

Memories of World War II

By

Harold Kick

MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR II

By

Harold Kick

*Harold Kick*



## WORLD WAR II

" December 7, 1941, this day shall live in infamy." These are the famous words of President Roosevelt as he addressed the Congress the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Fifty years later many Americans can still vividly recall that tragic day. Most people would like to forget the war and the difficult times for the entire world, but memories of this kind can not be forgotten easily. Maybe we older folks should tell the stories of the war to our younger people. I am sure a lesson could be learned.

World War II was the most extensive and most costly war in loss of lives and destruction to property the world has ever known. World War II ushered in the nuclear age, high tech electronics, super powers, and cold wars. The world would never be the same.

I would like to write about some of the memories of this time in history. I would especially like to write about the involvement in the war by the people of the small community of Pine City, MN. After reading hundreds of old Pine-Poker Pioneer newspapers and talking to dozens of veterans, I have found an amazing story about the people of Pine City and how deeply involved they became in the war effort. The story of the Pine City National Guard, the story of the twenty nine pilots and nearly fifty combat airmen, the enlistment of thirty two young women into the military and the efforts of the Red Cross should be told. The most important and saddest story of all is the death of thirty of our finest young men. Pine City gave far more than what should be expected from such a small community. We should record these stories.

After fifty years it is quite difficult to remember everything just as it happened. To my knowledge very few stories or accounts of the war years in Pine City have ever been written. I believe these stories are worthy of being recorded and kept as part of the history of the community. I will try to record the stories as I remember them and as I have been told by other people living in Pine City. If there are any errors or inaccuracies I do apologize for them.

Fifty years ago the town of Pine City had a population of about 1700 people and the surrounding rural area about 2500, making the entire area about 4200 people. For the stories I would like to define the Pine City area as the area that is now the Pine City school district, which includes Beroun, Henriette, Rock Creek and parts of Brook Park and Grasston. I hope the people of Grasston and Brook Park will forgive me if I include their heroes in my stories. Most of the boys went to Pine City High School and we would like to think they are part of the community.

I would like to thank the Pine City Pioneer for allowing me to spend days reading old newspapers they have on file. The Pine-Poker Pioneer newspaper did an excellent job of reporting on the war and publishing letters and information about our men and women in the services. Most of the information has come from the 1940's newspapers. Other sources of information are the History of the Pine City National Guard, the City of Pine City, the Ann Vach Collection, the Pine County Court House and the publication "One Hundred Years in Pine County".

## THE AIRMEN

The thought of being able to fly has fascinated people for centuries. Many attempts to fly like birds ended in failure, until in 1903 the Wright Brothers, Orville and Wilbur, were able to keep a powered homemade craft in the air for several minutes. This desire to fly was certainly evident in Pine City. As a young boy on the farm I would watch every airplane I could see and hope that some day I maybe would be able to fly. The first plane I ever got near was an airplane parked on the Pine County Fair Grounds. Several teenage boys and I walked to the grounds to have a look at this wonder. It was homemade and the most surprising thing it was powered by a Model A Ford automobile engine. This crude plane actually would and did fly.

Many of our young men were fascinated by the WW I stories of Eddie Rickenbacher, Billy Mitchell and the Red Baron. When the thought of another war became evident in 1940, our nation called for it's most talented young men to fly for our armed forces. Pine City's young men responded like no other community in the country. By the time the war was over in 1945, more than twenty five of Pine City's men were pilots, three were navigators, three were bombardiers and at least fifteen were gunners on bomber crews. Unbelievable numbers for such a small rural town in Minnesota.

To become a combat airman, a person had to be young, between the ages of 18 and 26, have excellent health, above average intelligence, have good coordination, and above all he must volunteer for this service. I once read a book that stated the Army Air Corps lost a higher percentage of it's combat men in combat than any other service. This may be true; our losses were simply staggering to our bomber crews and our fighter pilots early in the war. What attracted young men to such a dangerous duty? Could it be the some what glamorous service, the excitement of fast machines, or did it just sound better to be flying in the Wild Blue Yonder than walking in the mud and living in fox holes? Maybe it was the extra pay airmen received called flight pay, which I suspect was a cute way of saying extra hazard pay.

I believe several of our early flyers influenced more of our men than anything else. Early in the war Bob Therrien, a pilot, flew 50 missions in a B-25 bomber over North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. 1st. Lt. Therrien was awarded the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with nine Oak Leaf Clusters and several Battle Stars. Lt. Robert Hejny, a bombardier stationed in England survived a crash in the North Sea to return to duty and earn the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters and several Battle Stars-truly a couple of local heroes admired by all.

I hope the readers of this story will be forgiving if I should overlook someone or do not have a complete story, but the limited sources of information and after fifty years, my memory may not be clear. I may not have a complete record, and to this I do apologize.

Lt. Clifford Perkins was our first airman lost. Cliff was a Marine fighter pilot and was killed May 19, 1943, on a mission over the South Pacific. Lt. George Serbin, a Pine City school teacher, was a pilot in the U.S. Navy. George flew fighter planes off a

carrier and was the youngest Squadron Commander in the Naval history.

Lt.'s Ben Boo, Hal Harrison, and Raymond Hanson were all navigators on bombers. Ben navigated a B-29 to Japan. It was a difficult assignment to find your way over hundreds of miles of open sea to a tiny island.

Lt. John Sauser, a Marine Fighter pilot was killed on a training flight. Ensign Orville Thorson, a Navy pilot was also killed in training. Lt. Kenneth Wiedemann, son of Otto Wiedemann, a WW I fighter pilot, was bomber pilot and instructor.

The story of 1st. Lt. Wallace D'Aoust must never be forgotten. Wally entered the service before the war with the National Guard. He transferred to the Army Air Corps, became a bomber pilot and was assigned to fly B-24's with the 8th Air Force in England. On November 5, 1943, his group went on a mission to Munster, Germany. On return, his bomber was hit by flak and a fire broke out in his plane. He flew his burning plane until his crew was able to parachute to safety in Holland. It is believed Wally was unable to get off his burning plane and crashed into the North Sea. Could any American ask more of a twenty year old officer? Mr. and Mrs. D'Aoust later received his Air Medal and Purple Heart posthumously.

The story of the Joe Roberts family of Henriette should be told. Six children of the Roberts family attended the Pine City Schools, four of them to become military pilots in WW II. Willard, a Lt. in the Navy flew TBF torpedo bombers in the South Pacific. He later became the Mayor of Corpus Christi, Texas. Perry, was Navy pilot and flew tiny scout planes that were catapulted from the USS Quincy. The Quincy was sunk and Perry was one of the fortunate ones to be rescued. He stayed in the Navy to become a Commander. Jack flew B-24 bombers with the 8th Air Force in England. He stayed in the Air Force and served in Korea and Viet Nam. He retired as a Lt. Colonel. Bob, was a Navy pilot who flew in combat in the South Pacific and later became a Captain with United Air Lines. Quite an impressive record for one family.

