

Prologue

We celebrate Memorial Day and Veterans Day with time off from school or work to reflect on the service and sacrifice of our veterans. Some visit family members who served, others place flags or flowers on graves or attend parades and take off their hats or put their hands over their heart when our flag goes by. Thank you for your service.

Some of us heard the inaugural address of John F. Kennedy¹ where he told us all, "...Let every nation know whether it wishes us well or ill that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty."

At each time in South Park's history, when America required the courage and service of its young men and women, South Park students stepped forward and took up arms. Most returned and assimilated back into daily life, some lost their lives.

Remembering the loss of South Park students in their service to America is a key part of our school's persona, but what does remembrance truly mean for South Park High School, for *we of South Park*?

Certainly, each Memorial Day assembly calls student and faculty attention to former students who served, and to those who lost their lives in service. All who attended South Park as students, and later returned to participate in Memorial Day assemblies as an Alum, listened and paid their individual respects at the time.

But, as time passes and life happens, remembrance often resolves to a less specific or individual acknowledgement of our classmates. In time, no one alive will remember any of our students who lost their lives. They will be faceless names on a monument or a plaque. It is important that *we of South Park*, regardless of the year, remember them as our classmates. We owe each of them that.

"...Shall ne'er go by, from this day to the ending of the world, but we in it shall be remembered. We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; for he that today shed his blood for me, shall be my brother for eternity."²

An article in the Courier Express on May 26, 1944 relates,

"...South Park to Honor

Surrogate George T. Vandermeulen will speak at South Park High School and Principal Frank P. Regan will preside at a memorial for 32 South Park boys who have died in the

¹ January 20, 1961, Washington DC

² St. Crispin's Day Speech, 25 October 1415, shortly before the Battle of Agincourt, by King Henry V

service. A Victory V, with a wreath in the center, will form the background for flags for each of the boys lost in action. The school orchestra and the girls' chorus will provide music..."

The human toll taken from South Park continued well after the 1944 dedication.

At South Park High School, the monument stands. Silent, stately. Attentive to the spirit and sacrifice of those immortalized on the bronze plaque.

Dedicated in 1946, it bears the names of 118 former students who gave their lives during World War II.

Today the granite memorial, sheltered by a mature tree on each flank, remembers those former South Park students who lost their lives in that war. Through each season, students pass by in the morning and afternoon, walking to and from school and in many cases driven past by us later as we travel the pathway of our lives.

Often with only a glance or a tip of the hat as flags surround it during Memorial and Veterans Day activities, it stands unfailing in delivering the reminder that many South Park students stepped forward during dark times in American history. Each offering service and some giving all for our community, our city, our nation.

Soon, no one will remember the World War II fallen as fellow students, friends, brothers, a sister, a cousin, uncles, neighbors, sons or a daughter.

There is a plaque in Center Hall commemorating the sacrifice of seven who gave their lives in Vietnam. The plaque was donated by the South Buffalo American Legion Post #721, May 30, 1994 with the cooperation of the South Park Class of 1968. A plaque, nearby, honors one who remains Missing in Action in Laos.

These remembrances are part of the essence of who we are; *we of South Park*.

On May 2, 2015 as part of the 100 year Celebration, a Memorial Day program was held honoring all of our students who lost their lives during times of war. As each name was read by the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) unit, a chime tolled for each of our fallen warriors. Poignant.

Sitting there, listening, my thoughts included each as having sat in this same auditorium, in a seat next to mine perhaps, participating in and observing the programs of the day as SPARKS, regardless of what year it was. They performed on that stage, they cheered with school spirit at each pep rally, they walked the same hallways, traversed the stairways and transited Center Hall. They sat in the same classrooms and navigated the experience of South Park each of us have, *we of South Park*.

I also remembered the only fallen student I knew, Tim Nightengale (1967). He was a senior when I was a sophomore. I didn't know him well other than as a fellow member of the swim team and as receiving an occasional nod from a senior in the

hallways. Each and every time since then, when I hear the song, “Georgie Girl”³ I think of Timmy. He used to sing it with gusto to the great amusement of anyone in proximity.

