

Princeton '71 Parents in the Nation's Service:
World War II Memories

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On the 81st anniversary of D-Day, June 6, 1944, a number of classmates shared stories of their parents' service during World War II. Other classmates added their stories in the days and weeks that followed. As we gather to celebrate our 55th Reunion and the times we have shared together, it is fitting that we also celebrate our parents and their service to the Nation. These are their stories, as told by their sons.

Contributors

Kevin Baine	16	John Miller	33
John Baker	27	Mark Moorstein	22
Charles C. Barr	34	Luther Munford	15
Oz Bengur	8	Gary Oleson	9
John Brower	20	Rick Ostrow	35
Jim and Drew Browning . . .	37	Lamar "Lefty" Oxford . . .	23
John "Skip" Collins	12	Peter Parke	21
Tom Crocker	32	Duncan Payne	2
Clifford A. Cutchins IV	31	Terry Pflaumer	7
Mitch Daniels	18	Scott Rogers	27
Mike Decker	6	David Schankler	16
Paul Flowerman	33	John Shea	36
Ken Hall	4	Rob Slocum	10
Jeff Hammond	11	Geoff Smith	14
Tom Hart	1	Bruce Sokler	21
Lex Kelso	5	John B. "Jay" Sollis	28
Mike Ladra	19	Stuart Sovatsky	14
Mark Mazo	4	Thomas Stubbs	22
Robert McGahey	15	Gerry Uehlinger	19
Tom McGuire	31	Bill Zwecker	19
Paul Mickey	17		

Tom Hart

All of us grew up in the shadow of The War. They even had comic books about it. We played “war” games. We asked for plastic guns for Christmas. My little league coach, Mr. Tracy, had a big red flak scar down his forehead. Talking of old friends or looking at old photos, my Mom would often solemnly inform me “he died in the war.” And of course WE were gifted the ineradicable (until Vietnam? Until lately?) sense of being “the good guys,” as well as, for the likes of PU ‘71, lives of prosperity and privilege.

Second Lt. Tom Hart Jr (I am the “turd”) had a “good war” – flying the little-known P-61 Black Widow night fighter. The Luftwaffe was much decimated by the time he got in, and flying around at night over Europe with primitive radar in the nose, they actually never caught (or were caught by) anyone. So he was full of anecdotes, mostly jolly – like “As Red Geisel [whoever he was] used to say, ‘Let’s look it up in the Armanac’”

Here’s his plane after a crash landing. The pilot forgot to put the wheels down.



Duncan Payne

It was a good war for some lucky few, but it was a terrible and horrifying one for others.

My father was a Brit, born in China. His father died in a Japanese internment camp near Shanghai, his mother survived.

He was a member of the British Expeditionary Force evacuated from Dunkirk, where his hair turned white for the rest of his life.



He also was among a group of twenty officers and sergeants sent to take charge of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. He wrote about the experience in his autobiography, which I found among his papers after he died. Here are a few excerpts.

“None of us who drove out into the cool dawn knew quite what to expect at the end of that long tree-lined road. We’d heard of concentration camps of course, but the Allies had never overrun one before. . . . Then came the first whiff of that terrible stench I shall never forget; the heavy sickly odor which lay over the whole area like an invisible evil miasma.

. . . .

For the days that we worked there behind the high barbed-wire fence none of us was quite sane. The scope and urgency of our task were beyond

imagining. . . . Compassion consumed us and drove us on in superhuman efforts towards simpler things – to bring food, water, burial, some semblance of order into that terrible world.

In Belsen those who did not eat died. And those who couldn't drag themselves to the cookhouse with the others to fetch their meager rations didn't eat. Now these must be fed where they lay in their bunks. Sixteen people were needed to carry each well-scrubbed swill tub in which their special gruel was distributed. Sixteen because no fewer had sufficient strength to move it, small though it was. Four were needed to lift it, four more to hold them up, while eight more linked hands in two lines of four to pull the others along.

. . . .

Meanwhile our ambulances had shuttled down into the civilian hospitals in Celle the hundreds of the weak and others whose hope for survival depended on proper medical care. There, the populace had loudly protested their ignorance of what had been going on in Belsen. Now they knew better; the shame of it was among them for all to see. To rub it in, the burgomaster was required to conscript the womenfolk of a hundred leading citizens (his own among them, all being Nazis) to wash with warm water, soap and their own BARE hands the bodies of those our ambulances delivered; then dry them with their best towels. That night he and his wife committed suicide.”



My father's first wife left him for another man, exempt from service, while he was fighting the Germans.

He never talked about the war. Understandably so.

Ken Hall

My father, Bob Hall, was a radio operator on B-17s in World War II in New Guinea, using the Morse Code he learned as an Eagle Scout. One bombing mission went very wrong and the plane struggled to return to the base with one engine gone, two crew members dead from artillery fire, and so many holes in the fuselage the pilot did not dare to fly at full speed. My father had to convince the base that they were the last plane returning and not the first in the retaliatory attack. They descended in the dark, my father relayed the altitude, and the base lit up the runway long enough for the wheels to touch down. In 1983 he went to a reunion of the 43rd Bomb Group on the Queen Mary, the ship that carried him and about 8,000 others from Boston to Australia in 1942, nine weeks after Pearl Harbor. He had managed to track down his old pilot, Roger Kettleson, and get him to come. Here's how Paul Dean, staff writer for the Los Angeles Times, told the story on Oct. 6: "Recognition was immediate when the two men met in the lobby of the Queen Mary. 'Thanks to you,' Kettleson said, 'I'm here.' Hall remembered 30 missions, fighter attacks, a tail gunner killed, night bombing runs, and once limping back to base with all fuel warning lights winking. 'Thanks to you,' said Hall, holding the handshake, 'I'm still alive.'"

Mark Mazo

My father enlisted on December 8, 1941, without telling his wife (my mother), who was not pleased. He hoped to be a bomber pilot but instead became a B-17 bombardier who flew 32 missions in the Eighth Air Force out of East Anglia (he volunteered to continue after the mandatory 25 missions). Before every mission Dad's close friend Charlie Kiley would say the rosary over him. Dad took this ceremony seriously even though he was not Catholic. As it happens, before one mission Charlie was late in getting to my father, and he did not finish saying the rosary over my father until after my father's plane took off without him. Dad said that plane took a direct hit over Germany, killing everyone on board instantly. Dad and Charlie shared many other experiences during the war. They remained close friends all their lives, and our families remained close as well.

In 1944 my father volunteered for ground forces and landed in Normandy late on D-Day. Joining Patton's 3d Army, my father raced through France after the breakout at St. Lo, and later north into Luxembourg for the Battle of the Bulge. My father participated in liberating camps in Germany and even snuck into Vienna as the Russians were liberating/destroying it (the Russians temporarily arrested my father because Americans were not allowed to be there).

Like others, my father never spoke about the horrors he saw and participated in. Even late in life he refused to see *Saving Private Ryan*, because the D-Day scenes would have brought back those terrors. Instead, my father only told the funny and ironic stories (about how he was decorated for dropping the only bombs that hit a German heavy water factory in Norway, when in fact he had been so mesmerized by the scene of bombs dropping on the snowy mountains at night that he forgot to drop his own bombs until his pilot screamed at him; or how he cried when he had to pour his precious and recently "liberated" Hennessey Bras Arme cognac into his jeep radiator to keep it from freezing while behind German lines during the Battle of the Bulge). The closest my father ever came to describing the horror was telling me (as an adult) that of the 1500 men in his original bomber squadron only 17 survived unwounded and uncaptured in early 1944.

As I read these stories, I am reminded of Tom Hanks' last words in "Saving Private Ryan," whispering to Matt Damon: "*Earn This!*" Have we earned the sacrifice our fathers and mothers made? We cannot forget them. We must honor them by protecting America, as they did, and preserving our democracy and decency.

Lex Kelso

My Father was a Lieutenant in the Navy. He was a freshman in NROTC at Georgia Tech when Pearl Harbor happened. The commanding officer of the NROTC unit wrote the cadets' parents, saying that their sons were coming home for Christmas, planning to quit college to join the war. He asked them not to let them; the military would need their talents even more after they'd finished more college and ROTC.

