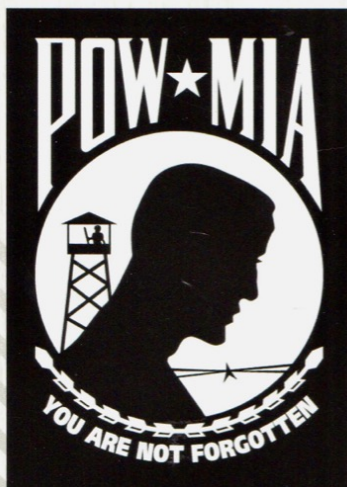


**POW/MIA VETERANS
OF MONROE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

a collection of stories

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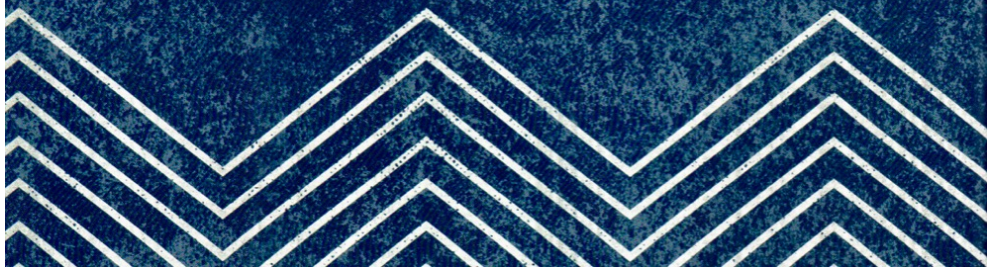


MISSED



THE *miles* YOU'VE

TRAVELED



PRISONERS OF WAR

World War II

Dave Crosby

Omar Dreps

Clifford Haberl

Raymond Laskowski

James May

Clyde Meyer

Calvin Vogt

Korean War

Emil Wetzler



OMAR H. DREPS

Branch: Army

Date of Birth: 8/19/1923

Date of Death: 12/1/1980

*Buried: Hecker City Cemetery
Hecker, Illinois*

Excerpt from "Veterans of Monroe County, Illinois"

Omar Dreps was born August 19, 1923 near Maeystown, Illinois to Anton and Christina Fromme Dreps. Omar graduated High School in Fults, Illinois and worked on the family farm and as a clerk/recorder.

He enlisted in the United States Army on January 28, 1943 at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. Omar was assigned to the Army Air Corps as a top turret machine gunner on a B24 Flying Fortress. His unit was the 483rd Bombardment Squadron. They flew 50 missions in battle campaigns over Europe, The Balkans, and Normandy. Omar survived when on their 50th mission they were shot down and spent several months in a German Stalag as a Prisoner of War (POW).



Omar Dreps

CLIFFORD W. HABERL

Branch: Army
Date of Birth: 12/21/1923
Date of Death: 8/1/2010
Buried: St. Paul Evangelical Cemetery
Columbia, Illinois



Excerpt from "Veterans of Monroe County, Illinois"

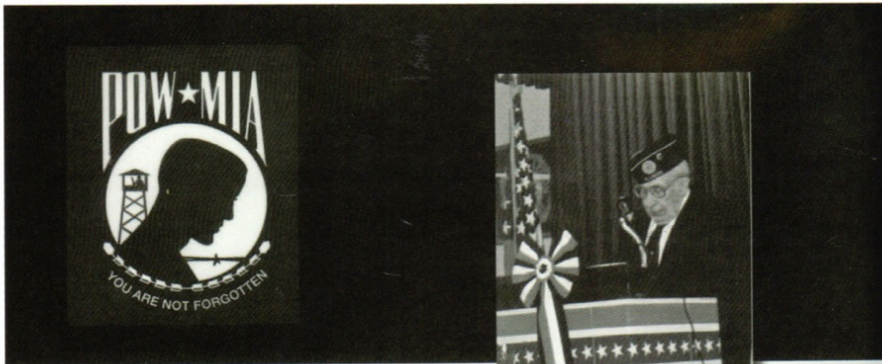
Clifford W. Haberl was born December 21, 1923 in Columbia, Illinois, son of Frank and Irene (Dollar) Haberl.

He was inducted into the Army March 11, 1943 at Scott Field, Illinois then sent to Fort Jackson, South Carolina Infantry Division. After basic training, he took an air test at Columbia, South Carolina, passed, and was sent to Winthrop College for six weeks air cadet training course, then sent to Fort Myers, Florida to aerial gunnery school. More troops were needed in the infantry so he was sent back to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. He took a delay en route and was sent overseas, there they joined the First Division (Big Red One). November 22, 1944 he was wounded while being captured near Aachen, Germany (Rhineland Campaign), where he remained a prisoner of war until the end of the war in June 1945. He was Honorably Discharged at Fort Ord, California December 4, 1945 with Grade TEC 5, Company B, 26 Infantry Regiment. His Military Occupational Specialty was Heavy Mortar Crewman.

Service Awards: World War II Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two bronze stars, Good Conduct Medal, Purple Heart, Bronze Star Medal, Prisoner of War Medal, Infantry Badge.

After returning home, he married Florence Metter August 17, 1946. They have one son Eugene (Jackie) Haberl, grandson Jeffrey (Emily) Haberl, great granddaughter Grace, and great grandson William Haberl.

CLIFFORD W. HABERL *continued*



*Clifford W. Haberl
Recollection of POW Experiences
In Germany during WWII
2007 Memorial Day Services
Columbia American Legion Hall*

I was captured in November 1944, shortly before Thanksgiving during the battle of the Hurtgen Forrest, while serving with the 1st Division. I was a company runner wireman radio operator. I was sent back to battalion to bring two sergeants up and to string wire from battalion to our company. On the way the wire ran out. The tech. sergeant said to tie the end to a tree. About that time the Germans yelled "Hands Up!" A sergeant grabbed me and pulled me into a nearby foxhole and yelled "Shoot!" The Germans threw two grenades in our direction. I was wounded in the lower leg and foot. The sergeant was wounded in the back and the tech sergeant was wounded in the face. A German patrol leader who spoke very good English, said they could have killed us but they want prisoners. They strip searched us for guns and other weapons. The Schmeiser machine gun barrel looked very huge when pointed at us. They then put soldiers on either side of me to help me walk and took us to German Headquarters. On the way we were under U.S. artillery fire. We

would fall down whenever the shells went over us. The Germans would laugh at us.

