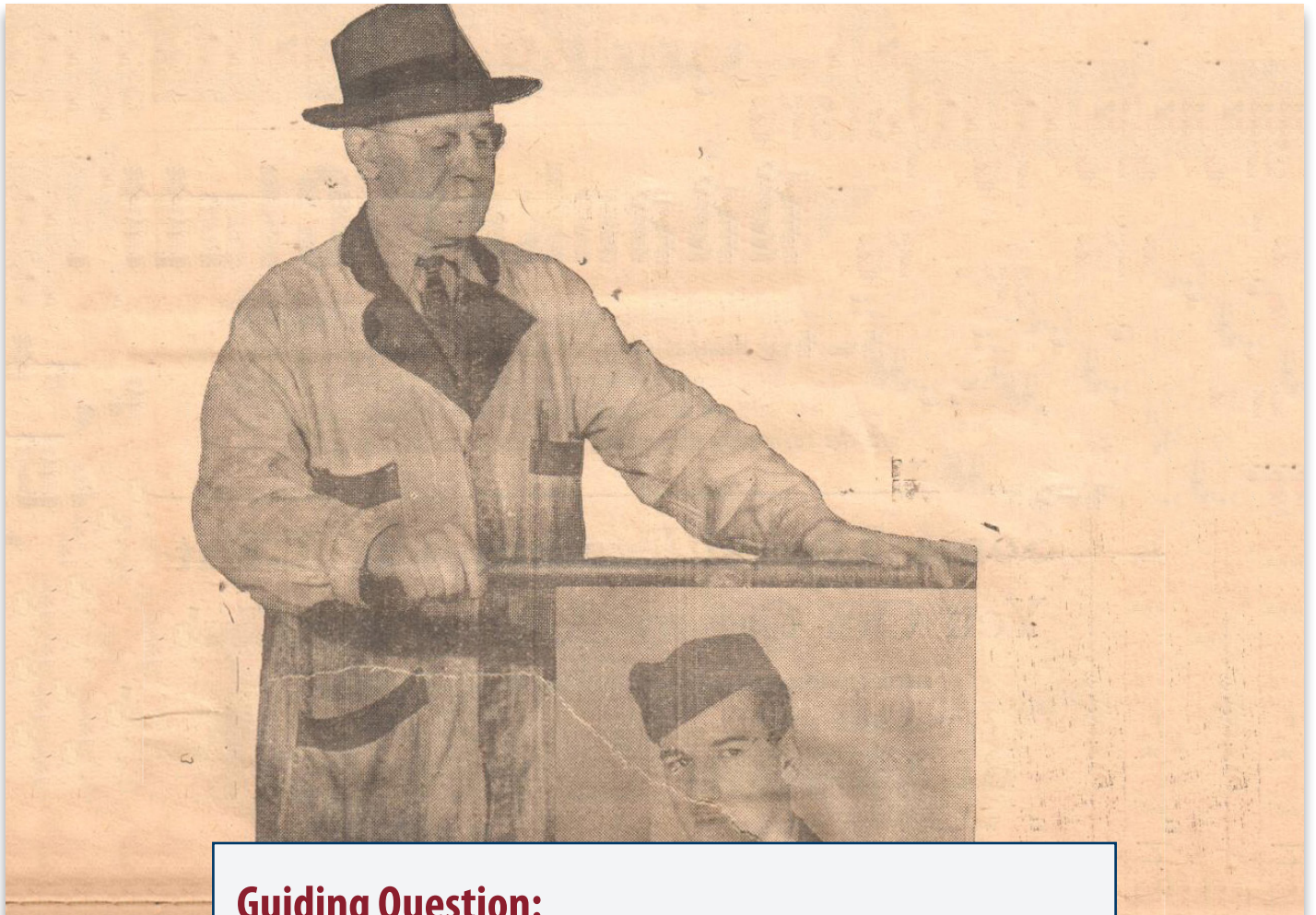


Remembering Service:

Creating Found Poetry at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery

DEVELOPED BY MEGHAN THOMAS



Guiding Question:

What can we learn about the nature of war, conflict, and sacrifice by visiting military cemeteries?



