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Boyd Blynn Stutler: War Correspondent in the Pacific, 1944-1945

by
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Boyd Blynn Stutler is known to students of West Virginia history as one of the twentieth-century's most respected writers on the subject. Few, however, are familiar with the breadth of his other endeavors, which included stints as a politician, soldier and journalist. During his extensive career as a journalist, Stutler "rubbed shoulders" with many of America's most prominent public figures.¹ One of Stutler's most memorable occupations was his assignment as a war correspondent in the Pacific Theater for the American Legion during World War II. He traveled with General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters in 1944-45 and had an enviable view of the Japanese surrender ceremony aboard the *U.S.S. Missouri* on September 2, 1945. While Stutler's life was replete with accomplishments, he likely considered his attendance at this historic event one of his most memorable journalistic achievements.

Boyd Blynn Stutler was born on July 10,

1889, at Cox's Mill in Gilmer County, West Virginia, the son of Daniel E. and Emily Bird Stutler. Daniel Stutler practiced law in Grantsville and was a long-time partner of Senator R. F. Kidd. The younger Stutler began his career as a journalist in 1899 at the age of ten, working as a printer's devil for the *Calhoun Signal*.² At the age of eighteen, he became the owner, editor and publisher of the *Grantsville News*, operating in these demanding capacities for ten years.³

In 1911, Stutler was elected mayor of Grantsville at the age of twenty-one, becoming at the time the youngest mayor in West Virginia.⁴ He also served as president of the local board of education in 1915 and 1916. Stutler married Catheolene May Huffman in 1911. The couple would have two sons: William Morris and Warren Harding Stutler.⁵

After President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress in April 1917 to declare war on Germany, the United States geared up for military intervention. Boyd Stutler enlisted as a private on September 4, 1917, and was assigned to Battery A, 314th Field Artillery, 80th Division. He was rapidly promoted to corporal on December 1, 1917, and to sergeant on March 9, 1918. He was again promoted to regimental personnel sergeant on May 1, when he was transferred to Headquarters Company, 314th Field Artillery. Stutler arrived in France on May 26, 1918, and would remain in this country for

twelve months with the American Expeditionary Force. His unit participated in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives of 1918. Six months after the conclusion of hostilities, Stutler's tour of duty was complete, and he was honorably discharged on June 7, 1919.⁶

After the war Stutler worked briefly as an editor for two small West Virginia newspapers before becoming chief clerk to the superintendent of public printing at the state-house, a position he held until 1928. Although the conflict in Europe had concluded, armed strife in the coal fields of West Virginia led Stutler in 1921 to enlist for emergency service with Company D, 150th Infantry, West Virginia National Guard, with which he served for one year. In 1924 Stutler was commissioned second lieutenant in the Reserve Officer Corps; he was recommissioned in 1929.⁷

Stutler wrote several books during the 1920s, including *West Virginia in the World War* and *Captain John Brown and Harper's Ferry*. In 1929 he became managing editor of the *West Virginia Review* and served as associate editor of the *West Virginia Encyclopedia*. Two years later Stutler co-authored, with Phil Conley, a textbook for West Virginia history studies, entitled *West Virginia Yesterday and Today*.⁸

Boyd Stutler was deeply involved with veterans' affairs and was elected department adjutant of the American Legion of West Virginia in 1928. His leadership role in this organization is evident by the numerous titles held by Stutler in both local and national veterans' organizations. In 1932 he became the assistant national publicity director of the American Legion and aide-de-camp to the national commander. The same year, Stutler became national commander of the 80th Division Association, a veterans' organization he had helped organize in 1919 and for which he already had served as national vice commander, 1926-31.⁹ In 1936 Stutler became managing editor of *The American Legion Magazine*, a coveted position he would hold until 1954.

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States was again involved in a world war. By mid-1944 the Allies had landed in France and American forces in the

Pacific Theater were making steady progress toward their immediate destination, the Philippine Islands. Although they encountered stiff resistance from the Japanese, the Americans moved inexorably closer to victory, which was a little more than a year away.

Stutler continued to work for *The American Legion*, a monthly publication with a circulation of three million readers, although, had he been a few years younger, he undoubtedly would have preferred to serve once again as a soldier. In June 1943, he was contacted by Whittlesey House, a division of the McGraw-Hill Book Company, with a publishing proposal for a book entitled *Honors For Heroes*, which would explain the history of the important military medals given to members of America's armed forces.¹⁰ Stutler started the project, but other duties called and the manuscript was never completed.