The German Headquarters looked like it was in the basement of a large church. It was here that a German medic bandaged my wounds. They interrogated us but all we gave was our name, rank and serial number. They knew more of what was going on with our side than we did. While we were in a shed waiting after our interrogation, we talked and figured out we had walked into a gap between our company and the next company. The Germans had infiltrated this gap. That day for Thanksgiving dinner, we had a few turnips and rutabagas. The next day, the sergeants were sent to a camp for sergeants and I was sent to a camp for lower ranks. I went to a camp located in Bonn, Germany.

On the third morning we were shaved, deloused and showered. We were told that our clothes would be deloused and cleaned. When we came out after our showers, our clothes had been replaced with other clothes and wooden soled shoes which caused me much pain because of my wounds. We

found out later that our confiscated clothes were used by the Germans to infiltrate the lines during the Battle of the Bulge.

The next day we were served black bread and molasses, we then were marched ten miles to a stockade where we joined another group of POW's. We received one loaf of bread and one small can of horse meat for eleven men. After several additional transfers, we were herded into boxcars of a train with so many in a car that we could not sit. We had no water and no toilet facilities. Some broke down and began crying because of the conditions. We were given a half loaf of bread and a third of a can of meat apiece for a two day train ride. We finally reached our destination, a stalag in Limburg. This was the first of six detention camps I was sent to during my captivity. The other camps were located in Neubrandenburg (twice), Rostock, Wismar, and Warin. Whenever we had to move to a new camp, we would have to walk. During the transfers, we slept in barns or fields under trees in the cold, even if it was raining. Wherever there was

a potato pile, we would bribe the German guards with cigarettes so we could crawl out to the pile to get some potatoes to eat. You were not sure even with bribing the guards that they wouldn't shoot you. Getting enough to eat was a very big problem.

We had primitive living conditions such as outhouses for latrines. Water was always cold for bathing. The buildings had double bunk beds with straw mattresses and pot bellied stoves for heating and cooking. When we marched, kids frequently threw rocks at us. The guards would yell at them to stop. In some situations we felt the guards were protecting us as well as guarding us.

The daily rations were a cup of ersatz coffee and a small piece of black bread in the morning. Evening dinner was cabbage soup. To this day I cannot eat cabbage. We received Red Cross parcels. Normally there was supposed to be one parcel for each man every six weeks. I received two parcels during the six months of my captivity and had to share one parcel with 5 other men. This was to prevent the accumulation of food, which could be used for an escape. These parcels had cigarettes as well as food. The main source of currency among POW's was the American cigarettes in the parcels. I once saw a POW with a \$100 bill trying to buy loaves of bread, but could not. I usually tried to get the sardines and paste liver, etc. because most of the POW's didn't want this food, but it was high in nutrients. I was able to trade with a Frenchman, my wooded soled shoes and some cigarettes, for a pair of regular shoes. I also had to bribe some German guards with cigarettes, who saw the trade. Every day the German guards would yell at us, especially when forming the morning count. This would occur whether it was sunny or raining. Frequently they would have to recount. We were told by the POW ranking person to beware

of the SS because of the punishment the SS would hand out. If you stayed in the stalags, you would roam from barracks to barracks to see if you could find someone you knew or find something extra to eat. You were always trying to find food. Wherever I went, I always carried a cup and a quart milk can to carry water, especially on the marches. I also carried a blanket during the marches.

During the Christmas season, the Germans began to brag and push the POW's around. That is when we found out about the Battle of the Bulge. At first we didn't take them seriously, but then the camp suddenly began to fill up with more American POW's. One prisoner was an African-American who told us he was far behind the front lines when he was captured. This is when we became worried.

While I was in the camps I had different assignments, depending on which camp I was in. At Rostock, I and a group were assigned to repair and install new railroad tracks. We did not fully cooperate. We had to roll carts of dirt down to the end of the track. Many times we would roll it off the end of the track and dump it over. The Germans would get mad and chewed us out. One of our POW's was killed when he accidentally stepped into the path of a train. He was treated respectfully. He was placed in a wooden coffin and we were taken under guard on a trolley to where he was laid out near the cemetery and was buried in a plot that was reserved for enemies of Germany. A German firing squad fired a salute.

We were marched about 9 miles a day heading for the American lines because the Russians were closing in on Germany from the east. On the second day, I couldn't march anymore because of my wounds, so they put me in a wagon along with other wounded and sick POW's who couldn't continue

to march. We spent the night in a shed which was cold with no heat. During the night, one of our soldiers died of gangrene. He was placed in a wooden coffin and buried in a small family plot. A German firing squad fired a volley over his grave.

There were 12 of us working on a farm. There were two guards assigned to our group. One was an old guard who was OK. One day as we were hoeing the fields, he got mad at us because we were not hoeing properly. He got so mad, yelled at us, gave his rifle to a prisoner named Max and he grabbed his hoe, and began to show us how to hoe. While he was doing this, Max was doing the manual of arms with his rifle. When the guard realized what he had done, he threw down the hoe and grabbed his rifle and said a couple of expletives in German. He often told Max that he was a Chicago gangster.

After our time on the farm, we were marched down the road toward the American lines again. We stopped for the night in the woods, next morning we woke up and found the guards left during the night and marked the area with POW signs. We saw many Germans headed for the American lines, the soldiers having shed their weapons.

Shortly, we saw Russian troops coming over the fields in vehicles shooting weapons in the air. One of our group could speak Russian and talked to them as to who we were. They loaded us into a wagon and took us to the American lines. After six months, we were back behind the American lines.

For many years thereafter, I had a reminder of my wounds as grenade fragments at times worked their way out of my leg. I also had nightmares about my experiences as a POW. I don't have those nightmares anymore and can now talk easier about my experiences.

RAYMOND LASKOWSKI

Branch: Air Force

Date of Birth: 4/12/1916

Date of Death: 2/21/1962

*Buried: Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery
Lemay, Missouri*

Excerpt from obituary found on findagrave.com

Raymond was an AVN Cadet with the 576th BS 392nd Bomb Group. On February 15, 1945, the aircraft he was on - a B24 called the "Birdie Schmidt Arc" - had mechanical difficulty while flying over Mulhausen, Germany and the crew of 9 all became prisoners of war.

Missing Aircrew Report:

"For the fifth time in two weeks, the same target was assigned again to the Group. On this raid, P-47 Thunderbolts were to divebomb the target and mark it with smoke flares and a Mosquito Pathfinder aircraft was also to assist the lead bombers in on the oil refineries. General briefings for (30) crews were conducted at 0415 and 0530 hours with take-offs beginning at 0755. Weather in the target area was poor once more. Fighter support was excellent and again no enemy fighter reaction was experienced. AA fire was generally moderate but fairly inaccurate. One B-24 and crew, however, apparently suffered flak damage and was lost."

