Carroll Yesteryears
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Soldiers' Stories: Remembering Those Who Didn't Return from World War II
By Austin Hewitt

The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918 marked the end of the Great War—the moment the armistice was signed by the Allies and Germany. The following year the first Armistice Day celebration was held at Buckingham Palace. It included a two-minute silence as a mark of respect for those who died and those they left behind. This tradition spread among many countries during the inter-war period. Some countries followed the example of Canada and renamed it "Remembrance Day." After World War II, however, many countries renamed November 11th as "Veterans Day" to honor veterans of all conflicts including those who survived.

The Great War, also known as the War to End All Wars, unfortunately did not accomplish that goal with the Treaty of Versailles. Many issues went unresolved and war broke out again in 1939. This became an even greater conflict, World War II.

I have always been a World War II buff. When I began volunteering at the Historical Society of Carroll County (HSCC) in early 2020, I became the docent for the World War II trunk as well as a researcher in the HSCC library. As fate would have it, the pandemic hit that March. The Society closed its doors and schools went online, giving me the time to learn more about Carroll County's experiences during the war.

Of special interest were the local men who did not come back. What were their stories? To answer that, I explored the records of the 88 men who died starting with the casualty list the War Department published after the war. It included name, rank, serial number and whether the person was killed in action or died from non-battle injuries. I searched for information in the Ancestry genealogical database, the Fold3 military database, and newspapers. I also used Steve Bowersox's thorough research covering approximately 650 Westminster High School alumni who served during the war. My last source was the service cards which veterans filled out after returning home. Just over 2000 Carroll men and women enlisted. Peter, Nathaniel, and Victoria Johnston, also World War II buffs, scanned the 2000+ service cards held by the Historical Society. If you have a family member who served from Carroll County during the war and would like to view their card, you can visit the Society's Research Library.

Viewing the records of the 88 men that did not return had an unexpected effect. The stories became very personal and moving. Those records, newspaper articles, and obituaries revealed the tremendous loss felt by families, friends and the community. There are 88 stories that deserve to be told but not enough space here to tell them all.

Edward and Robert Hooper were brothers who lived on Main Street in Westminster. They enlisted a year apart and assigned different infantry units. They were killed within a week of each other in late 1944 in France. The family first heard that Edward was wounded. He died of his wounds four days later. Four days after that they learned Robert was missing in action. His

body was found within two days. Imagine the grief his parents experienced as Christmas 1944 arrived.

There were two other deaths from the same part of Main Street. Jack Crandell's family lived in the same block as the Hoopers. He had been shot down over Luxembourg three months before the Hooper brothers died. Donald Myerly lived a block away but worked across Main Street from the Crandell household. He was killed June 7, 1944, the day after D-Day, by a German shell while driving an ammunition truck. Myerly is buried in the American Cemetery at Normandy. That's four deaths from the same block in a six-month period. You can read more details in Steve Bowersox's excellent "Carroll's Yesteryears" article from May 30, 2021. It appears on the HSCC website under the Research Library's Research Resources link.

Lacy Phillips was born in Virginia and moved to Westminster in the 1920s. He was killed five weeks after D-Day and is also buried in the American Cemetery in Normandy. If you ever visit Normandy, please pay your respects to these two Carroll County heroes.

Milton Hendrickson of Westminster joined the ROTC program while a Western Maryland College student, entered the Army Air Corp upon graduation in 1939, and became a pilot in 1941. He married Elise Hoke in 1942. He deployed to China and was killed in action in January 1944. Walter Hoke, Elise's brother, entered the service in February 1942, as an Army fighter pilot. He was killed in North Africa in August 1943. In the space of five months, Elise lost both her brother and her husband.

Marion Gore voluntarily enlisted in January 1942, following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He went into the Army Air Corp and received his commission June 30, 1943, at a ceremony attended by his parents. He was a B-24 Liberator pilot. He deployed to North Africa that November, then began flying out of England. On December 20 his plane was lost over Germany and his body never recovered. In six months, his family went from celebration to loss.

Arthur Neal, a Frostburg native, taught at Taneytown High School where he met Helen Stump from Manchester. He enlisted in June 1942, and was on leave from the US Army Air Base in Pueblo, Colorado, when he married Helen March 14, 1943. He was promoted to corporal on April 1 after returning from his wedding. On April 7 he was killed in a machine gun training accident. Helen went from newlywed to widow within three weeks.

Wayne Flohr was born in Flohrville, just north of Sykesville. It's a town named after an ancestor. He enlisted in the Army in October 1941, following graduation from Sykesville High School in 1936 and work at Springfield State Hospital. He served in the Army Medical Corps and Army Signals Corp before transferring to flight training to become a B-24 pilot. Wayne was stationed in Assam, India. He had flown over 600 hours and was an accomplished pilot but didn't die in combat. Instead, he was killed in an aircraft accident on the airbase on August 7, 1945. The war was almost over. The first atomic bomb was dropped August 6 and the second August 9. Japan surrendered August 15. Wayne's family would have seen all of this in the press before receiving word he had been killed. It had to be devastating to discover your loved one was killed knowing the war had ended. In a cruel irony, his obituary appeared on the front page of the *Carroll*

County Times on August 24, 1945. The article beside it was titled "War to Formally End August 31 as Japanese Sign Surrender Document Aboard Battleship."

Ernest Warfield was one of three African Americans from Carroll County killed during the war. He served in an aviation engineering battalion that repaired and built runways and bridges during the Pacific island-hopping campaign. Although his unit was frequently under fire, Ernest was not killed in action. He didn't even die during the war. The Japanese surrendered on August 15 and the peace treaty was signed September 2. He died September 10 in the Philippines. Details about his death are not in his records other than it was not battle-related. His was another family devastated to learn of their son's death weeks after the war ended.

Sixteen million men and women enlisted in the military during WW II. According to the Veterans Administration only 167,000 of them are alive today. That's about 1%. If you know any survivors, talk to them about their experiences while you still can.

Austin Hewitt is a research library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.

Image 1: *Brothers Robert and Edward Hooper of Westminster enlisted one year apart and were in different infantry units. They both died in France within a week of each other a few weeks before Christmas 1944.*
Photo credit: *The Hanover Evening Sun*, Dec 28, 1944

Image 2: *The Westminster World War I/World War II Memorial lists all those lost during the two wars. It is in the park next to Westminster City Hall.*
Photo credit: Austin Hewitt

Image 3: *Detail of the plaque showing Edward and Robert Hooper's names.*
Photo credit: Austin Hewitt