Overview

Using Veteran Profiles written from primary and secondary sources; eulogies and profiles from the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery website and the National Cemetery Administration website; and graves, columbarium niches, and monuments at the cemetery; students will find words and phrases that move them regarding sacrifice, war, and service. Eventually students will shape these words and phrases into a Found Poem that they will share with the class.

Objectives

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

- Define Found Poetry;
- Evaluate the role of military cemeteries in remembering historical events; and
- Discuss how their opinion of war and service may have changed through the activity.



I hope to have my students think more deeply and thoroughly about how we memorialize the service of veterans. I want them to use the words on monuments and memorials to form opinions and express their feelings about the nature of war and sacrifice.

— Meghan Thomas

Thomas teaches at Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center in Chicago, Illinois.

Spotlight: Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery

The Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery lies in the northwestern area of the former Joliet Army Ammunition Plant, approximately 50 miles south of Chicago. Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery is named after the 16th President of the United States and founder of the National Cemeteries. In the midst of the Civil War, on July 17, 1862 President Lincoln's signature enacted the law authorizing the establishment of national cemeteries "... for the soldiers who die in the service of the country."

Congressman George E. Sangmeister, a veteran of the Korean War, served as a representative and senator in the state of Illinois, 1973-87, and a U.S. Representative from Illinois, 1988-95. He was instrumental in the acquisition of 982 acres from the former Joliet Arsenal and its redevelopment as Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.

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Standards Connections

Connections to Common Core

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Documents Used

Primary Sources

Letter from Harry Truman to World War II Veterans
Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum
<https://www.trumanlibrary.org/trivia/commendationv2.jpg>

Secondary Sources

Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery
National Cemetery Administration
<https://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/abrahamlincoln.asp>

Veteran Profile, Private Bertram F. Heuer, Jr.
National Cemetery Administration
<https://www.cem.va.gov/legacy/>

Veteran Profile, Private Bertram F. Heuer, Sr.
National Cemetery Administration
<https://www.cem.va.gov/legacy/>

Materials

- Cemetery Packet with instructions to be filled out at Abraham Lincoln Memorial Cemetery
- Notable Burials handout
- Veteran Profiles of Private Bertram F. Heuer, Sr., and Staff Sergeant Bertram F. Heuer, Jr
- Map of Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery
- A pen or pencil for each student

Activity Preparation

- Make one copy of the Cemetery Packet for each student.
- Make one copy of the following for each group of three or four students:
 - Notable Burials handout;
 - Private Bertram F. Heuer, Sr. Veteran Profile;
 - Staff Sergeant Bertram F. Heuer, Jr. Veteran Profile; and
 - Map of Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.
- Bring extra writing utensils for students.

Procedure

Activity One: Cemetery Etiquette (15 minutes)

- Board the bus at school and ask students: *What do you think is the proper behavior at a cemetery and why? Do you think there is a different way to behave at military cemeteries than at regular cemeteries? Why is it important to respect this space?*
 - Inform students of any cemetery behavior they have not come up with themselves.

Activity Two: First Impressions (15 minutes)

- Once students and the teacher arrive at the cemetery, ask students: What are your first impressions of the cemetery? What do you see and what do you think it means? Tell the students that their impressions of the cemetery may change as they go through the activity.
- Distribute the Cemetery Packet to the students. Ask a student volunteer to read the instructions.

- Ask students divide themselves into groups of three or four students each and tell each group which part of the assignment they should begin with and how they should rotate through the other two parts. This way groups will split up throughout the cemetery.
 - Groups that start with Part One will go to Part Two next and Part Three last.
 - Groups that start with Part Two will go to Part Three next and Part One last.
 - Groups that start with Part Three will go to Part One next and Part Two last.

Activity Three: Interpreting Memorials (45-60 minutes)

- Provide each group with a map of the cemetery.
- Send students out to find memorials and graves and record the phrases from the readings and memorials that stand out to them.

Assessment

- Revisit the students' first impressions of the cemetery and ask: *How did your impressions of the cemetery change as you went through the activity?*
- Have students take out their packets and read over the words and phrases they gathered at the cemetery. Individually, students will create a found poem that shows their impressions of the cemetery and what they learned about war, conflict, and sacrifice.
- Have students highlight words and phrases in their Cemetery Packet that were used in the poem, and turn in the packet and their poem.
- Students will read their poem to the class and share the reasons why they used their chosen words and phrases.
- Look at and discuss the impact of examples of Found Poetry.
- Lead a discussion that addresses the guiding question: *What can we learn about the nature of war, conflict, and sacrifice by visiting military cemeteries?*
- Evaluate student performance using the Found Poetry Rubric.

