, with your time in placing wreaths, or both, we say a hearty "Thank You!" It is a privilege to be a part of this effort.

Even though the pandemic has caused us to make changes to the manner in which we have honored the veterans, Greenwood Cemetery is determined to join with you to say "Thank you for your sacrifice" to these men and women who have served our country in times of war and times of peace.

We do this each year to honor veterans who offered their lives for our freedom. Currently, there are 700 World War II veterans buried in Greenwood but it

is our desire to honor all veterans who served in the military forces. Some served in active combat, some were behind the front lines in support, some served in the United States while the war raged on in other parts of the world, and some of them served during a time of peace. Each one of them deserves our respect and our thanks. What we are doing here, by placing a wreath on each grave, is a small token of our gratitude. 🌿



## Veterans buried at Greenwood

AS OF DEC. 2021

War	Veterans
Mexican-American	3
Civil	205
Spanish-American	24
WW I	292
WW II	701
Korean	203
Vietnam	117
Gulf Wars	6
Peace Time	121
Total	1,672

**Petoskey native and Army Veteran Captain Chris Fought talks about a side of combat people cannot always see.**



# Invisible wounds

pexels.com

**H**ello, my name is Chris Fought, and it is my privilege to be speaking with you today about a wonderful event taking place at Greenwood Cemetery, in Petoskey, Michigan, Wreaths Across America. A big thank you to all the volunteers that came out to Greenwood Cemetery to make this event possible. I would also like to thank Karl Crawford for giving me this opportunity to share a little bit of my story and talk about Wreaths Across America.

On October 31, 2006, I raised my right hand and swore the oath to protect this country from enemies foreign and domestic. I became an enlisted soldier in the Michigan Army National Guard. Fast forward to December 18, 2010, I raised my right hand again, and I became an officer in the United States Army and eight months later I was in Afghanistan on my first combat deployment. I would spend just under two years of my 20s in a combat zone.

There are two sides of war, but mostly people know about one. One side is where soldiers go to a relatively unknown land to fight an enemy. This is the side that is most common to people. I was a part of the 10th MTN DIV and was deployed twice in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) in 2011-2012 and 2013-2014. On both deployments, my jobs consisted of fighting the enemy, whether in direct combat as a Fire Support Officer or logistically as a Field Artillery Battery Executive Officer and a Battalion assistant S3 (operations), ensuring my troops had the necessary equipment, ammunition, and supplies to successfully complete their mission.

I saw the nasty side of war. The side no one tells you about when you first are looking to join the military. The side no one who has deployed to a combat zone likes to talk about when they return home. During that nasty side of war, two things happen. First you become closer to the men and women you are serving with than you are with your own family. They are the people that see you at your worst, most vulnerable, and they are the ones you lean on. These men and women, no matter how different we all are, would give their lives to protect mine and vice versa.

Secondly, you discover who you are as a person, what you value most in this life, and the lengths you would go to protect what you value. With the positives, there come the negatives. War brings death, serious injuries, invisible injuries, and pain. There are very few combat veterans who do not experience any of these. On



### **About the author**

## **Chris Fought**

Age: 32

Military Title: Captain

Military service: Army

Currently living in Galesburg, Michigan

Current job at Veterans

Affairs in Battle Creek, and

also working on Masters in

Counseling at Spring Arbor

in the hopes of counseling veterans.

October 13, 2011, my unit lost SPC. Jeremiah Thor Sancho, to an IED attack. Jeremiah was in his early 20s, married, and had a young baby. Jeremiah did not deserve to be killed in action, but Jeremiah sets an example to the rest of us. Freedom is not won by politicians, wealthy elites, or professional athletes. Freedom is won by everyday men and women who want

to ensure that their families and loved ones' freedoms are never taken away.

The second side to war is the invisible war veterans fight at home. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, better known as PTSD, has led to a staggering 22 veterans committing suicide each day. These men and women feel there is no choice, their problems are too large, no one will be able to help them, and they consider that suicide is the only option. You will never know what a veteran is dealing with on the inside. The military teaches us when injured, to take a knee, drink water, and carry on with the mission. It is a lifestyle that veterans take to heart, asking for help is or can be seen as a weakness.

SGT Colten Derr was probably one of the most knowledgeable, squared away, noncommissioned officers I had the pleasure to serve with. After our redeployment to the States after the 2011-2012 deployment, soldiers were given 30 days of leave to spend time with their families and get reacquainted with life back in the States. I was driving back to Ft. Drum, NY from the Syracuse airport at 11:30 at night a few days before my leave ended. I received a phone call that no soldier wants to receive. It was my commanding officer calling to inform me that earlier that day SGT Derr lost his fight in the invisible war and took his own life. SGT Derr was dealing with personal issues along with trying to process a combat deployment. He showed no warning signs that he was thinking of committing suicide. His future with the United States Army was bright, and he only talked about his family in a loving way, but he was very private on that



**Freedom is not won by politicians, wealthy elites, or professional athletes. Freedom is won by everyday men and women who want to ensure that their families and loved ones' freedoms are never taken away.**

front. SGT Derr was a soldier's soldier and will always be remembered as such.