Mission Report from Lt. Linzmeir, Pilot 577th flying in the #4 slot formation position, gave an after mission report on this aircrew. This account noted that the Hubbard plane dropped behind the formation near the IP (initial point), losing altitude. It dropped bombs halfway from the IP to the target at 1132 hours. The ship continued to follow below and behind the Group formation. The report further noted the capture of all (9) crewmen in the vicinity of Mulhausen between 1200 and 1300 hours.

JAMES P. MAY

*Branch: Air Force
Date of Birth: 8/19/1916
Date of Death: 3/1/2006
Buried: Holy Cross Cemetery
Pataskala, Ohio*

Excerpt from "Veterans of Monroe County, Illinois"

James Patrick May entered the Army Air Corps in 1942 at Scott Field, Illinois, continuing to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri where he was accepted for the flying cadet program and Officer Candidate School (OCS). Upon graduation as a First Lieutenant, he joined his first flying unit at Lowry Field, Colorado and was later assigned to the 8th Air Force in England. James was piloting a B-24, when he was shot down over Munich, Germany and evaded capture for thirteen days.

While a World War II prisoner of war (POW) in Stalag Luft III, he was forced to march in a blizzard and transported by rail in a crowded cattle car through Germany. When he was liberated in 1945, he was emaciated but alive. Lieutenant Colonel James May was also stationed at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, Reese Air Force Base, Texas, and his final assignment was Lockbourn/Rickenbacher Air Force Base, Ohio.

James Patrick May was born on August 19, 1916 to Alfred F. and Helen Cody May in Monroe County, Illinois. He married Marjorie Sondag at Scott Field, Illinois on June 19, 1946. James died March 1, 2006 and was buried with full military honors.



James Patrick May

JAMES P. MAY *continued*

"WWII Vet Leaves Special Legacy"

Reported by Angela An

WBNS-10TV Columbus, Ohio

When Jim May was laid to rest near Pataskala on Saturday, many people remembered him for the special efforts he made during World War II to bring comfort to fellow prisoners of war, and their worried families back home.

"He was a wonderful officer...a smart man. Good to his friends and everybody," friend and fellow veteran Chris Georgeff said through choked-back, remembering Jim.

It was a difficult goodbye to his long-time friend, who joined the U.S. Armed Forces in 1942. Jim May's four brothers also served during World War II. "There were five of us. And they drafted all of us," Roy May said. Roy was the best man at Jim's wedding. He described how two years after they all were drafted, Lt. Col. Jim May was shot down over Munich, Germany. But after evading the enemy for 13 days, Jim was eventually captured and made a prisoner of war.

"They walked barefooted in the snow. And he weighed 70 pounds when he got out," Roy said. While being held by the Germans, Jim May wrote letters home to his parents, assuring them he was ok. May also wrote letters to the families of other soldiers to tell them their sons and brothers and husbands were also surviving. Many of those families wrote back, thanking May for sharing the good news.

But something else May did earned him even more praise and more honor than any medal could bestow. The eldest of May's eight children explained what else it was that made their father's service special. "When he went to a 40th anniversary of POWs, some of the men still had the cup that he had given to them as a gift when they came into the POW camp," recalled Mary Ann Thurkettle.

Forty years after the war ended, May finally received his Purple Heart.

Amidst the crackle of a 21-gun salute and the trumpeting of "Taps," Jim May was buried. Friends and family noted a great, gentle man is gone. But his story...his legacy remains for generations to remember.

"Waterloo family epitomizes sacrifice of war"

By Alan Dooley for the Republic Times Newspaper

November 9, 2016

Waterloo family epitomizes sacrifice of war

By ALAN DOOLEY
For the Republic Times

In 1940, war raged in Europe. Across the Pacific, Japan was trying to establish an empire.

America teetered on the brink of both wars, which would come together to create the second World War in 23 years.

America was gearing up for the fight, with industries converting to produce weapons and other military equipment. American families were watching the approaching storm, not knowing what impacts might lie ahead for them.

One such family was Alfred F. and Helen Cody May, residing in Burksville on a 120-acre farm with seven children — five boys and two girls. They also owned an additional 300 acres. All five of their boys would be drafted to serve, four in World War II and a fifth during the early days of the Cold War and



Roy J. May



Alfred F. May Jr.



Ambrose L. May



James P. May



Robert J. May

Korean Conflict.

Roy J. May, a longtime State Farm insurance agent and community leader in Waterloo, sat down with the *Republic Times* to share the story of his family's sacrifices to our nation's defense.

May spoke of a time when a nation of 131 million would pay 12.5 million of those citizens in uniform. Some volunteered, but the nation needed many more, and those were days of the draft. Young men were not recruited, or "invited" to join. Rather, they received an order in the mail, telling them when and where to report for training

and duty in which every service branch needed the next new recruit.

The boys were all in splendid condition, as farm boys were in those days.

"We farmed with horses, not tractors," May said. "We walked barefoot to and from school, and in the fields working with our dad."

They attended the old Portland School, which still stands as a residence on Route 3 south of Waterloo.

"We wore shoes only in the winter," he recalled.

James Patrick May, born Aug. 19, 1916, was the first in

the family to go. He entered the Army Air Corps in 1942. James attended officer candidate school and subsequently piloted B-24

Liberator heavy bombers, first shuttling them from the U.S. to England. In England, he began what was supposed to be 30 combat missions over occupied Europe and Germany. At the end of 30 such flights, crews were allowed to come home. But James was on his third mission when he was shot down over Munich, Germany.

James evaded capture for 13 days, but was found and incarcerated as a prisoner of war in a German military prison known as Stalag Luft III. Low points in the long days in prison included a forced march of some 70-plus miles in the snow, barefooted.

"He weighed 70 pounds when he was freed," Roy told of his brother.

James was known as a prolific letter writer. He wrote to tell his parents he was well, and wrote to fellow prisoners' families to tell them how their family members were faring. During a 40th reunion of his fellow POWs, some of the men still had something James had made for them. Handy with even simple tools, James had made cups for them from metal cans in which they were given meager rations.

And some still had them.

James continued his service, finally retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel with the U.S. Air Force. He married Marjorie Sondag in 1946. He passed away in 2006.