Teacher Tip: *Found Poetry is created by using words and phrases from existing texts and fashioning them into poems. Pure found poetry uses all words from other sources, but sometimes a few words are added by the writer.*

Methods for Extension

- Students with more interest in memorials can research service members buried at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.

Found Poetry Rubric

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Emerging
Cemetery Preparation	<p>Student was focused and on task during the cemetery visit.</p> <p>Student filled out the Cemetery Packet with thoughtful words and phrases from memorials, graves, and readings.</p> <p>Student visited all required sites and used a variety of different sources.</p>	<p>Student was mostly focused and on task during cemetery visit.</p> <p>Student had thoughtful words and phrases, but missed some spaces in the Cemetery Packet.</p> <p>Students visited most required sites and had some variety of sources.</p>	<p>Student was frequently off task during the cemetery visit.</p> <p>Student used some words and phrases, but needed more.</p> <p>Student missed important sites or used only some sources.</p>	<p>Student did not complete task.</p>
Addressing the Guiding Question: <i>What can we learn about the nature of war, conflict, and sacrifice by visiting military cemeteries?</i>	<p>Student was reflective and thoughtful about the cemetery visit in the poem.</p> <p>Student clearly addressed one or more of the elements of the question (war, conflict, or sacrifice) in the text of the poem.</p>	<p>Student was somewhat reflective about the visit but could have spent more time on the assessment.</p> <p>Student addressed one or more elements of the question, but needed to be more clear.</p>	<p>Student worked too quickly or did not understand instructions.</p> <p>Student did not address elements of the question in the poem. The poem was confusing or lacked thoughtful reflection.</p>	<p>Student did not understand or complete the assignment.</p>
Final Product	<p>Poem has a consistent theme and tone throughout.</p> <p>Poem has a logical sequence of words and phrases and is clear.</p> <p>Student only adds one or two of his or her own words.</p> <p>Student changes tense or punctuation for consistency.</p>	<p>Theme is somewhat unclear.</p> <p>Poem mostly has a logical sequence of words and phrases.</p> <p>Student uses too many of his or her own words.</p> <p>Verb tenses or punctuation are sometimes unclear.</p>	<p>Theme is unclear.</p> <p>Sequence of words and phrases is not logical.</p> <p>Student relies on his or her own words too frequently.</p>	<p>The poem’s relation to the essential question is unclear or the poem is incomplete.</p>

VETERANS LEGACY PROGRAM

Cemetery Packet:

Found Poetry: Phase One: Interpreting Memorials

Guiding Question: What can we learn about the nature of war, conflict, and sacrifice by visiting military cemeteries?

Instructions: Make observations about the headstones, memorials, and monuments throughout the cemetery. Some specific destinations will be given to you, and others you will find on your own. When you visit each marker, write down any words or phrases that you find interesting or descriptive or that move you in some way. Eventually you will combine this text to create a “Found Poem” that makes a statement about the guiding question. At the end of the activity, everyone will share their poems with the group and explain why they picked certain phrases and ideas to include in their work.

Form small groups (three or four people) to spend time with at the cemetery. You will be looking at gravestones, columbariums, and monuments as you complete all three parts of this packet.

Part 1: Visit the Memorial Walk. Read the inscriptions and descriptions. Write down quotes you find interesting or intriguing from any of the memorials in the space below. Write the monument or memorial that provided the quote next to it.

Monument or Memorial	Quote

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Part Two: Using the Notable Burials handout and cemetery map as your guides, visit the graves and columbariums of at least four notable people. At each site, have someone from your group read the information on the handout to the rest of the group. The quote you use may come from the grave/columbarium or the handout.

Name, rank, branch of service	Quote

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Part Three: Go to Columbarium Four. Private Bertram F. Heuer, Sr., is inurned in Wall 87, Row B, Niche 2. Staff Sergeant Bertram F. Heuer, Jr., and his wife, Elfrieda Heuer, are inurned in Wall 87, Row B, Niche 1. The elder Heuer served as a bugler and machine gunner in World War I. His son served as a mechanic in World War II. Elfrieda was an assistant to Enrico Fermi while he was on the Chicago Pile team that developed the world's first nuclear reactor. Read their stories and find five phrases or quotes that speak to you about their lives and experiences. Try to use at least one from each member of the family.