Over the course of the next 10 years, I have lost 10 soldiers that I have either served with or have served under me that have lost their lives to the invisible war. So please, if you are a veteran, and need someone to talk to just to process things, reach out to someone. There are people in your life that care about you; I am one of those people. Please do not become a statistic. Your life is much too meaningful for that. These men and women that lost the fight deserve to be honored and respected along the side of those that lost their lives in combat. They signed the blank check not knowing everything or the cost it would entail, and that is the definition of a true American hero.

On December 18, 2021, cemeteries all across America will be laying wreaths on the graves of this country's fallen heroes. These heroes decided to write a blank check for the United States, whether they were killed in action, fallen victim to suicide, or passed from old age, Wreaths Across America dedicates one day a year during the holiday season to remember these men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Wreaths Across America has a mission to Remember the fallen United States Veterans, to Honor those that have served, and to Teach children the value of freedom. Although we have Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and Wreaths Across America, we as a country need to remember, always, that the price for freedom is extremely high and there are few willing to pay that price.

These fallen heroes that we are honoring today made that ultimate sacrifice. There are families that will have a loved one missing from the dining room table, missing from seeing their kids' faces light up opening presents on Christmas morning, or sneaking in a I love you kiss to their partner. These fallen heroes did not pay the ultimate price because they thought they were going to be heroes. They did not pay the ultimate price for the recognition. These fallen heroes paid the ultimate price so that others would not have to, so that others could enjoy the holiday meals with their loved ones, could make the Christmas memories with their families, and kiss their partner and tell them that they are loved.

I challenge you this holiday season, as you are participating in holiday



*A volunteer honors a veteran at the 2019 Wreaths Across America event at Greenwood Cemetery.*

activities, to take a moment and send up a prayer for those families that will never be whole again. Take a moment to reflect on the freedoms that we as Americans have, and the men and women that have given everything to protect those freedoms. Take a moment just to say thank you because you never know what that veteran is going through. God bless you and yours this holiday season, God bless the United States Military, and God bless the Gold Star families all across our country. Thank you. 🌿

# Remember



## B-52 Memorial

Nine Mile Point Park  
Charlevoix County

# 7 branches, 7 heroes

*Each year, Greenwood Cemetery chooses a veteran from the branches of the United States military plus POW/MIA to feature. This year, we are dedicating a page to the newly created United States Space Force.*



**United States Army**



**United States Marine Corps**



**United States Navy**



**United States Air Force**



**United States Space Force**



**United States Coast Guard**



**United States Merchant Marine**



**United States POW/MIA**

## Ewald Henry Billeau

**E**wald Henry Billeau (Billiau) was born to John Charles and Caroline (Yehr/ Yahr) in Petoskey on Nov. 12, 1890. He was the fourth in a line of eight children, Albert, Arthur, Harold, Elma, Amelia and John Jr. A brother, Otto, died as a baby and a sister, Helen, died at the age of 10.

His father was a farmer, but young Ewald, when he wasn't fishing or picnicking (newspaper articles tout evidence of both), had an interest in carpentry.

At the time of his enlistment into the army in 1917, Ewald was living in Highland Park, working as a carpenter. Ewald was 27 years old when President Wilson issued the draft call in May.

He visited his parents in June of 1918 before returning to Camp Custer to prepare for his military assignment.

On July 21, 1918, Corporal Billieau and the rest of the 310 Engineering Regiment (A, B and C companies) and along with the 339th Infantry and the 337th Ambulance and Field Hospital companies — 4,750 people — set sail for Liverpool, England. From there, they were deployed to Russia as part of the American North Russia Expeditionary Force (ANREG). This group became known as the Michigan Polar Bears.

On August 25, 1918, the ANREG boarded trains for Newcastle. There ships awaited to take them to Archangel, Russia. The objective there was to guard war material sent by the Allied nations for use by the Imperial Russian Army, but, instead, the group found themselves caught up in the Russian Civil



### United States Army

War. In September, the ANREG, under British command, was sent to the front lines to fight side-by-side with the “White” Russians against the Bolshevik “Red Army.” It was during this time of battle that Ewald was promoted to Sergeant and awarded the British Meritorious Service Medal. This medal, usually awarded for long service, was extended from 1916-1928 to cover both valuable services by other ranks and for gallantry not in the face of the enemy.<sup>1</sup>

On June 26, 1919, the first battalion of the 310 Engineers, Ewald's unit, left Archangel for Brest, France. They arrived on July 6 and were cleaned up and issued new uniforms.

They arrived via the USS Northern Pacific to Hoboken, New Jersey, on July 17 where they were sent by train to Camp Sherman in Ohio and discharged.

Ewald was 29 years old.

He picked up where he left off with his carpentry career in Highland Park, but made it home for hunting season with his friends. In 1923, the Petoskey Evening News reports that he and his pals bagged “two fine deer.”

# PETOSKEY BOY IS IN RUSSIA

## E. H. BILLEAU WRITES OF EXPERIENCES.

Is With 310 Engineers South of  
Archangel Where Fighting Is  
Against Bolshoviki.