We had several pilots serve in the India-Burma area with the famous Flying Tigers. 1st Lt. John Grover shot down two Jap planes. Captain Kenneth LaTourelle, one of our Grasston pilots, shot down one Jap plane, destroyed five more on the ground and sank twelve river boats. Kenneth was shot down and wounded and took several days to walk back to his base to fly again. In all he flew ninety one missions against the Japs. Both of these pilots received the Distinguished Flying Crosses and numerous Air Medals and Battle Stars. Flight Officer Elmer Ziegler, an Army pilot, also flew in the China area. He was killed July 10, 1945 when on a fighter sweep. The Purple Heart and Air Medal are his family's remembrances of Elmer's participation in the war.

The above fighter pilots all flew P-51 Mustangs. The Mustang was considered by most authorities to be the most advanced and the best all around fighter plane of WW II. The British gave the fighter the name of Mustang, a perfect name for this airplane. The P-51 was much like a young wild green-broke horse. It was fast, responsive, long-ranged, well liked by the pilots, but skiddish and unforgiving. The P-51 was an excellent fighter, but was only for the most experienced pilots.

Ernie Pyle, one of the war's most loved correspondents wrote, "The fighter pilots are so young, so mature for their age and the most lonely, combat men in the war." Probably so, the fighter pilot was all alone in his tiny cockpit, could not move around or relieve himself and had no one to help him if he had trouble. A lonely feeling, indeed.

Several pilots flew with the Air Transport Command. Transport pilots flew all types of aircraft from the factories to the combat areas. Some pilots flew paratroopers to the war zone, while others flew supplies to the front lines. Captain David Hall flew to Alaska, North Africa and in the United States. Lt. Ward Jones flew supplies to troops in Holland. Captain Robert Swafford flew thirty combat bomber missions from England and then flew transport planes from the United States to Europe. Lt. Ervin Ovick was stationed in India and flew C-47's with supplies over the Himalayan "Hump" to China. At that time the Japanese controlled much of China and Burma and were threatening to take India. Lt. Orville Truesdell, a Navy pilot, also served as a transport pilot.

Captain Vernon Lange flew bombers with the 6th Air Force in Panama. Lt. Earl Nelson flew B-24 bombers with the 8th Air Force in England. Lt. Edward Peterson flew bombers from England and Lt. Dean Christy flew bombers from North Africa early in the war. F/O Morris Milgrom also flew bombers. Lt. William Saari, a Navy pilot, flew Blimps which were lighter than air aircrafts. Blimps were used to spot enemy submarines. Lt. Saari was decorated with the Air Medal.

Sorry I don't have information on Lt's Wayne Gustafson and Robert Gumnitz, both Army pilots.

Pine City Airmen included three bombardiers, Lt's Robert Hejny, Leonard Plessel and Charles Woehrle. Bombardiers had the duty of dropping the bombs on the target. All the preparation, the flying, dodging flak and enemy fighters would be for naught if the bombardiers missed the target. The bomber must fly straight and level for several minutes on the bomb run. This is a very unnerving time for the crew and especially the bombardier in his glass nose of the plane. Lt. Woehrle was shot down and became a prisoner of war in Germany.

Certainly we cannot tell this story without including our fifteen or more enlisted men who were so important as members of their bomber crews. All of these men were gunners and many also served as radiomen and engineers. I have always felt it must be more stressful for the crew of a bomber to fly on a combat mission than to the pilots. Pilots had control of flying the airplane and were too busy to be concerned about anything else; the other members of the crew could only hope and have complete trust in the pilot to control the aircraft and bring them back safely.

We suffered heavy losses of our gunners. Sgt. Gerald Michaels, a B-29 gunner, was killed on a mission over Japan. S/Sgt. Richard Petersen was killed in Italy when his disabled bomber crashed on return from a mission. Richard had only one more mission to fly before returning home. S/Sgt. Dean Trippler was also killed in Italy when his bomber failed to return from a

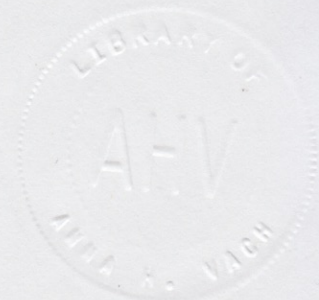
mission. His bomber was believed to have crashed in bad weather. T/Sgt. Dean Swenson, another gunner, was killed over North Africa. Sgt. Kenneth Caroon on a mission over Ploesti, one of the most difficult targets in Europe, had to bail out and was taken prisoner of war. T/Sgt. John Lindquist flew 30 missions over Europe and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters and Battle Stars. Sgts. Daryl Trippler, Irvin Nelson, Robert Jorgenson, Raymond Grothe, John Runa, Melford Westrom, Robert Striegl, Harland Lange, and John Roberts were all gunners and most saw combat in WW II.

Most combat men do not say much about their experiences, but maybe at our age we should tell some of our stories. With modesty, I would like to include my story. I was trained as a fighter pilot and assigned to the 325th Fighter Group in Italy. The 325th flew P-51's on long range escort and strafing missions. Missions would last from four to six hours or more. Targets included Ploesti, Kracow in Poland, Wiener-Neunstat, Vienna, Berlin and Regensburg, some of the most difficult and heavily defended targets in all of Europe. My most memorable mission was when I got into a dog fight with a ME-163, the very rare German Rocket Fighter. After a few rounds the German broke and ran. I suspect he noticed my very capable wingman backing me. The ME-163 was armed with three 30mm cannons in the nose. These cannons sure made an impressive display when fired at you. My combat record lists 50 missions, 94 sorties and 265 combat hours with one FW-190 shot down, 3 locomotives and 2 oil cars destroyed, 32 railwaycars damaged. The Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, and seven Battle Stars were awarded for my services. My greatest thrill was my 21st birthday, May 6, 1945. I knew the Germans would sign the peace treaty the next day, my tour of duty was complete and I had just received orders to return to the United States for possible discharge. What a way to celebrate your 21st birthday.