Which Heuer?	Quote or phrase from their profile or reading

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Notable Burials

Technical Sergeant Sator S. Sanchez

Section M1, Grave 36 | U.S. Army Air Forces | World War II

Born in Illinois, Sator Sanchez worked in the Civilian Conservation Corps before enlisting in the U.S. Army in 1939. He transferred to the Army Air Forces in 1941 and during World War II, gunner Sanchez completed 44 combat missions before returning stateside as an instructor. Technical Sergeant Sanchez volunteered for another tour and flew 22 missions with the 15th Air Force. On March 15, 1945, when Sanchez's aircraft was damaged over Germany, he ejected but his body was never recovered. In 1993, the tail of his downed B-17 was donated to the National Museum of U.S. Air Force. Sanchez is honored many ways. He earned a Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross, and is the only enlisted man for whom a B-17 aircraft was named, Smilin' Sandy Sanchez. His hometown of Joliet, Illinois, named an elementary school and park for him. Sanchez is memorialized in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.*

Lieutenant Colonel Ical E. "Gene" Hambleton

Columbarium 2, Wall 34, Row C, Niche 8 | U.S. Air Force | World War II, Korea, Vietnam

Illinois native Ical "Gene" Hambleton was born in 1918 and served in the U.S. Air Force in World War II as a radio operator, 1943-1945. Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton did not see combat in that tour, but he did as a navigator in Korea and Vietnam. He commanded the 571st Strategic Missile Squadron based in Tucson, Arizona, and on April 2, 1972—his 63rd mission in Vietnam—was shot down. Hambleton was the only crew member able to eject and he survived behind enemy lines for 11 days. His rescue was the longest and most complex of the war, immortalized in print and film as *Bat 21*, his aircraft call sign. Hambleton received the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, and Purple Heart. He died September 19, 2004, and is buried at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.*

Corporal Charles J. Krueger

Columbarium 4, Wall 72, Row A, Niche 12 | U.S. Army | Spanish-American War

Corporal Charles J. Krueger served in the 1st Cavalry Regiment, known as the United States Regiment of Dragoons, during the Spanish American War.

Sergeant George E. Sangmeister

Section 1, Grave 2 | U.S. Army | Korea

George Sangmeister (1931-2007) was born in Frankfort, Illinois, and throughout his career, Will County served as his legal and political base. His education was interrupted by the Korean Conflict and Sergeant Sangmeister served in the U.S. Army from 1951-1953.

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As a civilian he returned to school—Elmhurst College and John Marshall Law School in Chicago—and worked as a lawyer, magistrate, justice of the peace, and state attorney. Sangmeister entered politics in the Illinois state government. He missed a bid for lieutenant governor in 1986 alongside Adlai Stevenson, but shortly thereafter Sangmeister was elected as a U.S. Representative as a Democrat (1989-1995). He was instrumental to the redevelopment of the Joliet Arsenal, designation of a tallgrass prairie, and establishment of Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. Sangmeister died October 7, 2007. He and his wife, Doris, are buried at the national cemetery.*

Airman Second Class John F. Whiteside

Section 1, Grave 836 | U.S. Air Force | Veteran

Journalist John Whiteside (1943-2005) served in the U.S. Air Force in 1963-1964. After graduating from Northern Illinois University, in 1971 he went to work for the *Herald News* in Joliet, Illinois. Whiteside became a columnist for the newspaper a decade later and held that position until his death. He conducted interviews at local diner where a booth is dedicated to him. Whiteside advocated for veterans and police officers. His particular causes were the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery honor guards and the police memorial at the Will County courthouse. Whiteside died January 22, 2005, and is buried at the cemetery.*

First Sergeant George Theodore Hyatt

Section 1, Grave 1613 | Union Army | Civil War

First Sergeant Hyatt participated in a volunteer mission in 1863 at the Battle of Vicksburg, setting up scaling ladders against the enemy embankment. The mission was seen as a “forlorn hope” and only single men were allowed to volunteer. Nearly half were killed. Hyatt survived. He was a Medal of Honor recipient. He died in 1900.

