THE LIMA NEWS

About this section

The Lima News feels strongly that the service of veterans living in this area should be recognized.
Stories from veterans, told in their own words, are published here along with the photos that they shared.
For this year’s publication, The Lima News asked veterans to share their memories of the military gear they were issued in the service.
Visit limaohio.com for details.

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Editor’s note: George Stewart is 96 years old. He landed in Scotland to serve in England, beaches of Normandy, France and Germany.

It is hard to believe that it was 50 years ago that I landed on the beaches of Normandy because it is still so fresh in my mind. I did my basic training at Camp Crowder, Missouri, and served in Engineers and Signal Corps Office Training until it was discontinued. I served in the Army just a little less than three years.

I took the Queen Mary troop ship landing in Scotland then on to England for more training. We left England via a landing craft and waded ashore to the beaches of Normandy. I am sure you have seen many pictures and read many stories about what happened at the beaches of Normandy and it is too hard to put into words what it was like being there.

From there we went across France through Germany until they surrendered. Then we went to South France for shipment to the South Pacific war zone and then as we were heading for the Panama Canal came of the Japanese surrendering and we were instead ordered to Boston Harbor.

We were then sent to an Army camp. I was furloughed home for two months when my points added up enough to be discharged.

The real heroes of World War II were those who lost their lives so we could have the freedom we have today.

This is the type of landing craft that George Stewart and many others used on the beaches of Normandy.
Better fatigues were an investment

From Bill Moore, of Lima


I served with the 7th Communications Squadron in Taegu, Korea, assigned to the 5th Communications Group, 5th Air Force. The following is my story.

My job in the Air Force was that of a teletype operator. I had completed Air Force specialty school at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, in Cheyenne, Wyoming. I worked in the HQ of the 5th Air Force (Rear) in Taegu, South Korea. Taegu, in September 1952, was 100 miles or more from the “front.”

We were issued M1 Carbines, which was a common weapon used in the Korean War. However, the only time I can remember ever carrying it was for night guard duty at the 7th Communications Squadron compound. Guard duty was “passed around” so every now and then you got called on.

When I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in April 1952 at age 19, the Air Force was only about five years old. It was organized in 1947. Many of the folks enlisting then were issued the old Army Air Force olive drab uniforms. Somehow or other, we got lucky and were issued the new Air Force blue uniform. I thought they were really sharp looking. They even included the blue “Ike jacket,” which was a short waist-cut jacket.

As for our work uniforms (fatigues) we were not so lucky as we were issued the old dumpy looking one piece uniforms. They were baggy looking, even with the 3-inch cloth belt around the waist. Those were government issued. We quickly found that we could invest, with our own money, in two-piece fatigues, which most of us very happily invested in. They looked much more presentable.

The winter of 1952-’53 was very cold in Korea, with lots of snow. My mother had sent me a pair of hand warmers (chemical reaction) which worked very well. I quickly found that they not only provided your hands with warmth, but they were very thin and could be easily slipped down into the sides of your boots and keep the feet warm. Problem solved. We were also issued headgear that had big ear flaps on them. They were sheepskin lined and tied under one’s chin. Very warm, too.

The function of our unit in Korea was mainly that of a HQ function, sending and receiving all sorts of military information, yet loosely tied to operations at K-2 Airbase, which was a few miles outside of Taegu. We handled no classified information, as that was handled by our crypto section, which I was not a part of. I still have a few mementos that I have kept from that time in my life.

Thank you to The Lima News for what you have done for veterans over the many years that you have printed this edition.
Life on and off San Juan Hill

From Roger Schroeder, of Columbus Grove

I was drafted in August 1969 into the Army for two years. I spent about three months in Erlanger, Germany and about 11 months in Duc Pho, South Vietnam. My unit in Vietnam was Americal, 11th Brigade, 4/21 Infantry, Delta Company. I am 69 years old.

My name is Roger Schroeder. I was born a baby boomer in 1950 on tax day and am now 69 years old. I spent my childhood on a small farm in Columbus Grove. I graduated high school and spent a year at a trade school in Tennessee. I was drafted into the Army in 1969.

The Army was very new to me and intimidating. I was never asked to do something. I was told. There was never any kind of thanks for my efforts. The first few days we all had our heads shaved, gave up all our clothes and received uniforms. We were also issued dog tags with information such as name, religion and blood type. We also did lots of testing. The wages would not end up being very good. I earned about $3,000 in my two years.

We received about eight weeks of training in the U.S. and several of us including myself were sent to Germany. The stay in Germany was short lived and I was then transferred to Vietnam three months later.

Vietnam was tropical and appeared very peaceful from the airport landing strip. But from looking around more closely, things were going to be much different. After some in-country travel, I ended up at my final station in Duc Pho something south of Da Nang. There was one paved two-lane road running through Duc Pho.

We were issued boots made mostly of canvas with drain holes along the sides. It was said that there were steel plates in the soles. I think our uniforms were sized small, medium and large with lots of drawstrings for adjustments. We wore no underwear but always wore socks.

I was assigned to a light infantry unit on San Juan Hill. The time spent there was great, hot food, alcohol, clean clothes, music, bunkers with mattresses and some security. San Juan Hill was very tall. The time spent off the hill was not as good.

When we were off the hill, the typical rifleman carried about 40 pounds of gear mostly in a backpack. The rest of it was carried in the oversized pockets of our uniforms. We would be resupplied by helicopter about every three days when possible.

The 40 pounds that we carried in our backpacks included an M16 rifle with 200 rounds of ammunition, two hand grenades, one belt of machine gun ammo, two smoke grenades, a foldable shovel and a poncho liner when doubled as half of a small tent when snapped together. If you were really lucky you could get an air mattress that held air, but then again more weight.

When it came to food and water, you had to use some good judgment. You could pack as much food and water as you wanted, but you had to carry it. The food was all in metal cans. Typical meals were spaghetti, corned beef, beans and wiener, ham and eggs, etc. We carried about a half gallon of water along with tablets to treat additional water from the streams as needed. We usually burned and destroyed anything we couldn’t use.

In a platoon there were about 21 soldiers. There was a machine gunner, demolitions man, medic radio man and an officer. The load of ammunition was spread out equally. We usually traveled on trails, which was not recommended because of mines. Cutting new trails was very hard in the heat. We were all mostly around 18 to 20 years old. We were lazy but very careful.

Resupply day was always something we looked forward to. Helicopters were always brought in by using different colors of smoke for security. New canned rations, water, mail, ammo and assorted sizes of clean uniforms. Also an opportunity to rotate out sick and injured people. This all happened in seconds.