E. H. Billeau, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Billeau, writes a very interesting letter from Archangel, Russia, where he is with the 310th Engineers of the American forces fighting the Bolshoviki. He has been made a sergeant since leaving the United States.

His letter follows:

Archangel District No. Russia,  
Oct. 25, 1918.

Mr. and Mrs. John Billeau,  
Petoskey, Mich.:

Dear Father and Mother—As I have a little time I will write a few lines to let you know that I am well and feeling fine.

I am still in northern Russia.

Last Sunday we received some mail for the first time. It sure did seem good to get some news from home. I wrote a few days after I landed in Russia and expect you have some of the letters by this time. I received quite a few letters and cards.

Well I can't tell you much war news. Not any more than what you read in the newspapers at home. About all we get is by wireless, and we may not know when the war is ended as soon as you will at home.

This part of the country is all swamps and marshes, very wet and muddy, which makes it hard for us to get around.

There are, of course some things of interest to us here, but we are feeling quite lonesome.

Two Y. M. C. A. men came up here. They are going to have some books for us, so when we are off duty we will have something to read.

There are also going to be some supplies that we can buy, so that will help some.

The people here are at least a hundred years behind the times. They live in little towns along the river. Each family has a little strip of land on which they raise just enough for their own needs. They do all their farm work by hand labor, harvest their grain crops with a sickle, thresh with a flail and grind the grain into flour between two stones.

They make their own clothing out of the flax they raise. It sure is old times here.

The weather is turning very cold, the ground is frozen and covered with snow, the river is about frozen over so I must send my mail out on the next boat going down the river.

Our winter clothing came last week, fur-lined overcoats, fur caps, socks and sweaters. We surely will need them as it will be very cold when real winter sets in.

We have been very busy since we landed in Russia and every day is much the same here, week day and Sunday. The days are getting quite short as we are so far north and

they will be much shorter, very little daylight, in the middle of the winter. We are a little ways back from the front and we are quartered in a log house which we are able to keep quite warm. All the houses are built of logs.

There is plenty of timber, mostly pine.

Of game there is plenty, consisting mostly of wild turkeys and other game birds and jack rabbits. We have had turkey stew a few times and I hope we can get a turkey for Thanksgiving so it will seem more like Thanksgiving at home. We have plenty to eat, hard tack and beef, and we are able to get some eatables from the natives. The other sergeant and I got two chickens yesterday so we had some feed!

We have eggs once in a while, so we fare pretty well. Eggs are one rouble (about 10c) apiece, so eggs are not very cheap at that.

The Russians have no tobacco. Cigarettes are one rouble apiece.

The first few weeks we were here we didn't have any tobacco so the boys smoked tea leaves and dried moss, but now we get some tobacco each week, enough to get along until the Y. M. C. A. gets established, when there will be enough I think.

I haven't told you that I am a sergeant now. I have been acting sergeant since leaving the States and was made sergeant when we arrived in Russia so I have quite a bit more to look after.

Well I hope we will get another bunch of mail before long, any how I will be looking for some.

I never saw a happier bunch of boys then when we got that mail.

Well I must close for this time, hoping you are all well and happy, and hope to hear from you soon.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

From your loving son,  
Sergt. E. H. Billeau,  
Co. A, 1st Bn. 310th Engrs,  
Elope Expedition, Northern Russia,  
American Expeditionary Forces.

**“This part of  
the country is  
all swamps and  
marshes, very wet  
and muddy, which  
makes it hard for us  
to get around.”**

— Sergt. E. H. Billeau, Company A,  
1st Battalion, 310th Engineers,  
Elope Expedition, Northern Russia,  
American Expeditionary Forces

By 1929, Ewald had found his way home to Petoskey for good. He started his own building company, joined a bowling team and, on Sept. 22, 1934, married his wife, Eleanore Schomberg at the age of 43. He and “Nora” moved in with her parents at 621 Elizabeth Street and lived there for many years.

In 1940, he attended the World Series with his family and friends in Detroit. In 1944, he joined a Brotherhood group at his church and donated to the Emmet County War Fund. In 1948, Ewald and a partner bought up a plot of land on the east side of Petoskey, bordering Kalamazoo Avenue, Seldon Street, Jennings Avenue and Sunset Court. He called it Billeau Heights and built several ranch-style family homes complete with a kitchen to “please the housewife” and air conditioning.

Ewald was one of several area WWI veterans invited to act as honorary grand marshals in Petoskey's Memorial Day parade in 1980. He died two years later on June 8 at the age of 91. 🌿

For more information about the Michigan “Polar Bears,” visit [https://gwood.us/media/1409/074\\_wiles.pdf](https://gwood.us/media/1409/074_wiles.pdf)

1 From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meritorious\\_Service\\_Medal\\_%28United\\_Kingdom%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meritorious_Service_Medal_%28United_Kingdom%29)>

Sources for this and following biographies are from the newspaper archives at gwood.us or ancestry.com unless otherwise noted.

