

WWII Veterans continues from page 1

We are now winding down with the WWII Veterans. I had been featuring these and Veterans from previous eras in the Manning Monitor for six years, but now am solely featuring the Veterans on my web pages. So promotion and communication will only be online from now until the deadline day I start to lay out the Manning Veterans' history book.

Since 1996 I have been begging and pleading for people to come forward with military information using my web pages. This specific web page has the Manning Veterans database.

<http://www.davidkusel.com/veteran/welcome.htm>

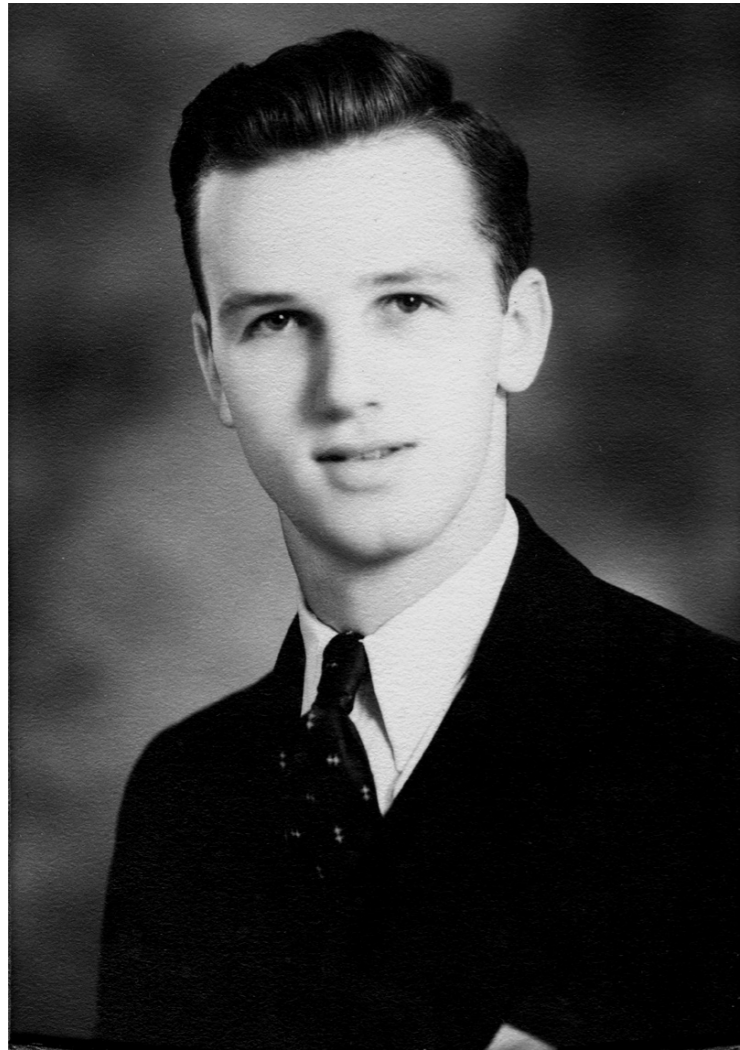
If you wonder whose names I have and to get an idea of what I may have for a Veteran in your family - please visit this link.

Then e-mail me so we can work together to get more pictures and information. If I don't have a Veteran's name or any pictures and information for a specific Veteran in your family, and you don't contact me then they won't be in the Manning Veterans' history book, or the Manning historical database.

I will continue to reach out and try to find contacts for each Veteran but I probably will never know about you or find an address - so it comes down to you reaching out to me.

Now we continue with the WWII Veteran listing.

#597 Donald Wyatt (no military pictures, 5 Monitor articles)



The Wyatt family had a very prominent part of Manning's history with the Wyatt Hospital. Now the family has disappeared completely today, and especially with the razing of the Wyatt hospital building in 2015.

My comments above about having no contacts with most of these long-lost families is true with the Wyatt family. The pictures I have of Don came from classmates, which further shows the importance of people sharing what they have with me so I can scan and add their things to the Manning database.

Manning Monitor 1945 - Sees Son In News Reel Mr. and Mrs. H.C. Gotch saw an M.G.M. newsreel in Audubon last Sunday in which Mrs. Gotch's son Sgt. Donald Wyatt of the Medical Corps with an engineering group, was prominently shown.

The picture's caption, "Heroism in Hottan" applied to that corps and was taken on the road to Aachen of the break-through in Belgium.