He got called up, I think in 1943, and sent to the eastern theater, that is, England. He commanded a landing craft that landed D+1 in Normandy. Terry's Dad could have been on his boat. He was 20 years old. The only story I remember him telling about Normandy is that on one of the trips he had some time, so he decided to walk down

the beach. At some point he realized he was walking with his hand on his revolver, and decided if he was doing that unconsciously, he should go back to the boat.

He later served in the Pacific and Japan. I think he got sent home early because he had an appointment to marry my Mother. On the ship home he found three other guys who played bridge. On the first hand he and his partner bid and made 7 No Trump; on the second hand the other two bid and made 7 No Trump. [For those of you who don't play bridge, this has to be a 1 in 1 billion event.] He and my Mother played bridge for fun for many years, and this was his favorite cards story.

As most of you know, the World War II Museum is in New Orleans. It's now quite extensive [and they've just acquired another block for expansion], but the first two exhibits were The Road to Berlin and The Road to Tokyo, which take you chronologically through the two theaters. They are extremely moving. In the Road to Berlin, at some point in 1942 or 1943, when the principal fighting was still in Africa, there's a section on the protests against the war. The outcome wasn't a foregone conclusion; we know the outcome, but they didn't.

Mike Decker

My Dad was chief engineer for a P-51 squadron in the 363rd Tactical Air group that crossed over on D-day plus 19. Prior to that his unit flew bomber escort for B-17's over France and Germany. On D-day his unit flew an escort mission at night. He was in charge of keeping the fighters in the air and received a Bronze Star right after the Battle of the Bulge. He never talked about the war, but he did get me out of bed for school by shouting "RAUS" which was very effective. He died in 1971.

Terry Pflaumer



My Dad (shown above in Normandy) was a lieutenant in the 9th Infantry Division, and served in the intelligence unit (he was a native German speaker). The 9th Division was in some of the heaviest fighting of the war. It led the drive up to Cherbourg (the first port in Normandy the allies captured) and was heavily involved in the major battles at the Falaise Gap and Huertgen Forest. But he never spoke about any of those.

His division landed on Utah Beach on the night of D+1. He was on an LST, which was designed to run in at high tide, ground itself in very shallow water and lower its front ramp so that tanks and other vehicles could be driven off. His LST, however, struck a sandbar further out than expected, a fact of which the crew was apparently unaware. Dad's jeep was the front vehicle, but when they drove it off the ramp, it immediately sank in over 5 feet of water. He and his crew were able to scramble back onto the LST, soaking wet, but alive. The LST then managed to maneuver closer into shore and deposit the rest of its vehicles and men. Several hours later, Dad and his team were on the beach at low tide, when they spotted a jeep some distance out on the sand. They walked out and discovered it was their jeep. They dragged it ashore and washed it out and managed to get it running. Dad said the dials never worked, but it ran, and they drove it for the rest of the war.

Oz Bengur

Great stories that are important to keep alive. Some of these stories still haven't ended. My wife Vicki's father (Bob Schultz) was a bombardier on a B24 and flew missions in conjunction with the D-Day landings. His twin brother Billy was a navigator on a B24 in the same squadron that was stationed in East Anglia. They were both 19. In early 1944 they were on the same bombing mission over northern Germany when his brother's plane was shot down over the Baltic. One of the few stories Vicki's dad told about his war experiences was that he spoke to Billy as his plane was going down. Last year Vicki's family was contacted by the Army's Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Division and were told that the Army believes Billy's remains may be in a cemetery in Sassnitz, Germany, a town along the Baltic. Apparently, after they were shot down, the bodies of the airmen washed up on shore and the Germans in that town gave them a proper funeral and, being Germans, kept records of where they are buried. A few of the airmen's dog tags were with the remains; however, several were unidentified. The Army knew this after the war (the airmen had been classified as MIA after the mission) but only recently got around to tracking down family members. They asked one of the male relatives to provide a DNA sample so they could identify Billy's remains. We are still waiting to hear the results.

In Ambrose's biography of Eisenhower, after the invasion on June 5 was called off, Ambrose describes the incredibly tense scene where the commanders of the invasion gathered with Eisenhower in a crowded room to listen to Stagg's weather forecast for June 6. When Stagg finished and Eisenhower finally said, "OK, we'll go," everyone rushed out of the room leaving Eisenhower standing by himself. It struck me as a particularly poignant moment when the weight of his decision must have been overwhelming. After that Eisenhower retreated to his room to write the famous letter that he never had to send.

Our landings in the
Cherbourg - Have our
troops failed to gain a
satisfactory foothold and
the troops, ~~have~~
~~withdrawn~~.) The ~~decision~~
decision to
attend at this time and for
was based upon the best
information available, and
the troops, the air and the
navy did all that ~~was~~
Brave and devotion to duty
could do. If any blame
or fault attaches to the attempt
it is mine alone.
Jeg 5

Gary Oleson

My father was an Iowa farm boy gifted with mathematics and machinery. He was working his way through Iowa State when the war started. He was in Army ROTC training for field artillery. They trained with horse-drawn French 75mm field guns, and Dad was on the trick riding team. He was commissioned without his degree after Pearl Harbor and assigned to the 2nd Armored Division. His skills caused him to be reassigned to logistics, specializing in transportation.

He told many stories about the war from humorous to tragic. Once a French gendarme directing traffic in Oran had two columns of American vehicles hopelessly snarled. He blew his whistle and waved his arms, and nothing moved. Dad had two MPs lift the gendarme by his arms and carry him away still tweeting while a third MP began unravelling the situation. Sometime later, my father and a friend went swimming in the Mediterranean. They got caught in a rip tide and carried out. Dad made it back after a long struggle, but his friend got a leg cramp and didn't make it.

Dad was transferred to England ahead of his unit to help plan logistics for D-Day. He knew everything about the invasion except "when." Nobody knew when. Dad went ashore on D+4, the day after his division landed. He was about a mile back from the front during the St. Lo breakthrough acting as a logistics trouble shooter. He was most reluctant to tell one story from that period and it was the very last story I got him to tell.

Near La Chapelle, the column he was with had been rolling free, then suddenly stopped as sounds of a big fire fight broke out ahead. A runner came back asking if anyone knew how to direct artillery. Dad did, so he followed the runner over a small rise to see that their column had intercepted the head of a long German column of trucks and armored vehicles trying to escape. Another American column started a fight with same German column at an intersection farther up the line. Their one forward observer had been hit, but the radio telephone operator was OK and had his maps. Dad saw that both road junctions had been pre-registered for artillery. German infantry was piling out of the trucks and running to escape, so Dad didn't follow the standard procedure of calling for marking rounds to be sure of the aim. There wasn't time. He just called "fire for effect" along the whole line between the two junctions. He didn't even know who was on the other end of the call. Apparently, it was about every tube in range because the whole landscape erupted.

The scene afterward was terrible. The Germans lost 1,150 soldiers and 96 vehicles. There were bodies and parts of bodies lying around, some burned in tanks. The cleanup was part of Dad's job unfortunately, but he was able to use German POWs for most of the dirty work. Unsurprising that he didn't want to talk about it. I may have been the only one he told the whole story.

German artillery fire caused his jeep to crash into a tree at the end of September 1944 and injured Dad's left hip. He was in hospital for months and missed the Battle of the Bulge. His hip never did heal properly, but he was never able to convince the VA to give him any disability benefits. At least he made it back.

Rob Slocum

Great stories, thanks everyone. My father never left the States. He wasn't a flyer but had something to do with training fighter pilots, mostly in Denver. He was Lafayette Class '39, and he said "everyone" came back for the first reunion after the war. It was very upbeat, as you can imagine, until one point when they read off the list of all the Lafayette men who had died. When he died in 1997, I was in touch with the widow of one of his buddies, who said her husband always regretted not going overseas. I guess you went where you were told. Or I wonder what sort of personality screening they did to reach some of these decisions.

My mother was a WAVE who you might say was a MeToo precursor. An officer took her out on a date to a “blue” movie—her sister’s term, telling me this story in 1991. Apparently, my mother raised such a fuss that she practically got herself a dishonorable discharge—which is not easy to do. I never came within a mile of ever asking her about this, but now I kind of wish I had.

