

WWII comes to Douglas County

By Carolyn Cloyd
On Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941, WT2c Dale Frederick Flory helplessly watched as bombs dropped on the USS Arizona. Flory, who was assigned to the Arizona which was docked at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, had just landed back at Ford Island and was 15 minutes away from boarding when the bombing began. On-board the ship was Dale Flory's younger brother Max. S2c Max Flory, age 19, was one of the 1,177 men who died on the USS Arizona that day; his body was never recovered. The Florys were one of 38 sets of brothers assigned to the USS Arizona.

Six months later, on June 12, Dale's father and step-mother received a telegram informing them: "The Navy deeply regrets to inform you that your son, Dale Frederick Flory, water tender second class, U. S. Navy, was killed in action in the performance of his duty in the service of his country."

Dale Flory, age 23, had gone missing in action in the Pacific Ocean on May 7, 1942. His body was never recovered. Along with his parents and siblings, Dale Flory left a wife, a California girl he married the previous October.

The Flory brothers were born in Greene County, Ind. Dale, one of 10 children born to Elmer and Clara Flory, and his sister, Majorie, were sent to live with their uncle William Flory in Bourbon in Douglas County, shortly after the death of their mother in 1927. Dale finished two years of high school and was living in Arcola when he joined the U.S. Navy sometime before 1940.

Majorie Flory married Glenn Santrock of Arthur, and her brother Max came to live with them and worked as a farmhand before also joining the U.S. Navy.

Dale Flory's name is inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial. Max Flory's name is carved in marble with those of his lost shipmates on a wall in the shrine at the USS Arizona Memorial.

On Sept. 16, 1940, with most of Europe embroiled in war, the United States instituted the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, requiring men between the ages of 21 and 45 to register for a draft. It was the first peacetime draft in our nation's history. Those selected in the draft were required to serve at least one year in the armed forces, but after Pearl Harbor, and the United States' entry into World War II, the draft terms became "for the duration."

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, young men rushed to enlist in the armed forces. The draft also ramped up enlistments, requiring all men between the ages of 18 and 64 to register by the end of 1942. Roughly 16,000,000 Americans would serve before the war ended in 1945.

The stories of the Flory brothers are just two of the remarkable stories of the Douglas County men who answered the call and served our country during WWII. At least 2,088 Douglas County men served, at least 83 lost their lives in the war, and at least 25 had direct ties to Arcola.

The Flory brothers were not the only Douglas County brothers at Pearl Harbor. Serving on the USS West Virginia were Charles Darling Brown, age 22,



JOHN SIDELL OF VILLA GROVE pictured second row from bottom, third from the right in a photo from the 1937 Villa Grove High School yearbook, Sidell was serving on the USS Arizona when it was attacked by Japanese Bombers at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, his body was never recovered.

and Harry Brown, age 24, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Allison Brown of rural Arcola. The Browns owned a farm about three mile southwest of Arcola, and his brother owned and operated Brown's Café in Arcola. Charles and Harry were serving on the USS West Virginia which was also docked at Ford Island when Japanese bombers attacked on Dec. 7. The Brown family received a telegram saying Charles was missing, then one saying he survived, and then a final message saying he was lost. Charles' brother Harry was also injured in the attack but survived. Charles' body was never recovered. His name is inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial.

At least one other Douglas County man lost his life on the USS Arizona on December 7, 1941.

GM2c John Sidell was raised in Villa Grove and had enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1939. John's parents received an early morning telegram on Sunday, Dec. 21, telling them their son was missing in action. His body was never recovered. His name is on the marble wall in the shrine at the USS Arizona Memorial. He was just 23 years old.

Pvt. Carl Dilbeck was born in Crocker, Mo. in 1920, the only child of Homer and Fanie Dilbeck. Carl moved with his parents to Illinois when he was 7 years old. He married Mary Gray of Arcola in August 1939. Dilbeck's draft registration form, signed in 1941, said he was engaged in farming for a farmer from Arcola named Sam Gilbert and he lived at 470 E. Jefferson Street in Arcola. He enlisted in the U.S. Army on Aug. 3, 1943, and served with Company C, 13th Infantry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division. Dilbeck left for Europe in Dec. 1943. He was killed in action on Aug. 28, 1944, in France during the Battle for Brest. His mother and father moved back to Crocker, Mo. and in 1948 they had their son returned home and buried in the cemetery there. Besides his wife and parents, Carl Dilbeck

left behind a daughter, Laura.