Private Second Class John Edward Carter

Section 8, Grave 46 | U.S. Navy | Veteran

John Edward Carter was born in 1934 and grew up on Chicago’s South Side where he and fellow members of a Bronzeville church choir formed the Swallows in 1952. The group became the Flamingoes and quickly became known for their intricate harmonies, with Carter as a tenor. The all-black, all-male vocalists were part of the emerging doo-wop sound and their “Golden Teardrops” was a signature song. The Flamingoes signed with Chicago’s Chess Records in 1955. Carter was drafted into the U.S. Army as cook, 1956-1958, stationed in Germany. While Carter was serving overseas the band replaced him, but in 1960 he joined another Chicago group, the Dells. Carter’s vocals remain profoundly influential and he is a two-time Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee for the Flamingoes (2001) and the Dells (2004). Carter died August 21, 2009, and is buried in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.*

Technical Sergeant John J. Houlihan

Section 9, Grave 1608 | U.S. Marine Corps | World War II

Technical Sergeant Houlihan served in the South Pacific on the island of Bougainville. He lost his leg up to his hip in battle. He received three Bronze Stars, a Marine Corps Medal, and a Purple Heart. He was a politician who served in the Illinois State House representing the 41st District. He fought for veterans' rights throughout his life.

Technician Fifth Class John H. Geiger

Section 9A, Grave 708 | U.S. Army | World War II

John H. Geiger was born in 1925 and spent his childhood in Iowa where his father, a veteran of World War I, directed Civilian Conservation Corps projects during the Great Depression. Geiger served in the U.S. Army during World War II. In 1945, while still in the military, the Army Technician Fifth Class joined the American Legion. By 1960 Geiger led Illinois' Legion department, and in the early 1970s he took command of the national organization. After his term, he remained active in the organization's leadership, championing the G.I. Bill for Vietnam veterans and influencing policy. After World War II Geiger attended school on the G.I. Bill, graduating from the University of Illinois and, in 1966, became a structural engineer for United Airlines. Geiger oversaw construction of United's Terminal One at O'Hare Airport as well as terminals in other cities. Geiger died January 10, 2011, and is buried in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.*

Fireman First Class Michael Galajdik

Section 10, Grave 402 | U.S. Navy | World War II

Michael Galajdik was born in 1916 and was raised with the help of a sister. He worked with the Civilian Conservation Corps from 1935 until 1940, when he joined the U.S. Navy. Fireman First Class Galajdik was on board the *USS Oklahoma* during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. Galajdik received the Purple Heart posthumously and was buried as an unknown in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Hawaii. He is one of many *USS Oklahoma* dead identified by the U.S. Army using DNA technologies and dental records. Galajdik's remains were reinterred in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery on April 22, 2017.*

Fireman Second Class Ernest Harold Guldbeck

Section 12, Grave 2 | U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Navy | World War II

Guldbeck performed underwater demolition during World War II. He attended the Art Institute and was an artist, illustrator and craftsman. He created artwork for commercial studios. He designed the Keebler Elf "Ernie."

Technician Fifth Class Augustus A. “Gus” Savage

Section 16, Grave 34 | U.S. Army Air Force (segregated unit) | World War II

Augustus Alexander “Gus” Savage (1925-2015) was a pioneer African American journalist, civil rights advocate, and Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Born in Detroit, Michigan, he grew up and lived in Chicago. A 1943-1946 tour in the segregated U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II developed Technician Fifth Class Savage’s commitment to racial equality. He graduated from Roosevelt University in 1951 and attended the Chicago-Kent School of Law. Savage campaigned for civil rights as a publisher, editor, and writer with *American Negro* magazine and *Citizen* community newspapers, as part of the League of Negro Voters, and as an elected congressman (1981-1993). He died October 31, 2015, and is buried in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.*

Ensign John William Bach

Section 16, Grave 326 | U.S. Navy | World War II

Born in Brooklyn, New York, John William Bach was a World War II veteran and basketball player, coach, and mentor. Born in 1924, he attended St. John’s Prep and began his basketball career there, winning two Catholic city championships, before serving in the U.S. Navy, 1943-1947. After his tour, Bach returned to school and the basketball court. He graduated from Fordham University and was named most valuable player in 1947-1948. He went on to coach Fordham’s basketball team for eighteen seasons and was inducted into the school’s Hall of Fame in 1974. Bach led Penn State’s team for ten years before he joined the coaching staffs of the Golden State Warriors and Chicago Bulls. He was behind the Bulls’ defense that helped secure three consecutive National Basketball Association championship titles. Bach died January 18, 2016, and is buried in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.*

*Biographical information adapted from the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery website.