Citizens of London is a terrific book about London before and during the war. John Winant ’71’s grandfather is one of the key players, our Ambassador to the Court of St. James. He took over for Joe Kennedy and it was a big change.

Jeff Hammond



My dad served in the Pacific—mostly in New Guinea and the Philippines and in Japan during the occupation. He was yanked out of medical school and told he was now an anesthesiologist and hospital commander. Like so many others, he never talked to me and my brother about the war. He opened up a bit when my son pressed him in an interview for a school project, but even then it was abbreviated. I have a vivid memory of him telling us about daily strafings and that the nights were the worst as one could not tell if the scratching sounds on the coral was the Japanese or crabs.

My aunt was an army nurse who transported wounded from the Pacific Theatre by train from San Francisco back to the East Coast.

My father-in-law served in the Navy and at one point was mistakenly reported killed in action. They had a funeral for him—he was reportedly lost at sea—only for him to shock his family by showing up alive. I suspect that type of story was not a rare occurrence.

John “Skip” Collins

My Dad grew up in a large Irish family in New Rochelle, NY. Although only 5’11”, he was point guard for the high school team, the “Shamrocks.” When he graduated, he wanted to keep playing. The best court was at the Brooklyn Navy Yard receiving station, so he joined the Navy reserve in the late 1930s. He was called up after Pearl Harbor. He and his two brothers all joined. See picture below. The stern old guy is my grandfather.



He was handy with electricity, so he became a radioman and served on several destroyers in the South Pacific, including the Porter and the Fletcher. He had Navy surgery on a bad leg (from basketball) that they botched, and so he had several trips back to the Navy hospital at Mare Island in San Francisco. During the medical trips, both destroyers he served on were sunk, so he was lucky to be away.

When he was on the Fletcher, he saw action at the Battle of Guadalcanal. The radioman sat in a room without windows high up in the ship (to be close to the antenna) and next to the bridge (so messages could be quickly relayed.) The only way he knew what was going on outside was the sound and the radio.

Like so many others, he didn't like to talk about the war. After he died, I went through his records and found the after-action message from the task force commander, Admiral Turner, congratulating the survivors, which Dad had

transcribed and kept. Below is the message. All three brothers made it back and raised families.

My mom was an engineer for Grumman Aircraft on Long Island. Before the war, she had an economics degree from Duke and then went to Columbia for 3 months to learn engineering. She met my Dad on the Long Island railroad. It was around Thanksgiving, and he was carrying a turkey he needed cooked. She cooked the turkey and got a husband in the bargain.

OUTGOING DESPATCH						
From: CTF 67 (ADM TURNER)			To: TF 67			
Origin:			Checked:		Information:	
Released by:						
PLAIN	RESTRICTED	CONFIDENTIAL	ROUTINE	PRIORITY		
TIME GROUP			DATE 13 Nov. 1942			
IN DISOLVING THIS TASK FORCE IT IS MY HOPE THAT THE NUMBER 67 BE SET ASIDE TO BE APPLIED ONLY TO SHIPS WHOSE READINESS FOR HIGH PATRIOTIC ENDEAVOR IS AS GREAT AS YOURS HAS BEEN X I GIVE YOU MY THANKS FOR YOUR MAGNIFICENT SUPPORT OF THE REINFORCEMENT OF OUR COURAGEOUS TROOPS IN GUADALCANAL AND YOUR READY RESPONSE TO BECOME THE SHARP EDGE OF THE SWORD WHICH CUTS THE ENEMY'S THROAT X THE ODDS WHICH MIGHT CONFRONT YOU IN YOUR ATTACK ON THE NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 12 WERE WELL KNOWN TO ME BUT I BELIEVED THAT THE TIME HAD COME FOR BRAVE MEN AND FINE SHIPS TO BE CALLED UPON TO DO THEIR UTMOST X IN GRETLING FROM THE FOE OF FAR GREATER STRENGTH THAN THAT WHICH YOU HAD EXPECTED YOU HAVE FAR EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS X I GRIEVE WITH YOU FOR THE PASSING OF LONG CHERISHED COMRADES AND OF SHIPS WHOSE NAMES HISTORY WILL ENSHRINE X YOUR MERITED REWARD CANNOT POSSIBLY BE FOUND IN MEDALS NO MATTER HOW HIGH X I SAY WITH ALL MY HEART MAY GOD BLESS DEAD AND ALIVE THE VALLIANT MEN OF THIS TASK FORCE X						
STERRITT-OBANNON-FLETCHER-BARTON-MONNISON-AARON WARD-HELENA SAN FRANCISCO-ATLANTA- JUNEAU-NEW ORLEANS-LOUISVILLE-MINNEAPOLIS						
NIBP		U. S. S. GUADALUPE (A032)			NIBP	
DATE: 16 NOVEMBER 1942		INFORMATION:				
FROM: FLETCHER						
ACTION: OBANNON						
HEADING:						
VISUAL						
WE HAD ONE TORPEDO PASS AHEAD TWO UNDER AND ONE EASTERN X SPLASHES ALL AROUND X BARTON BLEW UP IN FRONT OF US AND BELIEVE MONNSEN SUNK X TENRYU CLASS CRUISER SANK WHILE UNDER OUR FIRE X FIRED TEN FISH AT BATTLESHIP WHICH LATER BLEW UP X ATTITUDE RETICENT AS WELL AS REVERENT X						
ORIGINAL						
C. O.	Exec.	Nav.	Gun.	Eng.	O. O. D.	RELEASE:
Comm.	Med.	Sup.	C. & R.			

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Stuart Sovatsky

D-Day and the years of WWII that followed scarred my Father, Jacob Sovatsky, enough that he was to spend twenty-years, 'til his death, living within this VA Hospital where I would visit him during my high school, college and post-college years.



I pay my respects to him once again and to all those others for whom the impact of war never ended.

Geoff Smith

It is amazing that all of them were not scarred like your dad, Stuart. My dad flew B-29 bombers off Tinian in the Pacific toward the end of war. That shielded him from the close combat that many experienced but did not shield him from losing good friends who did not return from missions.

I have ridden (motorcycles) with a good number of Viet Nam vets who saw combat. Most won't talk about it. One did tell me that as they would walk through a destroyed village with indescribable carnage, they had a chilling line they all muttered to try and preserve their sanity: "Don't mean nothin'. Move on."

Looking at the sea of grave markers near Normandy takes your breath away. Those who experienced D-day and its aftermath certainly deserve our immense gratitude and respect.

Luther Munford

My father did ROTC at Georgia Tech and was called up early in 1941 and trained to be an ordinance officer. After teaching at the Command and General Staff School, he was sent to India in 1944 to be in charge of ordinance for the 10th Army Airforce in the India-Burma-China theater.

He died in 2007 at age 95. Toward the end of his life he suffered from dementia. At some point he told us he had “checked out the bomb that destroyed the Bridge over the River Kwai.” My mother said this was news to her. The story seemed unlikely. Maybe he was confused. That bridge, a railroad bridge, was in Thailand. The movie about the Bridge over the River Kwai, and I assume Dean Gordon’s book, said the bridge was blown up by dynamite brought in over land much earlier in the war.

But I later found a book on the 10th Army Airforce. It said that in 1944 a new kind of bomb, the Azon bomb, had been brought to India. The bomb had radio controls and so could be used for precision bombing. The book listed bridges in Thailand the bomb had destroyed, and among those was the “Bypass Bridge, later known as the Bridge over the River Kwai.” It was apparently one the Japanese had rebuilt.

Father knew best.

My wife recalls finding a copy of her hometown paper from wartime that listed all the men from the town who were in the war. What struck her was how many of her friends were named for those who never came back. That is probably also true for some of our classmates.

Robert McGahey

My father was a Naval aviator and never talked about his service in any detail. But he learned that his squadron would have flown close air support on an invasion of Japan, with predictable heavy losses. Whenever the atomic bombings came up, he was all for both of them.

Kevin Baine



My dad, Francis X. (“FX”) Baine, five years out of college in 1941, was turned down by the Navy because of his poor eyesight. So he joined the Coast Guard, where he served honorably throughout the war. There he met my mother, Marjorie Taylor, who was a Lieutenant in the Coast Guard’s SPARS (Semper Paratus—Always Ready). They are interred together in Arlington Cemetery.