In May 1944, the American Legion's national executive committee authorized sending representatives of the Legion overseas to the theaters of war. Boyd Stutler quickly submitted the necessary paperwork for accreditation by the War Department as a war correspondent for the American Legion, which received notification in early July that Stutler had been accepted for assignment to the Pacific. Stutler spent the next month preparing for his new duties, getting proper inoculations and a passport, and traveling to San Francisco in time to report to Fort Mason on August 16.¹¹

Stutler arrived at the military's Pacific Southwest Headquarters in Brisbane, Australia, on September 11, 1944, and would witness some of the war's bloodiest combat that month at Peleliu, an islet in the Palau Islands. A week after his arrival, on September 17, Stutler wrote that he had traveled "some two thousand miles" from headquarters since his arrival in the Pacific. He had "spent all but two days since arriving in the field, and have met and talked with some hundreds of officers and GI's."¹² For the next two weeks, he was in the jungle at a forward island.

Stutler's activity masked the fact that he was fifty-five years old, certainly a bit older than the young men whose stories he was covering.

Moreover, while Frank Miles was working in Italy for the American Legion, which Stutler thought likely was easier to cover in terms of area, Stutler was “over here [in the Pacific, where] distances are great; me[a]ns of transportation limited, and troops scattered over some thousands of square miles of la[n]d and water.” Despite the challenges, he was determined to cover the war from the front lines, which led him to hitch rides on “jeeps, trucks, planes, Army transports, and Navy ships; but so far have had no real difficulty in reaching the objective.” Stutler’s mobility was aided by his dual credentials in the Army and in the Navy.¹³

The five-day Battle of Leyte Gulf, the greatest naval battle in military history, concluded on October 27 and resulted in a decisive American victory. The subsequent invasion of Leyte was a result of the convergence of the forces of General MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz for a combined blow on the Philippines. Stutler covered the action, “ranging from the front lines to the rear echelons.”¹⁴ His work was hampered somewhat due to the problems he was having with his typewriter, which “got a ducking in salt water when I came ashore with the fourth assault wave.”¹⁵

Stutler also devoted considerable time to addressing problems and questions raised among the troops, spreading information to the American combat troops about the American Legion and also about the G.I. Bill. He suggested that the Legion should put together a folder with information about the bill for the troops.¹⁶

The Americans continued to advance in the Philippine Islands, conducting landings on Mindoro on December 15 and Luzon on January 9, 1945. During the latter part of December 1944, Stutler was unable to get out in the field due to torrential rains. When the rain receded, he went out with “some of the regiments on the firing lines, particularly during the fighting in the Pinamapoan-Ormoc corridor. The active combat work has passed to mopping up patrols, as you know from the daily dispatches.”¹⁷

The sons of Boyd Blynn Stutler were expected to exhibit the same patriotism as their

father, and both fought in the Second World War. Stutler was disheartened by the news that his son Warren, who was serving in Europe, had been captured by German soldiers on December 19, 1944. He received little information concerning Warren’s fate until the spring of 1945, when he was notified by the War Department that his son had been returned to military control. At the time, Stutler asserted that if his son was in “good shape, he probably will want to continue in service until the end of the war—that has been his training.”¹⁸ Stutler’s other son, William, whose nickname was Sambo, served in the Pacific. On June 1, 1945, Stutler wrote that he had not heard “from Sambo for a couple of months—his last letter sounded suspiciously like he was staging for a jump off to some theatre—so I may be seeing him soon.”¹⁹ Shortly thereafter, he received a letter from Warren, who reported that he was fine and would be fit for further duty following the expiration of his sixty-day furlough. His proud father recorded that he was “pleased beyond words that he came through so well.”²⁰

Boyd Stutler kept in good physical condition and was only hampered by minor problems, such as bug bites and colds. He lost twenty pounds in the six months following his arrival in the Pacific Theater and was proud to report that his waist size had been reduced to “a perfect 36—in fact can wear a 34, but the waistband is a bit snug in that size. There are times, however, when I yearn for a belly-filling steak . . . the heck with the waistline.”²¹ One factor in Stutler’s weight loss was his strenuous work schedule. He was pleased when he discovered that working hours could be extended after the use of lights was permitted.