Private Bertram F. Heuer, Sr.

RESEARCHED BY MEGHAN THOMAS



January 17, 1894 - June 9, 1971

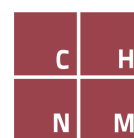
Hometown: Homewood, Illinois

Entered Service: May 24, 1918

Unit: 31st Division, 116th Machine Gun Battalion, Company A

Rank: Private, U.S. Army

Cemetery: Section C4-87, Row B, Site 2
Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery
Ellwood, Illinois



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Before the War

Bertram Heuer's parents, Otto and Bertha, were Germans who immigrated from Berlin to Cedarsburg, Wisconsin in 1884. Otto became a naturalized citizen in Chicago in 1891. He was a cabinet maker who at one point worked for the Pullman Standard Railroad Car Company where he helped make luxury sleeping cars for train passengers.

The family lived in Chicago for a while, then moved to the small farm town of Homewood, Illinois in 1902. Otto became sick with tuberculosis. Unable to work, his wife Bertha became the family's wage earner. She opened her own grocery store in Homewood where she, her sister Ida, and her children worked. Otto Heuer died in 1906 when Bertram was 12 years old.

From a young age, Bertram knew what it mean to work hard to make ends meet. He lived with his brother, Ewald, his sister, Regina, and his mother. Ewald died of a brain injury in 1909, adding more tragedy to the family history. At an early age, Bertram developed a love and fascination for automobiles that lasted throughout his life. He worked as a chauffeur for an architect, George Nimmons, who lived in the neighboring town of Flossmoor. After the war, Bertram opened his own garage in Homewood where he fixed and detailed cars.



Left: Bert, Regina, and Bertha posed together the day before Bert left for the U.S. Army, c. 1918. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

Right: Bert and his sister, Regina, the day before he left for the U.S. Army, c. 1918. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

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Military Experience

Private Bertram Heuer did not immediately join the war because he was an integral part of his family after the death of his father and brother. However, in May 1918 when he was 24 years old, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He described himself as being 5'8" tall, with brown hair and brown eyes, and a ruddy complexion.

Heuer was assigned to a Machine Gun regiment and was also a bugler despite having no experience with musical instruments. According to his daughter-in-law, Elfrieda, he said he did his best to play "Taps" and "Reveille."

Heuer had an incident while he was stationed in France awaiting orders to go to the front lines. He fell in a trench that had remnants of mustard gas and was burned. After a short stay in a hospital he rejoined his company. Despite reports that the men were headed to the front lines, he and his fellow soldiers were thrilled when they learned that a cease fire had been called and the war was truly over. Private Heuer returned to the United States and was discharged from Camp Grant, Illinois, on May 8, 1919.



Bertram Heuer, Sr.'s military photograph, c. 1918.
Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

Veteran Experience

Upon discharge from the U.S. Army, Heuer, along with 24 other World War I veterans, started the Homewood American Legion, Post No. 483. He served as Commander when the organization began, and remained active in the organization until his death in 1971. The Homewood American Legion had a drum and bugle corps and a drill team that played at funerals of local veterans and marched in parades. Heuer also played catcher on the American Legion softball team for several years, playing against the organization chapters in neighboring towns. Heuer built a car that he named the “Leapin’ Lena” which he drove in American Legion parades in Homewood and other cities. Rita Hayworth even rode in it in one of the many parades!

In 1920, Heuer drove the architect George Nimmons to Florida as his chauffeur. He met his future wife, Rose Perley, there, and they soon married. The Heuers settled down in Homewood and Bertram opened a service garage. Rose and Bertram started a family, eventually having four children. Heuer’s service garage failed during the Great Depression and he began working on cars at people’s homes and doing other odd jobs instead. After some short stints in other jobs, he got a job as a welder at the Buda Company in Harvey, Illinois.



Bert Heuer driving his car, the Leapin’ Lena, down Dixie Highway in Homewood with other World War I veterans. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.