Even in Vietnam you received two weeks of vacation. Lots of soldiers never took theirs, but I couldn’t wait to get out. I spent a week in Australia. While in Australia I rented a hotel, clothes and shoes for a week. The people all spoke English, listened to American music and watched American movies. They ate the same food as we did, and they looked like us. It was almost like being back home. I think they even liked us.

When my vacation was over I went back to Vietnam for a couple more months, and in July 1971 our unit was withdrawn from Vietnam. It happened very quickly, never even a rumor, and there were always plenty of rumors. I had the choice of finishing my time in Vietnam or leaving the country about three days. I chose the latter. It was a simple check in the proper box, and I was gone.

Not all our platoon came home. Jack W. and Jimmy M. were killed in action. Another four were wounded seriously enough to be sent home, never to return. I think of our two lost friends all the time but especially on Veterans Day.

We spent about 13 hours on a Flying Tigers airliner to get back to Seattle and a steak dinner. In the next 24 hours we were given some medical tests, some advice and warning about what to expect back home and an airline ticket back to Ohio.

My Vietnam unit (Americal) was not overly disciplined and I only remember about two haircuts in my 11 months there. So when I got home I got my hair trimmed up a bit, had a great tan, blue jeans and T-shirt. I blended right back into “the world,” as we used to call it.

A year later, I met the love of my life, Sharon, and 46 years later we are still happily together, with three great children and four great grandchildren.
Close call in a bunker in Vietnam

From Bruce Fent, of Rockford

My name is Bruce Fent. I was born Nov. 11, 1946. I was from rural Mendon area. I grew up on a livestock farm with my father and mother and a brother and sister. They had started a Boy Scout troop and I wanted to join, but my dad told me it was for kids in town and you were needed on the farm.

I got my first shotgun on my 10th birthday and always enjoyed hunting small game as well as raccoon hunting with a hound dog.

I had rheumatic fever when I was in grade school and had to take the summer off to recover and had to take high doses of penicillin thereafter.

In high school I was always a little mischievous. I always had fun in school but never believed in studying too hard. I took a typing course and thought I would never use that skill.

After graduation in 1964, I went to Hobart Welding School for 16 weeks. I got one of my first welding jobs on cranes at Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton. After a year of welding, there was a clerk job come up for bid but you had to type 30 words per minute. I passed the typing test and stayed on that job until I was drafted into the Army.

When I turned 21, I got my notice to take my GI physical. I ever gave the Vietnam War much thought because of my rheumatic fever and didn’t think they would take me. Surprisingly, I passed and was supposed to take basic training in January at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. My dad and mom begged me to join the Coast Guard, Air Force, etc., but being bullheaded I told them I’d take my chances and thought I might end up in a clerical type job with my experience at BLH.

I was 6’1” and weighed 210 pounds and thought I was pretty tough. After Army boot camp and they got done belittling and degrading you, you felt like nothing. We were issued general clothing. I just loved the boxer shorts, ha!

Each soldier had a foot locker to store your clothing. You would have to roll your socks and everything had its place. The drill sergeants would come through and dump your foot locker and bunk bed. Mainly harassment. This all went on for about three weeks and they would throw the garbage cane on our fresh buffed floors and we would have to do it all over again. I did enough push ups and low crawls to last me a lifetime. When I did finish basic training I had lost 35 pounds.

The next schooling was Advanced Individual Training. When I got my orders for Fort Polk, Louisiana, my heart dropped. It was an infantry training camp. Now this was serious business, and I tried to learn all I could. Most of the instructors were former Vietnam veterans and they had stories to make you a believer. We didn’t get that much harassment in AIT.

After a short leave, I was headed to Vietnam. My parents drove me to Chicago to get on the plane. We hugged and kissed, and the last thing my mother told me was don’t bring home any Vietnam girl and no tattoos.

Fast forward after many reception stations and thousands of miles, I was in Vietnam June 1968.

I was assigned to the Americal 98th Division 1st of the 52nd Infantry Brigade Charlie Company in Chu Lai, Vietnam.

I would carry an M-16 rifle, two hand grenades, a Claymore mine, trip flares, two rounds of M-60 ammo for the machine gunner, and a
rucksack that held all your clothes, C-rations and etc.

My first two months were not that bad. We would get sniper fire and hitting a few boobytraps. A few were injured but no one got killed.

Our mission was to find the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army. We would burn grass villages that they used as a stronghold. One of our missions was to find and dig up two NVA nurses that a former U.S. Army company raped and killed.

We found them in a former base camp in the mountains. What we didn't know, the VC had boobytrapped the whole area. When we found them, their toes were sticking out of the ground. They gave us gas masks to use because it was really nasty. We had to put them in a body bag and put them on a helicopter to use as evidence against the other company. While waiting for them to send a helicopter to get us out, it was getting dusk and a GI got his foot blown off after hitting a boobytrap and we saw several more boobytraps so we really had to be careful getting to the helicopter.

Around the first of August they made me point man for our squad. I didn't like it but made the best of it.

On Aug. 23, 1968, the picture with me holding my M-79 grenade launcher. Our base camp was rocketed at 3 a.m. Our bunker at LZ Buff was one of two that were hit.

When I came to, I could hear screaming and see trip flares going off. I thought my legs were blown off. I was afraid to look down because I was numb. My pants were shredded and all bloody but I still had my legs. I grabbed my M-79 and fired directly at a VC that nearly got to our bunker. He was so close that it didn't arm itself and the VC ran out of the perimeter. Another VC had killed two of my buddies in the next bunker. The VC was in our perimeter to our back and by the time we saw him I tried to shoot a shotgun round from my M-79 and it didn't fire. A dud.

I had two other GIs on my bunker but their legs were wounded and they couldn't set up. The one GI had his M-16 beside him and the VC got close enough to throw a grenade but luckily hit inside the sandbag enclosure you see in the picture. If you didn't believe in miracles, you should after this. I directed the GI to shoot at the VC. He was laying down when he shot at him. He was shooting over the top of him and told him to shoot lower and finally hit him. He rolled with 5 feet of our bunker.

I was airlifted out on the third helicopter for the wounded. It was a Quonset type hospital with about 20 to 25 wounded on both sides of the aisle. I had surgery late that morning for shrapnel in my abdomen. I still have that shrapnel to this day in my chest. I received a Purple Heart for injuries.

I spent the rest of my time at Fort Hood, Texas, as an MP.

I did get a three month early out to help my dad get the crops harvested.

I spent 13 years at BLH Clark Equip. making cranes, two years at Super Coach making buses and 33 years at General Dynamics making tanks.

