

Carroll Yesteryears
13 December 2015

Christmas 1944 Brought Worry to Families in Carroll by Mary Ann Ashcraft

Christmas 1944 brought a mixture of joy, sadness, and worry to most Carroll County families. The war in Europe had been going well for the Allies since the invasion of Normandy in June, but there was a setback in mid-December, later known as the Battle of the Bulge, and no indication the German army was ready to surrender. In the Pacific, things were also in flux – good news mingled with bad. Local husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers were fighting across the globe.

Looking through December issues of the *Pilot*, a Union Bridge newspaper, gives a sense of the public's mindset. There are huge advertisements urging the public to buy more war bonds. "The Sixth War Loan Drive is on. That means it's every American's job to buy at least an extra \$100 War Bond. Buy yours today." Who picked up the cost of these advertisements? Dr. T. H. Legg of Union Bridge was one. Also, Elmer E. Nusbaum (Lunches and Refreshments), L. E. Stauffer (Druggist), D. P. Smelser & Son (Grain, Feed, Coal, Lumber), P. B. Roop (Real Estate), Martin Brothers (Fresh and Salted Meats), Ensor Hardware Co. (Paints, Farm Machinery, etc.), and other area businesses.

Notices like the following appeared in the paper all too frequently: "A War Department letter received recently by Mr. and Mrs. Howard W. Cantwell, New Windsor, confirmed an official telegram delivered two days earlier, in which their son, First Lieut. Benjamin Ellsworth Cantwell, Army Air Corps, was reported missing over Austria since November 15." Or, "Mr. and Mrs. Earl Bloom received a telegram Wednesday evening informing them that their son Robert is a prisoner of war in Germany. In a telegram from the War Department received October 25, he was reported missing in action with air borne glider troops September 23, in Holland." A search using *Ancestry* showed that Robert Bloom returned home, but Benjamin Cantwell was not so lucky and lies in the American military cemetery at Saint-Avold, France.

On a happier note, the *Pilot's* "Of Local Interest" column carried this short paragraph: "A letter addressed to their son Hyder, who had been in China, was returned to Mr. and Mrs. D. S. Edwards this week with a notation that he was on his way to the United States."

Reproduced below is a poem from a December 1944 issue of the *Pilot* that must have summed up the thoughts of men still fighting:

A Prayer

Across the world the sound of shells has ceased...
And quiet shrouds the battle-rubbed West...
The enemy has laid away his arms, and Death and Pain are done in France.
But I go on...for I must fight and kill...
And work and sweat...and hide and run...
For *here* the enemy is very much alive...
His bullets still are made of lead...
Their angry whispers still foretell of sudden death
For me and others crouched in slime and mud...
The end for *us* is yet to come...
And so we pray to God to give us strength
To fight and win...without the waste of Time...
And with His Will...to see our homes again.

Mary Ann Ashcraft is a library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.



Photo credit: Antigoni Lefteris Ladd

Photo caption: This V-mail Christmas card was sent by Pvt. William C. Lefteris to his sister-in-law, Tula Lefteris, in Westminster in 1943 while he was serving in a field hospital in New Guinea. By 1944, his unit had moved with advancing American troops to the Philippines.