Dewey Dutton Jr. graduated from Arcola High School in 1939 and worked as a cook and a sales clerk before enlisting in the Army Air Corps at Chanute Air Field in Rantoul on Jan. 21, 1941. 2nd Lt. Dutton was stationed at Love Field near Dallas while serving with the 5th Ferrying Group, Air Transport Command, which was tasked with ferrying military planes from factories to domestic stations and fighting fronts. Their training program was said to qualify flyers to fly "anything, anywhere, anytime." At 10 a.m. on July 15, 1943, while piloting an SBD/A-24 Dauntless Dive Bomber, Dewey Dutton crashed and was killed. Mayor J. Virgil Fishel, an Arcola physician, requested all businesses close for the funeral on Monday, July 19, and that all flags in the community be flown at half-mast in honor of 2nd Lt. Dutton. Dewey Dutton was the first WWII service member to die in-service and to be returned for burial in Arcola. He would not be the last.

In mid-January 1945, Mr. and Mrs. Onie Bowles of Tuscola received word that their son, S2c Charles Edward Bowles, had gone missing in action on January 6 in the South Pacific while serving the U.S. Navy on the USS California. It was a blow to the family who was already facing concerns for Mrs. Bowles' brother who was imprisoned in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp in Thailand.

On Sept. 21, 1945, Averill Bowles, after losing her son, received a double-blow as her

family learned her brother, Robert "Popeye" Pullen, had died in the POW camp in Aug. 1943. Charles Bowles' name is inscribed on the Wall of the Missing in the Manila American Cemetery. Robert Pullen's father had his son returned home in 1948; he is buried near his parents in the Arcola Township Cemetery.

Paul Allen Gregg was born in Illinois in 1915. His father, a laborer, moved the family around Central Illinois, most likely looking for work, living in Parker, Westfield, Sullivan, Garrett, and Bourbon. Paul completed four years of high school while living in Bourbon, in Douglas County, and was working as a waiter in a café in a hotel in Arthur, where he also lodged, in 1940. On April 25, 1941, Paul and his brother, Raymond, joined the U.S. Army. Raymond, born in Westfield in 1910, served with the 108th Medical Brigade. He survived the war, married, and moved to Tacoma, Wash., where he passed away in 1995.

Not much is known about Paul Gregg's service. He served with the 109th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division, and he reached the rank of staff sergeant. The 109th Infantry Regiment participated in vicious fighting during the Battle of Hürtgen Forest (Sept. 19-Dec. 16, 1944) and the Battle of the Bulge (Dec. 16, 1944-Jan. 25, 1945). SSgt. Paul A. Gregg is listed on Army casualty lists as "PFOD," or "presumptive finding of death," with the date Dec. 19, 1945. SSgt. Gregg went missing in action, most likely during the Battle of the Bulge, and in the



PHOTO OF PAUL A. GREGG of Douglas County, Gregg was listed as presumed dead on Dec. 19, 1945, his body was never recovered, photo courtesy of the Arthur American Legion Post #479.



PHOTO OF CHARLES BOWLES from the 1943 Tuscola High School yearbook, Bowles, the son of Onie and Averill Bowles of Tuscola, was killed Jan. 6, 1945.

absence of a body he was declared dead on Dec. 19, 1945. There are no known memorials to SSgt. Paul Gregg. His name is one of many listed in the files of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency. Before his death, SSgt. Gregg earned a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star Medal with a "V" for valor.

The men and women of America who went to war during World War II have been called the Greatest Generation. In large part that is due to their accomplishments and sacrifices in the armed services, on

the frontlines, and on the home front during WWII. But the ability to get things done and bear the sacrifices was just part of the ideology bred into a generation raised by parents who came of age during the Great War, which changed American society, and who themselves came of age during the Great Depression, a time of unprecedented poverty, where entire families had to contribute to survive. The generation wasn't necessarily innately great; they were shaped by extraordinary hardships.

Douglas County, Illinois, with its rural setting and small

PVT. CARL DILBECK OF ARCOLA KILLED

Arcola, Ill.—Pvt. Carl Dilbeck was killed in action in France on Aug. 28, according to a message received by his wife, the former Mary Gray. Particulars of his death were not disclosed.

Private Dilbeck, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Homer Dilbeck of Bulpit, was born April 27, 1920. He entered service on Aug. 3, 1943, and received his basic training at Camp Wolters, Tex. He is survived by his wife, parents and daughter, Laura.

Military Funeral For Lieutenant Dutton

Arcola (Staff)

A military funeral will be held for Lieut. Dewey A. Dutton, Jr., who was killed in an airplane crash at Houston, Texas, Thursday, will be held at 2:30 p. m. Monday in the Arcola Baptist church.

Mayor J. B. Fishel of Arcola, has proclaimed two hours of city-wide mourning from 2 to 4 p. m. Monday during which time all business houses will be closed.

Military rites at the funeral will be handled by a detachment of soldiers sent down from Champaign. Burial will be in Arcola cemetery.

ARTICLE in the Decatur Daily News providing details about the funeral of Lt. Dewey Dutton of Arcola, July 18, 1943.

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ARTICLE in the Mattoon Journal Gazette reporting the death of Pvt. Carl Dilbeck of Arcola, Oct. 9, 1944.