I wondered about all of them. Who were they? What did they do when they were here? Were they musicians? Were they athletes? Were they scholars? Did they think of their future? Or were they, like me, just trying to figure out adolescence? I also wondered about them and how they met their fate in service to our nation.

This project is a timeline pertaining to our loss. It chronicles, to the best of the ability of the school publications, local newspapers and other internet resources, the “history” of each at South Park and then in their final days. There are no happy endings here, save for one.

It consists of a review of South Park High School’s DIAL yearbooks, and for the 60’s, the *PRIDE*, our Creative writing publication. Any missing data on these people from these publications is my own unintended oversight.

Note, the DIAL from 1945 through 1955 did not include the names of attending freshmen, sophomores or juniors. Review of information available on the Internet comes from a variety of sources. Not surprising in this is that there is relatively little specific information on our warriors due to their age and the absence of technology at the times of their lives, however, much is available on military units and their history.

Fifteen additional fallen warriors have been identified and found not to be listed on the World War II memorial outside school or in the post-War DIAL’s. They are: **Bruce Borth** (1935), **Stanley Brudny** (1942), **Salvatore Della Penta** (1937), **Philip Finkelstein** (1941), **Robert C. Greiner** (1937), **John Hess** (1936), **Thomas S. Kelly** (1932), **Daniel J. Kraynik** (1943), **Carl E. Mikesell** (1936), **John Mink** (1937), **Theodore F. Petoniak** (1943), **Jeremiah W. Reilly** (1942), **Stanley V. Siergiej** (1933), **Edward F. Tighe** (1940) and **Charles L. Wheatley** (1923).

These omissions are no doubt due to the “fog of war”, or perhaps, better assigned to the urgent need for South Park and our community, to begin the healing process following World War II. It is not too difficult to understand how names could be missing in the public demonstration of honor and grief amid the resolve to quickly prepare and dedicate their monument while trying to fully realize the loss.

As you continue reading, note that the annotation (year) after an individual’s name reflects the Class they were part of. Not all graduated from South Park, but the year addresses their place at South Park, in time.

Certainly, our 100-year history includes thousands of students who stepped forward and served America. There are many, many of these honored veterans who served with distinction in harrowing circumstances, survived and returned home to continue their lives. Their service is for another project.

³ Written by Tom Springfield, music by Jim Dale, 1966. Sung by “The Seekers” for the film “*Georgie Girl*” in 1966.

However, we offer a heartfelt Thank You to all the students who served and returned home. We appreciate your honor, courage and commitment. Thank you for your service.

So, who were the men and the woman who gave all?

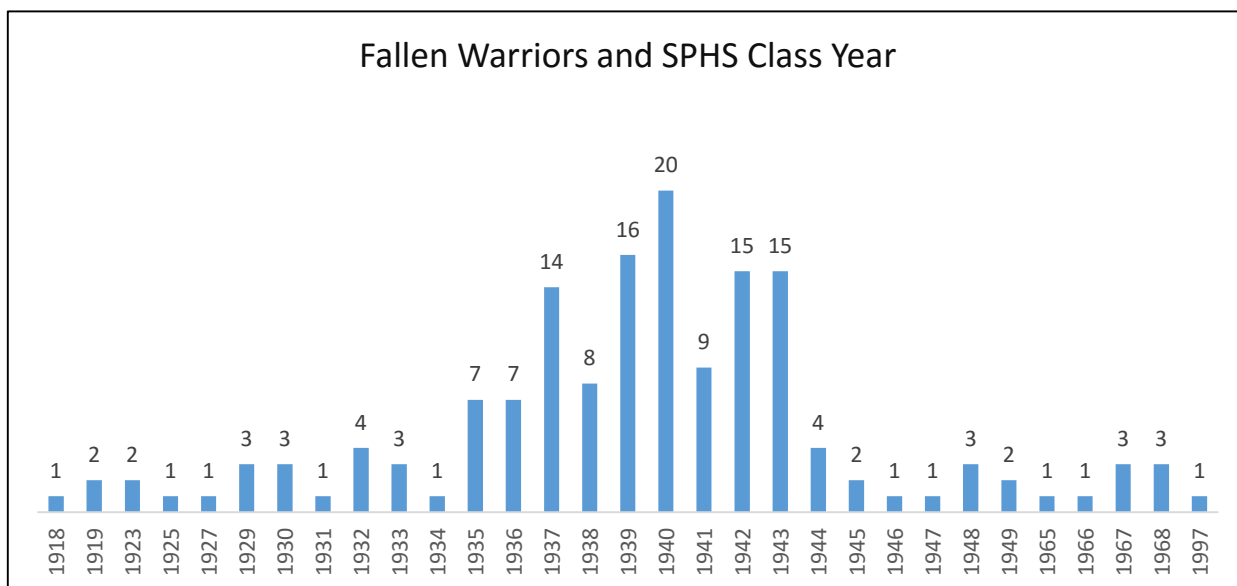
At the onset, they were our friends, our relatives, our neighbors, they sat in bleachers and cheered our teams, they went to our churches, they walked the same streets and ...