I have been married to my wonderful wife, Karla Nevergall Fent, for 48 years. We have four children and five grandchildren.

War comes at a cost. Freedom isn't free and thousands were injured and died. We were not welcomed home.
In memory of an uncle lost at sea

From James Arnold Frederick, of Lima

Editor’s note: James Arnold Frederick writes that he served in the U.S. Air Force from 1965-1969. He served at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, Vietnam, from 1966-1967. He shared this tribute to his uncle Carl Lloyd Arnold, who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II on the USS Indianapolis CA-35. He was lost at sea.

Carl Lloyd Arnold was born Nov. 5, 1925, on a farm on the east side of North Phillips Road, just north of the intersection of Sandusky road in Jackson Township, Allen County. His father was Walter A. Arnold (son of Cade Arnold), and his mother was Nellie D. Wingate Arnold.

Carl had one sister, Marcella Arnold Frederick Davis.

Carl started his schooling in 1931 in first grade at LaRue School on Phillips Road. His father, Walter Arnold, drove the school bus.

While in the first grade in 1931, the family moved to Lima. He continued his schooling at Washington School located at the southeast corner of South Pine and East Kibby streets.

After completing grade school he moved on to South Junior High School for eighths and ninth grades. He then went on to attend South High School and graduated in 1943.

While growing up, he liked most things boys do such as riding his bicycle, playing baseball and fishing.

After he graduated from high school he went on a fishing trip to Michigan with his friend and neighbor, Bob Snider, and his family.

After high school he worked at Westinghouse Electric Co. During this time he and a girl from Central High School, Jo Ann Parr, began dating and were very interested in each other.

Carl was called up for service in the U.S. Navy on Jan. 19, 1944. He went for his basic training at Great Lakes near Chicago.

He completed his basic training on April 8, 1944. He then traveled by passenger train to Norfolk, Virginia. There he boarded the USS Storm King and cruised through the Caribbean Sea and passed through the Panama Canal into the Pacific Ocean. He arrived at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in the first of May 1944.

He boarded the heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis on May 8, 1944. This would remain his permanent station.

They left Pearl Harbor on May 25, 1944, and arrived at Medero in the Marshall Islands on June 2, 1944. From there they went to Kwajalein Atoll. He commented in his diary that the islands they passed had been all shot up and the palm trees looked like poles stuck in the ground.

After leaving Kwajalein they arrived at the island of Saipan in the Marianas around June 9, 1944. Here they joined Task Force 58 under the command of Adm. Raymond A. Spruance. Spruance made the USS Indianapolis his flag ship.

Attacks on Saipan began on June 12. On June 14, the USS Indianapolis moved to within 4,000 yards of Saipan and started bombardment of the island. The Japanese were firing back and there was shrapnel flying all around. One of the men close by got hit in the back by shrapnel.

They sent four small boatloads of men in toward the beach to blow up some coral reefs so Marine landing craft could get through to the beach. Two men in one of the boats were killed and one injured badly by machine gun fire.

On June 15 the Marines landed on Saipan.

On June 15 Task Force 58 left the island of Saipan to confront a Japanese fleet that included two aircraft carriers in the Philippine Sea. On June 19 and 20, 1944, there was a pitched battle between the two opposing fleets. The battle was fought completely by aircraft and the two fleets never sighted each other. The Japanese lost over 300 aircraft in this battle and the United States lost over 90. Most of the American losses were from returning aircraft running out of fuel and ditching in the ocean. Most of these pilots were picked up by destroyers. This battle was called the Battle of the Philippine Sea and also the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.

After Saipan the USS Indianapolis took part in the shelling and invasion of the islands of Tinian and Guam.

After this there was shore leave at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for a couple of days and then back for the invasion of the island of Peleliu and onto the island of Palau.

Carl had a leave in Pearl Harbor in October and then came back to the United States and had a 15-day leave and came home to Lima on Oct. 23, 1944.

After returning to San Francisco and then onto San Diego it was back to the South Pacific. He went back to Guam and Saipan. These islands were now secure and Saipan could be used as a base to attack Japan with B-29 bombers.

On Feb. 17, 1945, the task force made a raid on the Japanese homeland. They came within 80 miles of Tokyo. Carrier planes were used to attack airfields and any other targets of opportunity.

The USS Indianapolis returned on Feb. 19 for the invasion of Iwo Jima. While participating in the bombardment, they observed the first use of suicide planes, kamikaze, used by the Japanese.

On March 8-11, 1945, they went to the island of Ulithi for a few days of recreation. After that they boarded the USS Indianapolis and met up with Task Force 58 and proceeded to Kyushu, a southern island of Japan. Here they made air raids on Japan between March 18 and 21. After this the task force proceeded to Okinawa.

While off the island of Okinawa, the U.S. aircraft carriers Enterprise and Franklin were hit and badly damaged by kamikaze.
While participating in the bombardment of Okinawa on March 31, 1945, a suicide plane dived on the USS Indianapolis. The ship’s 20 millimeter cannons hit the plane but not before it dropped a bomb that hit the fantail on the port side. The stern of the ship almost went underwater. Carl was working on one of the ship’s catapult planes when the attack began. He heard the firing and jumped out of his plane. The concussion knocked the adjoining catapult plane upside down and fell on the plane he had been working on. A good friend of Carl’s, Jim Farrell, was in the other plane and fell out and was injured badly. A friend named Shea was in the plane when it hit the quarterdeck and he fell out, dislocating his shoulder. There were nine men killed and a number injured in the attack. Funerals for the dead were held over the next three days.

While anchored off Okinawa, there were problems with Japanese swimming out to the ships at night and sneaking on board and attacking men with knives.

The ship’s crew gave the name of this harbor Death Valley after all the problems they had there.

On April 7, 1945, the ship, though crippled, left Okinawa and made it back to Guam. Here the crew took a shore leave and went to a Red Cross Canteen where they could eat some good food and listen to a good Marine swing band.

While at Guam, Carl was able to visit his friend Jim Farrell at the hospital on the island. He had a broken arm and some internal injuries.

On April 13, 1945, they received word that President Franklin Roosevelt had died.

The crippled USS Indianapolis limped back across the Pacific Ocean to Mare Island near San Francisco, California, for repairs.

During the month of May 1945, while the ship was in dry dock for repairs, Carl came home to Lima on leave. He visited with the family and while home he had his picture taken holding me. I was 3 months old.

