



# THE STORIES BEHIND THE STARS


*New Milford's response  
to the call to service.*

# *Introduction*

Former Speaker of the House Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill famously said, “All politics is local.” The same could be said about history. Events that occur on the national and international level have a direct impact on communities across the country, including our hometown of New Milford. The intention of this presentation is to draw a connection between these history-making events and New Milford.

The New Milford Veterans Monument is located at Borough Hall. As you drive around town, you come across certain street signs that display a gold star in front of the same names inscribed on this monument. Here, we share of some of “The Stories Behind the Stars.”

# Honor Men - Palisades Township - New Jersey.

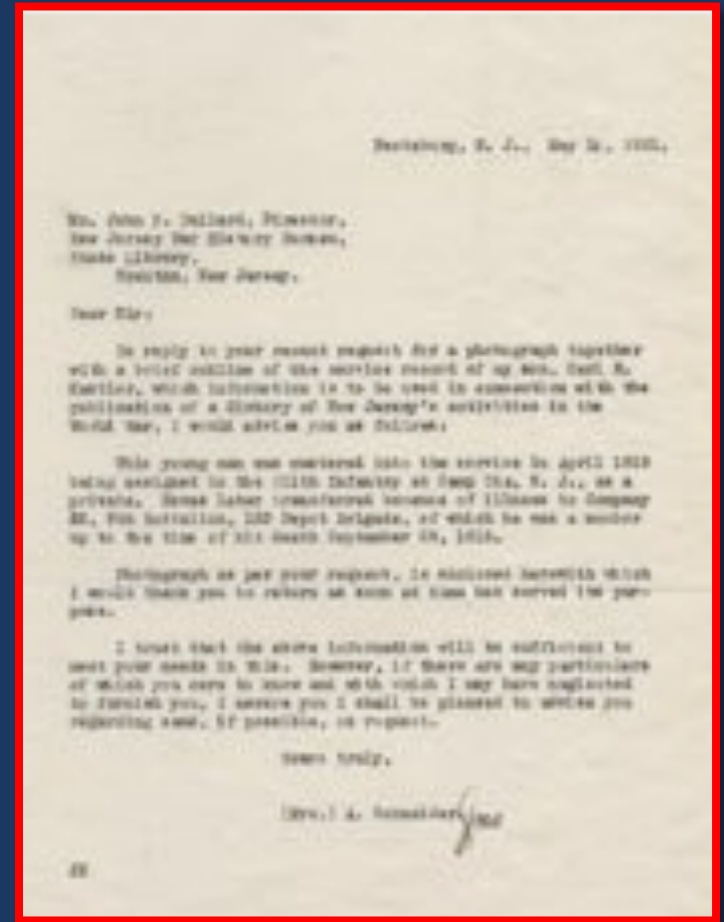


Carl H. Kastler  
Died  
Sept 28 1918.

Fifty-two residents of Palisades Township served in World War I. This printer's block shows all the residents who entered the Armed Forces. There was one casualty: Carl H. Kastler.