My uncle saw service as a Marine in the Pacific and later attended Dartmouth on the G.I. Bill. The only family member injured during the war was his wife, my aunt, who had spent three of her teenage years in the Santo Tomas Internment Camp in the Philippines. She lost her eye to a bullet fired by U.S. Army troops during the liberation of the camp in February 1945—a small price to pay compared to the price paid by others.

David Schankler

Unlike Kevin’s father, mine saw the eye chart on the wall as he walked into the room and memorized it. At the end of the day, he was welcomed into this man’s Navy. He had been an engineer in college, and they sent him to radio/radar repair school. I still have his notebook and Blue Jackets Manual, of course I do. He served aboard the UUS Carter Hall (LSD-3) and was stationed in the Pacific, primarily in Shanghai. I don’t believe he ever saw action and I suppose he can thank Little Boy and Fat Man for that. In his later years he would attend his ship’s reunions, and today he lies at rest on the bluffs of Pt. Loma, overlooking the ships of the Pacific Fleet in San Diego Harbor.

Paul Mickey

My father wanted to serve in WW II, as did his four brothers, but he had a bad back (from crashing a small plane) and failed several times to pass the physical. The closest he got was spending a year in post-war government in Germany, putting his legal training to use. However, early in my career I had the opportunity to work with two remarkable men, one of them essentially a second father, and over time heard about their wartime experiences.

In 1979 Alan Boyd hired me to be EVP-Law of Amtrak. Alan had been head of the Civil Aeronautics Board, then President of the Illinois Central Railroad, and then the first US Secretary of Transportation. He would talk openly about those experiences, but almost never about his time as a college-age Air Force pilot. In 2004 he told me he was going back to England to visit a spot he hadn't seen in 60 years, and it first dawned on me that he had flown in D-Day. Pressed for more detail, he explained that on the night of June 5 he had flown a DC-3 full of paratroopers from Lincolnshire to Sainte-Mere-Eglise, returned to base for a few hours of sleep, and then towed gliders to a landing zone behind Utah Beach (it had been flooded and he choked up speculating on the fate of the glider crews).

When Alan retired, Graham Claytor took over as Amtrak's President. Graham had a distinguished career in law, government (Secretary of the Navy, acting head of DOT), and business (president of the Southern Railroad), and he loved to tell stories about his exploits, but only once did I hear him talk about his most memorable wartime experience. In late July 1944, he was commander of the destroyer escort Cecil Doyle steaming across the Pacific when he got word that an airplane had spotted men floating in the water several hours away. He radioed for permission to change course, and getting no response, he turned and raced to investigate. The men were the surviving crew of the USS Indianapolis, which had been sunk by Japanese torpedoes five days earlier after delivering atomic bomb components to Tinian Island (its mission was secret, and its disappearance was not widely reported—the bomb was used six days later in Hiroshima). Graham knew the men must be desperate and so ordered the ship's lights pointed on the clouds as he approached, ignoring the risk of further Japanese attacks, to give them men hope. Some 900 men had survived the sinking, but after days of exposure and constant shark attacks, only 300+ remained. The survivors held a reunion every year until about 2022, and I'm told they always raised a glass to toast Graham Claytor. We walk in the shadow of giants.

Mitch Daniels

Like everyone else, I've been moved by the recollections and the gratitude that runs through all of our classmates' stories. I don't have a Dad story. My father had just finished Army medic training and was awaiting assignment when the war ended. But Paul Mickey's mention of the USS *Indianapolis* prompts me to offer this entry. In 1987, back in what had become my hometown of Indy after serving my first sentence in the federal government, my job included the opportunity to organize and host occasional seminars and dinners on public policy issues. One regular attendee was a quiet, unassuming country lawyer from Frankfort, Indiana named Adrian Marks. I must have known him for at least a year before someone asked me, "You know who that is, don't you?" I didn't, and was embarrassed to find out he was a hero of the USS *Indianapolis* tragedy.

As a young naval aviator, on patrol in his PBY seaplane, Adrian was the first to spot the survivors, dying of wounds, exposure and, as everyone recalls from "Jaws" (it's 50 years old this year???!), sharks. Marks disobeyed orders and set his plane down amid the struggling sailors. He pulled into the plane as many men as he could cram in, then tied many others to the pontoons. All told he rescued, I think the number was, 56 guys. Like so many of his counterparts, he cut short any conversation one tried to initiate about his achievements. He was so modest, so totally unpretentious, you never would have figured him for the hero that he was.

While serving in public office, I attended several of the reunions of USS *Indianapolis* survivors. At the last one I got to, among a crowd of a thousand or so, the lights in the massive ballroom were dimmed, as a small Asian woman walked down the raised platform on the center aisle. A child of maybe three or four was with her, holding her hand. Reaching the podium microphone, she introduced herself as the granddaughter of Capt. Hashimoto, the Japanese submarine captain who had sunk the *Indianapolis*. Hashimoto had testified in defense of Capt. McVay, commanding officer of the *Indianapolis*, at his scapegoating court martial. McVay committed suicide our freshman year but was exonerated during the 1990s. His granddaughter's words of reconciliation made for a devastatingly emotional moment; we all wished that more than the 30 or so survivors still alive and present could have been there to hear them.

Bill Zwecker

Like Gov. Mitch, I too have been very moved by everyone's stories. Plus, Mitch, thanks for sharing your story here about Adrian, etc. Very inspiring.

Unfortunately, my father's WW II stories went with him to the grave in 1997 (at age 90). Given he was in the OSS (the precursor to the CIA), he always said "I can't talk about those years or what I did. . . . The main thing is we defeated Hitler."

Mike Ladra

I always remember D-Day, as no less than four of my relatives were involved in the invasion. My dad and future maternal uncle were aboard a destroyer providing fire support for the British landing at Sword beach, and my dad later in the day led a shore party at Juno beach to evacuate Canadian dead and wounded. My dad's brother, conscripted into the Luftwaffe for reasons too complicated to explain here, was killed during the battle while manning an anti-aircraft battery, and my maternal aunt went ashore on Omaha beach on D-Day +7 as a 1st Lt. in the US Army Medical Corp and surgical nurse in a MASH unit. I grew up listening to their stories of the war and will never tire of them or forget them. They were one hell of a generation.

Gerry Uehlinger

My Dad, Gerard P. Uehlinger Sr. was attending a New York Giants football game at Yankee Stadium on Dec 7th when he heard the PA announcer calling names of military commanders to report. He knew something was going on.

He was a medical student at Georgetown U when he signed up with the Army shortly thereafter. After training in Alabama, he joined Mark Clark in North Africa, fought across that continent, and then made landings in Sicily and Italy. I believe he was in western Italy as the Army fought to take Monte Cassino, a monastery on top of a 1,000 foot hill which overlooked a valley, and which the Germans had made into a fortress. My Dad was trying to get up the hill and a mortar shell hit the guy next to him, killing him instantly. My Dad got hit with shrapnel in his upper thigh, missing his genitals by a quarter of an inch.

His mother got a telegram he was KIA. However, a few days later she got a followup telegram stating he had survived and was in an Italian hospital.

He never would talk about his war experience. He died of a massive heart attack in church when I was a freshman at Princeton.

FOLLOWUP . . . years later I was practicing law in Maryland, representing a young owner of a construction company named Wolfgang Schneider. We were at his deposition, and he had brought his father for support. The father had kind of a mean look about him and a strong guttural German accent. Curiosity got the better of me, and I asked if he was in Germany during the war. He said he was, in the German army. He stated he was at Monte Cassino and was captured and sent to Nebraska. He stayed in the US because he had relatives in New York. I realized he could be the guy who was lobbing mortars at my father. I didn't say another word to him.

John Brower

My mother and father both served as naval officers during World War II. My mother was working as a chemist at Swift's in Chicago when she decided to join the WAVES. She enlisted in, I believe, 1943 and served as a supply officer. She first was in Norfolk, Virginia, and then in Kaneohe Hawaii.