Bert met his future wife, Rose, in Ormond Beach, Florida early in 1920. They were married that June. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

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During the late 1920's and 1930's, Heuer also served as a volunteer fireman. When a fire alarm went off, he would call the operator to learn the location of the fire, and then rush to help. Heuer's desire to serve his community showed throughout his life.

During World War II, both he and Rosa worked for the Buda Company making engines for military vehicles while their son, Bertram, Jr., served in the U.S. Army as a mechanic in Europe. The family's patriotism was highlighted in one of the editions of the company's newsletter.



Heuer family highlighted on a Buda Company promotional poster during World War II.
Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

Commemoration

Bertram Heuer died on June 9, 1971 and was buried in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, in Elwood, Illinois.

According to Heuer's grandson, David, Heuer would only talk about the war with his son who also served. The family felt that father and son understood what it meant to be at war better than anyone else. Heuer may not have been on the front lines, but he spent his life in service to his country and those who fought for it. His service in the U.S. Army and his participation in the American Legion should be remembered and honored.



Grave of Bertram F. Heuer, Sr. next to his son at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. Courtesy of the Meghan Thomas.

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Bertram Heuer. U.S. WWI Draft Registration Card. Digital images. <http://ancestry.com>.

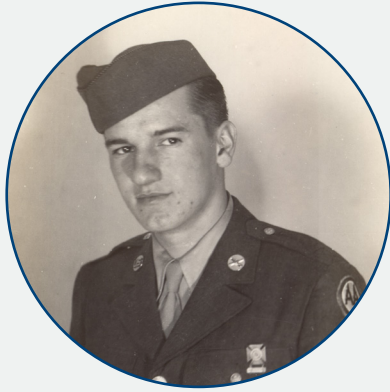
Bertram Heuer, Sr., World War I Final Pay Card and Master Index Card, Record Group 92; National Archives and Records Administration - St. Louis.

Family Chronicles: Heuer Family. June 30, 1992. Courtesy of David Heuer and Elfrieda Heuer.

U.S. Army Transport Service, Passenger Lists, 1910-1939. Digital images. <http://ancestry.com>.

Staff Sergeant Bertram F. Heuer, Jr.

RESEARCHED BY MEGHAN THOMAS



August 8, 1924 - February 22, 2007

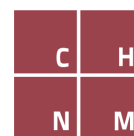
Hometown: Homewood, Illinois

Entered Service: February 20, 1943

Unit: 9th Army, 3508th Medium Automotive
Maintenance Company

Rank: Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army

Cemetery: Section C4-87, Row B, Site 1
Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery
Ellwood, Illinois



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Before the War

Bertram (Bert) Heuer, Jr. was raised in Homewood, Illinois, a small town south of Chicago. He lived with his parents, Bertram, Sr. and Rose, and his sisters, Lolita, Rose, and Elizabeth. His father was a World War I veteran and an auto mechanic.

Bert spent time in his father's auto repair shop and learned to drive when he was eight years old. After it became a law to be a licensed driver, Heuer received an official driver's license when he was 15. Bert remembered visiting the World's Fair in Chicago in 1933. He witnessed the arrival of the Italian Armada in Chicago which included Italo Balbo, a fascist supporter of Benito Mussolini. Bert did not know at the time that he would later fight against fascist forces in Europe.

Despite the hardships of the Great Depression, Bert had a happy childhood with siblings and friends. He played at a nearby park, ate ice cream from The Cone Shop in Homewood, and spent time near Lake Michigan during the summer months. During high school, he saved money and bought a bicycle. He rode at night past nearby engine factories when he could not sleep. During World War II, these factories were repurposed to produce military equipment.

Military Experience

On February 20, 1943, Bertram Heuer, Jr. was inducted into the U.S. Army. He attended basic training in LaJolla, California, and was transferred to the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma for the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). Later he was sent to Camp Walters in Texas to join an Infantry Casualty Replacement Battalion.

Heuer was assigned to the 3508th Medium Automotive Maintenance Company, perhaps because of his experience with cars in his father's shop. His company left for overseas duty in February 1944 on a Merchant Marine ship from Boston. Eventually Heuer and his company arrived at Ross in Wye in southern England and waited there until June 1944.