I have only written about combat airmen. Let's not forget the dozens of Pine City men in the ground forces, mechanics, armorers, medics, the tower operators and the mission planners. These men were so very vital in the success of every mission. I have seen the relief on the faces of the ground crew when their airplanes came back safely from a mission. It is unforgettable. They really worried about the return of their pilots. At this time I think of Don Doran who was a control tower operator in the Aleuthian Islands. Tower operators were so important to the pilots in guiding them back to a safe landing. S/Sgt. Glen Kick was another that saw no combat, but had the important duty of training bombardiers in the use of the secret bomb sight. S/Sgt. Robert Ovick serviced aircraft propellers in the Pacific and Japan areas. Sgt. Emil Najmon with Aircraft Service served in Italy and Cpl. Leonard Miller served on maintenance of B-29's in the Pacific area. Captain James Engle served as commanding officer of a Air Force training school. Lt. Eleanore Wiedemann served as an officer in a Flying Training school. Two other women, Denice Rawley, with the air transport

command and Margaret Rolph, a Link trainer instructor also served in the Air Force.

Why did so many Pine City men volunteer for flight duty? No one seems to know or even suggest an answer. We as Americans can only be ever so thankful that we had the quality of young men and ever so grateful for the sacrifices of so many. It has been said "The Freedoms we enjoy every day as Americans have not been Free."





## Pine City Men Killed in WWII

It is difficult to believe that thirty of Pine City's finest young men were killed in World War II. Nation wide statistics would indicate a community the size of Pine City should expect to have a loss of twelve or thirteen. Why Pine City had over twice the National average is hard to understand.

I have asked a number of people about these losses and few can even suggest any reason for the high losses. One person suggested that the military considered all men from small towns and rural areas as just country boys with rather poor education and only suited to fill in the lines as cannon fodder. Over half of the men killed were well trained leaders with the ranks of Sergeant, Chief, Ensign or Lieutenant, certainly men with this training and leadership abilities would not be considered cannon fodder.

From my research I have found a very high percent of our local men were volunteers into the more active combat services such as Infantry, Paratroops, Glider Troops and the Army and Navy Air Forces. These are the branches of service which could expect high casualties during war. Over sixty men volunteered for Officer training, most received their commission as Field Officers and served in combat areas. This alone would indicate the willingness of the Pine City men to accept responsibilities, leadership and dangers of war time service for their country.

The Pine City High School class of 1942 had thirty three boys in its class, thirty served in the armed forces in World War II. These surprisingly high numbers indicate the patriotism and concern these young men had for their country and the willingness to serve when needed.

The following list of the men killed and the brief account of the incident was compiled from newspaper articles in the local paper and from families and friends of the men killed. After fifty years it is hard to find pictures and stories of all the men. With the help of three mothers, a wife, sisters, brothers and other relatives I was able to get twenty four pictures and a brief story about each of the thirty men. To decide if these men were from Pine City or a neighboring town presented a minor problem, but I hope the list is accurate and complete.

The list of men killed is in order as they died. The dates and places indicate how the fighting progressed. The first deaths were Navy in the Pacific area then moved to North Africa, Italy then into Europe and then back to the Pacific area near the end of the war.

The Pine-Poker Pioneer lists Gerald Corrigan as the first from Pine City to be killed. Little information could be found on Gerald. Several people remember he lived in Pine City, and he joined the Navy before the war. Chief Quartermaster Corrigan was killed August, 1942 while serving on the USS Whitney.



Anthony L. Rode

Pvt US Army

Killed August 6, 1942

Tony lived at Pine City and was the brother of Mrs. Paul Stumne. He entered the service May 6, 1942 and served with the 352 nd Squadron Air Force Gunnery School at LOs Vegas.

Tony was killed the night of August 6, 1942 while on guard duty from a gunshot wound inflicted by persons unknown.

Pvt Forrest Ward of Pine City who was stationed at the same camp accompanied the body to Mound, Minn. for burial.

Age 33



William Osman

Pvt. USA

Killed: August 30, 1942

William Osman the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Osmah of the Beroun area was only in the service for six days when his body was found along the railroad tracks near Nashville, Tenn. Police are of the opinion that William was beaten and robbed by an unknown assailent.

Age 21



Russell Milliren

MM 1/C USN

Killed: November 15, 1942

Russell lived in Pine City and graduated from Pine City High School with the class of 1937. He enlisted in the Navy before the war began.

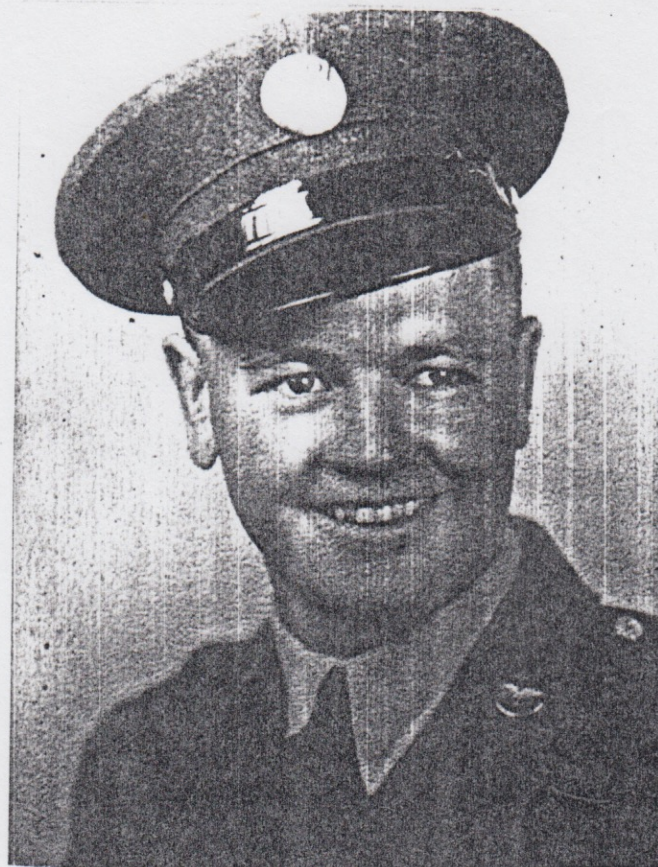
Russell and forty three other seamen were killed when the USS Pensecola was torpedoed by the Japanese in the South Pacific. His body was placed on another ship to be returned home for burial. This ship was sunk and his body was lost at sea.

His cousin Lt. Robert Roberts, a Navy pilot from Henriette, Minnesota was flying over the USS Pensecola and witnessed the hit of the torpedo.

The Pine City VFW Post was named Novak-Milliren in honor of Russell Milliren.

Age 26





Dean Swenson

T/Sgt. AAF

Killed: February 24, 1943

Dean Swenson, the son of Mr. and Mrs. John A. Swenson grew up in Pine City area and attended the local school. Dean enlisted into the Army Air Force and was trained as a tail gunner on a bomber. He served overseas with a bomber group in North Africa. T/Sgt. Swenson was killed February 24, 1943 while on a bombing mission over North Africa. He was awarded the Air Medal and Purple Heart.