My dad enlisted in the Navy as an aviation cadet in 1936. He was a seaplane pilot, first flying PBY's and then PBM's. At the beginning of the war, he was in Corpus Christi, Texas training seaplane pilots. He then was Operations Officer, Executive Officer and finally temporary Commanding Officer with VP 207, a PBM squadron stationed in Ecuador. In January 1944, he took command of VP 18, a newly formed PBM squadron. I believe the squadron was 24 to 26 planes, each with a crew of about 10 men. After training, the squadron moved to Hawaii and then to combat operations in the Pacific. VP 18 operated as part of the invasion of Saipan from July 1944 through March 1945. My Dad flew 28 combat missions, both day and night. The planes under him in the squadron flew numerous combat missions. The squadron then moved to be part of the Okinawa operations. He left VP 18 in May 1945 to become commanding officer of HEDRON TWO, a 5,000 man maintenance facility in Kaneohe Hawaii. He was there when the Pacific war ended. Kaneohe is where my parents met. They were married there in December 1945.

A Princeton subnote. During the Korean war my dad was Operations Officer on the USS Princeton, an Essex class carrier operating off the coast of Korea. In 1960 and

1961 he was the Captain of the Princeton, which then was a helicopter carrier with a large contingent of Marines onboard. While Captain of the Princeton, he delivered a flag from the ship to the Princeton Chapel. I believe the flag is still there. (I was in sixth grade then and had no idea that I would one day attend Princeton.)

My parents are buried in a joint grave in Arlington Cemetery. Rather than a spouse's headstone, my mother's headstone is, as it should be, a veteran's headstone showing the highlights of her service.

Peter Parke

Canadian here . . . thanks for sharing. . . . Happy to add on some history. . . . But, let me go back a little further first. My ancestor, "Mungo" Park, was part of the British colonial explorers who played a significant role in mapping and claiming parts of Africa during the 19th century. Key figures include Richard Burton, John Speke, David Livingstone, and Henry Morton Stanley, who explored various regions and sought to map the Nile's sources and the continent's interior. These explorations, driven by a mix of scientific curiosity, commercial interests, and imperial ambitions, paved the way for British colonial expansion and have left Africa and the middle east in the mess it is presently in. Case in point, did you know that the British promised the area of Israel and Palestine to three different peoples, the Arabs, the Jewish people, and the French?

My first adopted father lost a leg and the ability to have children in WW I as a medic at Passchendaele. Later back in Canada, when I was five, he died of a massive heart attack. My biological grandfather was a colonel in the Canadian army in WW II. My second adopted father enlisted in 1940 for WW II but was accidentally hit in the head with a bullet and knocked unconscious at the practice firing range in Toronto, Ontario. Not able to go overseas, he was put in charge of that training firing range for the whole of the war.

Bruce Sokler

My father was not involved in D-Day, but instead served as a Lieutenant in the Army Air Corp in the Pacific Theatre with the 42nd Bomb Group. His group was part of McArthur's "island hopping" strategy through the South Pacific on the way back to the Philippines.

My father was a base officer. The Marines would capture the island, the Seabees would come in and throw up a base and a runway, and then the Army Air Corp would operate its bombing missions from that base.

My father was badly wounded by a Japanese bombing raid. Lucky for him (and I guess me), the medical officer, on arriving on the island, had scouted out the fastest route to a MASH station. My father and his stretcher were strapped on the hood of a jeep, rushed to the MASH station where he was stabilized. He was eventually evacuated to Australia. He was operated on several times, and about half his small intestine was removed.

He then returned to his unit (on a different island) with whom he stayed until the end of the war. He was finally discharged and returned to the States in May 1946. (It took a while to bring everyone back.)

My Dad married my mother in March 1947. Like many of us, I am a 1949 baby. My Dad died in 1994; my mother passed away in 2020.

My parents are interred together in the columbarium at Arlington National Cemetery.

Thomas Stubbs

My father AJ Stubbs served on the USS Tripoli, the first ship of that name, an “escort carrier” in WWII, for 2-3 years until the end of the war in Europe. He was a lieutenant in the ship’s radio unit. They patrolled for submarines in the Atlantic while he was stationed on the ship. He was not in combat. I am lucky and grateful that he made it home. I’ve had his Naval uniform jacket and heavy wool overcoat in my closet since he died in 2003.

Mark Moorstein

My father enlisted after he finished his residency in surgery in Boston in 1944. As a lieutenant in the Army medical corps, he was sent to Europe just in time to become part of the Battle of the Bulge in a forward medical unit. He told me that both German and American doctors worked together when one side captured the other. Doctors struggled with combat shell-shock — and apparently resorted to Benadryl to

sedate serious cases. One of the German doctors working with my father explained that those German doctors trained in psychiatry often traveled with the trauma medical units and gave my father lessons in handling the cases. My dad organized a lecture for the other American doctors and shortly afterwards was ordered back to the US to take training at Columbia. He became one of the first Army psychiatrists, and while he treated American soldiers (and some German) in Texas, he was told to prepare for the invasion of Japan.

He mustered out in 1946, returned to teach psychiatry at the University of Michigan. When I was born, we moved to Akron, Ohio, where he started the first psychiatric sections in the local hospitals. He lived to 97 and died 10 years ago.

Lamar “Lefty” Oxford

My Dad Chester was a Twin, and where the Oxfords were from in deep Georgia ,it was no surprise his Twin was named . . . Lester. That’s right, Chester and Lester. Friends called them “Chec and Lec.” No wonder I didn’t complain when my Mom named me Lamar.

My Dad was one of six Oxford Brothers who went off to War. Miraculously they all made it home, despite one suffering through Pearl Harbor, then spending the next three years dodging Japanese Destroyers while on a small US Navy Submarine in the South Pacific. That was my Dad. All his brothers were in the US Army and fought the Nazis in Europe.

But before I tell you more about my Dad at Pearl Harbor and on the Sub, first a funny story from the Oxford Family book of stories. After graduation from tiny Pike County High School in 1938, Chester and Lester fulfilled a lifelong dream. They got out from behind the plow mule’s behind on the Family farm and headed for the “big city” of Atlanta. There they went to work at their Uncle’s Diner, waiting to sign up with the US Navy to “ride the waves and see the World.”

But one day a beautiful young woman walked into the Diner. Lester saw her first, so he rushed over to meet her. She later said she was put off by him and wasn’t attracted to him at all. But the next day she came back, my Dad Chester came over to take her order, and forever after she claimed it was “Love at first sight.” This despite the fact

that Chester and Lester were virtually identical Twins, presumably showing the importance of personality—even at first sight.

Yes, that was my Mom Nell, and they were inseparable from then on. Except that he and Lester had already signed on with the Navy. All they had to do was pass the Physical, and they had both been Star Athletes in High School. Therein lies the other funny story. My Dad first explains their Navy situation to Nell, and she promises to “wait for him.” So the Twins show up for their Physical Exams—having been told they would “ship out” as soon as they passed. But Fate had other ideas. My Dad passed the Physical easily, but Lester was told he flunked it. He stormed out to the crowded Lobby and loudly yelled to my Dad, “F*ck the Navy!” But Dad was very persuasive and went right back in to speak to the Navy Chief in charge. He told the Chief they were Twins, that Lester was a good Athlete, and that there must be some mistake. The Chief agreed to give Lester another chance, so my Dad happily went out to the Lobby to bring Lester back in. But as Family lore recalled that moment innumerable times, Lester again said “F#ck the Navy!”—and this time added, “I’m going to join the Army and jump out of Airplanes!”

Which he did, becoming a Screaming Eagle with the 101st Airborne Division and jumping behind Enemy lines three times—in North Africa, Italy and in Normandy on D-Day. But on each jump he broke his right ankle, and he was ordered home. He refused the first two Orders, however, and chose to stay with his Comrades while he healed—fighting alongside. He finally relented after the D-Day Jump and came home after being rescued. But the sad requiem for our Family was the appearance of a Cancerous tumor in Uncle Lester’s same right ankle five years after the War ended, followed by amputation of his foot, then five years later his leg, then finally the Cancer finally taking him—at the tender age of 39 in 1959. I’ve never before or since heard the sound of a Human howling like my Dad did that night, when he was told that his beloved Twin brother Lester had passed away

But my Dad Chester was lucky to be alive himself. After Navy Enlisted Men’s basic training, his intelligence got him picked to be a Medic/Pharmacist’s Mate in the Navy Medical Corps. So he was stationed at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. He was already writing letters steadily to my future Mom, saying that he would leave the Navy in 1942 after 4 years in. He would come home to her and his beloved Georgia, to marry her and seek their fortune together with a family.