When Carl went back to San Francisco to report for duty after the ship was repaired he left his white uniform, a flight suit and numerous other objects and mementos at home.
Our family consists of many veterans. We are proud of all of them. Our grandson is the latest. His predecessors are:
We had many more. Some of whom never made it home from the wars.
We feel we live in the best country in the world. We are made up of all the countries of the world.
We give thanks for all we have been given for being a part of this country.
Ralph J. Byrne Sr. was born to Arthur Byrne and Emma Brickhead on Oct. 15, 1932. The youngest of eight children, he was often referred to as “baby brother” well into his 70s by various siblings. Brothers Richard and Leroy Byrne, sisters Ruth, Jeannie, Betty, Cora and Geraldine. My father and Aunt Betty are still living.

My father looked up to his older brother Frank. He says that Frank first served a full term in the Army and then joined the Navy for a full 20 years.

At age 17 with an eighth grade education he enlisted in the Army during the Korean War. He was stationed in Regensburg, France, and Mannheim, Germany. They were assigned to guard the Czech border. He remembers the guys on the other side of the border as being very friendly and a lot like them. They even traded cigarettes with each other. There was never any real conflict. He remembers dating a German lady who was blind. And would often jokingly refer to our having another brother over there.

My father just turned 87. After showing him some pictures he stated that he had been in the Army for exactly two years, 11 months and seven days. He also said that he was 21 when he enlisted.

He enlisted in 1951 and was a Pvt RA Armor, tag number Ra15457277. Most significant duty assignment was 1814 Company G 6th Armored Cavalry Regiment. He has a DD 214 form among his many papers which states, “Honorable Discharge from the Armed Forces of the United States of America on the 11th day of September 1954. This certificate is awarded as testimonial of honest and faithful service.” His discharge from service was due to having his appendix removed while enlisted. He still receives a monthly check for it.

He talks of hanging out in the kitchen with his buddies which is evident in a couple of the pictures. The pictures also give used three different modes of dress, all very well maintained.

The form shows that he received two medals, an OCC and MEDGER and National Defense Service Medal.

I’m sure my father’s memories would have been more detailed if we only had the foresight to talk with him about it a little sooner. After experiencing some serious health issues last year he slipped away from us into full blown dementia, complete with paranoid delusions. Some visits are good and he almost seems himself again. But they don’t last. The tough guy that we all knew is no longer there.

An example of his strength that best stands out to me would be that through most of my childhood my father was a regular drinker and heavy smoker, whiskey and cigars on occasion also. When we became teenagers, as teens often do, we began to tell him he had a problem. It wasn’t long after he informed anyone who would listen that nothing had control over him he only smoked and drank because he enjoyed both. Within a short time, he had put his carton of cigarettes and a few extra packs on top of our television and announced to everyone that he could quit anytime he wanted.

He raised four boys and three girls, was married to my mother for 55 years until she died nine years ago from CLL.
Military service leads to lifelong public service

From DeBow Freed

DeBow Freed grew up and worked daily on a family farm, was president of his high school class, appointed to West Point, and graduated from West Point in three years as a cadet officer when he was 20 years old.

He chose Infantry as his branch of service and was overseas for seven and a half years in the 26th, 32nd and 35th Infantry Regiments in Japan, Germany, South Korea and Vietnam and was aide and assistant to the head of our military assistance program in the Middle East. He had been in all of the countries in the Middle East and North and Eastern Africa on various assignments by the time he was 28 years old.

He graduated from the Infantry School, the Army Command and Staff College and the Air War College. He completed the course work and research, entirely at night and on weekends, which enabled him to obtain a Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico.

He later served as president of Monmouth College in Illinois for five years, then 20 years as president at Ohio Northern University, and later seven years as president at the University of Findlay, for a total of 32 years as president of church-related universities.

He and his wife entertained 3,000 to 4,000 students, faculty and community guests in their home annually and regularly as part of their commitment and contribution to public service. They visited student resident halls with treats the night before the first exams as part of their outreach to students.

He presented diplomas to over 20,000 graduates in arts, sciences, engineering, pharmacy, business and law who had successfully completed their collegiate academic programs.

His wife was a lay minister in the United Methodist and Presbyterian churches and frequently spoke at those churches in areas where they lived.

Their approach was one of getting to know and help others as part of their lifelong commitment to public service. Military service was a key step in that regard.

After 23 years of active military duty, they had 37 years of academic leadership service in church related private higher education as part of their commitment to lifelong public service.

He and his wife considered themselves enormously fortunate to be able to devote their post military years to young people, which their military service had made possible. She passed away in 2016.
Standing watch in Korea

From Harvey McMillen, of Van Wert

I was drafted in the Army July 17, 1952. My basic training was in Fort Knox, Kentucky, trained to be a tank driver.

After training, I was on a ship to Korea.

I served in the U.S. tank company attached to the South Korea Army. We served on the 38th Parallel.

Our tanks were in slots at the top of hills. We slept in bunkers.

Now I am 90 years old and belong to the VFW and American Legion.

Harvey McMillen served in Korea from 1952 to 1954.

Harvey McMillen stands for a quick portrait in the field.

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The story behind the name

From Todd Meier, of Wapakoneta

When you enter Wapakoneta from the north on old 25 you pass a VFW building with a sign that reads Alvin W. Metzger Post 8445. Like me, you may have wondered who was Alvin W. Metzger?

Alvin was born in 1916 and grew up on East Benton Street in Wapakoneta, like most kids playing baseball and basketball. When he graduated from St. Joe High, he joined the 136th National Guard Field Artillery Medical Unit.

On Dec. 20, 1937, he joined the U.S. Navy and was sent to Great Lakes Training Center. After completing basic training, he was eventually assigned to the cruiser USS Houston as a machinist mate. Serving in the Navy in any capacity is an honor, but especially so in 1938 if you served on the Houston. The Houston was called by President Franklin Roosevelt, “his favorite ship.” In the pre-World War II days before there was Air Force One, the President traveled to foreign destination by ship. President Roosevelt chose the Houston as his flagship. When FDR was on board, the ship would be fitted with special ramps and hand rails. The presidential flag flew from the mast.

The Houston escaped damage at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, due to being assigned to the Dutch East Indies to protect American interests there. In the days after Pearl Harbor the Japanese also launched attacks on the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island and allied bases in the Dutch East Indies. When the Japanese bombers destroyed a base at Cavite, they were convinced that the Houston was one of the allied ships sunk.

As the American forces scrambled to reinforce the allied bases in the area, the Houston served to escort convoys and attack enemy targets of opportunity. As reports of the Houston, a ship the Japanese believed destroyed began to surface, the crew took pride in a new nickname given the Houston, “The Ghost of the Java Coast.”

On the night of Feb. 27, 1942, the Houston and the Australian Cruiser Perth was sent to intercept a Japanese invasion force. After midnight the Perth being in the lead, struck the Japanese first. It soon became apparent that they were outnumbered and outgunned. With Perth being sunk, the Houston fought on alone against the overwhelming Japanese force.