For all, 117 (75%) were listed as single with no dependents. At least one, Franklin J. Reed (1947) was engaged to be married.

Thirty four (22%) were married. Raymond McMullen (1935) was married to Helen Tate, a 1940 SPHS graduate, at the time of his death. Two, Charles Wheatley (1923), and John Mink (1937), were married to foreign born women. Mink's wife Jean lived in England where they met and married there four months before his death. Wheatley's wife was from Australia, and his family in South Buffalo had been anxiously waiting to meet her at the time of his death. Another, Jackie Flanigan (1940) married his sweetheart, Mary O'Day, while on leave in Buffalo, lost his life two weeks later. Sadly, his Mary died three years later.

Just over half, 18 (53%) of the married warriors did not have children. Of the 10 (29%) who had one child, six had daughters and three had sons. Leonard Kohl's (1943) son was born after he was Killed in Action as was Cecil Murphy's (1940) daughter.

Three had two children; a daughter and son, and William Hess (1925) had a second daughter, Penny, born after he left home for the last time.



Classmates and...

Gerard Kline (1938) and Theodore Polanowski (1938) served together aboard the *USS Vincennes* (CA-44) and lost their lives when their ship was sunk during the Battle of Savo Island. Both remain Missing in Action.

John (1939) and Paul Myers (1942), brothers from Portland Ave were Killed in Action within 3½ months of each other.

William Scanlon (1941), John Mulvey (1943) and Theodore Petoniak (1943) lost their lives during the D-Day invasion at Normandy. Scanlon and Mulvey both lived on Stevenson Street, and all three were in the same unit hitting the beach during the first wave; 299th Combat Engineers Battalion.

Jeremiah Reilly (1942) was killed during the loss of the *USS Juneau* (CL-52). He was a shipmate of the Sullivan brothers also killed during this attack.

Where did they live?