But the Japanese had other ideas. Like all young Corpsmen, on December 7, 1941 my Dad was living in the 2d floor barracks of the US Naval Hospital—just yards away from the Harbor Waters and a short distance across the Channel from Battleship Row. He didn't have the Duty that Sunday morning, so he was lying awake in bed wearing his Navy "skivvies"—a white tee shirt and boxers. He was planning for his Sunday off.

Suddenly he heard loud 'Pop, pop, pop' sounds, but he thought little of it. The US Navy and Marine Pilots often did flying drills, using blank ammo. But then he heard the horrible sound of young men screaming in the Courtyard below his window. He looked out in time to see the faces of Japanese Torpedo Bomber Pilots, who had just bombed our Navy Battleships to smithereens and were now strafing the Sailors and Officers in the Navy Hospital Courtyard with machine-gun fire. My Dad saw men he knew, already lying dead below him.

So he jumped out of bed and ran down to the Hospital Emergency Area to help. He didn't even take the time to put his pants and shirt on. He helped carry wounded men in from the Courtyard, then worked for 24 hours straight trying to help Navy Doctors and Nurses save lives. They spent most of their time trying to save burned-up Navy Sailors and Officers who had jumped off their sinking and burning Battleships into Harbor Waters on fire themselves from burning fuel and oil. He never took the time to put his uniform on.

That's what he did for the next three months, trying to help burn victims survive their wounds, while the US Navy licked its own serious wounds and prepared for All-Out War in the Pacific with the Japanese. Finally, in Feb. 1942 he was shipped out on a US Navy Submarine—tiny by today's standards—to head West into the Enemy's shipping channels and try to wreak havoc.

Many, many of those Subs and their Crews never made it back to Pearl, and my Dad lost many friends that way. Japanese dominance and fighting in the Pacific lasted well after the Battle of Midway had given us our first hope. And because they weren't nearly enough Navy Doctors to man every Ship, Boat, and Submarine in the Navy, Corpsmen/Medics like my Dad Chester—Enlisted men all—were on their own without a Doctor when injuries, sickness, and any health problems arose on their watch.

Like a few other Medics, my Dad with the aid of the Sub Commander had to perform an emergency Appendectomy on a fellow Sailor. The young man survived, and that success was one of the primary reasons my Dad reached the pinnacle for any Navy Corpsman during the War. He received a Promotion to Chief Petty Officer, the Navy equivalent to Army Sergeant, in 1944 at the tender age of 24. It was understandably one of the proudest moments of his Life.

After his Sub fought off Japanese Destroyers and their horrifying Depth Charges for three years, doing their own damage to the Enemy Fleet, he was allowed two weeks' Leave. His purpose: to fly to San Francisco, take a Cross-Country Train to Georgia, and finally marry his beloved Nellie. After a brief Honeymoon, he was then transferred to Treasure Island Naval Station in San Francisco Bay.

There he was assigned to a Troop Ship, preparing to take Marines and Army Soldiers across the Pacific and into dangerous Japanese homeland Waters—still full of Kamikaze suicide fighters. The soldiers were to be off-loaded for the final Invasion of Japan. It was thus no surprise to me at all that my Dad and all his Navy Buddies loved Harry Truman 'til the day they died, for ordering the dropping of the Atomic Bombs on Japan. My Dad always said that “the Japs (sic) would have fought us 'til the last woman and child.”

So my Dad Chester and all his brothers made it home to Georgia safe and sound after the War, though they finally lost his twin Lester to War-related injuries. The other Brothers all got out of the Army and lived their long lives in Georgia. But my Dad loved being a Chief in the Navy Medical Corps, in charge of running the show and supervising all the other Corpsmen while the Navy Doctors and Dentists came and went.

So after all he had experienced at Pearl Harbor and in the South Pacific—at around the same tender age we were while at Princeton and Law/Grad Schools—he made the Navy a Career and stayed in 30 years. And never regretted a moment. His only regret? When his son Lamar turned down an Appointment to the US Naval Academy—and becoming an Officer and a Gentleman—to follow his Hero Bill Bradley to Princeton. He didn't speak to me much that Summer of '67, but once he saw our Campus for the first time, he too fell in love with it.

Scott Rogers

My father was Scott Rogers, Dartmouth '40, and I think every single friend he had enlisted one way or another in the military effort in WW II. He never told me any stories about his military experience until my mother and father drove me from Cleveland to Princeton in the fall of 1967. I'm sure many other fathers were similarly silent, but when he described his experience in Patton's 10th Armored Division during the Battle of the Bulge, I was never really the same. Countless documentaries and movies simply confirmed the abject horror he lived through and put in the far reaches of his mind. He did speak a tiny amount later in life about the war, but not much.

What he did talk about was his role after the war, when he ran the GI recreation program for all of Europe, helped build the ski facilities in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the Bavarian Alps, and entertained countless dignitaries as kind of "the mayor," a role he was eminently suited for.

He went on to run three Fortune 500 companies and was as absorbed in life as anyone I ever met, but I can only marvel at how he compartmentalized his time with the tanks and close combat in the war.

John Baker

My father, COL (retired) John Baker, graduated from West Point in 1942 and spent the next 28 years on active duty in the United States Army. Throughout his long and dedicated career, he demonstrated a strong commitment to his duties and the Soldiers he led. His peacetime assignments took him to various posts across the United States, in Heidelberg and Munich, Germany, and the Canal Zone. In World War II he served with Army Coast Artillery forces defending the port of San Diego and Air Defense forces defending the tank plants in Detroit. Towards the end of World War II, he was reassigned to West Point, where he taught civil engineering. Next came Yale Law School and a follow-on tour to the Pentagon as a Judge Advocate. Assignment as the Third Infantry Division Staff Judge Advocate in Korea during the war there followed – a busy and challenging time.

It's a family tradition. My grandfather, BG (retired) Ted Gillette, was Chief Signal Officer, 1st Allied Airborne Army and received the OBE (Order of the British Empire)

for ensuring secure communications from Potsdam to the British sector after VE day. I followed in my grandfather's and father's footsteps (Armor, JAGC – Operation Just Cause, Panama), as did my brother, COL (retired) Matt Baker, a Marine (Infantry – Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom). Both of my sons, CPT Ted Baker and COL Andy Baker, served in the latter conflict (Field Artillery and Corps of Engineers). Andy is still serving and my niece, Skye Baker, is finishing her senior year at the Naval Academy.

John B. (Jay) Sollis

My dad was a Marine officer. He served during World War II and was recalled (from law school) for the Korean War. I admired him greatly. He was a superb role model. I was proud of his wartime service.



Marine officers, many of them, were matinee idols back in the day. I would have needed a waiver had that been a prerequisite.

I grew up thinking that we owe our country something in return for the blessings we receive as Americans. JFK's call to serve resonated with me. That was not an uncommon sentiment among those of us growing up in the 1950's and '60's. Many of us believed it was our duty to follow in our parents' World War II and grandparents' World War I footsteps.

I always expected that I would serve a couple of years in the Marine Corps before getting on with life. In 1971 my draft lottery number, 48, more than accommodated the fulfillment of that expectation. I was one of three members of our class who

became Marines—Phil Hamilton and Chris Wilson had been Marine option NROTC midshipmen. I earned my commission the old-fashioned way at Officer Candidates School.



My parents met at Northwestern University in 1943. They married in '44 just before my father shipped out for the Pacific. He was gone for two years. While he was off saving the world, my mom, a writer and actress, was gainfully employed writing soap opera radio scripts back in Chicago. I'm sure it never occurred to them in those days that they would one day send their two sons to Princeton, Todd Bryant Sollis, '68 and John Bryant Sollis, '71.

My dad was dismissive of the Tom Brokaw formulation of America's Greatest Generation. He always insisted that the generation of our founding fathers was, and remains, unsurpassed in terms of genius and greatness.