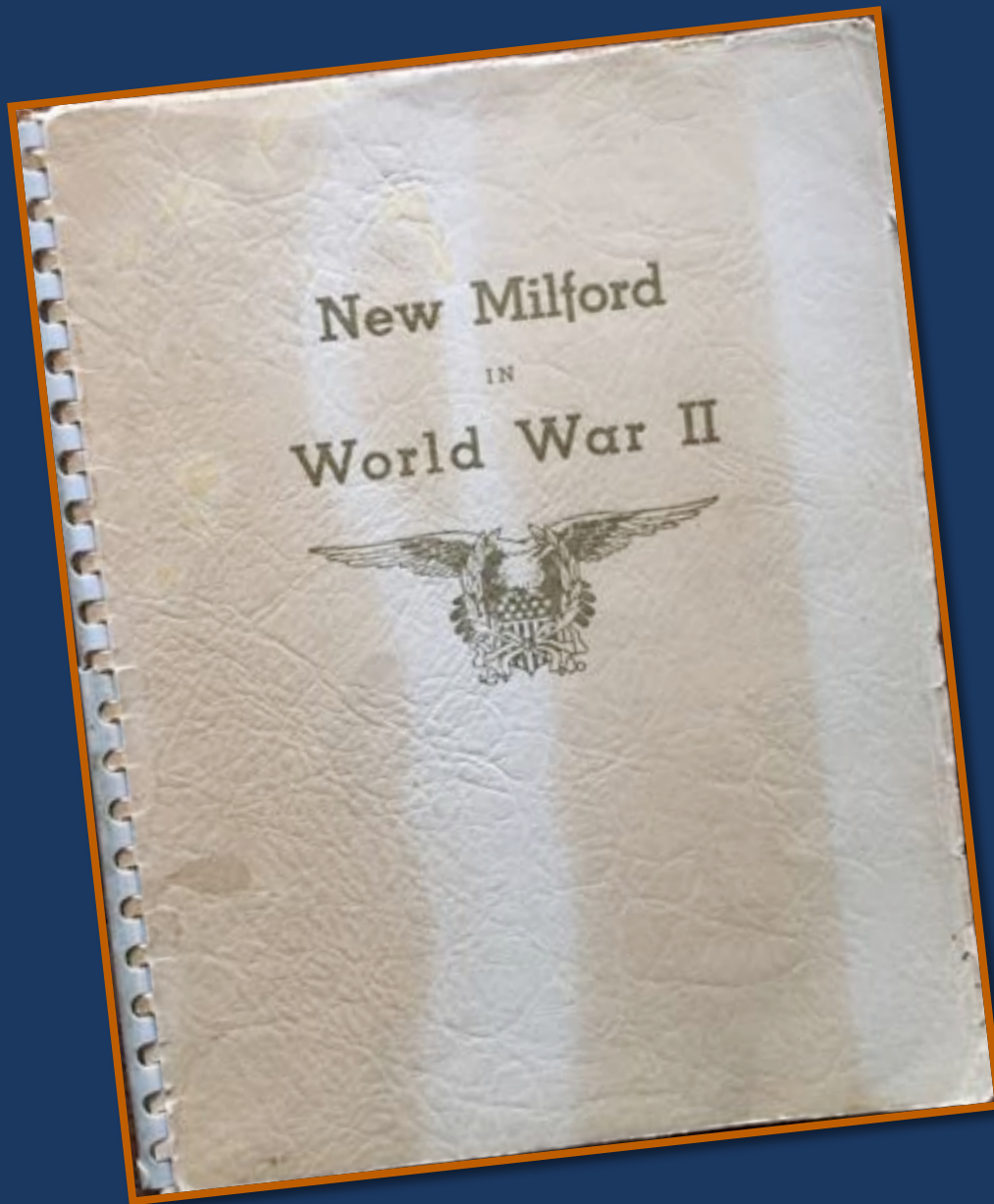


Carl Kastler's mother, Margaret Schneider, provided this letter and picture of her son to the the N.J. War History Bureau. He lived on Grand Street and joined the Army in April 1918 at Fort Dix. He died of pneumonia in September at the age of 22. He was most likely a victim of the 1918 flu pandemic, also known as the "Spanish Flu." Military bases were the perfect breeding grounds for the spread of the virus because large numbers of people lived in close quarters.





# WORLD WAR II



New Milford's record of service:

- 563 men and women joined the Armed Forces.
- 223 citizens volunteered as members of the borough's Defense Council.

Thanks to Teresa M. Martin, a long-time educator at the Junior High School, New Milford's record of service is well documented. In 1947, she published a booklet, which included information on the 563 men and women who served in the Armed Forces. She also included expanded profiles of those who did not return home.

The Junior High School kept an honor roll of all graduates in military service. And once a month, the Servicemen's League of New Milford published a newsletter about their activities around the world. Many of these names are now on street signs throughout New Milford. The majority were killed in action, several died while training for combat. The information was provided by family members.