Pictures of wrecked army vehicles, destruction and dense clouds of smoke were shown; also the Belgian people marching back home after their second liberation from the Germans. Engineers were shown laying mines. In the group picture of the medical corps, Donald was shown in the center of the front line during most of the film.

He looked very tired but smiled and was so natural that anyone who knew him wouldn't miss him finding him in the film.

The picture was taken the day after Christmas, a Christmas that Donald had written his mother he would never forget.



Donald Wyatt with his classmate, Arlene Parish 1934

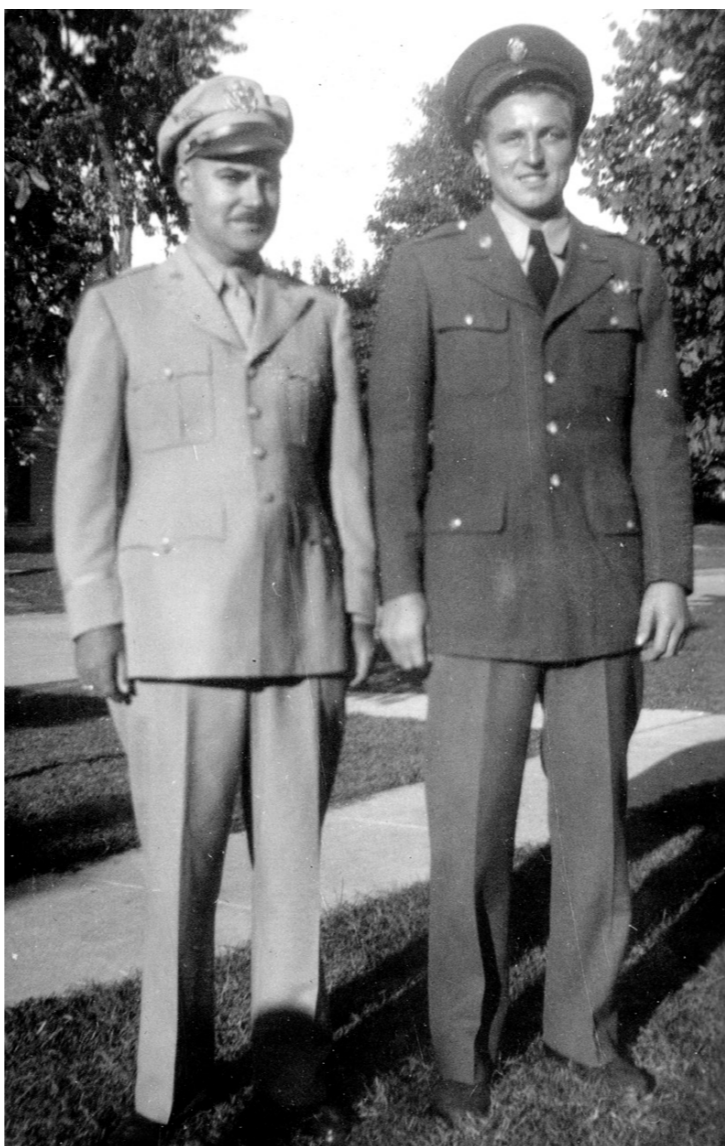
#598 Dr. Merlin R. Wyatt (1 military picture, 6 Monitor articles, brief write-up)

Dr. Wyatt was inducted into the Army Air Force on September 16, 1942.

In 1943 he was commissioned as Captain in the medical division of the Army Air Force and received his flight surgeon training in Santa Ana, California, and San Antonio, Texas. He was transferred to Randolph Field, Texas, where he took a course in Aviation medicine.

In 1944 he went to Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, where he completed a course for Army Medical Corps officers and Naval Medical officers on Chemical Warfare. While in DeRidder, Louisiana, he received his appointment from Washington as Flight Surgeon. Merlin received his discharge from the Army Medical Corps at Shreveport, Louisiana.

He returned to service in the Army Air Corps and attained the rank of Major.



Merlin Wyatt and Gene Strathman

#599 Jack H. Young (no pictures, 2 Monitor articles)

Manning Monitor 1945 - Jack Young Is Wounded In Action We have received news Jack Young is now in combat in Germany.

His wife who now resides at Harlan had been notified that he was missing in action but has since then received word her husband had been wounded but had rejoined his outfit.

He stated that he had been wounded on March 29 by shrapnel which struck him over the left eye and in his neck, but is all right now. He has received the Purple Heart award.

#600 Gordon Younie (no pictures or information)

Gordon married Madlyn Cramer of Manning.