At the end of January 1945, Stutler made plans to visit another part of the liberated section. He noted, however, that in the Philippines “the distances are widening and it takes more time now to get from one part to another by my favorite method of hitchhiking, but I get to see and talk to more of the men that way. I hitched eighty miles yesterday getting back from MacNider’s section—that meant a ride on more than a half dozen jeeps and trucks and a visit with as many officers and men . . .

[g]etting with these chaps gives me a cross section of what they are thinking and talking about.”²²

By the spring of 1945, the Philippine campaign had settled down to mopping up operations that Stutler described as “a mean, nasty piece of business, but the sort that does not get the big headlines. Satisfactory progress is being made at a moderate loss, but there can be no let-up until the Nips are completely eliminated—they’re great infiltrators and keep it up as long as a few are left lurking about.”²³

Stutler continued to carry out humanitarian efforts among the troops, lecturing to them on rehabilitation and forms of assistance which were available. He was pleased when troops recognized him from clippings sent to them by their parents. Stutler also noted the effect that the death of war correspondent Ernie Pyle, who was killed off-shore at Okinawa on April 18, had on American soldiers. They took his death as a “personal loss. . . I was with combat troops when the word came through and as a matter of fact I heard more comment about Pyle and his taking off than I did of the President’s death.”²⁴

In May, Boyd Stutler traveled to Luzon to recuperate from some “tooth and jaw trouble.” He must have been quickly cured because, in a June 1 letter to an American Legion colleague back in the States, he wrote that while visiting General Jack MacNider’s headquarters on the southern tip of the island he had enjoyed “fried chicken every evening and bacon and eggs for breakfast; a good bed to sleep in—and would you believe it, cool, white sheets. That was something most unusual for an old field soldier and I made the most of it.”²⁵ Stutler returned to Manila on May 31 after driving several hundred miles around the area examining the outposts and installations.

Stutler traveled to Kunming, China, on June 22 to cover the Allied war effort in that country but found that Frank Miles had been assigned to the area, which would lead to a duplication of effort. Stutler did enjoy the climate, which he described as “delightful—slept under two blankets last night—and that is a great relief after coming from the straight down torrid sun in Borneo, with a brief stop in sultry, humid

Manila.”²⁶

Stutler also enjoyed joking about the inflated Chinese currency. In the course of eating a steak dinner, he drank \$600 worth of coffee, which proved pleasing to him. “I have always wanted to drink that much because I have never thought that coffee is sold at a price commensurate with its worth. The meal was good and filling. But will have to trade for another bale of Chinese hay before taking another dinner out.”²⁷ Although Stutler enjoyed joking about the difference in currency value, he was not amused when his wallet with all his papers was stolen during his brief stay in China.²⁸

On the morning of July 10, 1945, Stutler returned to the Manila area where he would remain for just over one month. During this brief, final stay in the Philippines, Stutler fell prey to several humorous incidents involving mistaken identity. While on Northern Luzon, he was mistaken for General MacArthur and “damn near mobbed by Filipino folks wanting autographs.”²⁹ There was also a young Filipino girl who, believing that Stutler was a priest, asked him when the next Catholic mass would be held.³⁰

Japan was preparing to resist an invasion of the home islands when two devastating explosions in August 1945 shook the world and ended the war. Stutler was at mess with General Robert Beightler in Northern Luzon when news of the dropping of the first atomic bomb was received. He remarked in a letter written on August 22 that “[o]n coming back to Manila I have been more or less frozen ever since.”³¹ One person, Ernest J. Wesson, jokingly accused Stutler of having had a hand in the explosion: “When first reports came in I went around with a wise feeling . . . certain that you were behind the so-called Atomic Bomb. . . . I felt sure you had solved our problems by tossing a copy of Drelingcour’s CHRISTIAN CONSOLATIONS at the beggars.”³² Following the Japanese surrender, Stutler was tied down in Manila for several days while awaiting the turn of events.

On August 30, 1945, Stutler landed with the first wave of the American airborne movement at Atsugi Airport in Japan. He observed that “things are moving rather rapidly and there will

be but little rest until the final surrender ceremony.” According to an officer who took part in the preparations, setting the stage for the surrender ceremony on the *U.S.S. Missouri* was not unlike the planning for a “gigantic pageant.”³³ Rehearsals were conducted, and men were selected to serve as stand-ins for the military officials who would soon grace the deck of this mighty battleship.