Alvin, in the engine room, was kept busy responding to the constant changes in orders of the changes in course and speed as the battle progressed. A signalman stated, “there was no place to find cover. We were receiving enemy fire from all points of the compass.” At one point a Japanese destroyer fired a torpedo that missed the Houston but went on to sink one of their own transports.

When battle damage to the Houston became too great and the ship began to go under, the captain gave the order to abandon ship. The Houston never struck her colors. Of the Houston’s 1,100 crew, Alvin Metzger was one of the 732 who were killed in action. The surviving 368 crew were captured and sent to a POW camp in Burma immortalized in the book and movie “The Bridge over the River Kwai.”

Alvin W. Metzger was the first serviceman from the area to be killed in World War II. When the VFW 8445 was formed they honored him by taking his name for their post.

The captain’s widow, Mrs. Edith Rooks, said of the crew of the USS Houston, “There is no greater loss to bear … but we will bear it for our men and their deeds will live on in the lives and love of their families.”

Sources: The Wapakoneta Daily News and “Ship of Ghosts” by James D. Hornfischer
I would like to submit a story about my grandfather. He was in World War II. He didn’t really like to talk about most of his time spent overseas, but he did like to talk about having a pet deer. They trained the deer to stomp when the enemy was approaching. He was very proud serving for his country. He also spoke of being stationed under the Eiffel Tower. His name was Deloyd Wayne Kline. He served from at least 1944-1945. He died in 2012 and would have been 96 this year.

I know this is not a military story but he was so proud of the fact that when he got home from the war he went to a dance and there is where he met his future wife. My grandma Lillian was engaged to another man, but as the story goes he swept my grandma off her feet, and the rest is history.
Editor’s note: Jan Campbell is daughter of Don Carolus, a World War II veteran who served January 1943 to March 1946.

I know this veteran who served in World War II. He was never flashy. He worked hard and rarely complained during his service time. He had gotten pretty banged up but then he met my dad, Don Carolus. Don took my friend apart then lovingly carefully fixed each piece and put him back together.

You see, my veteran friend is a 1946 Willys Jeep. It is one of many veteran workhorses of the Army who pulled their weight in numerous conflicts, serving both stateside and overseas.

This Jeep came to my dad’s house in 2008 when Dad began the long process of restoration. Dad was himself a veteran of World War II, starting his military life as many of his buddies did at Camp Perry in Toledo in January 1943.

After basic training in California, Dad spent time in training in Yuma, Arizona, and Duck Hill, Mississippi. His military focus was — you guessed it — motor vehicles. Dad said he worked on anything from a standard Jeep to a half-track. He eventually spent 26 months serving in Assam, India, where his company was responsible for forward supply logistics of the China-Burma-India theatre of operations. Although Dad was not officially on a battle front, he often flew voluntarily “across the hump” of the Himalayan mountains to drop supply support to troops at the front of the Chinese/Japanese war zone. He spoke of being shot at on some of those flights, and would flash a sheepish grin when he told those stories.

Dad came home and was honorably discharged in March 1946, his ship landing in San Francisco Bay. The next 70-plus years were dedicated to faith, family and building that American dream for which our servicemen and women fought so bravely on all battle fronts across the globe.

When Dad started restoring his Jeep, I’m not sure he could know just how much it would come to mean to all of us as a family. It was a part of him. It was a part of his history. It was part of his passion for all things “buildable.”

For several years every Memorial Day he would
Don Carolus enjoyed restoring this vehicle.

Don Carolus waves in a past parade.

proudly ride in his Jeep, waving to the crowd as his son or grandson drove him in his moments of glory. Behind him would be a large pickup pulling a float full of sons, daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Often nieces or nephews would join, or even a close friend of two. It brought us all together to celebrate Dad and all veterans — especially those who gave their all.

Dad lost his earthly battle at 94 years old this past January. Not able to part with the Jeep, my husband and I purchased it from my sisters and brother. When Memorial Day 2019 came, my heart just wasn’t in it to put my buddy in the parade without Dad.

So my children and grandchildren climb on the Jeep, take pictures in the Jeep and take short rides. It’s now a historical vehicle. We miss my dad each time the Jeep rolls out of the parade.

Thanks, old buddy. You served well.
My father in law, Richard Billingsley, was a World War II Army veteran who spent the war years in the Philippines. His unit was called to split up and replace the 31st Division. Landing barges took 150 of the replacements to Mindanao. He was assigned to Company B, 155th Infantry. Army trucks took the soldiers most of the way and then they hiked about 20 miles to join the outfit. He was assigned to a rifle company as a BAR man. The Browning Automatic Rifle had a 20-round clip. The next hike was about 50 miles, so the trucks were a blessing even though they continued walking and riding.

He was given one of the two handheld radios on one of the patrols and someone else carried the BAR. He received the Combat Infantry Badge and was promoted to Private First Class after one of the patrols.

The Army-issue leather boots would get soaked crossing rivers and streams in the mosquito-infested jungles, so the GIs cut slits above the soles of the boots to let the water out. They would wear their socks until they dried on their feet.

Canteen cups came in handy as a pot for cooking corn they took from a field. But the corn gave them diarrhea. A few days later they went to a Red Cross station and got some doughnut mix. They used steel helmets for mixing bowls and rolled the doughnut dough on a board with a round tent stake. They cut the doughnuts with a C-ration can and the doughnut hole with a small can from the gas mask kit that was about the size of a quarter. Those GIs sure were resourceful.

When the Japanese finally surrendered, Richard was transferred to Quartermaster Trucking Company as a truck driver in the Ordnance Company. Army equipment was hauled to boats and it was shipped to some other place. The Philippine Army got a lot of American equipment and the rest of the parts and equipment were run off a cliff and gasoline was dumped on the pit and set on fire.

Just as important
as the job they had of hauling equipment, it was his job to pick up beer once a month for the base. Cigarettes were 50 cents a carton and the men would give him and his sergeant the money to get them what they wanted. After all these young fellows had been through, they deserved it.

While in the jungle, Richard contracted malaria from a mosquito. The Atabrine tablet he was issued made his skin and the whites of the eyes yellow. Malaria attacks caused chills that made him feel like he would freeze. Five tablets a day was the only cure. He still had attacks years later.

Richard was sent to Leyte from Mindanao. Again he was assigned to be a driver. He drove civilians to work in different offices and back to town at the end of the day. He also drove troops to sick call. Two days before he was scheduled to leave the Philippines he had to have his appendix removed and was unable to leave. He stood on the porch of the hospital and watched the boat leave with his Army buddies aboard.