Clifford Perkins Jr.

Lt. US Marines

Killed: May 19, 1943

Clifford Perkins was born June 10, 1920, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Perkins Sr. He lived in Pine City all his life and graduated from Pine City High School with the class of 1937.

Cliff enlisted with the Navy early in the war and earned his pilot wings September 9, 1942. He transferred to the Marine Corps and was commissioned a Lieutenant.

Lt. Perkins was lost and believed killed on May 19, 1943 while on a fighter mission in the Pacific area. He was awarded the Air Medal and Purple Heart.

Age 22



Wallace D'Aoust

1st Lt. AAF

Lost: November 5, 1943

Wallace D'Aoust was born in Duluth, Mn. on December 25, 1922. He moved to Pine City with his parents and graduated from Pine City High School in 1940.

Wally entered service with the Pine City National Guard in February 1941. He transferred to the Army Air Force and trained as a bomber pilot. He earned his wings and Lieutenant commission on February 16, 1943. Assigned to fly B-24 heavy bombers with the 8th Air Force in England, Wallace flew bombing missions over France and Germany. He was promoted to First Lieutenant on September 27, 1943.

On return from a bombing mission to Munster, Germany on November 5, 1943 Lt. D'Aoust's bomber was hit with flak and began to burn. Wally ordered his crew to bail out over Holland. It is believed the burning bomber crashed into the North Sea with Lt. D'Aoust aboard.

Mr. and Mrs. D'Aoust received the Air Medal and Purple Heart post-humously for Wally's meritorious service to his country.



John Sauser

Lt. US Marines

Killed: November 23, 1943

John Sauser the son of Mr. and Mrs. William Sauser was born March 2, 1921 in Pine City. He attended the Pine City schools and graduated with the class of 1939. John was active in sports and held the district record in the 440 yard run.

John enlisted into the Navy Air Corps and was trained as a pilot. He transferred to the Marine Air Force and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant.

John was killed November 23, 1943 when two aircraft collided in the air during a training flight.

Age 22







Lawrence Atkinson

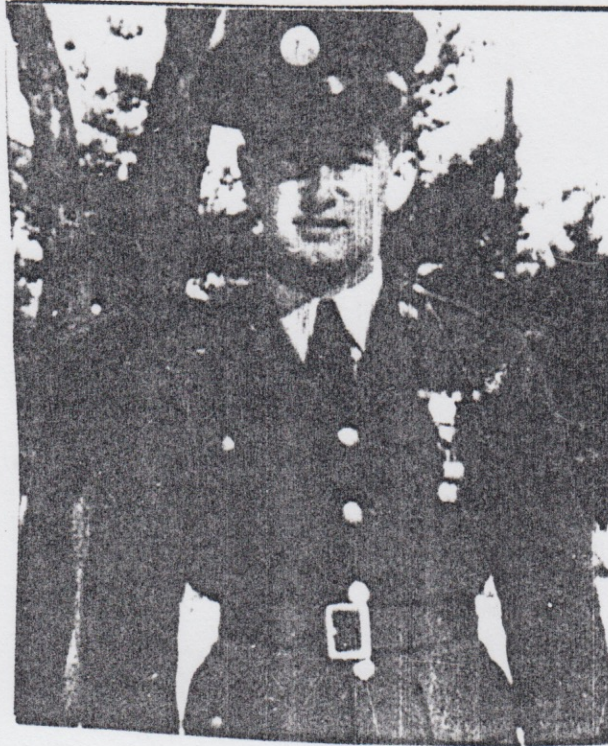
Pvt. US Army

Killed: January 21, 1944

Lawrence ( Hoover ) Atkinson the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Atkinson lived in Pine City all his life and attended the local school. Due to a heart defect Hoover was considered unfit for military service. On his third attempt to enlist he was accepted for the Army. Lawrence entered the Army on October 19, 1942 and was trained as a medic. He served overseas with the medical corps in North Africa, Sicily and Italy.

Pvt. Atkinson was killed trying to save other soldiers lives on January 21, 1944 in Italy.

Age 26



Kenneth L. Wilson

S/Sgt US Army

Killed May, 24, 1944

Kenneth Wilson the son of Mr. and Mrs. Felix Wilson graduated from Pine City High School with the class of 1939. Kenny entered the service with the Pine City National Guard in February 1941.

S/Sgt Wilson was killed in action near Mount Trocchio, Italy on May 24, 1944. Sgt Wilson was trying to alert his men to get under cover during a German dive bombing raid. Kenny was hit and killed.

Several weeks before he was killed Kenneth was awarded one of the Nations highest awards, the Silver Star, for "Galantry in Action" during combat with the Germans in Italy.

Age 22

Silver Star - Purple Heart



Stanley R. Jacobson

Sgt. US Army

Killed: June 24, 1944

Stanley Jacobson was born July 28, 1908 in the Pine City Township, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Anton Jacobson. He was married to Lorretta Peterson April 28, 1942

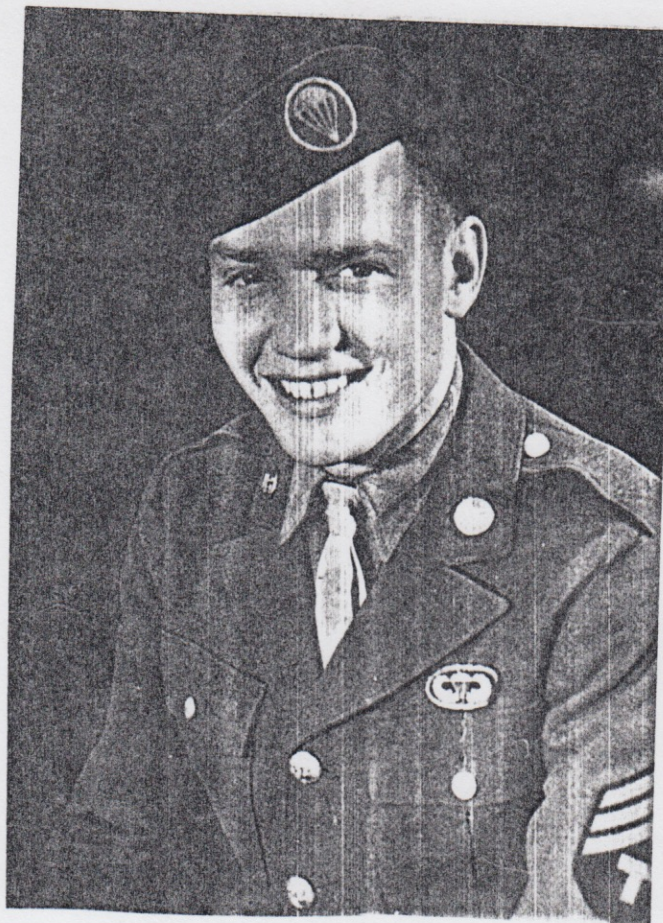
Stanley was serving in North Burma with a combat engineer group. They were building a road across northern Burma to get supplies to the Chinese forces fighting the Japanese.