This Japanese surrender ceremony, which Stutler hoped to be “the culminating event that would restore peace to all the world,”³⁴ took place three days later, on Sunday morning, September 2, 1945, aboard the *U.S.S. Missouri*. Stutler “drew a position in a small gun turret almost directly over the position taken by General MacArthur and his official staff. It was within easy earshot and I did not need the loudspeaker system to hear every word that was spoke.”³⁵ He observed that the Japanese representatives “resembled nothing so much as the mourners at a funeral just about to take a last look at the late departed.”³⁶ At precisely nine o’clock, General Douglas MacArthur emerged from Admiral William Halsey’s cabin and walked to the table facing the Japanese. Stutler noted that the sun emerged brightly from behind the clouds just as MacArthur began to speak:

We are gathered here to conclude a solemn agreement whereby peace may be restored. It is my earnest hope and indeed the hope of all mankind that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the carnage of the past—a world founded upon faith and understanding—a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance and justice.

MacArthur then invited the Japanese representatives to sign the surrender document. Following the Japanese acknowledgement of surrender, the Allies quickly signed the documents, concluding the ceremony in twenty minutes.³⁷ Stutler then rushed to get his story on the wireless at Yokohama before the ten o’clock deadline. As he correctly asserted, the world was waiting for the story: “Uncounted millions had waited long and sacrificed much for this hour.”³⁸

In addition to his lengthy telegraph describing the ceremony, Stutler also wrote an article entitled “I Saw The Surrender,” which was published in the September 1950 issue of *The American Legion Magazine*.

Before returning to the United States, Stutler traveled to Korea to witness the Japanese surrender in that small country, which only five years later would engulf the United States in yet another war. Returning to Tokyo on September 16, Stutler boarded the *U.S.S. Ticonderoga* for the voyage home after an exhilarating year covering the American advances to victory in the Pacific. On September 20, the battleship sailed out of Tokyo Bay and started across the Pacific.

Behind me as I turned my face toward Uncle Sam’s land . . . were eight beachhead landings, long hours and days on the lines with the infantry in combat; . . . patrols into the jungles; street fighting in a dozen cities, . . . ; dive bombing with the Marine Air Groups; long diving missions over the coast of Asia from French Indo-China to Shanghai and pioneer raids on Formosa; . . . PT boat patrols in Philippine and Borneo waters . . . ; with rear area troops when at their regular work and also when necessity called them to get into action

The *Ticonderoga*, with “its battle-weary complement,” reached San Francisco on October 5. “It was good to be home,” Stutler wrote.³⁹

Upon his return to America, Boyd Stutler resumed his position as managing editor of *The American Legion Magazine*, where he remained until reaching mandatory retirement age in 1954. He also continued to undertake other projects as well. From 1944 to 1950, Stutler chaired the West Virginia War History Commission. He also wrote radio scripts and was the editor for *The American Story* radio series from 1954 to 1957. Stutler was the managing editor of the West Virginia Education Foundation in 1954 and was elected president of the West Virginia Historical Society in 1958. He also served as the director of the Civil War Centennial Association, a member of the Manuscript Society and a member of the

editorial board for *Manuscripts*, a quarterly magazine.

In 1961, Stutler's book *West Virginia In The Civil War* was published in conjunction with the centennial of the conflict. One project that Stutler did not complete was his biography of John Brown. He spent years doing research and collecting John Brown documents and personal memorabilia, but the manuscript was never published. His final book, *Kinman Massacre*, was published in 1969.

On February 19, 1970, Boyd Blynn Stutler died from a heart attack at the age of eighty, but he left a rich legacy due to his tireless work ethics.⁴⁰ His most lasting contribution to historians is his extensive manuscript collection, which can be found in the West Virginia State Archives. Not only does the collection contain Stutler's personal papers, it also includes diaries, manuscripts and, of course, Stutler's John Brown Collection.