Mess line in, Kerkrade, Holland. Heuer is the soldier all the way to the right, 1944. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

During his time in England, Bert worked kitchen duty and post exchange duty, providing tax free goods. Eventually he and his company were called to leave for France. The 3508th Medium Automotive Maintenance Company maintained small arms and motorized vehicles for front line soldiers. He crossed the English Channel and landed at Utah Beach days after the initial invasion. Bert described seeing sunken ships and using makeshift ramps to bring equipment to land.

The 3508th Medium Automotive Maintenance Company followed General George Patton's Third Army to maintain vehicles. Bert lived through air raids, witnessed the confusion of soldiers in battle, and saw soldiers get wounded, but he did not shoot a weapon during his time in the war. He remembered driving through Paris while the newly liberated French people lined the streets in appreciation. His company cleared the streets of destroyed German military equipment so that other vehicles could pass through. During this time, Bert was promoted to corporal for fixing a broken piece of equipment that others of higher rank had tried and failed to repair.

The 3508th Medium Automotive Maintenance Company moved through northern France, where they temporarily guarded a former concentration camp, and continued through Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. In September 1944, the company moved from the Third Army to the Ninth Army.



Bert Heuer, Jr. with a fallen German Messerschmitt ME-262, 1945. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

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Heuer was promoted to sergeant in December 1944 right before the Battle of the Bulge. Bert temporarily served as a bugler, as his father had done in World War I. His son remembered that his dad told stories of enlisted men throwing shoes and other objects at him when he played the bugle in the morning because they wanted more sleep.

At the Battle of the Bulge, his unit received the Award of Meritorious Service unit plaque for consistent superior service. After the battle, the 3508th Medium Automotive Maintenance Company was stationed in different German towns for vehicle maintenance, but it became increasingly clear that the war would soon end. Heuer learned of the end of the war in Europe on May 9, 1945 and that an armistice had been signed in Reims, France two days earlier.



Heuer standing next to a German army trailer, 1945. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

Heuer was disappointed to be assigned to service in Japan. He was short a few points to be sent home, but he ended up not having to go. He was discharged from Fort Sheridan, Illinois, in December 1945. He served a total of 33 months.

Veteran Experience

During the war, Heuer received a letter from a young girl named Elfrieda Rahn (called Tootie by her friends and family). Tootie had been asked by a friend to write to a lonely soldier on the front and she complied. She wrote many letters during the war to different soldiers because it was seen as patriotic to keep up their spirits.

Tootie worked in the Grounds Department at the University of Chicago as a secretary during the war. She took notes and attended meetings about physical changes to the West Stands of Stagg Field in preparation for the first nuclear reaction on December 2, 1942. She received a private tour of the unrestricted area with other office workers, but did not know the full extent of the project until later.

After Tootie's initial letter to Bert, they started a correspondence that lasted until he returned from the war. They went on their first date feeling like they knew each other and their relationship quickly grew. They became engaged in February 1946, just months after their first in-person meeting.

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When Heuer returned home, he took advantage of the G.I. Bill and entered junior college. He was talented in carpentry and building and eventually got a job with Illinois Bell Telephone Company. He spent the rest of his career in this field of work. Bert and Tootie had three sons and lived in the south suburbs of Chicago.



Top Left: Elfrieda (Tootie) and Bert, 1946. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

Top Right: Bertram and Elfrieda Heuer on their wedding day, November 23, 1946. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.

Bottom Left: Bert Heuer, Jr. at work for the Illinois Bell Telephone Company. Courtesy of the Heuer Family.



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Commemoration

Staff Sergeant Heuer did not fire a weapon in World War II, but he played an integral part in the Allied invasion of Europe. Starting at Utah Beach during the invasion of Normandy and following troops throughout Europe to make sure that vehicles and weapons worked properly, he and the 3508th Medium Automotive Maintenance Company played a crucial, but often overlooked role in making sure American troops were well equipped to fight.

Heuer started as a private, but was consistently promoted because of his leadership skills and technical ability. Heuer's years in Europe during World War II affected him after his homecoming. His wife, Tootie soothed him during bad dreams and he spoke privately to his father about their war experiences. After the war, Tootie and Bert lived a peaceful life together and now they are buried together, next to Bert's father, at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois.



Bertram Heuer, Jr.'s marker at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois, 2018. Courtesy of the Meghan Thomas.

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