## Damon Lowry Hendrickson

---

**D**amon Lowry Hendrickson was born June 6, 1968, in Wayne County, Michigan to Timothy F. and Judy Hendrickson. As a young child, he moved to Alanson with his mother and stepfather, Wilson Taylor, and a sister, Elena, and brother, Timothy Junior.

Damon was active in school, winning awards for perfect attendance, for French class and drama, playing on the basketball team and enjoyed collecting comic books. He graduated Alanson Littlefield in 1988. Two years later, he shipped off to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California to begin basic training.

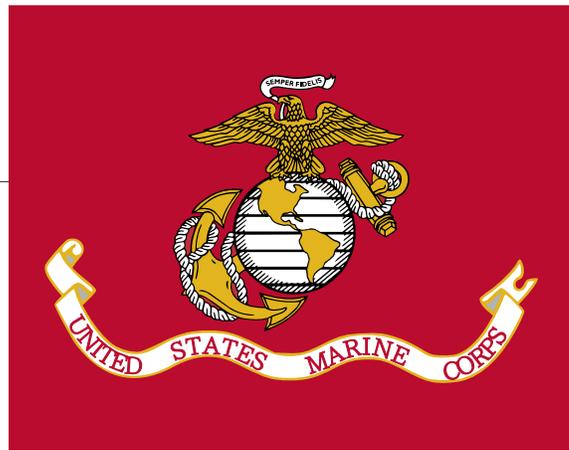
On March 20, 1990, just a few months before tensions between Iraq and Kuwait arose, Private First Class Damon Hendrickson completed his recruitment training. He was then sent to Camp Pendleton, California for further training as an unrestricted Marine.

In August, Damon announced his engagement to Cynthia Brown just before shipping out to the Persian Gulf. In October, Damon joined those aboard the USS Iwo Jima which held station near Lebanon. The vessel was an amphibious assault ship, the first of its kind designed for landing helicopters. She recovered Apollo 13, among other missions.



*ABOVE: The amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima heads out to sea after embarking the Marine units that it will carry to the Persian Gulf region for Operation Desert Shield. Damon spent most of his days aboard this ship during the mission. (photo from the US National Archives)*

*RIGHT: Damon Hendrickson on his wedding day July 13, 1991.*



## United States Marine Corps

From the April 19, 1991 Petoskey News-Review: “U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Damon Hendrickson, 22, returns home to Oden for a brief leave Saturday, April 20. Hendrickson shipped out for the Persian Gulf in early August and served the majority of his time aboard the USS Iwo Jima.”

A previously planned wedding date of October 20, 1990, was changed to July 13, 1991. Damon, wearing his Marine dress blues, and Cynthia were married that day in Lansing. The newly wed couple honeymooned in the south and then settled in North Carolina where Hendrickson was stationed. He was honorably discharged toward the end of that year, and the young couple settled back home in Northern Michigan in early 1992.

Damon and Cindy had two children, Miranda and Devon. He became a real estate agent and also worked as an IT administrator. He died May 13, 2020 after several months of suffering from cancer. 🌿

## Rear Admiral John Parke Sager

**R**ear Admiral John Parke Sager spent 34 years serving in the U.S. Navy.

Parke was born June 28, 1912 in Burt Lake and attended Petoskey schools as a young student, where he made the honor roll several times. At some point, his family moved to Ann Arbor. After graduating from Ann Arbor High School, Parke attended the University of Michigan where he earned a Bachelor's degree in 1934. He earned his Master of Science in aeronautical engineering a year later. After that, he initially signed up for the Army, but, they had no openings in the Air Corps, so he resigned after three months and joined the U.S. Navy where he became a Naval Aviation Cadet. He completed his flight training in 1936 and was designated a Naval Aviator.

He performed his first duty in the Canal Zone, and was stationed in the Panama Canal, but was transferred back to the States in 1938 to San Diego, California.

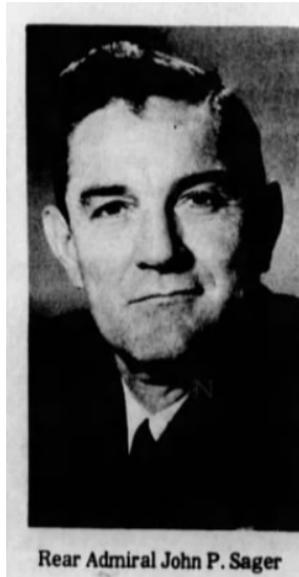
Parke spent his off-duty time in Northern Michigan with family and friends, the McConnells. During one such dinner party in December, 1939, he detailed his experiences as a member of the U.S. Flying Corp., and told them of an instance where he flew a loaded plane from San Diego and encountered a heavy storm on the way to Coca Sola, Panama.