Another brother, Alfred F. May Jr., born April 19, 1918, went next. A heavy equipment operator with the 314th Infantry, 79th Division, U.S. Army, he was part of the invasion of

See MAY 2A

MAY

continued from page 1A

Normandy, France, as Allied forces stormed ashore to begin the end of the Third Reich.

Sadly, Alfred died in action on June 26, 1944, and is interred in the Normandy Cemetery in France.

Ambrose L. May, born Dec. 30, 1919, was drafted into the Army on Feb. 13, 1943. He was trained as a heavy equipment operator at Fort Belvoir, Va. Promoted to Corporal, he was sent to the Pacific Theater with the 1886th Engineer Construction Battalion (Aviation) on the island of Guam. There, Ambrose was injured and subsequently awarded the Bronze Star for bravery.

Ambrose returned to Waterloo on discharge in 1946, where he married Corinne Frisch in 1953. They had five children. He was a life member of the Waterloo VFW Post 6504 and the Disabled American Veterans. He died on July 14, 1995, and is interred in Waterloo.

Roy J. May was born May 7, 1925, and was drafted while attending Waterloo High School.

"They had to wait until the end of the first semester," he said.

He entered the Army Air Corps on Jan. 29, 1944 as an Aviation Cadet. He subsequently was sent to the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center in Texas, where he trained as a pilot before being mustered out in 1945 as the military started to wind down in anticipation of the end of World War II.

Roy is easily recognizable in Waterloo. His slender, erect frame still looks good in his American Legion uniform which he has worn with pride, most notably as commander of the local chapter for the past 10 years.

He has also been a past commander of the American Legion post, President of the Waterloo Optimist Club and Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus.

Roy has been married to his wife Norma for 69 years now. They still reside in one of Waterloo's iconic homes at the northwest corner of Market Street and HH Road near Walmart. May also operates his insurance business there, claiming to be the longest serving State Farm agent in the firm.

He started there in April 1945 at the age of 20. Another brother, Robert J. May, born Feb. 28, 1927, was too young to be drafted during World War II, but he too was drafted into the Army in 1952. He served slightly more than 25 months before being discharged in August 1954. He married Elizabeth Wierschem May in June 1952, prior to entering the service. He was stationed in Europe during his service.

So, the family of Alfred and Helen Cody May, was heavily impacted by war and the draft.

One son would die in combat. Another endured a lengthy period as a prisoner of war but chose to continue to serve even after that experience. A third was injured in the Pacific Theater and a fourth was drafted as World War II wound down. And finally, a fifth would be drafted to serve in the early years of the Cold War.


During those years, nearly 10 percent of the population served in uniform. Today, a nation of 319 million is defended by 1.3 million active duty and 800,000 reserve and National Guard personnel — about two-thirds of one percent.

How did the May family deal with the loss and separation driven by years of war and tension?

"You know," May said, "we never even talked about it, even at dinner together. It just was."

But for sure, in each heart, there was pain at the loss of Alfred, uncertainty at the fate of James, and concern for the others.

This is why on Veterans Day this Friday, Nov. 11, it's imperative for the community to do more than simply enjoy a holiday off. Please reflect on the sacrifices that have carried our nation this far, and resolve that none of them shall have been in vain.

Thank a service member or veteran, that day and every day. 

CLYDE F. MEYER

Branch: Army

Date of Birth: 1919

Date of Death: Unknown

Buried: Unknown

Information found on archives.gov

Clyde enlisted into the Army in East St. Louis on June 12, 1942 as a Technical Sergeant. He was detained in Germany at the Stalag Luft 4 Gross-Tychow in Pomerania, Prussia. He was returned to military control, liberated or repatriated. His last report date for the US Army was May 24, 1945.



CALVIN W. VOGT

Branch: Army

Date of Birth: 7/1/1924

Date of Death: 5/4/1983

Buried: Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery
Lemay, Missouri

Excerpt from WWII-Era Local Newspaper

Calvin Vogt, son of Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vogt of near Valmeyer, who was previously reported "Missing in Action" is now known to be alive and in a German prison camp. This comforting news came to his family greatly disturbed by the knowledge that another son, Robert, was wounded in action. Pvt. Vogt was reported missing in May, and the welcome news that he was alive was received this week by his anxious parents.

Information found on archives.gov

Calvin was detained in Germany at the Stalag 2B Hammerstein camp in West Prussia. He was returned to military control, liberated or repatriated.

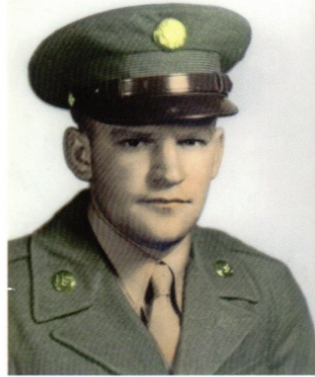
EMIL J. WETZLER

Branch: Army

Date of Birth: 6/18/1926

Date of Death: 1/29/2003

Buried: Holy Cross Lutheran Cemetery
Renault, Illinois



Information found on archives.gov

Emil was a Private First Class in the Light Weapons Infantry Division. He was captured on February 13, 1951 in South Korea and held in the Ch'ang-Song POW Camp until he was released on August 14, 1953.

CPL. EMIL WETZLER HOME AFTER 2½ YEARS AS P.O.W.



HAPPY REUNION—Cpl. Emil Wetzler and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Wetzler of near Maestown, were in a deservedly jubilant mood as they posed for the Times camera Tuesday afternoon. They were stopping briefly in Waterloo on their way home from St. Louis, where Emil arrived shortly after noon.

Tuesday was a day of real celebration for the George Wetzler family of near Maestown, for it marked the return home of their son, Cpl. Emil J. Wetzler, after 2½ years as a war prisoner of the Chinese Communists. Emil arrived at Union Station in St. Louis about 1:30 that afternoon, where he was met by his parents and his sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Wilburn Aycock.

Cpl. Wetzler is home on a 30-day rest and recuperation leave, and is to report at Fort Sheridan at the end of the furlough. When asked by a Times reporter if he was treated well by his captors, Emil replied, "Let's call it rough". He said that the Reds were the most distrustful souls he had ever seen, and that if they saw five or six prisoners talking together, they immediately suspected a plot and broke up the group by sending half of them to another prison. He appeared reluctant to discuss his experiences and apparently wants to forget them as quickly as possible.