Stanley died June 24, 1944 from a gunshot wound inflicted by a Japanese sniper.

Stanley's body was later returned to United States.

Age 35

Purple Heart



Paul Burton Thore

T/Sgt US Army

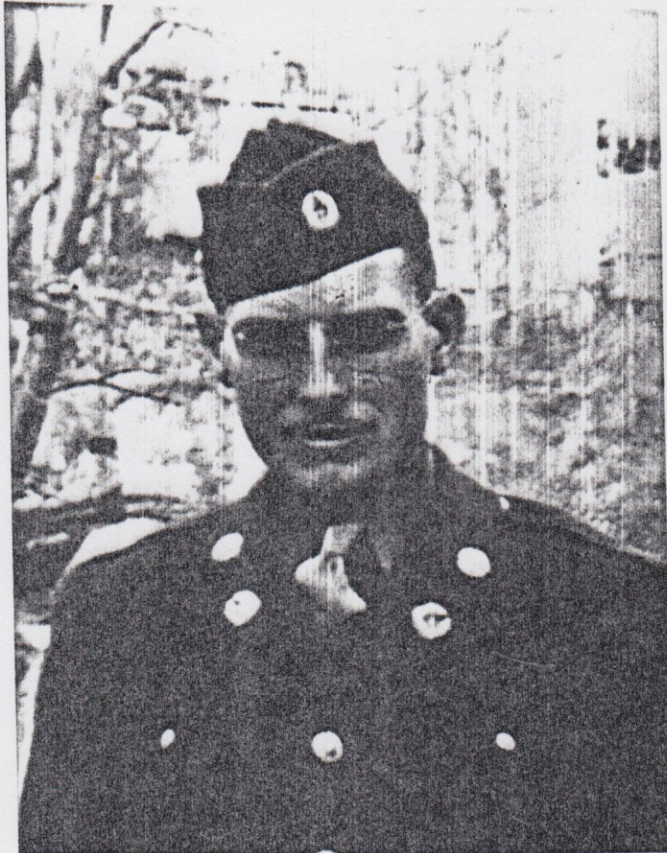
Killed: July 7, 1944

Burton Thore the son of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Thore was born September 27, 1920. He moved to Pine City with his parents in 1932 and graduated from Pine City High School with the class of 1936.

Burton enlisted as a Paratroop Infantry man in May 1942. He was sent to England and then to France.

T/Sgt Thore killed July 7, 1944 while on a Paratroop drop behind the lines in France.

Age 23



Clifford Seedorf

Sgt. US Army

Killed: July 14, 1944

Clifford Seedorf was born September 10, 1908 the son of Mr. and Mrs. John Seedorf of the Brook Park area. He entered service March 12, 1943 and trained with a tank destroyer unit.

Sgt. Seedorf was killed in action in Italy on July 14, 1944.

Age 36



Vernon K. Nelson

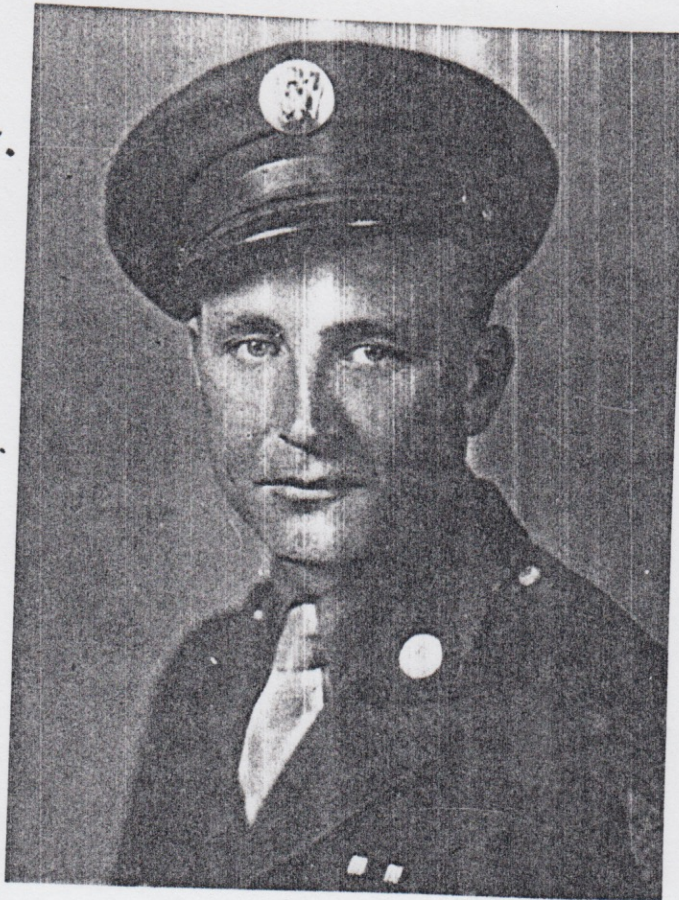
PFC. US Marines

Killed: August 1944

Vernon Nelson the son of Mr. and Mrs. Sophus Nelson of the Royalton Township attended Pine City High School. Vernon enlisted in the US Marine Corps in August 1943. He trained in San Diego and was sent to the South Pacific area.

PFC Nelson was killed sometime in August 1944, possibly near Saipan. The Marine Corps feared more information would benefit the enemy.