In addition to serving on the Defense Council, residents helped the Red Cross collect clothing and medical supplies for the troops. War Bond drives were always over-subscribed. Citizens eagerly collected salvage materials and willingly accepted the inconveniences of rationing – all in support of the war effort.

## *Louis J. Faller*

- Age: 24
- Joined the Army in the fall of 1941.
- Trained as a pilot with the Army Air Corps.
- Achieved rank of Lieutenant.
- Reported MIA March 25, 1942, after leaving on a mission from Hickok Field, Hawaii. Plane never returned.
- First resident to die in WWII.

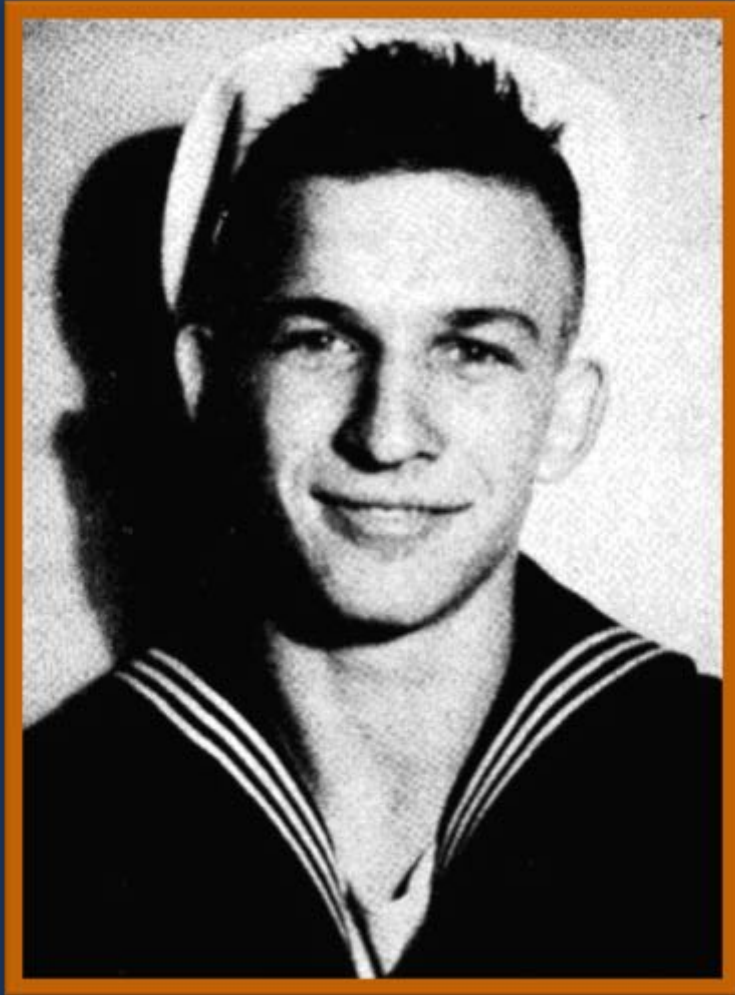




## *Henri Neil Reichelt*

- Age: 24
- Enlisted in the Navy and assigned to USS Juneau.
- Died Nov. 24, 1942, when the Juneau sunk after fierce fighting near Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.
- Only 10 crew members survived the battle. Other casualties included the five Sullivan brothers.
- Cited for gallantry and bravery under devastating enemy fire.





## *Lee G. Hoffman*

- Age: 20
- Enlisted in the Navy and served on the USS Nelson and USS Maddox.
- Died June 10, 1943, during the invasion of Sicily.
- The Maddox was destroyed and the entire crew was lost.

## Alfred H. Luhmann

- Age: 23
- Enlisted in Army Air Force in September 1942.
- Graduated training with special honors as an aerial engineer.
- Achieved rank of Staff Sergeant.
- Assigned to the 702<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Squadron, 445<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group based in England as a gunner and aerial engineer.
- Died April 1, 1944, while returning to base after a combat mission over Germany. Plane lost two engines.