Wetzler, with prior army service, was recalled to active duty on October 8, 1950 and was sent to Korea three months later. He was with an infantry outfit moving forward with a group of tanks on Feb. 12, 1951, when the enemy closed in behind them and he was taken prisoner. Wetzler is looking well and says they were able to keep in shape by playing softball until about three months before the armistice, when the rumors started flying, and for some unexplained reason, the softball games were stopped.

Waterloo Times Article
published on September 3, 1953

Emil Wetzler Released by Reds

Emil Wetzler Home From Red Prison

Survived Death March; Treatment 'Some of Roughest'

Emil Wetzler, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Wetzler, and a member of a family which has had more than their share of war experience, arrived home yesterday, released by the Chinese as a prisoner of war on August 14th. He arrived at Union Station in St. Louis at twelve thirty Tuesday afternoon. Air transportation was not available, he said.

Young Wetzler had not been heard from for a long time and was first reported missing in action. Later he was reported as a POW and this was confirmed by the young man's own letters to his parents.

Excerpts of his letters appeared in The Republican from time to time, and a reporter noted that they always mentioned how well he was being treated, and at that time wondered if the Reds dictated what the prisoners could write.

Young Wetzler was not in a talkative mood when interviewed by this writer yesterday afternoon. He is to be home for 30 days and then goes to Ft. Sheridan, near Chicago, for another physical examination, and after that and pending its results, he believes he will be discharged. He shows the effects of whatever he went through and preferred not to talk, and choked up with emotion when he did mention the "death march" and when asked about the treatment he received he said "it was some of the roughest." He told a reporter he didn't want to talk much now. "I want to forget as much as I can," when asked about the death march and treatment accorded the American prisoners.

He was taken up to the very northern border of Korea, near the boundary line, and it took from August 9th to the 14th to reach the 38th line near Kaesong. The next day he was on a boat, headed for home, landing at San Francisco August 29th; he sailed from Inchon, Korea, and has traveled over 7000 miles since August 9th, when he was moved from the northern border of Korea to Kaesong.

When asked what shape he was in, Emil said he really didn't know yet. He had had stomach and throat trouble and would have another examination after his visit here at home.

The Wetzler family well know the horrors of war. A son Roland was wounded twice in World War II, and another son Wilbert "Whip" Wetzler, lost an eye. Another son William is in service now and the subject of this story was a POW. Still another son Robert is subject to call.



Smiling jubilantly is Mrs. George Wetzler, mother of Emil Wetzler, shortly after she received a telegram giving her official word that her son had been repatriated at Freedom Village.

Mrs. Wetzler is pointing to Emil in a group picture that appeared several months ago in a New York paper after being taken in a prison camp. The picture was the first real evidence the Wetzlers had that Emil was in good health.

—Republican Photo.



Pfc. Emil J. Wetzler

Was Captured by Chinese in February Of 1951; Freed Thurs.

Emil J. Wetzler, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Wetzler of near Mayestown, was released Thursday night by the Communists at Panmunjom, Korea.

Young Wetzler was a prisoner of the Chinese Reds since Feb. 12, 1951, when he was captured as his unit was running an enemy roadblock near Saemal in South Korea.

News reports said the group with which Wetzler was repatriated was in about the best physical shape of any troops thus far repatriated.

Reported Missing

His parents learned that he was missing in action March 16, 1951 in a telegram from the army. It wasn't until Sept. 24 that they learned he was a prisoner of the Reds.

At that time they received a letter, which he had written March 31, saying that he was in good health and getting good treatment. They received several other letters, in which he always repeated that he was well.

Heard on Radio

The Wetzler's first learned that their son had been released in a broadcast Thursday night about the same time that a telephone call from Chicago came, telling them the good news.

Neighbors, who heard the news on television and radio, then arrived.

Mrs. Wetzler was interviewed by recording over the Waterloo Republican Front Page of the Air on KSGM Friday evening, and she said "I was praying every night and day for him to come home safely." She said she expected him to arrive in the States in about two weeks.

In his last letter he said that some of the men from his prison camp were repatriated in the exchange of wounded several months ago, and that he was hoping the others would be exchanged soon.

Picture in Paper

Several months ago, Mr. and Mrs. Wetzler received a copy of a New York newspaper in which Emil was pictured as a member of a softball team in the prison camp.

A news story Saturday morning quoted young Wetzler as saying that Communist indoctrination courses at his camp were discontinued in November after the GIs "stuck together and wouldn't go."

Wetzler was in service prior to the Korean War, and was recalled to active duty Oct. 8, 1950. He was sent to Korea in December of that year.

Two Brothers Casualties

Two of Emil's brothers were casualties of World War II. Wilbert lost his left eye, and Roland

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| <p>GOVT PO</p> <p>WASHINGTON D C 340PM MAR 15</p> <p>MR AND MRS GEORGE J WETZLER RR 2</p> <p>FULTS ILL</p> <p>THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY HAS ASKED ME TO EXPRESS HIS DEEPER REGRET THAT YOUR SON PFC WETZLER EMIL J HAS BEEN MISSING IN ACTION IN KOREA SINCE 15 FEB 51 UPON RECEIPT OF FURTHER INFORMATION IN THIS OFFICE YOU WILL BE ADVISED IMMEDIATELY PO CONFIRMATION LETTER</p> <p>FOLLOWS</p> <p>EDWARD F WITTELL MAJOR GENERAL USA THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY</p> <p>340PM H</p> | |
| <p>THE COMPANY WILL ACCEPT NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSS OF MESSAGES OR DELAY IN DELIVERY</p> | |



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

May 19, 1988

Dear Recipient:

In accordance with your request, it is a pleasure to forward the enclosed Prisoner of War Medal.

This Medal was authorized by Congress for any person who served honorably as a prisoner of war after April 15, 1917. Your Medal recognizes the special service and sacrifice that you have given for this Country.

The front of your Medal is an eagle, symbol of the United States and the American spirit. Although surrounded by barbed wire and bayonet points, it symbolizes the hope that upholds the spirit of the prisoner of war. On the reverse, below the words, "Awarded to," is space for engraving your name. Below this is an inscription naming the purpose of the award, "For honorable service while a prisoner of war." The shield is from the Coat of Arms of the United States of America.

Please accept this Medal with my best wishes.

Sincerely,

John O. Marsh, Jr.
John O. Marsh, Jr.

Enclosure

THE PRISONER OF WAR MEDAL

It is estimated that 142,000 United States service members were held as prisoners in World War I, World War II, the Korean War and in Vietnam.