Age 19



Carl Purdy

Pvt. US Army

Killed: September 20, 1944

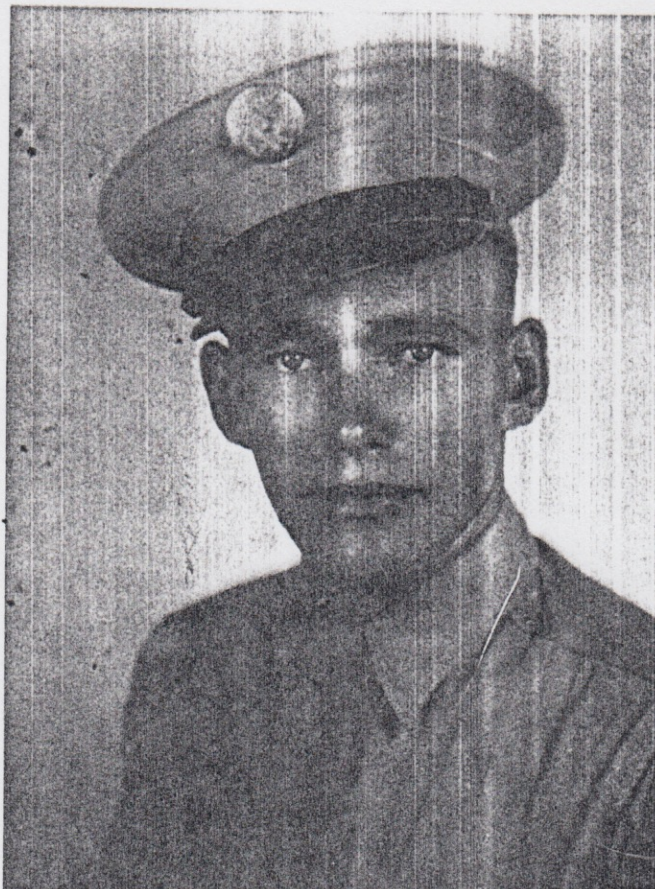
Carl Purdy was born December 8, 1914. He grew up in the Pine City area.

Carl volunteered to be trained as a glider trooper and was sent overseas to France.

Pvt. Purdy was killed September 20, 1944 while he was participating in a glider troop drop in France.

He was survived by his wife and two daughters.

Age 29



Dean C. Tripler

S/Sgt. Army Air Force

Killed: November, 1944

Dean Tripler was born June 15, 1924, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Tripler of Pine City.

Dean enlisted into the Army Air Corps at Fort Snelling on June 10, 1943. He received aerial gunnery training at Tyndall Field, Florida.

He was assigned to overseas duty as a tail gunner on a B-24 Liberator bomber with the 15th Air Force in Italy.

S/Sgt. Tripler was killed on a bombing raid on Austria. His bomber never returned from the raid and no trace has ever been found.

Age 20

Air Medal - Purple Heart





Ernest A. Wanous

GM 1st C US Navy

Killed: December 13, 1944

Ernest Wanous, his five brothers and one sister were orphans and lived in the Pine City area with friends and relatives. Their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Anton Wanous died when they were young children. All the boys served in the military service during WWII.

Ernest was a gunner on the Cruiser Nashville. The Nashville was screening a convoy bound for the invasion of Mindoro. A Japanese bomber on a suicide mission dived into the side of the Nashville and killed 133 Officers and men. Another 190 were wounded. Gunners Mate First Class Ernest Wanous was among those killed.

Ernest's body was buried on Leyte and later returned to Pine City to be buried in Calvary Cemetery.

Melvin Peter

Cpl. US Army

Killed: Dec. 13, 1944

Melvin Peter lived in Pine City and worked at the Pine City Hardware before the war. He served in the Army.

Cpl. Peter was killed in action December 13, 1944 in France.

Gerald Pepin

PFC. US Army

Killed: January 11, 1945

Gerald Pepin was the son of Mrs. Eva Pepin. Gerald lived in Pine City and attended the local school.

He served overseas with the Third Army in France and Luxemburg as an Infantryman. Gerald was wounded twice before being killed January 11, 1945 in Luxemburg. He was awarded the Purple Heart with two clusters and three Battle Stars.

Age 19



Ervin B. Miller

Sgt. US Army

Killed: January 11, 1945

Ervin Miller was born in Pokegama Township April 15, 1915 the son of E.B. and Malina Miller. He graduated from Pine City High School with the class of 1934.

Ervin entered service November 12, 1941 and was sent to England in September 1943. He served in France, Germany, and Belgium with the 3rd Armored Division of the First Army.

Sgt. Miller was killed in action on January 11, 1945 in Belgium.

Age 29





Orville Thorson

Ensign US Navy

Killed: February 10, 1945

Orville Thorson the son of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Thorson was born November 6, 1920. He grew up in the Henriette area and graduated from the Grasston High School in 1939.

Orville enlisted in the Navy and was trained as a pilot. He received his wings and Ensign commission.

Ensign Thorson was killed February 10, 1945 while on a training mission near Cape May, N.J.

Age 24



Richard E. France

PFC. US Marines

Killed: March 3, 1945

Richard France was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas France of Pine City. He attended the Pine City school.

Richard enlisted in the Marine Corps December 8, 1943. He served overseas in the central Pacific and was sent to Iwo Jima during the invasion of that Island.

PFC. France was killed on March 2, 1945 in action on Iwo Jima. Memorial services were held Sunday, May 30, 1945 at the First Presbyterian Church in Pine City.



Neal Goodrich

PFC. Army

Killed: March 25, 1945

Neal Goodrich was the owner of the Goodrich Funeral Home and Furniture Store. He was inducted into the Army November, 1943.

Neal went overseas in September, 1944 and was attached to the 423 Medical Detachment in England, France, Belgium and Germany.

While on duty in a forward aid station near Asback, Germany on March 24, 1945 the Jeep in which he was riding ran over an enemy land mine. Neal was wounded by mine fragments and never regained consciousness.

He was survived by his wife Phyllis and two year old daughter Roberta.



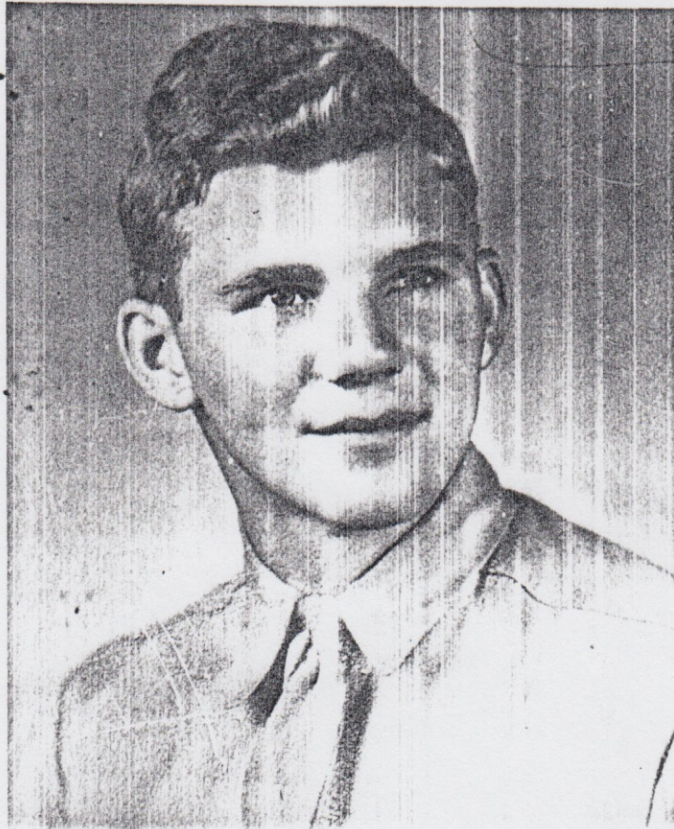
Duane Schwartzwald

US Navy

killed: April 8, 1945

Duane Schwartzwald was the son of Mr. and Mrs. William Schwartzwald of Pine City,  
Duane enlisted into the Navy at 18 years of age.  
He was killed near Luzon in the Philippines on April 8, 1945.