The Tet Offensive of 1968 radically changed the casual assumptions of a good many Americans about the virtues of military service. My brother was in law school at Columbia when he received his induction notice. He told me he had no intention of serving in Vietnam but eventually wrangled his way into the New York Army National Guard, a better gig than going to jail.



My brother laying down a funky beat as he boogalooed down 5th Avenue.

My dad never spoke about his combat experience as a Marine. But he spoke expansively and fondly of the people, the remarkable cast of characters, with whom he served. I understand why. As someone who witnessed the brutality of war as a United Nations Military Observer in Lebanon (1981-82) —



We were among those awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988 — and then a decade later as the commanding officer of a battalion of Marines and sailors in combat in Kuwait, I do understand why.



What we remember most, and what we remember best, just as in my father's day, are the people with whom we were privileged to serve.

**In memory of a brave young American.
Semper Fidelis, Marine.**



Tom McGuire

My father, Robert (Bob) McGuire, graduated from Easton (Pa.) high school in 1940 and enlisted in the Navy in 1942, serving in the Pacific as a gunner on the *Pennsylvania*, a WW I-era battleship. The *Pennsylvania* was in dry dock in Honolulu on December 7, 1941 and sustained only minor damage in the Japanese attack.

My father spoke little about his experience. I do know he enlisted to be a Navy flyer but left before completing flight school and transferred to the battleship. He did describe episodes near the end of the war in which the antiaircraft guns were pointed straight up to ward off kamikaze attacks.

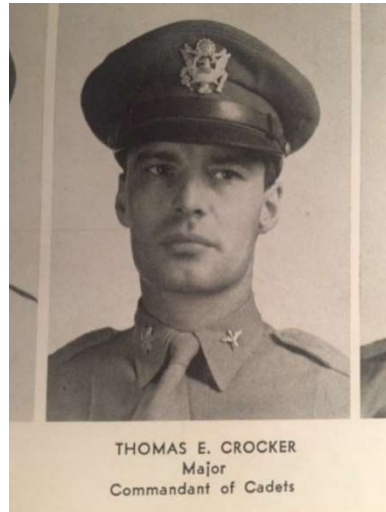
The Navy had a program, I believe called the V-12 Navy College Training Program, in which an aptitude exam was administered to sailors. My father took the test at the end of the war, and the Navy sponsored him to go to Princeton—a gift, coming from a background where he had no realistic prospects of going to college. He was class of 1949, lived in Edwards Hall, and (according to family legend) advertised a “free beer” party during football weekends to attract undergraduates with their dates. He and his roommate put a slot machine in the room that was set to never pay out, financing the beer and yielding a profit. He left Princeton his sophomore year to go to work to help support his mother who had been widowed in 1932 with four young children. He never returned to college. I never visited Princeton before attending. Because of my father’s connection, I had decided early on as a kid that PU was where I wanted to go.

Clifford A. Cutchins IV

My father was VA Tech Class of ’44 when he was called into service. He was a Captain in the US Army and served in the Pacific. He graduated after the war and became a banker. Ultimately he became CEO of Sovran Bank, the largest bank in Virginia. Sovran merged with C&S in Atlanta, then with Nationsbank, now Bank of America.

Tom Crocker (Thomas Edward Crocker, Jr.)

My father, Thomas Edward Crocker, served in the US Army Air Corps during WW II.



He was a reserve officer and was mobilized with the rank of Captain in 1940, long before Pearl Harbor. I guess you could say that, compared to some, he had a “good war,” although I know there is no such thing. He served stateside, mostly at Maxwell Field near Montgomery, Alabama, helping to train over 100,000 US, British and other allied pilots, navigators and bombardiers for the eventual massive aerial war over Europe by the US “Mighty Eighth” Air Force and others. After reading the moving accounts from many of our classmates, I wonder if he trained some of their fathers who were the front line heroes. At the end of the war, he was offered conversion to regular Army and the prospects of promotion, but he left active service at age 36 with the rank of Lt. Colonel. He remained in the reserves, but he was never mobilized again because of his age, although I recall that there was some concern that he might be during the Korean War. He spent the remainder of his career as a civil engineer and was involved in the design and construction of sensitive US Government facilities during the Cold War.

His younger brother, my uncle, was an enlisted man in Patton’s Third Army and was engaged in vicious fighting in taking the Rhine River bridges for which he was decorated.

My father never talked about the war. He viewed it as his duty and nothing more. If he had medals, he never kept or wore them. I remember his dismissing them as being

given “for just showing up.” I do, however, have his saber which he was awarded on his commissioning as a Second Lieutenant in 1931.

He and my mother (they were married before the war started) had many close friends from his wartime service. Including a few Princeton grads. I remember meeting and talking with them as they all inevitably passed through Washington in the 1950s. They were an eclectic but convivial bunch, some more unforgiving about the war than others, but all stellar representatives of “the Greatest Generation” to me.

My father and I had frequent and deep conversations about the Vietnam War when I was at Princeton (he shared my skepticism), and he helped steer me into some sensible yet honorable options. He died eight days before I graduated from Princeton.

Four-and-a-half years after graduating I entered the service of my country, not in the military but in another capacity. Among other things, I swore an oath of office which contained, as did my father’s, the vow to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.”

John Miller

My father, Ray E. Miller, and his brother reported for their armed services physicals in Indianapolis right after the attack on Pearl Harbor. My uncle passed and was sent to the navy in the Pacific theater. My dad did not pass his because of a respiratory issue. There was concern that gas warfare could be in play as it was in the great war. He had graduated from Butler University with a degree in chemistry in 1940, so he was assigned to war material production at the US Rubber plant in Detroit. For the duration he was a foreman in manufacturing tires for army trucks. It was essential service, but he did not talk a lot about working double shifts turning out tires for four years.

Paul Flowerman

My father, Marvin S. Flowerman, was born in 1924, the son of Joe and Bessie, who had immigrated in the 1890’s from the “Pale of Poland.” Yiddish was the language spoken in his home. After graduating Brooklyn College in three years, Marvin enlisted and was sent to Stanford to learn Indonesian and prepare to be dropped

behind enemy lines. However, the huge personnel demands of the Battle of the Bulge pre-empted those plans, and he shipped out to France in January 1945, shortly after marrying his longtime sweetheart Libby, then aged 18.

As a platoon sergeant, Marvin experienced intense combat which he never chose to describe. His fluency in German and moderate skill in French was noticed, and he became an interpreter accompanying officers on the hard march eastward toward Austria. He witnessed recently liberated concentration camps, another memory he was never interested in describing. He witnessed war's brutality, with atrocities committed by all sides during the Bulge.

At war's end, he joined his comrades for wild celebrations in Paris and then accepted an assignment to run the military government of a small German city in the western part of the country. He understood the civilian population to have been broadly complicit with the Nazi regime, but he told me that he did his best to efficiently support postwar recovery and not let his resentment hinder his work.

I am told that upon his return he discarded his uniform. I do have some of his medals (i.e. sharpshoot) and recall his big and comforting khaki army handkerchief, which was my eye covering when I had a terrible case of chickenpox at age five.

Marvin had a distinguished business career, was an accomplished potter, and served in elected and appointed country government positions. He was acting police commissioner of Far Hills, NJ, when he passed away on August 12, 2007.

Charles C. Barr

When my father, John W Barr '44, was a freshman at Princeton University in 1940, he wanted to go to Europe and assassinate Hitler. He went to Dean Lippincott and told him that he was a pretty good rifle shot, and that he thought that if he could go to Europe and kill Hitler that he could end this thing. The Dean praised his patriotism, but advised him to stay in school, stay with the ROTC, finish his college education, and then go to Europe and kill Hitler.

In 1944 my father went to Italy with the 10th Mountain Division as a second Lieutenant. He went to Europe on a Liberty ship, and the first night they had the lifeboat drill. He said it took 20 minutes for his platoon to get to the top deck once

the alarm sounded. For this reason, he volunteered for night watch as he figured the German submarines would attack at night.