After 20 months of overseas service, he was finally cleared to sail home on the USS Gen. A.W. Greely. What a welcome sight it was when the Navy transport ship stopped in San Francisco at 4:30 a.m. with the Golden Gate Bridge all lit up.

Added to his gear and issued by the Army and as a gift from the Gideons, he always carried a New Testament and Psalms Bible. There were three interesting messages in the Bible. The first from the Army: “Attention: By special request of the U.S. Military and Navy Authorities you are instructed to place your NAME ONLY on the fly leaf, nothing more. On no account name your post, ship or station at any place in the book. To do so might afford valuable information to the enemy.”

The second message from the Gideons is a page at the back of the Bible that tells the service member to “Look up your chaplain at the first opportunity. Your welfare is his first concern, and you will find him friendly and helpful at all times. His counsel and advice will guide you in avoiding or overcoming difficulties. In many ways you can help him in his service for others. A close friendship between a chaplain and his men preserves and promotes a fine spirit in any service unit.”

The third message is inscribed in Richard’s handwriting: “On the way to Fort Ord, California. Going to fight the Japs!”

Richard Billingsley recuperates in the Philippines after surgery for appendicitis. Notice he is standing near a cemetery sign at the hospital.
A proud tradition

From Phil Rader, of Columbus Grove

Jen is the daughter of Mark and Lori Rader, Lima, and Michael is the son of Phil and Mary Rader, Columbus Grove.

Jen is currently stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and is in the 218th Military Police Company, 716th Military Police Battalion with a rank of Sergeant First Class.

Michael was stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, with the 101st Air Assault Headquarters, Headquarters Company for First Brigade Combat Team. He was the Brigade Logistics Planner with a rank of Captain.

Both Michael Rader and Jennifer Rader are the grandchildren of First Lt. Wayne R. Rader, Pearl Harbor survivor.

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Home for the holidays

From Serge Ladd, of West Leipsic

Editor's note: Serge Ladd is 90 years old.

The Ladd brothers from West Leipsic. Serge wished to share photos from his past service.

Home for the Christmas holiday in December 1951. From left: Serge Ladd (Navy), 22; Donald “Don” Ladd (Air Force), 21; and Robert “Bob” Ladd (Army), 19. We were all taking basic training at the time but granted leave for Christmas. Serge went in the Navy in October 1951, and Don and Bob went in November 1951. Don and Bob are deceased.
Aboard the USS Essex

From Jennifer Picker, of Lima

Gerald “Jerry” Picker, born Feb. 8, 1924, is a World War II veteran who served aboard the USS Essex aircraft carrier from 1942 to 1945 as an electrician mate. Jerry was a baseball pitcher for Delphos St. John’s High School, pitching a no-hitter season and was recruited by the St. Louis Cardinals. Dad believed in service to his country so he signed up to serve with the U.S. Navy. First he married his love, Junella, who waited for his return in California.

The USS Essex went through several battles. The worst was on Nov. 25, 1944, when the carrier was hit by kamikaze pilots on the port edge of the flight deck landing among planes gassed for takeoff, causing extensive damage, killing 15 and wounding 44. Many of the seamen aboard this ship took to the flight deck to push the bombs off the ship that did not explode. Jerry being the electrician mate, it was his duty to re-establish the carrier’s navigational systems (anemometer, gyroscope, etc.) and all electronic components that were damaged or destroyed. This required work beneath the flight deck running new cables to the Combat Information Center and to the towers. This took over two days during continuous battle while being shot at by kamikaze pilots.

Even through their hardships, the antics on the ship by the seamen and officers were crucial to keep morale up. When the ship crossed the equator, each seaman received a subpoena from the Royal High Court of the Realm of Neptune in and for the District of Equatorius. This stated comical charges for each seaman as a landlubber, beachcomber, guardroom rat, lounge-lizard, parlor-dunigan, hay tosser, chicken-chasers, park bench warmer, feather-merchant, scollay cowboys, bridge shark and other foul creatures of the land masquerading as seamen. Jerry’s charges were trying to belittle the initiation by childish tricks and growing massive mounds of hair fit for screen idols only. Initiation was to walk the line of seaman for a whack with paddles.

Jerry has always flown our country’s flag and even today, he continues to display the U.S. flag on the walls of his room at The Springs of Lima.

God bless all our servicemen and keep our country free.

Gerald “Jerry” Picker received this humorous document.
Remembering the descendants of John and Isabel McKinney

From Rodney McKinney, of Lima

Editor’s note: Rodney McKinney, 81, served in the Navy from 1958-1962, stationed in Norfolk, Virginia. This is about some of the children and grandchildren of John and Isabel McKinney from Elida and their past service.

John Jr. “Jack” was the oldest son. He joined the Army in December 1950 and was stationed in Korea. He was a truck driver that brought ammunition to the front line. He was a corporal when discharged and spent 30 years in the reserve and came out as a sergeant. Two of Jack’s sons were in the Navy. John III “Danny” was in from 1982 to 2012 and was command master chief. James was in the Navy from August 1986 to 1992. He was petty officer second class ensign 2 when discharged.

The second son William “Bill” went into the Navy December 1950, two days after Jack left for service. He was a storekeeper on the USS Plow which transported airplanes from the west coast to Japan during the Korean War. He was discharged in 1954.

Robert “Bob” the third son was in the Army from March 1960 to June 1962. He was a conductor on a train that went from Livorno, Italy, to the Austrian border. While there the USS Forrestal came into Port Lake Horn. His brother Rodney was stationed on that ship and they were able to spend three days together in May 1961. When Bob was discharged he was specialist 3.

The fourth son Rodney joined the Navy April 20, 1958, and was stationed on the USS Forrestal 2nd Division. He was a boatswain’s mate. He was two cruises to the Mediterranean. The Forrestal was in the Caribbean Sea when John Glenn went into space. They were to retrieve him if he came down after just one orbit. Rodney was discharged April 6, 1962, as a seaman. Rodney’s three sons were in the service.

The oldest Richard “Rick” joined the Army July 1, 1981. He was in Germany for two years. Then he was stationed at Fort Bragg with the 82nd Airborne. He participated in military world conflicts. Grenada: Operation Urgent Fury, October 1983 to Dec. 15, 1983. Panama: Operation Just Cause, December 1989 to Jan. 31, 1990. The first Gulf War: August 1990 to February 1991. He was in Korea for two years. He retired as master sergeant in May 2002.