He spent another weekend in Petoskey in April of 1940 with friends, and on June 1, he married Esther Christopher in Ann Arbor. By now, Parke had earned the title of Lieutenant and was stationed at the U.S. Naval Training Base at Grosse Isle, Michigan. Esther stayed



### United States Navy

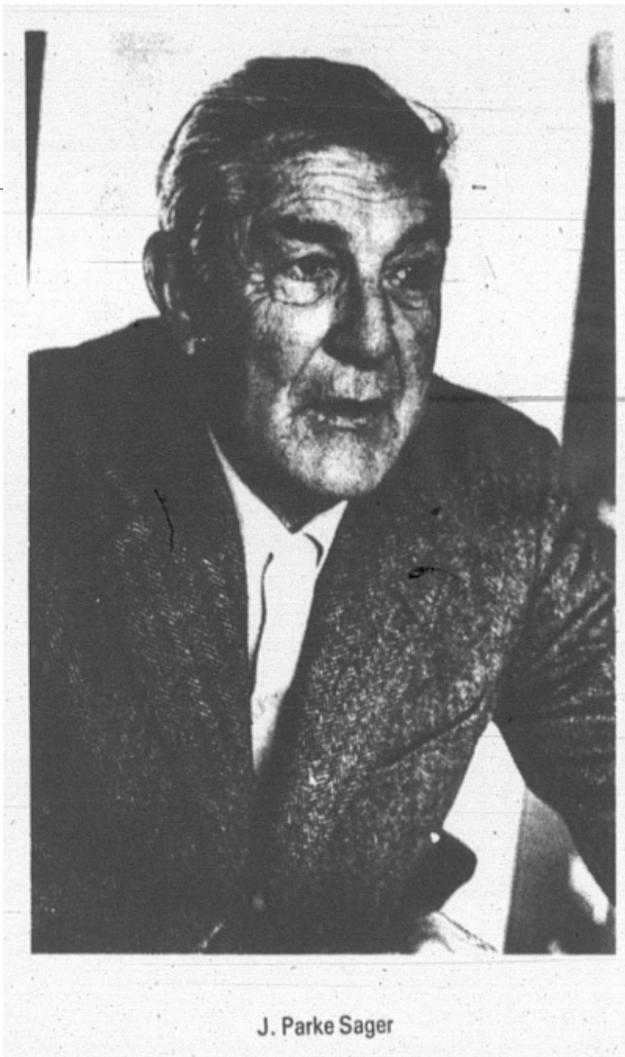
in Michigan with her family until September, when she joined Parke at his new station in Philadelphia. It was here that Parke made his greatest mark. From a 1991 article of the Petoskey News-Review: "Perhaps (Parke Sager's) most notable single contribution to the war effort was the part he played in discovering, as a test pilot, a glitch in the American aircraft



Rear Admiral John P. Sager

engines which prevented planes from flying as high as the Japanese planes. When a plane can fly higher, it can attack out of the sun, remaining invisible to its prey." Lieut. Sager was the first pilot to fly a navy plane over 40,000 feet using an oxygen mask and equipment designed and built himself.

In the summer of 1943, Lieut. Sager flew his plane to Walloon Lake, buzzed the family cottage, and carried on to Pellston airport where he waited for his family to pick him up. He enjoyed a 10-day leave, even acting as a guest speaker at the Elks Lodge, before being sent to the Pacific Theater



that October where he served as a Material and War Plans Officer on land and ships, attached to the Aircraft 7th Fleet.

While serving in the Pacific, his wife and children remained in Petoskey.

Parke received a promotion to Commander in 1944 and, one year later, was awarded the Legion of Merit for "For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as material and war plans officer on the Staff Commander, Seventh Fleet, during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Southwest Pacific area, from November 1943 to May 1945. Anticipating and providing for the material needs of the aircraft units of Aircraft,



Parke Sager

Seventh Fleet, Commander Sager skillfully planned the development of air bases and the material support of these units, thereby contributing greatly for the eminent success of operations in the area ..." The Air Medal was "for meritorious achievement in aerial flight as pilot of a plane, in action against enemy Japanese forces from January 3-30, 1945."

In 1954, Parke was promoted to Captain. Ten years after that, Captain Sager became Rear Admiral Sager. He moved up to Vice Commander of Material Acquisition three years after that and retired from active duty in 1969.

Rear Admiral chose to live in Walloon Lake for his retirement years. He was active in his community, often as a guest speaker at service clubs, Memorial Day and Veterans' Day events, and was often tapped by the local paper for interviews about current war events. He was a member of Kiwanis.

Throughout his career, Rear Admiral Sager and his family lived in California, Ohio, Washington D.C., Maryland, Missouri, Philadelphia and Japan. He had seen active and training duty in the Canal Zone, Grosse Isle, Australia, the Philippines and Alameda. In addition to the Legion of Merit and Air Medal, Rear Admiral Sager earned "the American Defense Services Medal, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with Silver Star (five engagements), the World War II Victory Medal, the National Defense Service Medal with bronze star, and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon. 🌿

## Loree Marteen Saunders (Pekarek)

**L**oree Marteen was born Loree Marteen Saum on April 16, 1965 and, according to posts on ancestry.com, was adopted by her great aunt and uncle James and Doreen Pekarek.

She grew up in Grosse Pointe, attending Grosse Pointe North High School. She graduated in 1983.