It is obvious that Boyd Blynn Stutler was a firm believer in the importance of patriotism. He served his country as a soldier and as a national leader in veterans' affairs, and his decision to remain for eighteen years with *The American Legion Magazine* exemplifies his commitment to the American soldier. As the Charleston newspapers noted in their brief articles on his death, Stutler's long life was filled with momentous events, both as a participant and as a journalist. Despite the fact that neither Charleston paper noted Stutler's presence at the Japanese surrender ceremony, it appears certain that one of his most memorable occupations was chronicling the final year of the bloody struggle in the Pacific and witnessing the Japanese surrender aboard the *U.S.S. Missouri*. Stutler's participation in this historic event was quite possibly the high point of his professional career.

1. Boyd Blynn Stutler to Captain William E. Miller, 19 August 1953, Charleston, West Virginia, Boyd Blynn Stutler Collection, American Legion Papers, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, West Virginia. All subsequent citations are taken from this collection unless otherwise noted.
2. Boyd Blynn Stutler to Captain William E. Miller,

- 19 August 1953, Charleston, West Virginia.
3. Jim Comstock, ed., *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, Volume 21 (Richwood, WV: 1976): 4562.
4. Ibid.
5. Autobiographical sketch of Boyd Blynn Stutler, prepared in 1936.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Christine Nasso, ed., *Contemporary Authors—Permanent Series* Volume 2 (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1978): 500
9. Autobiographical sketch of Boyd Blynn Stutler.
10. William Poole to Boyd Blynn Stutler, 23 April 1943, New York.
11. Richard P. Powell to James F. Barton, July 3, 1944, Washington; Powell to Boyd B. Stutler, August 3, 1944, Washington.
12. Robert Leckie, *Delivered From Evil: The Saga of World War II* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), 775; Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, September 17, 1944, Headquarters SW Pacific.
13. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, October 6, 1944, MacArthur's Headquarters, New Guinea.
14. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 3 November 1944, Leyte.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 2 January, 1945, Philippines.
18. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 1 June 1945, Manila.
19. Ibid.
20. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 26 June 1945, Kunming, China.
21. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 1 June 1945, Manila.
22. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 28 January, 1945, Philippines.
23. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 1 April 1945, Philippines.
24. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 23 April 1945, Philippines.
25. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 1 June 1945, Manila.
26. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 26 June 1945, Kunming, China.
27. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 1 July 1945, Kunming, China.
28. Ibid.
29. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 1 August 1945, Northern Luzon, Philippines.
30. Ibid.
31. Boyd B. Stutler to James F. Barton, 22 August 1945, Manila.

32. Ernest J. Wessen to Boyd B. Stutler, 10 August 1945.
33. Boyd B. Stutler, "I Saw The Surrender," *The American Legion Magazine* (September 1950).
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 5.
37. Stutler, "I Saw The Surrender," 6.
38. Ibid., 7.
39. Boyd B. Stutler, "Homecoming," *The American Legion Magazine* (December 1945).
40. "Rite Slated Saturday For Stutler," *Charleston Gazette*, 20 February 1970; See also "Historian, Ex-Legion Editor Dies," *Charleston Daily-Mail*, 19 February 1970.

From the Editor

Boyd B. Stutler wrote more than two hundred stories while on assignment in the Pacific. When the American Legion announced that Stutler had been assigned as a war correspondent for *The American Legion Magazine*, the organization noted that his stories would be made available to the Legion's national, state, and post publications, as well as to the general press. Sometimes, if he thought a story might have interest for a certain publication or in a particular state, Stutler would note that. Some of Stutler's stories were published in *The American Legion Magazine* or other Legion publications. His stories also appeared in newspapers across the United States, including a few in West Virginia. The *West Virginia Review*, which was run by Stutler's old friend and associate Phil Conley, used his material several times.

Below are two of Boyd Stutler's stories that have a West Virginia connection. In neither case has it been determined that the piece ever appeared in print. Correspondence between Stutler and the Legion indicates that, at one point, there was a problem with getting stories to local West Virginia publications, so perhaps the papers he suggested never received them.

For one of the stories, No. 104, there is another possibility, that by the time the papers received it, circumstances had made its use inappropriate. Though undated, the piece must

have been written sometime in February 1945. The Lt. William Ronk in that story, whose name Stutler ironically (given that the young man had delivered newspapers to the Stutler home as a boy) misspelled as Raunk, was killed at Luzon on March 2.