#601 Leroy "Dick" J. Zerwas (several pictures and information, formal write-up, 6 Monitor articles)



In 2012, LeRoy's son, Richard, contacted me and shared a lot of Zerwas pictures and information. Richard and his son also served, so their military information will be included with LeRoy's story as a Veteran family history. I won't include all of that information now but will show you some of it.

LeRoy was born on February 2, 1909. He graduated from Manning High School in 1927. LeRoy married Rita Dinges of Carroll, on September 6, 1932. Shortly after WW II was declared against Japan in December 1941, at the age of 33, LeRoy enlisted in the US Navy as a Seabee. The 60th U.S. Naval Construction Battalion (known as the 60th Seabees) was established in 1941 for the specific purpose of building and defending airstrips in the Southwest Pacific during World War II. The battalion recruited its members primarily from the Midwest, seeking mature individuals with established construction skills. The average age of the volunteer Seabee was 37.

On August 11, 1942, the Naval Construction Training Center, known as Camp Endicott, was commissioned at Davisville, Rhode Island. In October of 1942 LeRoy reported to Camp Endicott for boot camp training. In a matter of months, fully combat-ready members of the 60th Battalion Seabees found themselves en route to the Pacific. After boot camp the newly trained Seabees traveled to Port Hueneme, California. On March 23, 1943, they set sail on the U.S.S. President Monroe for New Farm Wharf, Brisbane "Australia." It became obvious that this was not a pleasure cruise as 2500 men were jammed into this ship intended for 1000 people. Another living change to LeRoy's life was his introduction to the Navy issued "sea bag." The issued sea bag was a big ole' one strap canvas bag issued for the purpose of carrying all of his belongings. Now the Army and Air Force got foot lockers, but sailors carried their one sea bag. Every fleet sailor carried one set of dress blues, port & starboard, undress blues, and whites, a couple of white hats, boots, shoes, a watch cap, assorted skivvies, a pea coat, and three sets of bleached-out dungarees. In addition to the 2500 sailors looking for sleeping and living space, there were 2500 sea bags some-how stacked aboard the MONROE. After a short stay in Brisbane Australia, the Seabees moved up the Australian coast to Townsville for the purpose of "staging" for their destination, the Woodlark Islands.

Woodlark Islands, called Murua by local inhabitants, is located just east of the Southern tip of Papua New Guinea Island. Back in January of 1942 the Japanese Military had captured Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, and had quickly established it as the main base of Japanese military and naval activity in the South Pacific. The importance of this Allied operation (code name "Operation Chronicle") to defeat the Japanese at Rabaul was vital to the success of winning the war in the South Pacific.

The first job assigned to the 60th Naval Construction Battalion was to quickly build an airstrip on this small island. Men worked 20 hours a day ripping away bush, vines, and trees while 15 inches of rain the first week further complicated their task. In a record breaking time of only 13 1/2 days a 3000 foot landing strip was ready for operation. From this airstrip, P-39 aircraft were based and became an important factor in defeating the Japanese at Rabaul.

Additional air strips were constructed by the SeaBees at Finschhafen, New Guinea, and Owi Island, Dutch New Guinea.

In October 1945, after nearly 3 years in the South Pacific area, EM1c (CB) USNR, LeRoy Zerwas was honorably discharged and returned to Manning, where he continued on in the telephone business with his brothers. In 1958 LeRoy and Rita purchased the Westside Telephone Company and moved to Westside, where they worked until retirement.

His wife Rita passed away February 1975 and LeRoy passed away January 1998. They are survived by their four children Richard, Arthur, Larry, and Mary Reed.



Back: LeRoy, Rita; Front: Dick, Larry, Artie

#601 Francis James "Frisco" Zerwas (several pictures, brief write-up, 4 Monitor articles)



Francis enlisted in the Navy Air Corps on October 13, 1942, and entered active service on May 13, 1943. Following graduation from naval air training in Corpus Christi, Texas, Francis was commissioned an Ensign on December 13, 1944.

He received his Certificate of Pilot Status on April 23, 1945, from Jacksonville, Florida, and went on to advanced PBY training in Hutchinson, Kansas. Francis was assigned to a unit in Miami, Florida, August 12, 1945, flying reconnaissance missions over international waters.

He was transferred to San Diego, California, on October 30 and honorably discharged from active service on December 22, 1945. Francis also served as a Lieutenant Junior Grade in the Naval Reserve following his active duty.



Brothers: Francis & LeRoy Zerwas

Next week we begin the Korean War list of names