The United States Army's Institute of Heraldry was tasked to design the medal. Designs were solicited from the military services, veterans' organizations and private citizens, and over 300 proposals were submitted. A Joint Service Panel reviewed all of the proposals and selected the design submitted by Mr. Jay C. Morris, a civilian employee of the Department of the Army.

The public law authorizing the Prisoner of War Medal specifies that the medal shall be accorded a position of precedence in relation to other awards and decorations, immediately following decorations awarded for individual heroism, meritorious achievement or service, and before any other service medal, campaign medal or service ribbon authorized to be displayed.

YOU  ARE

★ *our* ★

HERO



MISSING IN ACTION

World War I

Otto Wagner

World War II

Archie Berry

Fred Fritz

Henry Heitner

Monroe Metzger

Wallace Roever

Arlo Schellhardt

Lyle Thompson

August Weinel



OTTO WAGNER

Branch: Army

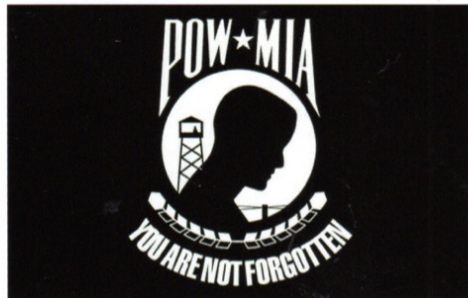
Date of Birth: Unknown

Date of Death: 9/6/1918

Memorialized: Tablets of the Missing
Suresnes American Cemetery
Suresnes, France

Information found on American Battle Monuments
Commission: abmc.gov

Otto was a Private for the U.S. Army with the 22nd Engineer
Regiment during World War I. He went Missing in Action on
September 6, 1918.



ARCHIE W. BERRY

Branch: Navy

Date of Birth: 1905

Date of Death: 10/9/1945

Memorialized: Tablets of the Missing
Honolulu Memorial
Honolulu, Hawaii



Excerpt from USS Southern Seas Memories - Crew Biographies

Archie W. Berry was born in 1905 and enlisted in the Navy on May 5, 1944 in St. Louis. He served during World War II. He came aboard the USS Southern Seas as a Fireman Third Class on January 17, 1945 at Guam in the Mariannas Islands. He received advancement to Motor Machinist's Mate Second Class on September 1, 1945. During the October 9, 1945 typhoon, Berry was reported missing and ultimately declared dead.



The USS Southern Seas

FRED C. FRITZ

Branch: Navy

Date of Birth: 9/2/1925

Date of Death: 8/6/1945

Memorialized: Tablets of the Missing
Manila American Cemetery
Manila, Philippines



Excerpt from "Veterans of Monroe County, Illinois"

Fred C. Fritz, known to his friends and family as Fritzie, graduated from Waterloo High School in 1943. His grandparents raised Fritzie because both of his parents had died by the time he was 3 years old. He entered the U.S. Navy on September 1, 1943, just three months after graduation. He completed basic training at Great Lakes, and then advanced training at Northwestern University and New London, Connecticut. He entered foreign duty in January 1945.

Fritzie was a Radioman Petty Officer 2nd Class and one of a crew of 84 serving on the USS Bullhead (SS-332). On August 6, 1945, the Bullhead reported arrival on station in the Java Sea. She was not heard from again and was presumed sunk, with her entire complement of officers and men. She was the last U.S. Submarine lost during World War II. The USS Bullhead is officially classified by the U.S. Navy as "overdue and presumed lost."



The USS Bullhead

HENRY HEITNER

Branch: Navy

Date of Birth: Unknown

Date of Death: 12/18/1944

Memorialized: Tablets of the Missing
Manila American Cemetery
Manila, Philippines



Information from honorstates.org

Henry Heitner was in the United States Navy. He served as a Seaman Second Class on the USS Monaghan on the Philippine Sea during World War II. Seaman Heitner's official status is Missing in Action or Lost at Sea.



The USS Monaghan

MONROE F. METZGER

Branch: Navy

Date of Birth: 8/24/1919

Date of Death: 12/17/1945

Memorialized: Tablets of the Missing
Manila American Cemetery
Manila, Philippines



Monroe F. Metzger

Excerpt from "Veterans of Monroe County, Illinois"

Monroe Fred Metzger, born August 24, 1919 to William and Mary Stumpf Metzger of Waterloo, became Monroe County's first World War II casualty and hero.

Monroe enlisted in the U.S. Navy March 1, 1939 and served in San Diego, Hong Kong, Manila, and on the USS Tulsa. On May 6, 1942, when he was attached to a Naval Hospital at Canacao, Philippine Islands, Monroe Metzger, Seaman First Class, was declared missing. According to letters received by his father and sister, Ardel, after they had sent numerous letters requesting information, Monroe had been taken to the hospital from the USS Tulsa and was doing well when the hospital fell to the enemy. Patients and staff were evacuated to Manila, which also fell to the enemy. Between April 9 and May 6, 1942 both Bataan and Corregidor, Philippine Islands surrendered to the enemy. Stores of food and ammunition in the defending garrison had been depleted and casualties are known to have been heavy among the defending forces. No additional information had been received by the Navy Department concerning the fate of Monroe. The family received official notice from President Harry Truman that Monroe was presumed dead December 17, 1945 and he was awarded the

WALLACE O. ROEVER

Branch: Air Force

Date of Birth: 4/22/1920

Date of Death: 1/20/1945

Memorialized: Tablets of the Missing

Manila American Cemetery

Manila, Philippines

Excerpt from "Veterans of Monroe County, Illinois"

Wallace Roever enlisted in the United States Air Corps on November 3, 1943. He was a First Lieutenant in the 42nd Bomber group, 70th Bomber Squadron. Wallace was the pilot of a B-25-D Bomber.

Wallace Roever was born on April 22, 1920 in Columbia, Illinois to Oscar and Alma Mueller Roever. He was not married and had been an art student at the University of Illinois. Oscar died when his plane crashed January 20, 1945 near Kofian Island, then called New Guinea, a Province of Indonesia. His body was never recovered.



B-25 Mitchell Bomber



Wallace Roever

ARLO F. SCHELLHARDT

Branch: Navy

Date of Birth: Unknown

Date of Death: 2/16/1945

Memorialized: Tablets of the Missing
Manila American Cemetery
Manila, Philippines

Information from honorstates.org

Arlo Schellhardt enlisted in the Navy and served during World War II as a Petty Officer Third Class. His occupation was Motor Machinist's Mate Third Class. Schellhardt was reported missing and ultimately declared dead on February 16, 1945.