Both William Ronk and Michael Alphonse Rafferty, the brother of Sister Agnes Regina, the focus of 109, are among the more than eleven thousand men and women whose names are included on the West Virginia Veterans Memorial at the Capitol Complex in Charleston. These West Virginians were enlisted in the service and died during the recognized period of conflict of one of the twentieth-century wars. The Veterans Memorial Archives is housed at the West Virginia State Archives. Staff have created an online database of all the names and currently are working on biographies of these individuals. The database and completed biographies are available on the Archives and History Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history/wvmemory/wvvetmem.html>. For more information on Lieutenant Ronk and Major Rafferty, please consult that site.

From Boyd Blynn Stutler Collection,
American Legion Papers, West Virginia State
Archives, Charleston, West Virginia.

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Boyd B. Stutler, Correspondent
The American Legion Magazine
GHQ (PRO) APO 500
San Francisco, Cal.

For Charleston (W. Va.) Gazette
Charleston (W. Va.) Mail

WITH A MARINE AIR GROUP, CENTRAL
LUZON—Climbing stiffly out of the cockpit of
an SPD-Dauntless after completing a successful
air strike with the "Diving Devildogs of Luzon"
I walked away from the sturdy little bomber with
the young pilot. Before taking off he had been
introduced as Lt. Champe, but I admired his
skillful airmanship so much that I wanted to
know more about him.

“I’m Lt. Charles Champe, Jr.,” he said, “my home is at 536 Elizabeth St., Charleston, W. Va.” I had spent some hours in the plane striking at enemy installations south and east of Manila with a lad from my own home town. And what a pilot he is!

After a bit of visiting and comparing notes on mutual friends and acquaintances the flying Marine said: “Bill Raunk [Ronk] is here with me and we live in the same tent. He’s our squadron operations officer now.” Then to the tent to see Lt. William Raunk, Jr., who lives at 828 West Washington St., Charleston. During his junior school years he ran a paper route and delivered papers at my Main Street home.

Lt. Champe, who has been in overseas service since November 1, 1944, and has nearly 600 hours of combat flying to his credit, asked two or three times about the mail.

“Sure there’s nothing for me?” he asked his tentmate again. “You know I’m terribly anxious to hear from home.”

“He’s expecting news about his first child,” Lt. Raunk explained. “It was expected the first of the month and he has not yet heard whether he is the father of a son or daughter. He’s been restless and impatient these last few days. Maybe the next mail will bring a letter.” Mrs. Champe is the former Muriel Walker.

Lt. Raunk, who has had longer service in the active war zone, shares credit with R. E. McCarrville for sinking a Jap gunboat in Simpson Harbor, New Britain, last September. But his big thrill came in the Luzon campaign when, with two other pilots, he blasted a pat[?] in less than two hours for a long advance by the 1st Cavalry Division and its supporting ta[?] in the advance on Manila.

“It was a nasty day for the kind of bombing we do,” he said. “The ceiling was at 3,000 feet and thunderheads were rolling up. I sent six of the planes back to the base and took two with me to locate the target. Our mission was to destroy a battery of Nip guns that were holding up the troops and had stopped a column of thirty tanks and ten light vehicles. The target was easy enough to spot, but the ceiling was too low to drop our 500-pound bombs so we climbed as high as we could for dives and dropped the

hundred-pounders one at a time in the right spot to do the most good. The Jap guns were knocked to pieces and the tank column and tro[o]ps went through without much trouble.”

The two pilots on the mission with Lt. Raunk were Lt. Giles Coggins, Winston-Salem, N. C., and Lt. George J. Ross, Tariffville, Conn.

“On the way back we strafed enemy ground troops and got credit for six enemy vehicles on the ground,” he added.

The two young airmen were one year apart in passing through Charleston High School, Raunk graduating in 1939 and Champe in 1940. They enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps together on September 1, 1942, and trained together at Dallas, Texas, and Pensacola, Fla., where both won commissions and their wings. Separated after completing the flying school course, they did not meet again until brought together on Bougainville, when they were assigned to the same squadron for the Luzon. Both have made distinguished records in one of the most difficult and hazardous, as well as the most thrilling, arms of the air combat service.

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Editor’s Note: Charles Champe’s wife Muriel gave birth to a son on February 13, 1945.

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Boyd B. Stutler, Correspondent
The American Legion Magazine
GHQ (PRO) APO 500
San Francisco, Cal.

