

Clark's Fallen Heroes

By William J. "Duff" Duffy

A long-time Clark resident who has researched the Clark Fallen Heroes for over 40 years



**From the Civil War to Afghanistan, 21 Clark boys
who went off to war and did not come home.**

I feel deeply that their sacrifices must be told so that they are not forgotten, especially by our youth. They have given of their lives while our country was at war, so that we may live in freedom. You may not know them, but in gratitude pay tribute to them every Memorial Day.

Let's take a brief look at each of "**Clark's Fallen Heroes**", but before we do, here's a portion of the Gettysburg Address:

"that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

President Abraham Lincoln

November 19, 1863

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CIVIL WAR

BULLMAN, JAMES, Cpl., CO.C, 14th New Jersey Volunteer Regiment. James resided with his family on the "Bullman Farm" on Raritan Rd., where the Bank of America/Acme Supermarket is presently located. He was Killed in Action on 1 June 1864 at the Battle of Cold Harbor with 7,000 other Union forces during that battle.

On that fateful date at 1700 hours, James was in the front line with the 14th, as they attacked the strongly entrenched Confederate forces. A dreadful battle was fought, lasting long after dark as the 14th suffered critically, losing 240 in killed and wounded, including Cpl. James Bullman.

After Cold Harbor, Commanding General Hiram Ulysses Grant said to his staff: "I regret this assault, more than any one I ever ordered."

This Fallen Hero is buried in the Bullman family plot in South Plainfield.

WORLD WAR I

MILLER, JOHN B., U.S. Army, former address 2 Valley Road, Clark. His father Adam received a telegram on 9 December 1918, that his son, previously reported as "Missing in Action," since 16 October 1918, during the Allies final winning offensive action, was now reported to have died 12 November 1918, following "Wounds Received in Action." This Fallen Hero was a member of the 155th Infantry Brigade, 309th Infantry, 78th Division.

On 16 October 1918, Miller was with his unit attacking German forces during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, which was part of the final Allied offensive of World War I that stretched along the entire Western Front. During this attack, John was severely wounded and would eventually die from those wounds on 12 November 1918, one day after the Armistice was signed ending the war.

WORLD WAR II

BIENKO, BENNIE, S1C, Serial No. 02245585, U.S. Navy, "Killed in Action" 13 November 1942 at the "Naval Battle of Guadalcanal" while aboard the U.S.S. Monssen.

This Fallen Hero, who resided on Lincoln Boulevard prior to his entry into the Navy, fought in this particular battle along with fellow Clark resident John L. Ruddy, Jr. who was aboard the U.S.S. Juneau. Bienko was killed at approximately 0200 hours and is now considered Clark's first World War II casualty. Ruddy was killed at approximately 1100 hours on the same day and is now considered Clark's second World War II casualty.

NOTE: Up until the time of William J. Duffy's research, Ruddy was considered Clark's first World War II casualty and that is why the Clark VFW is named and dedicated to Ruddy, an honor rightly deserved. However, Duffy was able to confirm the time of their deaths.

BITSKO, CHARLES, Pvt., Serial No. 32559648, U.S. Army, "Died in the Line of Duty" on 11 November 1943 while aboard a troop transport ship in the Pacific. On 21 August 1944 a new bridge was named in his honor in the vicinity of his unit's camp in the South Pacific.

This Fallen Hero grew up in Hillside, but at the time of his entry into the army he resided on Raritan Road. He is buried at a cemetery in Hillside.

CLAUSS, PAUL J., PFC, Serial No. 32240351, U.S. Army, 77th Infantry Div. "Killed in Action" by machine gun fire, 15 December 1944 on Leyte Island, the Philippines, while coming to the aid of a wounded soldier.

Paul, who was 31 years old when killed on his birthday, was the victim of Japanese machine gun fire while saving the life of another soldier in a battle on the Island of Leyte in the Philippines. The other soldier had been wounded in the leg and was rescued by Paul before he himself was killed.

This Fallen Hero grew up in Elizabeth, but later moved with his parents to Coldevin Road. He is buried at St. Gertrude's Cemetery in Colonia.

GRAVES, MELVYN, Pvt., Serial No. 42100647, U.S. Army, "Killed in Action" 24 January 1945 while serving in France at the end of the Battle of the Bulge. This hero was under heavy mortar and artillery fire and was hit in the neck by a piece of shrapnel. His father, Herman Graves, was Mayor of Clark 1927-1932.