Abbott Rd	5	Good Ave.	1	McKinley Pkwy.	2	Sage Ave.	1
Alabama St.	1	Griswold St.	1	Melrose St.	2	Schiller St.	1
Alsace Ave.	1	Hager St.	1	Miami St.	1	Seminole Pkwy.	1
Altruria St.	2	Hamburg St.	2	Midland St.	1	Seneca St.	4
Amber St.	3	Hammerschmidt St.	1	Milford St.	1	Sheffield Ave.	2
Boone St.	1	Harding Rd.	1	Mineral Spring Rd.	2	Shenandoah Rd.	3
Cable St.	1	Harriet St.	1	Mumford St.	1	Smith St.	1
Cazenovia Pkwy.	1	Hayden St.	1	Oakdale Pl.	1	South Geary St.	2
Choate Ave.	2	Heussy St.	1	O'Connell St.	4	South Park Ave.	5
Clinton St.	2	Hillside Ave.	1	O'Connor Ave.	1	Spaulding St.	1
Columbia Pkwy.	1	Hopkins St.	1	Olcott St.	2	Stevenson St.	3
Columbus Ave.	3	Hubbell Ave.	1	Olsen St.	1	Teresa Pl.	1
Como St.	3	Imson St.	1	Oneida St.	1	Tiffit St.	1
Crystal Ave.	1	Junior Ave.	1	Orlando St.	2	Tindle Ave.	1
Culver Rd.	1	Kamper St.	2	Parkview Ave.	3	Trowbridge St.	1
Cumberland Ave.	1	Kenefick Ave.	1	Payne Ave.	2	Weaver St.	1
Cushing Pl.	1	Kentucky St.	1	Peabody St.	1	Whitfield Ave.	3
Davey St.	2	Kimberly Ave.	1	Portland St.	2	Wildwood Pl.	1
Downing St.	4	Knoerl Ave.	1	Prenatt St.	1	Willink Ave.	1
Duerstein St.	1	Ladner Ave.	2	Pries Ave.	1	Woodside Ave.	2
Elk St.	2	Lakewood Ave.	1	Remolino St.	1	Yale Pl.	1
Exchange St.	1	Louisiana St.	1	Richfield Ave.	1	Zittel St.	3
Fairview Pl.	1	Lovejoy St.	1	Riverview Pl.	2	Hamburg, NY	1
Folger St.	2	Macamley St.	3	Roanoke Pkwy.	1	Tonawanda, NY	1
Geary St.	1	Maurice St.	1	Rutland St.	2		

Not unexpected, there are many stories; after all this is South Buffalo.