Age 20



Richard C. Petersen

S/Sgt. US Army Air Corps

Killed: April 10, 1945

Richard Petersen was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Petersen of the Rock Creek area. He graduated from Pine City High School in 1943.

Richard enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1943 at the age of 18. He served overseas as a Belly Gunner on a B-17 bomber with a bomber group in the 15th Air Force in Italy. He flew his first mission October 14, 1944.

Richard had only one mission to fly before he would be sent back to the United States when his bomber returning from a combat mission crashed and he was killed.

His body was returned to Pine City December 7, 1948.

Air Medal      Purple Heart

Age 19





Gerald N. Michael

S/Sgt. US Air Corps

Killed: May 24, 1945

Gerald Michael was born in Pine City and attended the Pine City schools. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Michael.

Gerald entered service November, 1942 and was trained as an electrical specialist and gunner. He went to Saipan October 19, 1944 to be a tail gunner on a B-29 Superfort.

Gerald was killed May 25, 1945 over Tokyo, Japan. The plane he was flying in encountered enemy aircraft and anti-aircraft fire over the target. The bomber crashed and killed all but four of the crew.

Gerald had completed 21 missions over enemy territory and received the Air Medal.

Air Medal

Purple Heart

Age 21

Lloyd Gorman

Sgt. US Army

Killed: April 14, 1945

Lloyd Gorman lived in Pine City and attended the local school.

Sgt. Gorman was in the Army and served in northern Italy with Army Ski Troops. He was killed April 14, 1945 in one of the final battles in Italy.

Floyd Rypkema

S/IC Navy

Killed: June 30, 1945

Floyd Rypkema was the son of Hannes Rypkema of Pine City. He graduated from Pine City High School in 1941.

Floyd enlisted in the Navy and attained the rating of S/IC.

Floyd was killed June 30, 1945 in a car-truck collision.

Age 22



Elmer R. Ziegler

F/O Army Air Force

Elmer Ziegler the son of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Ziegler Sr. was born in Brook Park. He graduated from Pine City High School with the class of 1939.

Elmer enlisted into the Army Air Force in January 1943. He was trained as a fighter pilot and was assigned to the Fifth Air Force in China and Formosa. He flew P-51 fighter planes in that area of the Pacific.

Elmer was killed July 10, 1945 while participating in a fighter sweep over China.

Age 24



Walter G. Holms

S/2C US Navy

Walter Holms, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Pete Holms of Pine City entered service in 1943 at the age of 18.

Walter served as an Aviation Machinist with the US Navy Air Force. He served overseas on Saipan.

Due to bad weather the Navy Catalina bomber he was flying in crashed into a mountain and Walter was killed. Date of the crash was September 16, 1945.

## Women in the Services

Women in the armed services was almost unheard of before 1942. "An unfit place for a respectable young lady" is what I recall many of the older women of the time were saying. Women were encouraged to enlist and enlist they did by the thousands. Wacs, Waves, Spars, Wafs and what ever else they were called were all branches of the women's services.

Women served as nurses in the services for many years and proved to be very capable and dependable nurses. Women nurses were a great moral booster for the wounded and sick men. Their tender loving care was something many men nurses did not have. They were loved and respected by all the men. My cousin, Lt. Anna Mae Ziegler was an Army nurse and served in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany. Her hospital ship was sunk in the bay of Naples during the invasion of Italy. She spent many hours floating in the water with only a life jacket before she was rescued. Lt. Ziegler was the kind of nurse the men loved.

It should be mentioned that all women volunteered their services, they were not drafted. They served very well indeed in non-combat duties as office personnel, jeep drivers, radio operators, link trainer operators and parachute packers. This freed the men for combat duty. By the end of the war they were accepted as an important asset to our armed forces.

My records show thirty two Pine City women volunteered for service in World War II.

Elenore Wiedemann  
Harriet Wilcox  
Verna Sherman  
Margaret Ingram  
Ruth Nelson  
Orale Rassmussen  
Betty Hall  
Leona Grothe  
Virginia Bede  
Helen Martinson  
Elsie Martinson  
Margaret Rolph  
Louise Jewell  
Doris Sommer  
Myrtle Hanson  
Audrey Lindquist

Irene Nordstrom  
Lorraine Stumne  
Audrey Eng  
Denice Rawley  
Martha Kubat  
Helen Swenson  
Lila Hinze  
Elenore Thiry  
Joan Huber  
Margery Stratte  
Patricia Wenborg  
Delphia Wenborg  
Mary Beth Gustafson  
Dorene Johnson  
Dorothy Lentz  
Alice Shuey

## COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

Over sixty men and women from the Pine City community served as commissioned officers in World War II, a very high number. National average would indicate about thirty would be a representative number for the Pine City community. Far more would have liked to serve as an officer, but did not have the opportunity due to the limited number of officers in the services. Again our service people indicate their willingness to assume the responsibilities and the leadership needed for an all out war effort.

The following list was compiled mostly from the Pine-Poker Pioneer newspaper from the war years. Several names are of people I do not recognize, but I assume these people had families in Pine City. I believe the list is quite accurate.

Lt. Col. A. K. Stratte	USA
Lt. Col. C. R. Boo	USA
Lt. Col. John Roberts	USAAF
Maj. Eben Gillespie	USAAF
Maj. E. McEachern	USA
Lt. Com. R. G. Johnson	USN
Capt. Carl W. Kick	USA
Capt. Everett Johnson	USA
Capt. James Engel	USA
Capt. Robert Swafford	USAAF
Capt. David Hall	USAAF
Capt. Kenneth LaTourelle	USAAF
Capt. Theodore Buselmeir	USA
Capt. Everett Walters	USA
Capt. Vernon Lange	USAAF
Lt. Willard Roberts	USN
Lt. Robert Roberts	USN
Lt. Charles Schmidt	USMM
1/Lt. Everett Stelzner	USA
1/Lt. Robert Therrien	USAAF
1/Lt. Robert Hejny	USAAF
1/Lt. John Grover	USAAF
1/Lt. Harold Kick	USAAF
1/Lt. Clark Foster	USA
1/Lt. Wallace D'Aoust	USAAF
1/Lt. Ben Boo	USAAF
1/Lt. Earl Nelson	USAAF
1/Lt. George Lutz	USA (Chaplin)
1/Lt. William Syzmonik	USA
Lt. George Herman	USA
Lt. Clifford Perkins	MAF
Lt. George Serbin	USN
Lt. Sidney Boreen	USA
Lt. Charles Woehrle	USAAF
F/O Morris Milgrom	USAAF
Lt. Albert Milgrom	USA
Lt. John Sauser	MAF
Lt. Duane Glasow	USN