For Weston (W. Va.) Independent
Weston (W. Va.) Democrat
Glenville (W. Va.) Democrat
Glenville (W. Va.) Pathfinder

WITH THE LOS BANOS RESCUE FORCES, LUZON—When Sister Agnes Regina, formerly of Camden, W. Va., reached the temporary rest camp after her rescue from the Los Banos Jap prison camp, she received the first message from her home in nearly three years.

It told her that her brother, Dr. Michael Alphonse Rafferty, U.S. Medical Corps had been killed in action in Germany.

Sister Agnes Regina, a member of the missionary order of Maryknoll Sisters, is a daughter of William Rafferty of Camden, and has been on nursing duty in the Far East since 1936. After two years at a hospital twenty miles out of Shanghai, China, she was forced to leave in 1938 when the Japanese invaded that section. On arrival at Manila she was assigned to St. Paul's Hospital in the Walled City and was there when the Japs came to disturb her again.

"For the first two years our internment was not so bad," said Sister Agnes Regina. "We were permitted to stay at the hospital and had the liberty of the building and grounds. At intervals [we] were called out to work in the hospital of the civilian internment camp at Santo Tomas. It was not until July 7, 1944, that we were all gathered up and taken into close confinement at the Los Banos prison camp."

More than 300 priests and sisters were among the nearly 2,200 Americans and allied national relieved from their confinement at the camp forty miles southeast of Manila at early dawn of February 23. The rescue raid, twenty-five miles inside enemy territory, was one of the most brilliant exploits in the Pacific war. It was accomplished by a combined Paratrooper, amphibious, artillery and Filipino guerrilla force, all elements perfectly co-ordinated and the strike perfectly timed.

Speaking of the daringly executed raid, General MacArthur said:

"Nothing could be more satisfying to a soldier's heart than this rescue. I am deeply grateful. God was certainly with us today."

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Editor's Note: In a letter to her niece, written soon after her release from Los Banos, Sister Agnes Regina described her rescue:

It was worth fighting for to see those paratroopers drop out of the sky and hear the American voices around the fences, even though I was lying on the dirt floor of the

chapel with only swali walls between me and a possible stray bullet. And then with reduced luggage we entered the amphibious trucks or tanks, crossed Languna de Bay and were transported in trucks to our new Prison Home, but a much different atmosphere.

(*Weston Democrat*, March 16, 1945)

The First Civil War Christmas by

Kenneth R. Bailey

based on research by Donnell B. Portzline¹

Kenneth Bailey is a retired professor and dean at WVU Institute of Technology. He is the author of several books and article and was the editor of the Historical Society newsletter for many years.

For many, there is no more nostalgic holiday than Christmas. One hundred and fifty years ago, Civil War soldiers found themselves facing the first of four Christmas holidays on duty. Being far from home on a favorite holiday is difficult—doubly so for soldiers (volunteer or conscript) who may not leave their post without permission. The initial optimism that the war would be decided quickly had largely faded between the firing on Fort Sumter in April and Christmas 1861. In recognition that the struggle might be prolonged, three-month troops had been replaced with men enlisted for three years, and mounting casualties from small and major battles destroyed any euphoria about the glory of combat.

Though the number of troops, Union or Confederate, in the field on the first Christmas was smaller than the massive armies of Christmas 1862, the anguish of separation from home and loved ones was great. Private James Holloway was stationed near Dranesville, Virginia, with the 18th Mississippi when he wrote his wife: "My Dearest Wife and Babies, A healthy Christmas to you all and to father and son and all the rest. I can't say a happy one (though I wish it) for happiness is not ours until we all meet after the war." "You have no idea how lonesome I feel this day. It's the first time in my life I'm away from loved ones at home."²

Though sad, soldiers found ways to celebrate the holiday. Corporal Henry J. Johnson of Company G, 1st Regiment, West Virginia Infantry (still called Virginia Infantry then) wrote to the *Wellsburg Herald* from camp at Romney, Virginia, on December 18, 1861. "We contrived to spend a very happy Christmas, owing to the kindness of friends of home, thro' whose thoughtfulness we were very plentifully supplied with something to tempt the eye and gratify the taste. One variation from home Christmas was an almost utter absence of 'individ's' laboring under the influence of too much 'fire water.' As a consequence, all arose next morning with clear heads and eyes. Many members of the regiment and especially of Company G, spent the day in decking their quarters with mountain pines, so that by evening they resembled a home place decked for a Christmas festival."³