In July of 1985, Loree joined the United States Air Force. After basic training, she was transferred to Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois for jet engine training. From there, she went to work at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. This is where she worked in the 2nd Bomb Wing, working on C-141s and B-52s.

In December of 1985, Loree was married in Baton Rouge, but divorced in 1988.

Loree's contributions to the Air Force are detailed in a printed piece shared at her funeral: "Following basic and technical training, Loree was assigned to the 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale AFB, LA, as a jet engine mechanic and then as a propulsion crew chief and the base engine manager (In 1991, seven B-52s from the 596th Bomb Squadron carried out the first offensive strike of Operation Desert Shield/Storm — this was the first mission in which bombers launched from and recovered to a base in the continental U.S.). She graduated from the Community College of the Air Force



### United States Air Force

in June, 2000, with an Associates Degree in aircraft Maintenance Technology. Tech Sgt. Saunder's military decorations include the Air Force commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster (for prolonged acts of heroism or meritorious service), the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with five oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Good Conduct Medal with five oak leaf clusters, the National Defense Service Medal with one device (for members of the Reserve components during the period of the Gulf War), the Air Force Longevity ribbon with two devices and the Basic Military Training ribbon."

In 1997, the Air Force promoted Loree to Staff Sergeant and sent her to Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho. She was in charge of the jet engine shop there.

In 2000, Loree was diagnosed with breast cancer. She fought for four years and died at the age of 38 on Feb. 24, 2004. Among those listed as her survivors is her "Air Force family of engine management, 366th Maintenance Operations Squadron, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho." 🌿

## Space Force:

### The newest branch of the armed forces of the United States

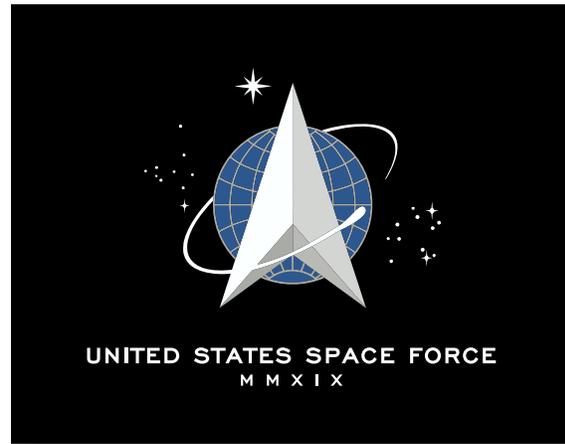
The United States Space Force, redesignated from the Air Force Space Command, was signed into law as the sixth branch of the U.S. military on December 20, 2019 as part of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act.

Space Force is a separate and distinct branch of the armed services and is organized under the Department of the Air Force in a manner very similar to how the Marine Corps is organized under the Department of the Navy.

One of the reasons Space Force was created, according to Vice Chief of Space Operations Gen. David Thompson in a Dec. 5, 2021 interview with Chris Wallace, was to understand first strike threats from countries like China and Russia and to design tactics and techniques to counter them. Space Force doesn't seek to be the "new sheriff in town," but rather to set and guide responsible behavior in space.

"We are a military force," he said. "We firmly advocate for ... conduct and standards of norms that everybody should follow and we should follow them as well."

Secretary of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in a July 7, 2021 memo outlined five "tenets" of responsible behavior in space: Limit the generation of long-lived debris, avoid the creation of harmful interference, maintain safe separation and safe trajectory, communicate and make notifications about space activities.



## United States Space Force

Unfortunately, according to Gen. Thompson, these expectations are not commonly adhered to."

Today, there are 13,000 Guardians, consisting of the "brightest minds in science, technology, aerospace and engineering."

The mission:  
The United States Space Force is responsible for organizing, training and equipping Guardians to conduct global space operations that enhance the way our joint and coalition forces fight, while also offering decision maker military options to achieve national objectives.

Their motto: Semper Supra  
(Always Above)

The Delta symbol used in its logo honors the heritage of the United States Air Force and the Space Command.

Learn more: [spaceforce.mil](https://spaceforce.mil) 

## Richard Charles Hermann

**A**fter graduating from Harvard University in 1954, Richard Charles Hermann really wanted to be in the Coast Guard. This, from the June 17, 1954 Petoskey Evening News:

“Richard (Dick) Hermann of the house of Ewald Hermann, Highland, Ill., is making short stay with us awaiting the time when Uncle Sam will say ‘Come and join me.’ He would like to get into the Coast Guard Academy but it seems they have a waiting list, so guess it is the Army for him. That is, unless Mr. Wilson, who has lived on the other end of the lake around Shadow Trails way, can get him a special assignment.”

Richard was born to Erna Pabst and Dr. Ewald Emil Hermann in Missouri and grew up in Highland, Illinois. His dad, a surgeon, also owned a summer home on Walloon Lake.

No one knows if the aforementioned “Mr. Wilson” had any pull or not, but we do know Richard was sworn into service as a Coast Guardsman on Aug. 9, 1954.

Ensign Dick Hermann was stationed at Grand Haven aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Woodbine as third in command and Operations Officer there for more than a year.