## Robert Greve

- Age: 20
- Moved to Westwood after graduation from New Milford Junior High School.
- Enlisted in the Army in February 1943.
- Assigned to the Army Specialized Training Program to study engineering; transferred to Canon Company, 134<sup>th</sup> Infantry in 1944.
- Reported MIA in France; died in a German prison camp Aug. 9, 1944.



## George Fermery

- Age: 19
- Enlisted in the Army in July 1943.
- Assigned to 26<sup>th</sup> Division, Company L, 142<sup>th</sup> Infantry.
- Participated in offensives in Italy and France.
- KIA in France on Sept. 14, 1944.
- Awards include: Combat Infantry Badge, ETO Campaign Ribbon, 2 Bronze Stars, Presidential Citation and Purple Heart.



## *Charles R. McCarthy*

- Enlisted in November 1942 and assigned to the Army Air Force.
- Served in India and China.
- Attained rank of Staff Sergeant.
- Died in plane crash on Oct. 14, 1944, over China.
- Earned citations from President Roosevelt, General Arnold. Also Air Medal and Purple Heart.
- Attended Jersey City schools.
- Moved to New Milford after he was married and lived on Birchwood Road.





## *Dennis J. Lacey*

- Age: 21.
- Attended Norwich University in Vermont.
- Volunteered for service as an Army Air Cadet in March 1943.
- Volunteered for service in the Pacific.
- Achieved rank of Lieutenant.
- Died Nov. 7, 1944, in air collision near Townsville, Queensland, Australia.
- Buried at military cemetery in Townsville.



## Howard Trench

- Age: 25.
- Joined the Navy in February 1943.
- Trained with the Construction Battalion; worked on submarines.
- Assigned to submarine Escobar, based at Pearl Harbor.
- Escobar was sent out on combat duty in Yellow Sea in September 1944 and reported missing in November 1944 after sustaining heavy enemy fire.
- Awards include Submarine Badge, Victory Medal and Purple Heart.



## *Edward J. Jordan*

- Enlisted in the Army Air Force in June 1942.
- Received extensive training at bases across the country.
- Assigned to the 15<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force, 455<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 742<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Squadron based in Italy in September 1944.
- Flew 27 combat missions.
- Died Dec. 20, 1944, when plane crashed into a mountain while returning to base after a mission.
- Buried in the military cemetery at Bari, Italy.



## Garry Leonard

- Enlisted in February 1943 as an Aviation Cadet.
- Qualified as a pilot, navigator and bombardier.
- Achieved rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.
- Assigned to the 490<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group at Eye AFB in England.
- Died Feb. 6, 1945, while returning from a combat mission over German.
- Plane in the formation developed engine trouble and collided with his plane.
- Buried at the military cemetery in Epinal, France.



## *William Korfitsen*

- Enlisted in the Army in February 1943.
- Trained with the Army Air Force Chemical Operations.
- Assigned to Company E, 406<sup>th</sup> Infantry, stationed in France.
- Injured during the Army's successful attack on Klein-Boslar, Germany.
- Died Feb. 26, 1946, of wounds received in action at military hospital in Germany.
- Buried at the military cemetery in Margraten, Holland.





## Warren Johnson

- Age: 20.
- Enlisted in the Army in the fall of 1943.
- After basic training in Virginia, sent overseas to England in 1944.
- Served in the Infantry of the Third Army.
- Died Feb. 28, 1945, of injuries sustained in the “Battle of the Bulge,” the last major German ground offensive on the Western Front.



## *Armand Alessandrini*

- Age: 29.
- Enlisted in the Marines in February 1943 and trained at Parris Island.
- Sent overseas in January 1944 with the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division, serving in the Marshall, Saipan and Tinian Campaigns.
- Died March 8, 1945, during the battle of Iwo Jima.
- Received citations from the President and Navy Secretary, Asiatic-Pacific Ribbon and the Purple Heart.
- Lived his entire life on Eagle Ave.