The second son Jeffrey “Jeff” joined the Navy on July 16, 1984. He was on the USS Biddle, a guided missile cruiser. They patrolled the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. He was discharged as third class ensign on July 17, 1988.

Kyle the third son went into the Air Force on June 1989. He went to ordnance school in Colorado and spent three years in Korea loading weapons on F-14s and F-15s. He spent the rest of his time at Air Force Base Moody in Valdosta, Georgia. He was discharged as an airman in June 1993.

Dolores “Jane,” daughter of John and Isabel McKinney, married Kenneth Parish. He served in the Air Force, Air Traffic Control in Laon, France, 1950-1954 and was a senior airman when discharged.

Their oldest son Ken Jr. was sworn in the Army February 1981. He went to Fort Benning, Georgia, for basic training April 1981 and graduated June 1981. He was a drill corporal at Fort Benning July to October and graduated U.S. Army Airborne School October 1983.

Memories of a paratrooper

From Brenda Allen Keller

This is a tribute to my uncle, Guss Holbrook. He was born Oct. 22, 1917, and died Dec. 25, 2012.

On Dec. 20, 1941, Guss Holbrook entered the U.S. Army. He had been drafted and the one year of training that was planned was quickly reduced to six months. Guss went to Camp Roberts, California, for basic training.

Guss was a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division. He attended jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia. Initially, the candidates made one daytime jump and one nighttime jump from a 250-foot tower. Next, they made a daily jump for five consecutive days. If those jumps were successful, the candidate was awarded his wings.

Guss admits, “I was scared every jump.” His lowest jump was 1,200 feet. He made one jump in combat. This occurred during the invasion of France. He always thought that a jump in combat would be the worst jump but it was actually the easiest. “When the shrapnel came up through the bottom of that plane, I wanted to jump out.”

After jump school, Guss headed to Italy. He traveled by ship for 13 days and 13 nights before arriving in Europe. He said the trip across the Atlantic was smooth en route to Europe but was very rough on the way home and “some of the guys actually looked purple.”

En route to Europe, Guss was aboard an Italian luxury liner called the Santa Rosa.

Thank you for your service

From Marilyn Schoonover, Columbus Grove

Editor’s note: Robert Schoonover graduated from Shawnee High School and married Marilyn Kay Anderson, from Vaughnsville. After the military, he worked at Ford Motor Co. Lima Engine Plant and retired from there. He enjoyed golfing, shopping and car shows. He died Nov. 25, 2018. His uniform and picture of the West Wind and his unit are on display at the Putnam County Museum in Kalida.

Seaman Robert Joseph Schoonover served as an SN E-3, transportation in the U.S. Coast Guard.

He enlisted in the Coast Guard Sept. 26, 1963, and was assigned to foreign service sea duty and Vietnam service on the coast guard cutter the West Wind from Aug. 5, 1964, to Oct. 6, 1965. His active service continued on from Oct. 6, 1965, attached to the Commander, 3rd Coast Guard at District of New York.

One of his duties was driving Secretary of Transportation Alan S. Boyd in New York until Sept. 25, 1967, at which time he transferred to the Coast Guard Reserve.

 Medal, Campaign Ribbons received:
Coast Guard Unit Commendation Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal, Coast Guard Good Conduct Medal
He was honorably discharged Sept. 25, 1969.
A mother’s perspective

From Debra Tibbs

Editor’s note: Jerian Donnell Tibbs, 38, is from Lima.

Jerian was recruited into the National Guard right out of high school at the age of 18 against my wishes for him. Choosing this path was his choice, especially when there’s a promising picture painted before you.

The day I dropped him off at the armory on Collett Street and watched the doors gently close behind him, I knew that he would go to war. Which is something you can never prepare your mind for as a mother.

After 9/11 the St. Marys unit, which he was part of, was sent to Indiana for training that December for deployment to Iraq in 2005 for an 18-month mission. Their uniforms went from Army green to the color of desert sand, as well as the Army vehicles.

The send off gathering and watching the young men board the buses was probably the hardest moment. It was like a kick in the gut and reality setting in at the same time to see your first born loading a bus for war — but you find the strength inside you to stand and stand therefore. I made sure he had a poster covered with the faces of those who loved him and the word of God in a compact, easy carry form.

With the prayers of family, friends and the body of Christ you get through and learn to stand on the firm foundation. I would wear two watches, one with my time and the other with Iraq’s time, knowing that his duty was patrolling at night.

I met mothers during this time who had had nervous breakdowns during the time their sons had been deployed. This time was so trying for them and also so sad but you do the best you can do — encourage, understand and be compassionate.

There were several meetings that I attended in St. Marys during my son’s departure, and the unit was good about keeping those at home updated and who to contact if needed.

Jerian’s troop mission was to uncover bombs, and my mission was to pray for him and his troop. I held onto the send off program with all the names of the guys who had boarded the buses that day and I would rise early before work to cover him and his troop with prayer.

While Jerian was home on leave his unit drove over a mine and received seven Purple Hearts that day — but no deaths. The bonding that develops between these men is beyond what I can put into words. The phone call I received after his return to Iraq and the alarming sound in his voice will never be forgotten.

The disappointment of not being there for his buddies and friends when he thought he should have been, especially after developing a close brotherly knit bondage, was upsetting to him.

I remember a few stories Jerian would tell. While out on patrol one night
a missile from the enemy brushed across the windshield of the vehicle he was riding in while it was lit up like a Christmas tree. Lives were preserved that night. The second story was the tank he was a gunner in drove across a landmine and it exploded. He was tossed around the vehicle. Those in the vehicle thought he was dead. He was spared of all injuries and just seconds prior, he was standing up with part of his body exposed and right at the right moment and time he had an urge to sit down and did and his life was spared.

He also received a Medal of Honor for putting his troop before himself during a time that could have been devastating. He was awarded with a mini vacation to stay at a resort for his quick thinking and that was during the time of his birthday. I was happy about that.

Going back to civilian life could not have been easy, especially when everyone around you are potential enemies except the ones that are dressed like you. Being trained to look over your shoulder and around every corner cannot be easy coming back to civilian life to wander about with freedom and ease. But he did learn to adjust which took time and prayer.

When Jerian expressed his desire to re-up, I was saying it is time to come home. I knew I did not have a re-up in me.

P.S. The troops wore bandanas over their nose and mouths to protect themselves against the sand storms.
This picture was taken at the train depot in Lima sometime in 1951. It’s a picture of my father, Ross Thomas, in his Army uniform, hugging my mother, Joan Thomas. Looking on are mom’s brother, Ron Lloyd, and his wife, Moneta. The picture was taken by one of dad’s buddies from the window of the troop train he was on as it passed through Lima on its way from California to New Jersey. The story behind the picture is a little longer.