On 24 December 1944, this Fallen Hero wrote a Christmas Eve letter to his son Robert telling him that he would be home next Christmas and the family would all be happy together again.

Prior to his entry into the army, Melvyn resided on Valley Road.

GREEN, RUSSELL W., Pvt., Serial No. 42000833, U.S. Army, "Killed in Action" 26 April 1944 while serving in the Italian theatre of war on Anzio Beach, Italy.

Russell was inducted into the U.S. Army on 29 June 1943 and was assigned to Co.C, 135th Infantry of the 34th Infantry Division.

On that fateful date, at Anzio Beach, Italy, Russell's unit was attacking the German lines and came under intense mortar and artillery fire. During this attack, Russell was Killed in Action. He was just two days short of his 19th birthday and was in the service for less than 10 months.

Prior to his death, Russell wrote two letters home to his family; both just days before his death. In the one dated 25 April 1944, the day before his death, he requests that his family send him chocolate candy.

This Fallen Hero grew up in Linden, but is considered a Clark Fallen Hero because after he entered the service, his family moved to Raritan Rd., thus becoming a Clark resident.

Russell is buried at the U.S. National Cemetery in Beverly, New Jersey.

GROSSMAN, ALVIN R., 2nd Lt. Serial No. 0-803810, U.S. Army Air Corps, "Died in the Line of Duty", 14 June 1943 while conducting training exercises aboard a navigation training plane. The Lieutenant had just earned his wings as an Army Pilot two weeks prior to his death.

This Fallen Hero is buried at the OHEB Sholem Cemetery in Hillside.

HUTCHINSON, EUGENE F., Torpedoman's Mate 3C, U.S. Navy, "Killed in Action" 7 November 1944 while serving aboard the USS Albacore (SS218). This submarine was sunk on its 11th patrol by mines off North Hokkaido Island, Japan. All hands were lost and is on "Eternal Patrol".

On 24 October 1944, Albacore left Pearl Harbor and arrived at Midway Island on 28 October to top off her fuel tanks and was never heard from again. On 7 November 1944 a Japanese patrol boat witnessed the explosion of a submerged submarine (presumed to be Albacore) and saw many items rise to the surface.

This Fallen Hero grew up in Florida, but married Clark resident Gertrude Amon and they moved to her parents' address on Westfield Avenue.

MAKOWSKI, EDWARD J., Serial No. 0-751919, U.S. Army Air Corps, "Killed in Action" 3 March 1944 while serving as a bombardier aboard a B-24 Liberator. This hero was assigned to the 14th Air Force, 450th Bomb Group, 723rd Squadron.

This Fallen Hero, who resided on Lake Avenue prior to his entry into Army Air Corps, was taxiing with his other crew members down the runway for takeoff when the plane suddenly braked to avoid takeoff and came to a halt past the end of the runway. The plane exploded and burst into flames with a full supply of fuel and bombs. All 10 crew members including Edward were lost.

PADUSNIAK, JOSEPH G., Tech 5, Serial No. 32385995, U.S. Army, "Killed in Action" 18 December 1944 while serving with the 99th Infantry Division at the "Battle of the Bulge."

This surprise attack began on 16 December 1944, at 0530 hours, as 300,000 German troops, backed by artillery and hundreds of huge Panther, Mark IV and new Tiger tanks struck along a 85 mile front.

On 18 December- the final day of Joseph's life-the Germans continued attacking and advancing. Elements of the 394th Infantry Regiment- Joe's unit- were attacked throughout the morning. On the third day of the battle, Joe was somewhere on the battlefield when he succumbed to inflicted wounds and gave the ultimate sacrifice for his country.

This Fallen Hero who resided on Westfield Avenue prior to his entry into the army, was killed along with 30,000 other American forces during this battle. He is buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in Clark.

RUDDY, JOHN L., Jr., S2C, Serial No. 06464195. "Killed in Action" 13 November 1942 at the "Naval Battle of Guadalcanal" while aboard the U.S.S. Juneau.

On that fateful day, the Juneau was struck by torpedoes fired from the Japanese submarine I-26 at 1100 hours and one of the torpedoes entered Juneau's ammunition magazines. When the smoke cleared there was nothing to be seen of the Juneau. It is presumed that John was Killed in Action at this time.

This Fallen Hero, who resided on Prescott Turn prior to his entry into the Navy, was killed along with 900 other sailors aboard the Juneau that day and subsequently thereafter in the shark-infested waters.