LYLE A. THOMPSON

Branch: Air Force

Date of Birth: 5/11/1923

Date of Death: 3/2/1945

Memorialized: Tablets of the Missing

Manila American Cemetery

Manila, Philippines



Lyle Thompson

Excerpt from "Veterans of Monroe County, Illinois"

Lyle A. Thompson was born and raised near Hecker, Illinois. He served in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II. Lyle was inducted into the Army on February 18, 1943 and entered active service on March 8, 1943 at Scott Field, Illinois. Lyle achieved the rank of Staff Sergeant (SSG).

SSG Thompson received his thirteen weeks basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and his advanced individual training as an aerial gunner/engineer with the 649th Bomb Squadron, 411th Bomb Group and later with the 3rd Air Force, III Bomber Command at Florence Army Air Field, South Carolina where he received training on both the Mitchell B-25 Medium Bomber and Douglas A-20 Light Attack Bomber. SSG Thompson was deployed overseas to the South Pacific in June of 1944 and was assigned to combat operations flying 33 missions as an aerial gunner/engineer on the A-20 aircraft with the 387th Bombardment Squadron of the 312th Bombardment Group in the Southwest Pacific Area of the Far East Air Forces.

SSG Thompson was lost with his aircraft and pilot near the coast of Northern Luzon, the Philippine Islands, while returning from a mission to Formosa on March 2, 1945. It was his thirty-third mission. He was posthumously awarded the Air Medal and Purple Heart as well as a Citation of Honor signed by Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, HH "Hap" Arnold. Lyle married the former Isabelle Kreher, at Lincoln Air Base, Nebraska on June 17, 1943, to which union, a daughter, Charlotte Marie was born. SSG Thompson never had the opportunity to see his daughter, as he was overseas at the time of her birth. SSG Thompson's remains were never recovered.

AUGUST F. WEINEL

Branch: Navy

Date of Birth: 10/6/1914

Date of Death: 9/28/1943

Memorialized: Tablets of the Missing
Manila American Cemetery
Manila, Philippines



Excerpt from "Veterans of Monroe County, Illinois"

August Frederick Weinell born October 6, 1914, Columbia, Illinois, to Fredric William Weinell and Elizabeth Daoust Weinell. He attended Columbia Grade School, Dupon High School obtaining high scholastic marks and participated in Civil Military Training at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. He also attended Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri 1931 to 1932. During college, he found time to pledge Alpha Kappa fraternity and pursue an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy. He attended United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, 1932 to 1936 and stood number 1 in the class and took all scholastic honors and awards, which included a Rhodes Scholarship. As a young Ensign, August's first ship was the Heavy Cruiser, USS Indianapolis, which put into port at Portland, Oregon for the Rose Festival in June of 1937. At a reception given for the ship's officers, he met Elizabeth Billingslea Robins, daughter of Colonel Robins US Army, who was then chief of construction for Bonneville Dam. They were married December 7, 1938 at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. August's Navy career path was chosen when he applied for the submarine service. He attended submarine school at New London, Connecticut and graduated at the head of his class, once again taking all top honors. His first submarine was USS Pollock. The Pollock was due to return to Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Being advised that Pearl Harbor was under attack, Pollock entered harbor the following day on the 8th. Later she set sail for Japan, specifically the east coast of Honshu. August was later to receive the Silver Star for one action involving seven ships and a night surface attack, which he commanded. He also received the Purple Heart for injuries received during and emergency "crash" dive. August was transferred to submarine construction at New London, US Naval Ship Yard and assigned to the USS Cisco, SS290. On November 16, 1943, the Navy reported the USS Cisco as missing in action. (continued on next page)

Following the end of the war, Japanese records indicated an active bombardment of a moving oil slick on the surface of the Sulu Sea west of Mindanao. These attacks continued until it was observed that the oil slick was stationary, about September 28, 1943. The Columbia Star, August's home town newspaper reported on January 24, 1946 that his parents received a letter from Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal stating that, "The Cisco was unreported after leaving Port Darwin, Australia, and to date no other information has been received by the Navy Department concerning the fate of the vessel or her crew. In view of the length of time that has now elapsed since your son was reported missing, and because there have been no official nor unconfirmed reports that any of the personnel of the vessel survived or were taken prisoner, I am reluctantly forced to the conclusion that your son is deceased." Lieutenant Commander August F. Weinel who had been previously reported missing in action while in performance of his duty on November 16, 1943 was declared Killed in Action (KIA) on January 8, 1946.

His wife Elizabeth and his three children William, Tom, and Elizabeth survived August.

Information on findagrave.com

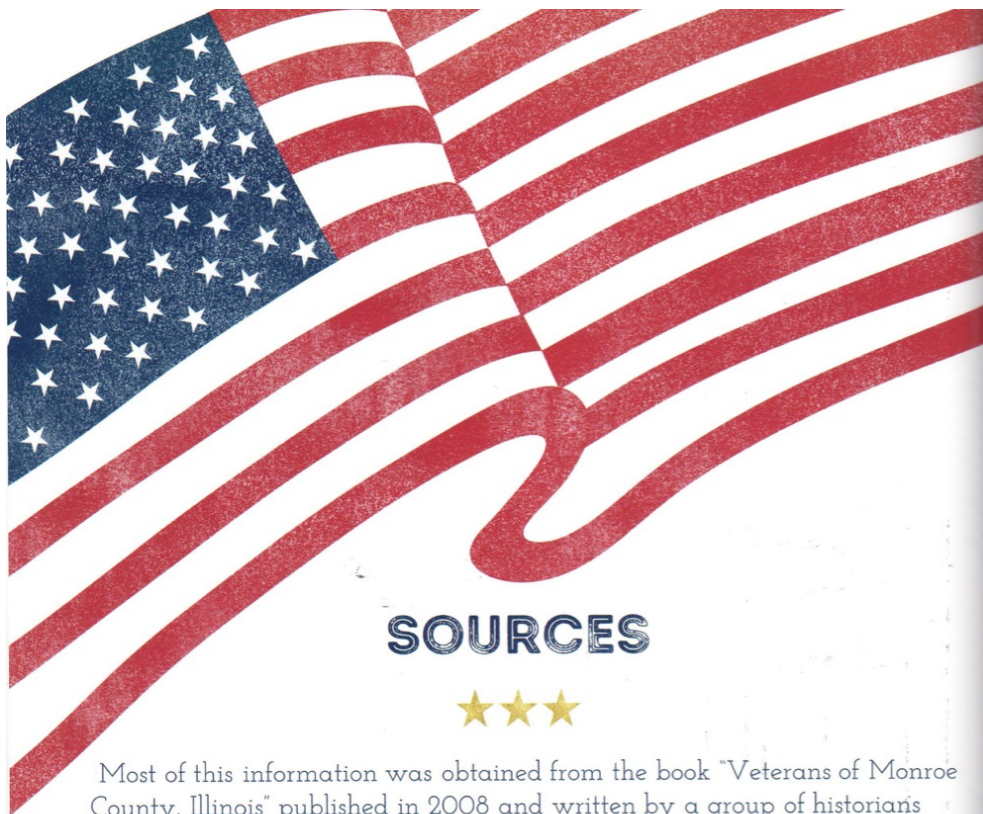
The crew of the USS Cisco were lost approximately on September 28, 1943 and were officially declared Killed in Action on January 8, 1946.