Dad received his draft notice in the fall of 1950, just as the Korean War was starting. He reported for basic training in February 1951. Dad says that at the end of basic training, an officer asked if anyone in his company had experience with boats. Dad raised his hand. He didn’t tell them that his experience with boats consisted of driving a small boat with a 5 hp outboard motor on Lake Erie, but apparently that was good enough for the U.S. Army.

He was sent from basic training to California, where he was trained to pilot a landing craft (LSM - Landing Craft, Mechanized). At the end of this training, he came home on leave, fully expecting to be sent to Korea upon his return. At the time, he was engaged to my mother, but when he got home he told her that he didn’t want to get married right then, as he was afraid he would be killed in Korea and didn’t want to leave her as a young widow. Mom wasn’t buying it, however, and gave him an ultimatum; we get married now, or forget it! Family lore has a different wording for mom’s ultimatum, however, it isn’t fit to print in the newspaper. The ultimatum worked, and they were married in the church parsonage in Gomer shortly thereafter. After a brief honeymoon overnight at a hotel in Lima, Dad returned to California.

When dad got back to California, he was surprised to find that his company had been shipped out to Korea, and he had been transferred to another company! His new company was to board a train bound for New Jersey, where they would board a ship bound for Greenland. And in an even stranger twist, his troop train was scheduled to pass through Lima on its way to New Jersey. Dad was able to get to a phone and call mom with the details of his upcoming trip.

At that time, the new Mrs. Thomas did not have her driver’s license (something a young woman didn’t need back then). Dad had to talk her into getting it some years later. Dad’s train wasn’t scheduled to stop in Lima, but mom talked her brother, Ron Lloyd, into taking her to Lima so that they could at least watch the train as it passed through town. Imagine their surprise when the
train came into the station and stopped! Dad says that there was some kind of mechanical issue that needed taken care of, but, at any rate, he was able to talk his way off of the train for a few minutes. Dad also said that all of the other soldiers were hanging out of the train’s windows “hooting and hollering” as he hugged his wife.

Dad continued on to New Jersey and boarded the ship bound for Greenland. They were sent there to assist in the unloading of ships carrying construction materials for what became Thule Air Force Base. He wasn’t able to use his boating skills, however, as the Navy wouldn’t allow Army personnel to unload their ships. He spent six months in Greenland working on the docks as a stevedore. After Greenland, he was sent to Panama for a year, where he was able to ‘drive’ an LSM. I have included a picture of him on his ship. Dad’s the guy at the top.

Mom was able to join him in Panama for that year, where they set up their first home on the Army base. When Mom flew home at the end of that year, she was eight months pregnant with my brother, Don. Dad had a couple more months of service to finish up, so he had to take a couple more train rides, this time to and from Spokane, Washington.
I was 20 years old when I went to Pleiku, South Vietnam, in January 1968, returning in January 1969. I was a cook in the unit called 573rd Infantry Supply and Support. From a Private E-1, I rose to the rank of a Specialist E-5 in only 10 months. So I was a very darn good soldier.

The guys in my unit did not receive nice new weapons. We were issued the same kind of old equipment used by the soldiers in World War II and Korea. But we did not care. Our guys found out that old weapons were just as deadly as new ones.

I finished my time in the United States Army by serving my final six months at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia.

Some of my wit:
- Happy pappy — proud father
- Celebrity diets — favorite fantasies
- Reality television — well written
- Tall order — runway models needed
- Tiger Woods — where tigers live
- Bad movies — reel life disasters

Frosted flakes — orange hair
Red carpet — more unknown celebrities
Crowbar — here crows get drunk
Memory

From page 9

We now have these objects in our possession.

On July 16, 1945, the ship left Mare Island and moved to Hunter's Point Navy Yard in San Francisco where components of the atomic bomb were loaded on board the USS Indianapolis. They transported the top secret cargo to the island of Tinian in the Marianas. From Tinian the Army Air Corps B-29 bomber Enola Gay piloted by Col. Paul Tibbets would drop the first atomic bomb named Little Boy on the Japanese City of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945.

Another atomic bomb named Fat Man was dropped on the Japanese city of Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945, by Maj. Charles Sweeney piloting a B-29 bomber named Bockscar.

After delivering the atomic bomb components to the island of Tinian the USS Indianapolis proceeded to the island of Guam. After being in port for a few days Capt. Charles McVay received orders to proceed to the island of Leyte in the Philippines.

The USS Indianapolis left Guam on July 28, 1945, and proceeded to the island of Leyte on a straight course without a destroyer escort. The Navy denied an escort for the heavy cruiser, which normally would have an escort.

Near midnight on July 29, 1945, the USS Indianapolis was hit by two torpedoes out of four torpedoes fired by the Japanese submarine I-58 commanded by Mochitsura Hashimoto.

There were 1,197 men on board the USS Indianapolis at the time it was hit. Approximately 300 were killed in the initial attack or went down with the ship. There were close to 900 in the water. Carl and one of his best friends, Otha Alto "Al" Havins survived the initial attack and made it into the water. They got separated and never saw each other again.

Carl was on a floating life net and Havins was in a life boat with McVay.

No SOS was sent out.

It wasn't until the fourth day in the water — Aug. 2, 1945 — that a flying seaplane on a routine flight happened to spot survivors floating in the sea. The pilot landed to assist what survivors he could gather together, and he radioed for help. Destroyers came from all directions to pick up survivors.

The tragedy of the whole affair was the four to five days that the survivors were in the water. Over 580 died in the water over those five days. They died from starvation, exposure, drowning and, worst of all, sharks. There were 317 survivors.

It is not known exactly how Carl died. From all accounts we've heard from survivors over the years he had survived on the floating net up until the third day in the water — Aug. 1, 1945. He was seen the evening of Aug. 1 but the next morning, he was gone.


Carl's friend, Havins, survived and became a minister and lived in California until his death a couple of years ago. Carl's friend Farrell wasn't on the ship when it went down because of his injuries. He still lives in California today. After the war both Havins and Farrell made visits to Lima to see my grandparents and my mother, Marcella Frederick Davis. Havins and Farrell were true friends.

There is a marble cemetery marker in his memory at Memorial Park Cemetery east of Lima.

Carl was an aviation machinist mate petty officer third class at the time of his death and was 19 years and 8 months old. His parents received his Purple Heart posthumously.

Even after all these years, he is remembered with much fondness and love. He will never be forgotten.
Gerald "Jerry" Picker served on the USS Essex.
Deloyd Wayne Kline and his fellow soldiers trained a deer.
HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

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