Near Fayetteville, Major Rutherford B. Hayes, future president of the United States, spent the Christmas of 1861 with his 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He had reason to celebrate as he received news on December 23rd that his fourth son had been born. Christmas Day "was bright and lovely. The band waked me with a serenade." Hayes treated his subordinate officers to a dinner of oysters and crackers, secured from the "sutler."⁴

In his account of the Civil War, Stephen A. Morgan of Marion County, who was serving with the 31st Virginia Infantry, recounted his Christmas Day, 1861: "After roaming around Monterey for a while, and hearing some Christmas 'pops'⁵ from some old shot guns, Col. Arnett and myself left the inhospitable and cheerless place, and proceeded to Edgar Campbell's. At Hightown we found Joseph A. Leeper and we all went down to John Campbell's, took dinner, and arrived at E. Campbell's a while before sun down. We found uncle Billy Kerr, John Burns, and Mrs. Campbell's family. We spent the evening playing 'seven up'.⁶

Another member of the 31st Virginia, James E. Hall, stationed near Bartow, Virginia, gave a tongue-in-cheek description of his first Christmas in camp. "This is Christmas, and as is

common there must be some amusement and festivities going on. We are amusing ourselves hovering around a fire in our tent, which smokes us nearly to death. Though last night was Christmas Eve, I did not sleighride much! Instead of that, we were marched out with the Regt. on the mountain to guard the batteries and artillery. We spent our Christmas Eve very gaily, sure. We are still living in our tents, but we make them tolerably comfortable by constructing rude fireplaces to them. At night we do not fare so well. Some mornings when we awaken our blankets are wet with frost, and the inside of our tent lined with hoar frost. Many times our hair is frozen stiff by congealed respiration, and our floor is covered with snow. This is a pleasant life, sure. I was home this time one year ago."⁷

Civilians, too, felt the absence of loved ones as well as apprehension about the impact of the conflict on home and country. Sallie Putnam, who chronicled life in Richmond during the war, wrote: "Never before had so sad a Christmas dawned upon us. Our religious services were not remitted, and the Christmas dinner was plenteous as of old; but in nothing further did it remind us of days gone by. We had neither the heart nor inclination to make the week merry with joyousness when such a sad calamity hovered over us."⁸ From Barbour County, Isabella Woods wrote to her husband, Samuel: "The children are all well and are anticipating a merry Christmas. We have a big turkey, candies and other good things, but I loathe the sight of them. I would rather sit down to a dry crust with my family undivided. It will be a sad day for me, but I will try to trust the Lord for His Grace and believe that 'behind a frowning Providence he hides a smiling face.' Let us pray that before another Christmas we may be a united and happy family."⁹

Sadly, there were three more Christmas celebrations before the war was ended. Each brought with it renewed wishes for peace and sadness at the loss of loved ones and "empty chairs" marked their absence at holiday dinners.

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1. Dr. Donnell B. Portzline spent 15 years in extensive research on Christmas in Virginia and West Virginia before his death in 2008. This article is an excerpt from a larger work which is in progress.
 2. Kevin Rawlings, *We Were Marching on Christmas Day* (Baltimore: Toomey Press, 1995), 40.
 3. *Wellsburg Herald*, January 3, 1862.
 4. Charles R. Williams, *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes Vol II*, (New York: Kraus Reprint Co, 1971), 168.
 5. Firing guns to celebrate Christmas was a nineteenth-century tradition.
 6. George E. Moore, ed., "A Confederate Journal," *West Virginia History*, XXII, No. 2, 215.
 7. Ruth Woods Dayton, ed., *The Diary of a Confederate Soldier, James E. Hall* (n.p., 1961), 42.
 8. Sallie A. Putnam, *In Richmond During the Confederacy* (New York: Robert M. McBride Co, 1961), 89-90.
 9. Ruth Woods Dayton, *Samuel Woods and His Family* (n.p., 1939), 59.

Submissions

The West Virginia Historical Society newsletter welcomes manuscript submissions for publication consideration that deal with state or local history-related topics. Submissions, which should be of a length suitable for publication in the newsletter and include footnote/endnote citations of referenced materials, should be sent to the newsletter editor, West Virginia Historical Society, P.O. Box 5220, Charleston, WV 25361.



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