SCHMITT, MARTIN, Cpl., Serial No. 32594212, U.S. Army., "Killed in Action" 30 November 1944 while serving with 102nd Infantry Div. near Linnoch, Germany. Buried overseas at the American Military Cemetery in the Netherlands.

This Fallen Hero grew up in Roselle Park, but married Clark resident Margaret Carlson who was his high school sweetheart. They lived on Westfield Avenue with Margaret's parents prior to his entry into the Army. When "Schmitt" Lane was selected for a new Clark street after the war, whoever ordered the street sign inadvertently misspelled this hero's last name. The street today remains "Schmidt" Lane.

WITKOWSKI, JOSEPH, PFC., Serial No. 12203849, U.S. Army, "Killed in Action" 9 July 1944, while serving with the 8th Infantry Division near St. Lo, France, during the Normandy breakout.

This Fallen Hero who resided on Hart Street prior to his entry into the Army was honored for his service along with fellow Clark Fallen Hero Joseph Padusniak by renaming a portion of Hart Street into Joseph Street. He is buried at St. Gertrude's Cemetery.

COLD WAR

WILKES, JOHN, Jr., First Lt., USAF, "Died in Service" 9 October 1958 while piloting an F100-F Super Sabre jet. Lt. Wilkes was on a routine training flight when his jet crashed in the desert near Phoenix, Arizona. He was 28 and resided at 465 Madison Hill Road.

This Fallen Hero is buried in Arizona along with his infant son.

VIETNAM

HARTMAN, RICHARD D., CMDR, Serial No.613595, U.S. Navy, age 32. On 18 July 1967, Hartman's A-4E jet airplane fell victim to anti-aircraft fire near Phu Ly, Nam Ha Province, North Vietnam. He ejected safely, however, the next day four other Naval personnel were killed during an attempted rescue of Hartman. He was eventually captured and "Died in Captivity". His remains were repatriated on 6 March 1974 and he is buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Section 11.

This Fallen Hero grew up in New York State and during his military career he listed his home address as Gertrude Street in Clark, which was the residence of his aunt where he visited and stayed many times.

KUSPIEL, KENNETH, SP4, U.S. Army, "Killed in Action" 1 February 1968 while serving in the infantry, as a result of multiple wounds from an exploding land mine in the vicinity of Chu Lai, Vietnam, at the beginning of the "Tet Offensive".

This Fallen Hero graduated from Clark's ALJ High School in 1964 and attended Farleigh Dickinson University. He left school in 1966 to join the army with his high school buddies. Kuspziel resided with his family on Elm Street prior to his entry into the Army.

SEVELL, ROBERT L., Capt., Serial No. 093427, U.S. Marine Corps, "Killed in Action" 28 February 1968 while co-piloting a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter enroute to a downed aircraft near the heroic Marine Base at Khe Sanh, Vietnam.

On that fateful day, Bob was on a recovery mission when the aircraft was downed by heavy hostile automatic weapons fire. The aircraft exploded on impact with the ground and all 22 personnel aboard were Killed in Action, including Captain Sevell.

This Fallen Hero graduated from Clark's ALJ High School in 1961. He was the starting quarterback of the Crusaders football team during his junior and senior years. Prior to his entry into the Army, Sevell and his wife Valerie resided on Oak Ridge Road with their son Bobby, who was less than a year old when his father died.

WINTERS, JOHN P., LCPL, U.S. Marine Corps, "Killed in Action" 25 May 1969 after being hit by fragments from a mortar shell near Cam Lo, Quang Tri Province, Vietnam. This Fallen Hero resided on Colonial Drive prior to his entry into the Marine Corps.

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

BENISH, STEPHEN C., PFC, age 20, U.S. Army, "Killed in Action" 28 November 2004 in Ar Ramadi, Iraq, when he received enemy fire while on a dismounted patrol. Benish was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Howze, Korea.

This Fallen Hero resided on Ivy Street with his family prior to his entry into the Army. Benish graduated from Clark's ALJ High School in 2002.

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

HARVEY, JAMES, W., II, Sgt., age 23, U.S. Army, "Killed in Action" 20 June 2011 in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit with small-arms fire. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

This Fallen Hero wrote a last letter home to his family that was only to be opened upon his death. Harvey graduated from Clark's ALJ High School in 2005 and resided on Conger Way.



HEROES -- Every One of Them