In January of 1956, his engagement to Petoskey daughter Margaret (Margo) L. Curtis was announced. The couple had planned a June wedding, but in April of that year, Dick received word that he



### United States Coast Guard

would be sent to the Miho Bay Loran Station as its commanding officer for a little more than a year.

So, after an April 16, 1956, wedding and a 2-week honeymoon in Bermuda with his new bride, Richard set for Japan and active duty.

The 24-year-old Richard returned to the states on Aug. 2, 1957. He enjoyed a 72-day leave with his wife at the Walloon Lake cottage and then served as Operations Officer in St. Louis for a short time and continued his service in Connecticut with the Coast Guard Reserves.

Richard started work in the container division of the Alton Box Board Company where he worked for the next 38 years. In 1977, his wife, Margo, died. He remarried in 1984 to Cynthia Beadell and they retired to Walloon Lake where he enjoyed sailing and teaching others to sail and was involved in the community, serving in Melrose Township planning and zoning boards.

He died at home in Walloon Lake on March 23, 2013. 🌿

## Allister George Murner

**A**llister “Al” George Murner was born on June 16, 1919 in Rabor, Michigan to William and Anne Murner. His parents had both immigrated to the United States. The family is listed on at least two passenger lists in 1920 — one from Glasgow to New York City, one from Nova Scotia to Liverpool.

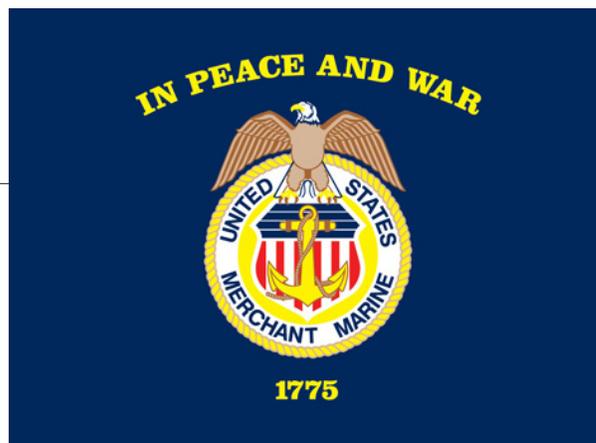
And so it seems, Allister was born to be on a ship.

At some point, his parents made their way from Sault Ste. Marie to Petoskey. This is where Allister grew up. He was an honor student, a member of student council and a star football player for Petoskey High School. The Petoskey Evening News in 1934 called him a “speedy halfback” and by his senior year in 1937, he was coined “Petoskey’s crack backfield man.”

After graduation, Allister attended the Central State Teachers College in Mt. Pleasant. By 1939, he was employed by the Petoskey Transportation Company on the steamer J.B. John.

The 6-foot tall, black haired, blue-eyed sailor joined the Merchant Marines and registered for the WWII Draft on Oct. 16, 1940.

According to passenger lists from ancestry.com, from 1943-1950, Allister was aboard several ships. Somewhere between this service during WWII and his short trips home to Walloon Lake, he found Elizabeth Hass. ►



### United States Merchant Marine



#### ON CONVOY DUTY

Lt. (jg) Allister Murner, USMS, 2nd Mate, is a veteran when it comes to convoy duty in the U. S. Merchant Marine.

A graduate of PHS '38 and former Walloon Lake resident, he graduated from the U. S. Maritime Service Officer's School, Fort Trumbull, New London, Conn., and has served in the Merchant Marine for the past two years. He was with a convoy in the Casablanca harbor at the time of the African invasion and in Sicily during the start of the Italian campaign.



Shooting the sun with a sextant is 2nd officer Lt. (jg) Allister Murner, 25, of Detroit, Mich., a graduate of the Maritime Service Training Station at Ft. Trumbull. He's a veteran at convoy duty.

Allister and Elizabeth were married in Bay City, Michigan on Sept. 12, 1946. By this time, he had made it to Chief Mate and continued his career with the Maritime Service, sailing out of New York City. The couple had two sons and came home to Walloon Lake each year.

From the Jan 6, 1945 Philadelphia Inquirer: "Today, America is operating the greatest merchant fleet in the history of the world. Soon, 4000 ships will be at sea; 3000 are now transporting to every part of the world the vital necessities of war. These modern ships are vast complicated affairs, and, unless fully manned, are idle hulks tied to a dock. That is why the men of the U.S. Maritime Service, all volunteers, are making a contribution to ultimate victory which cannot be measured by words."

Allister died April 13, 2006, at the age of 86. 🌿

ABOVE: Allister is featured in this news clipping from the Jan. 6, 1945 Philadelphia Inquirer.  
BELOW: He got his sea-legs start working for the Petoskey Transportation Company on the steamer JB John in the years leading up to WWII. (photo from Bowling Green State University)



## Lewis Sleeper

**A**t the age of 19, Lewis “Bud” Sleeper, 6 feet, 145 pounds, blue eyes, brown hair, took a break from his job at Pabst Brewing Company in Illinois and registered for the WWII Draft on June 27, 1942. That October, 14 pounds lighter, he enlisted into the Army Air Corps at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana. Within a few years, he was running missions as a lower turret gunner on a bomber over Ploesti oil fields.