## *Robert Trotta*

- Age: 24.
- Enlisted in the Army at Fort Dix in 1940.
- Served in Battery C, 165<sup>th</sup> F.A. Battalion.
- Assigned to camps in nearly every state.
- Stationed for 32 months in Attu in the Aleutian Islands, which had been occupied by the Japanese.
- Drowned June 6, 1945, while on maneuvers at Camp Shelby, Ga., preparing for deployment to China.



## *John J. Bulger*

- Enlisted in the Army at Fort Upton in April 1941.
- Served in 134<sup>th</sup> Medical Regiment.
- Died in a Jeep accident on Dec. 30, 1942, while on maneuvers at Fort Bragg, NC.
- Lived on Milford Ave.
- Buried at St. John's Cemetery, Queens.





## Frank J. Rosse

- Age: 31.
- Grew up in New Milford; family later moved to New York.
- Musically oriented family; mother was a soloist in the choir at St. Joseph's, Oradell.
- Played guitar as part of the "Ross Trio" with his two sisters.
- Drafted into the Army in 1944.
- Killed in Action January 1945.
- Buried at Epinal American Cemetery in France.
- After the war, a third sister joined the group, which became known as The Fontane Sisters.



# THE KOREAN WAR



## George A. Morris

- Age: 27.
- Army sergeant served with Headquarters Company, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division.
- Reported MIA while withdrawing from Kunu-Ri to Suncheon, North Korea, on Dec. 1, 1950.
- Presumed dead Dec. 31, 1953. His body was never recovered
- Twin brother, John, joined Army after George went MIA.





## *Richard T. Shea Jr.*

- Age: 26.
- Born in Virginia; attended Virginia Tech.
- Enlisted in the Army in 1944.
- Earned an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1948.
- Outstanding athlete at the Academy; captain of the track and field team.
- Married Joyce Riemann of New Milford immediately after graduation in June 1952.
- Died July 8, 1953, during the Battle of Pork Chop Hill.
- Received Congressional Medal of Honor for gallantry and courage.
- Son, Richard III, was born July 10, 1953, two days after his death.
- Track stadium, Plebe summer camp at West Point named in his honor.



With historic research, it is not uncommon to find discrepancies in information. For example, New Milford's Veterans' monument lists four names as having died in Korea.

One, Frank J. Rosse, should be listed under World War II. There is information about George Morris and Richard Shea. However, there is no information readily available about James H. Powell.







# THE VIETNAM WAR





*Thomas E.  
Grix*

- Age: 21
- Attended Fairleigh Dickinson University.
- Enlisted in the Army. He wanted to be a Green Beret and served as a communications specialist with Company A, Advanced Team 99.
- Died Dec. 15, 1967, of gunshot wounds received in battle.
- Survived by his mother and wife Carol.



## *Lawrence R.* *Merschrod*

- Age: 20
- Entered the Army in January 1968 and sent to Vietnam in July of that year.
- Served with B Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.
- Killed in action in September 1968.
- Survived by his parents, brother John and sister Claudia.

# Lester G Michels

- Age: 36
- Served in the Marines, attained rank of Staff Sergeant.
- Was a drill sergeant at Parris Island, infantry leader in Vietnam.
- Died March 21, 1966.
- Survived by his wife, Wanda, and five children.
- Buried in Idaho.



# James B. Woods Jr.

- Age: 19
- Oldest of 10 children.
- Managed McDonald's in River Edge before enlisting in the Army in January 1969.
- Critically wounded when his helicopter was shot down Aug. 26, 1969.
- Father arrived in Vietnam on Sept. 15; flew through combat zone to reach son at an evacuation hospital in Da Nang.
- James Jr. lapsed into coma following emergency surgery; died Sept. 24.
- Father accompanied his son's casket as well as those of six other casualties to the United States.



This presentation was prepared by the:

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