Lt. Robert Dickson	USN
Lt. Ivan Behrendt	USN
Lt. Rollis Odendahl	USAAF
Lt. Emil Gardner	USA
Lt. Harold Lehto	USA
Ens. Orville Thorson	USN
Lt. John Berg	USA
Lt. Edward Peterson	USAAF
Lt. Roger Gottry	USN
Lt. Ralph Teich	USA
Ens. Marlin McNeal	USN
Lt. Hal Harrison	USAAF
Lt. Robert Cherrier	USMM
Ens. Harriet Wilcox	USN
Lt. Verna Sherman	USA
Lt. Frank Koksma	USA
Lt. Robert Wilson	USA
Lt. Garfield Christopher	USN
Lt. Haslum McKusick	USA
Ens. Albert Oman	USN
F/O Elmer Ziegler	USAAF
Ens. George Saunders	USN
Lt. Kenneth Wiedemann	USAAF
Lt. Eleanore Wiedemann	Wac

## Minnesota Naval Militia

A unit of the United States Navy located in Pine City, Minnesota, very unlikely most people would think. The Third Division of the Minnesota Naval Militia was not quite the United States Navy, but it could be called into service by the Navy in time of war. The Division and an armory to house it was located in Pine City.

On the evening of January 21, 1913, seventy young men from the Pine City area were mustered into the Naval Militia by Captain Guy Eaton from Duluth. The officers elected for the new division were Commanding Officer Lieutenant Robert Wilcox, Lieutenant (JG) Dr. K.W. Kapp and Ensign Fred Jepson. Uniforms were issued on April 18th and plans for an armory were in progress.

The Pine City Militia trained for two weeks of each of the summers of 1913-14-15 and 16. They cruised the Great Lakes in the USS Gopher. Several months before the United States declared war in WW I, the unit was ordered to be on alert. The several months of preparation and suspense was broken at 10:30 AM on April 6, 1917, when the order to "Mobilize the Naval Militia" was given. Pine City's Militia of 38 men were ordered to board the train that day and proceed to Duluth, and then on to Philadelphia Naval Yard. They were to serve on the USS Massachusetts.

A monument is located on the lawn of the City Hall in Pine City with the names of the Officers and men of the Third Division who served in WW I. The marker notes that this Militia unit was the first to be called into active service in WW I.

A shooting accident happened the very first day of the mobilization. During the time of alert and preparation, an armed guard was kept to guard the Armory. While the men were checking their new rifles, one of the rifles fired, the bullet passed through Dewey Wilcox' right ankle and then through the ball of his left foot and into the floor. Apparently the man on guard duty forgot to unload his rifle and the rifle discharged when he worked the action. The bullet hole can still be seen in the Armory floor. After some weeks of recuperating Dewey rejoined his unit in Philadelphia. Dewey jokingly claimed to be the first casualty of WW I.

The Third Division was not kept together as a unit. The men were assigned to other duties with the Navy. After the war the Division was dissolved and never reactivated. Naval Militia units were only reorganized in Duluth, St. Paul and Minneapolis.

The act to establish Naval Militia units was authorized by the Congress in 1899. Naval Militia units were military organizations equivalent to the National Guards. A Naval Division had about the same number of men as a company of land forces. Minnesota's first Naval Militia was organized in 1903 at Duluth. This unit trained on the Great Lakes in the USS Gopher.



How did Pine City, a small town thousands of miles from the seas and a hundred miles from the Great Lakes, qualify for a Naval Division? In 1913, the Minnesota Legislature authorized cities in Minnesota to share with the state in building armories in their cities. Congressman J. Adam Bede, of Pine City and Judge Robert Wilcox, a former Naval Officer, worked hard to get an armory and a Naval Unit located here. A check for \$1,000.00 from voluntary subscriptions and a deed for three lots donated by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hodge was enough to assure an armory to be built at Pine City. The building was built in the fall of 1913 at a cost of \$15,000.00.

The armories served the communities as a place for the Militia to train, but also a community center. Many dances, meetings, funerals and other gatherings were held at the Armory. Pine City High School played its basketball games in the building until the High School Auditorium was built in 1937.

In 1924, Battery E 125th Field Artillery of the Minnesota National Guards was activated and took over the Armory as its training facility. They trained at the Armory until February, 1941, when they were called into active service in WW II.

The Minnesota State Guards were organized to replace the activated National Guard and trained in the Armory until 1947, when the present National Guard was organized.

After the new Armory was built on old Highway 61 south of Pine City, and the local school took over the old armory and used it for school purposes for several years. The building is now under control of the City. The Minnesota Naval Militia Armory is now a historical point of interest, and thus closes another interesting story of military history of Pine City.

Notes

Graves in the Brook Park Cemetary

Gordon H Vettling killed in Tunisia March 23, 1943  
age 26. Believed to have lived east of Brook Park.

F/O Elmer Ziegler killed on a fighter sweep over Kyushu, Japan

Lawrence Lewellin L/Cpl US Marines killed in Vietnam  
April 23, 1967 Age 21

Vance Raines PFC Army Infantry Died Oct 16, 1964, age 28 ???

Population of US-1940	132,000,000
Men & women in the service	16,112,566
Lost their lives	407,828
Minnesotans killed	6,209
Population of Pine County	21,909
In service from Pine County	2,820
Killed from Pine County	84

Hinckley's war memorial lists 26 men killed in WWII.  
All these men had a Hinckley address. It is believed that  
Hinckley, Mn. was the hardest hit small town in the United States.

Prioners of war.

Lt. Charles Woehole Bombardier 8thAF  
Shot down over Germany

Russell Kurzhal  
Taken at the Anzio landing

S/Sgt. Kenneth Caroon Gunner on Bomber 15th AF  
Shot down over Ploesti, Romania

Raymond Pangerl  
Taken at the battle of the bulge.

Willis Wilson ???

Iwo Jima

~~PFC - Richard~~ PFC Richard France killed  
Melvin Broz recieved serious injuries  
Seaman Clifford Larson helped land troupes on the beaches  
Cliff also watched the raising of the flag on Mt. Surabatchi  
from only a short distance, and cheered the raising.  
Seaman Ben Nawak was on one of the ships that shelled the  
Island during the invation.