Based in England, he received the Order of the Purple Heart when wounded in action during bombing missions in Germany. He was also fighting in the combat zone in Africa and Italy. In May of 1944, Lewis’ plane was shot down and he survived by slinging a parachute bag over one shoulder. Once on the ground, he was taken as a prisoner of war in Romania. He and fellow POWs survived several attacks and were rescued in September by allied B17s swooping in under enemy fire.

In November, he recovered from injuries in a hospital for three months. Then he was discharged and retired from duty at the age of 21.

Lewis then returned to high school at the age of 22, graduated, and with the help of the GI Bill, attended the University of Michigan where he earned a BBA.

Lewis married and raised two daughters and worked for The Guardian Life Insurance Company. There he designed and led a training program for the company and took that program to Mutual of New York in New York City. He did this for 30 years.

Around 1983, Lewis retired to Tucson, Arizona, but he certainly didn’t slow down.



### United States POW / MIA

He did work for Habitat for Humanity and in 1989, he started the SAGE (Senior Advancement and Growth through Education) society at the University of Arizona. Because of this, he was recruited by the Peace Corps. After that, he continued small business development work in Kenya through USAID.

Lewis still wanted to see more of the world, so he volunteered as a cruise ship host. He traveled for free as long as he danced with single women. This is how he met his wife, Janice Lee.

Together, the two helped in the American Red Cross, flying to national disaster areas when needed.

Lewis was active in the American Ex-Prisoner of War as Southwest National Director up until the year he died. He joined remaining Romanian ExPOWs in North Carolina for an annual reunion in 2012. His last article, “Why is it Worthy for AXPOW to Survive?” appeared in the July 2013 EXPOW Bulletin. ([www.axpow.org/bulletins/jul-aug13.pdf](http://www.axpow.org/bulletins/jul-aug13.pdf))

Lewis A. Sleeper died Sept. 9, 2013 and was buried in Greenwood with Sleeper relatives who had lived in Petoskey. 🌿



# The Cemetery

A place to rest and remember forever

**W**e believe a cemetery is the best place, the only place, that a loved one will be remembered and honored for the rest of time. Why would a nation set aside so much valuable property, just to inter the human dead? What value is there in returning, again and again, to visit the graves of those who have gone on before us?

Renée Tanner says regarding Emma Lamb Barnes Baker: “I couldn’t help feel

a bit sad to find she had no children of her own. But then I thought, ‘I am here, 92 years after her death, learning from her and thinking about her and visiting her grave and recording her story for others to see.’

A friend of mine in the cemetery business says, “Nowhere else but a cemetery is the story of a community so well written.”

Historical articles from the Greenwood staff are not writing a

story, but recording a story already written by the men and women who sacrificed so much, not just for this nation's freedom, but for the freedom of the entire world. Greenwood has a role to play in the recording of these stories and protecting and honoring the memory of those who wrote them.

Our history books and tours and our obituary and newspaper collection are part of “marketing” an ideal that runs counterculture to the practice of so many (in scattering anywhere or in doing nothing with the cremains). It is up to us to turn the tide, not to make money for a cemetery, but to present people with the best option, which should be the only option, a place where this person they love will have a spot of land, a piece of the earth, where they will be remembered forever.

In my daily travels around the cemetery, I pass by graves of our town's residents who died more than a century ago. Their graves are as well attended to as those of people buried here only a few months ago. Walkers-by read their names, a 17-year-old baseball player places a flag on the grave of a veteran from the Civil War, parents bring their children to show them the graves of their great-great-grandparents, a young woman sits on a blanket next to her husband's resting place.

Heritage is reclaimed, whether it is familial or community or national. We are here because of them. The community we appreciate so much is here because of them—they took

their part in the building of it and then passed the torch to us.

## Why is a cemetery important?

- It reminds us that others were here before us, some were pioneers, some were dreamers, some were builders, some were maintainers—and they all had a part.
- It reminds us, as we look at the headstones, to remember that life is short. Consider, “Hiram Obed Rose, 1830-1911,” that it is important what we do with the dash between the dates. H.O. Rose was a pioneer entrepreneur who made the most of his 81 years. A cemetery reminds us that there is a beginning and an end to this life, and it gives us hope for the years in between.

Wander the paths of Greenwood. Read the names: “Curtis,” “Waukazoo,” “Porter,” “Ingalls,” and match them up to the streets of our town and surrounding townships.

Read the inscriptions on the military markers “Killed on Okinawa” or “WWII, Korea, Vietnam” marking the grave of a man who served in three different wars. It is not morbid; it reminds us in troubled times of the goodness of men and women who gave of themselves to something bigger than themselves. A cemetery is the place we visit, the place where we are reminded to protect, not to squander, the gift of life we have been given.

— Karl Crawford, superintendent

# REMEMBER. HONOR. TEACH.



  
**Greenwood  
Cemetery**  
AN APPROVED ARBORETUM