The 10th Mountain Division worked its way up the Italian peninsula toward the Alps in 1944, and many of the officers were excellent skiers. My father did not know how to ski and so he was assigned to an artillery unit as a forward observer. He would get in a small plane with a pilot and fly over the German positions. The artillery unit would fire off shells and my father would look out the window, and radio back to the artillery unit “You’re 200 yards to the South and 300 yards to the West”. He said they would crank the guns around again and fire them off again and that he would radio back “You’re now 50 yards to the north and 100 yards to the east.” I asked my dad if he ever killed any Germans, and he said he didn’t know. He said he threw some hand grenades out the window of the plane over the German positions, but he never knew if he hit anybody or not.

After victory in Europe, my father was put on another liberty ship and was headed for the Panama Canal to invade Japan when they dropped the atomic bomb. He said they turned right and went to New York. Don’t ever say that the atomic bomb was a bad thing.

Rick Ostrow

My dad, Gerald S. Ostrow, flew many missions over Germany in his B-24 in WW II. He was based in England, where he and his dormmates had to choose either heat or hot water—but not both—each month. My dad was a firm “hot water” voter, believing that with a hot shower, you could always dress to beat the cold, but you could never properly recover from an ice-cold shower. Newbies—and there were plenty, as the pilot death rate was so high—always needed to be strenuously convinced, as they imagined heat to be essential.

I was struck by how strong the democratic ethos was—that even at this level, things were determined by a vote. Two staunch democratic allies, the U.S. and England, convinced that even at this basic level, voting was the best way to decide—and one man-one vote at that.

The men would be awakened early each morning to be briefed on that day’s mission, never before that. Secrecy and democracy, both operating at once.

John Shea

On the morning of December 7, 1941, my father, a 23-year-old ensign, was waiting to drive a group of officers to 8:00 am Mass at the Kaneohe Naval Air Station, just north and east of Pearl Harbor, when he saw a convoy of aircraft approaching the island. As the planes drew closer, he realized that their V formation was not standard for U.S. aircraft. When they were nearly overhead, he saw a bright red circle emblazoned on the fuselage – the insignia for Japanese Zeros. The planes strafed the Air Station with machine gun fire, hitting the U.S. planes on the tarmac, Kaneohe's hangars, and the nearby Bachelor Officers Quarters where he lived. After attacking Kaneohe, the Zeros headed for Pearl Harbor where nearly the entire U.S. Pacific fleet was anchored.

Dad was wearing his dress whites for Mass when the planes attacked. He ran to his quarters, awakened the slumbering junior officers, and changed into khakis. His mattress had been strafed by Japanese bullets, and another car that had left for church just before he was set to leave had been hit by Japanese aircraft fire. My father later commented that he learned it was a good idea to go to Mass, but not so bad to be late.

Dad and his fellow naval airmen attempted to return fire on the attackers, but their attempts were ineffective. Dad had a colleague bend over to provide support for a machine gun, but the gun's recoil sent his shots astray. Japanese bombs hit the hangar he was trying to defend and shrapnel hit him in his shoulder, inflicting a superficial wound. By mid-morning, the attack ended, with devastating consequences.

Subsequently, after a brief training stint in pre-Castro Cuba, Dad was transferred to San Diego, was promoted to Commander, and took command of a subchaser, a class of small destroyer escorts. In that capacity he directed the landings at both Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Both of those landings went well; the mayhem mainly started after troops got on the beaches.

Dad was in a "front row seat" as he watched the Marine and Seabees go ashore and face the slaughter unleashed on them at Iwo Jima. He knew that a college friend was among the Marines who landed, and he assumed that his friend had perished on the beaches. But he later ran into his friend, alive and well.

Immediately after the battle for Iwo Jima, the U.S. fleet reassembled southeast of Okinawa, the last stop on the planned island-hopping campaign. Again, Dad coordinated the amphibious landings. As before, the landing itself was uncontested, but the U.S. troops made only slow and bloody advances thereafter. The U.S. ships remained nearby and were exposed to Kamikaze attacks that came in waves, at times including as many as 2,000 planes. One night a ship near Dad's was hit by a Kamikaze plane and caught fire. Dad moved his ship alongside the stricken vessel to save the sailors he could. In doing so he exposed his ship as well, but he maneuvered the ship into the billowing smoke for better cover. A Kamikaze bore down on him, and his gunners fired at it. Dad believed that they shot down the Kamikaze, but in the melee he could not be sure. Dad received a Bronze Star for valor because of his efforts during the battle.

After the battle at Okinawa, the costliest battle of the War, the U.S. planned an invasion of the Japanese mainland that would end the War once and for all. Dad's ship was among the destroyer escorts assigned the role, now familiar to him, of coordinating the landing forces for the first phase of the operation. But then, news came that the U.S. had bombed Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9. Japan surrendered on August 15 – V-J Day.

Dad had served with distinction from the bitter beginning to the jubilant conclusion – from Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, through V-J Day on August 15, 1945. At the War's conclusion he was 26 years old and had a life of 50 more years to live, a business career to pursue, and a family to support and raise. But he had already experienced more than most would in several lifetimes.

E.S. (Jim) Browning and Andrew H. (Drew) Browning

Our father, Earl S. Browning Jr., had a specialized job during World War II, one that eventually won him a few moments of fame. He was an Army counterintelligence officer who prevented sabotage, neutralized security threats, and worked with local Resistance leaders to track down Nazi agents. He took part in the liberation of Normandy, Paris and Belgium and headed Army counterintelligence on Paris's Left Bank. He won a Bronze Star for blocking the infiltration of German spies wearing American uniforms during the Battle of the Bulge. He joined the 7th Army's campaign across southern Germany and was at the Dachau concentration camp near

Munich shortly after its liberation. But the events that would produce his 15 minutes of fame happened in the war's aftermath.

During the occupation of Germany after the war, Dad oversaw the dozens of Army counterintelligence agents in the U.S.-occupied zone. In 1947 he was horrified to discover that some of his agents had hired war criminal Klaus Barbie to help run a network of anti-Communist spies across Germany and Eastern Europe. Barbie, later known as the Butcher of Lyon, had been a bloodthirsty Gestapo and SS officer in France, responsible for the torture and murder of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of French civilians. Our father had seen what people like Barbie did during the war. Dad ordered Barbie arrested — only to be overruled by his Army superiors, who put Barbie back to work. Unwilling to accept that, Dad began an internal battle to end Barbie's influence.

This was a time when, in the name of reconciliation and also for simple expediency, Germany and its Western occupiers were beginning to return former Nazis to positions of power, not only in espionage but also, gradually, in government, education and business. Dad was bucking that trend. He repeatedly questioned the value of Barbie's work and bit by bit he chipped away at Barbie's spy network. He took every opportunity to remind superiors that hiring a war criminal was a decision that would end badly. "I felt nothing but disgust and contempt for the SS and what they had done," Dad recalled in a family conversation much later. In Paris, he had been inside a building near the Arc de Triomphe where the Gestapo and SS conducted interrogations. "The SS had tortured prisoners in the basement of that building. I saw evidence of the things they had done and I thought we should have nothing to do with any of them," he said.

By the time Dad was transferred back to the U.S., in 1949, he had managed to dismantle Barbie's entire spy network. Barbie had lost all his influence and was hiding from the French in a safe house provided by the U.S. Army. Dad was pressing his superiors to take the final step and send Barbie to France for trial. But once Dad was no longer there, his superiors dropped that idea and looked for ways to cover up the whole affair. In 1951 they smuggled Barbie to Bolivia.

Bolivia's military governments protected Barbie for three decades — until 1983, when the country's new civilian president expelled Barbie to France for trial. The truth about U.S. protection of Barbie finally came out and there was a global outcry. Dad

was one of the rare heroes in the sordid affair. He was widely interviewed by U.S. and British newspapers and television. When Dad died in 2013, The Washington Post, the London Independent, the London Daily Telegraph and other publications told his story again, in obituaries. The Daily Beast called him “The Moral Spy.”

Dad earned two Princeton master’s degrees in 1953, in politics and public affairs, and he became an avid Princeton supporter. What would have made his heart swell with pride was that, after his 2013 death, the Princeton Alumni Weekly selected him as one of 11 notable alumni who had died that year. PAW published a full-page profile, focused particularly on the Barbie affair. Dad so loved Princeton that it was a shame he couldn’t have seen it. Here’s the link: <https://paw.princeton.edu/article/lives-earl-staten-browning-jr-53>

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“Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices.”

Harry S Truman