Cisco sailed from Panama August 7, 1943 for Brisbane, Australia, arriving September 1 to assume local patrol duties, until September 18, when she docked at Darwin. She put out on her first war patrol September 20, but never returned. Japanese records tell of sighting a submarine leaking oil on September 28 in an area where Cisco is known to have been the only submarine operating. Japanese records state this submarine was sunk by bombs and depth charges. Cisco is thus presumed to have been lost in action on September 28, 1943. The only survivor from the crew was Chief Radioman Howell B. Rice, who was taken sick in Darwin and sent ashore to the Navy hospital prior to Cisco's final voyage.

Japanese records state that the submarine was attacked by Type 97 "Kate" attack bombers of the 954 Naval Air Squadron and the riverboat Karatsu (originally a U.S. Navy gunboat, USS Luzon (PR-7), captured by Japanese forces and put to work against her former owners).



USS Cisco



SOURCES



Most of this information was obtained from the book "Veterans of Monroe County, Illinois" published in 2008 and written by a group of historians including Jan Wenk, Karen Buettner, Vern Ritter, Pam Foster and Pat Vaseska.

Information was also obtained from the book "Arrowheads to Aerojets: Monroe County, Illinois 1673-1966" published in 1967 and written by Helen Ragland Klein.

Waterloo, Illinois Mayor Thomas Smith and City of Waterloo Community Relations Coordinator Sarah Deutch put together this booklet of Monroe County, IL POW/MIA Veterans in 2019.

Special thanks to Jan Wenk in helping find additional sources of information.



Pictured, 24 of Monroe County's finest young men assemble for a group photo outside the draft center on Main Street in Waterloo on June 23, 1942. The men are preparing to board a bus to head to various services' basic training. Eventually, about 13 million like them put on uniforms and fought in Europe or Asia. *(submitted photo)*

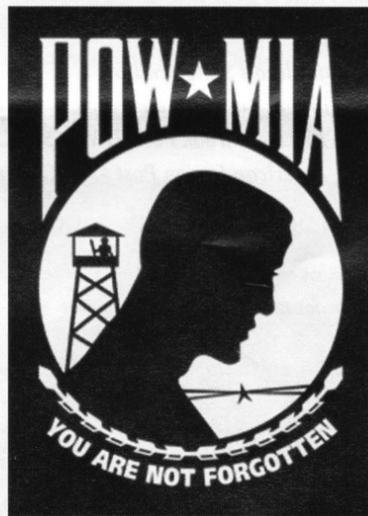


THANK YOU FOR YOUR
SACRIFICE

POW-MIA Monument Dedication Ceremony

September 21, 2019

10:00 am



Dedication Program

Call to Order and Advance of Color Guard

*Metzger-Crook Post VFW #6504, American Legion Post #747 &
Girl Scout Troop #698*

National Anthem

Performed by Gibault Catholic High School Hawkapellas

Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic School 2nd Grade Classes

Invocation

Captain Thomas Peck, Chaplain, 375th Air Mobility Wing, USAF

Welcome

Mayor Tom Smith

Guest Speakers

Paul Schimpf, Illinois State Senator

Dan Reitz, Illinois State Representative

John Fuller, Metzger-Crook Post VFW#6504 Commander

Roy J. May, American Legion Post #747 Commander

Unveiling & Dedication of POW-MIA Monument

Guest of Honor

*Colonel Kenneth E. Moss, Headquarters Air Mobility Command,
USAF*

Gun Salute

Metzger-Crook Post VFW #6504

Benediction

Captain Thomas Peck, Chaplain, 375th Air Mobility Wing, USAF

Taps

Performed by Russell Wolf

Retire the Colors & "Ashokan Farewell" by Lillian Roever

*Special thanks to the Illinois Patriot Guard and
Waterloo Fire Department for attending.*

Guest Speaker

COLONEL KENNETH E. MOSS

Colonel Kenneth E. Moss is the Deputy Director of Operations, Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration, Headquarters Air Mobility Command, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. He is responsible for policy and procedures for worldwide air operations and transportation functions assigned to the command. These include airfield operations, Civil Reserve Air Fleet, Command and Control, combat/nuclear/current operations, operational requirements, aeromedical evacuation, training, and standardization programs. Colonel Moss is a 1992 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy. He has held command positions at the squadron, group and wing levels. Colonel Moss also served at United States Central Command on the AFRICOM transition team and as the Division Chief, Iraq Strategy, Plans and Policy. His previous assignment was Commander of the 374th Airlift Wing at Yokota Air Base, Japan.



POW-MIA Veterans

The City of Waterloo recognizes and honors the service and sacrifices of our Nation's men and women in uniform who were prisoners of war or missing in action while serving to protect the freedoms enjoyed by all Americans. The follow are POW-MIA Veterans from Monroe County:

Prisoners of War

Dave Crosby
Omar Dreps
Clifford Haberl
Raymond Laskowski
James May
Clyde Meyer
Calvin Vogt
Emil Wetzler

Missing in Action

Otto Wagner
Archie Berry
Fred Fritz
Henry Heitner
Monroe Metzger
Wallace Roever
Arlo Schellhardt
Lyle Thompson
August Weinell

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

International Order of Odd Fellows
Waterloo Military Heritage Day
Waterloo Walmart
City of Waterloo
Monroe County Genealogical Society
Monroe County Historical Society
Metzger-Crook VFW Post 6504
Metzger-Crook VFW Post 6504 Auxillary
American Legion Post 747
Monroe County Democratic Club
Huebner Concrete
Laux Grafix
Judy Maurer
Ron Hagenow

POW-MIA Monument Dedication Ceremony

September 21, 2019

10:00 am