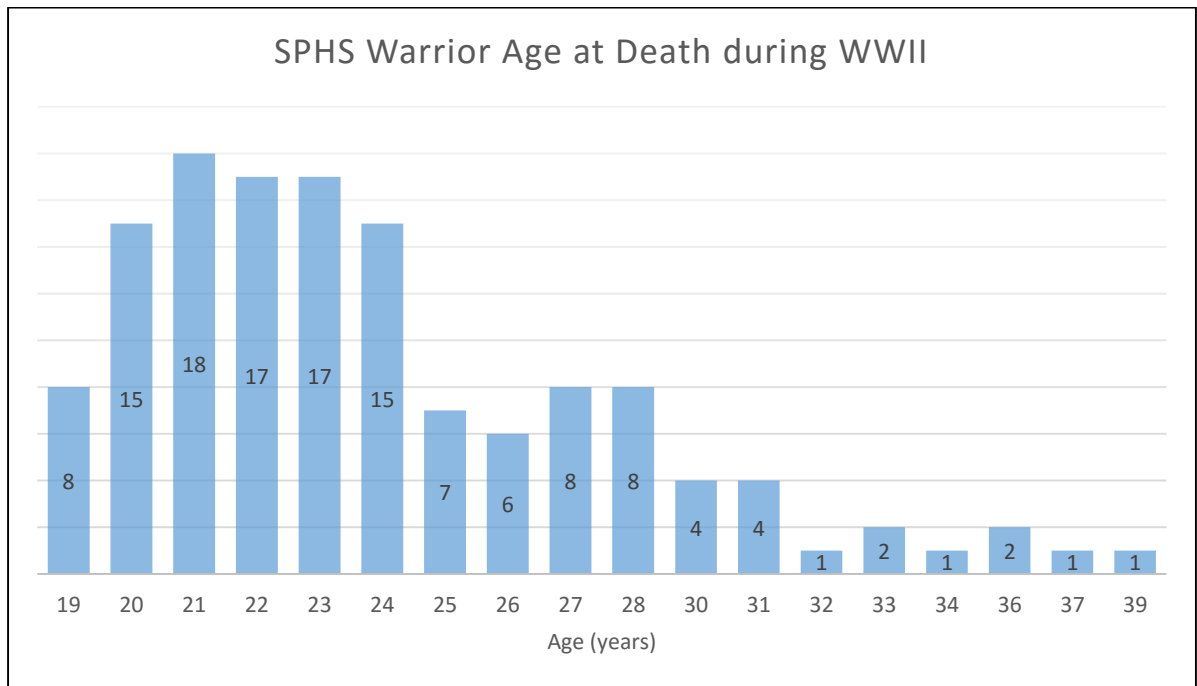
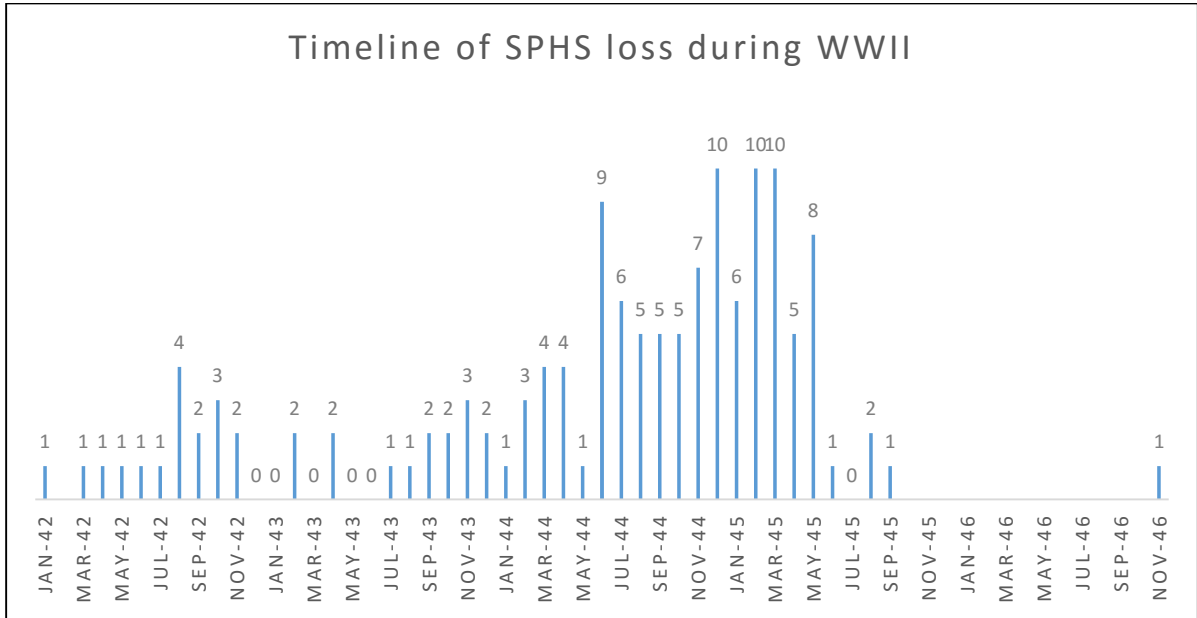
War / Service	SPHS Fallen Warriors	Months of Service (Average)	Age (Average)	Age (Range)	Age (Mode)
WWI	3	16	18		18
Army	1	13	18		
Marine Corps	1	16	18		
Navy	1	18	18		
	136				
WWII		24	24		
Army	53	24	25	19 - 39	22
Army Air Forces	47	22	24	20 - 29	22
Navy	13	29	23	20 - 27	25
Marine Corps	10	29	22	20 - 24	21
Army Medical Corps	3	14	21	19 - 25	
Coast Guard	2	63	26	21 - 30	
Merchant Marine	2		29	29	
Army Nurse Corps	1	18	26	26	
Army Chaplain Corps	1	23	31	31	
China National Aviation Corps	1		27	27	
Korea	7	13	21		
Army	5	11	21	19 - 21	22
Marine Corps	2	19	21	19 - 23	
Viet Nam	8	12	20		
Army	2	22	21	21	
Marine Corps	5	9	19	19	19
US Navy	1		20	20	
OIF	1	81	25		
Army	1	81	25	25	
TOTAL	155	24	24	19 - 39	

When they made their decisions to serve, they selected service in each of the branches, to include the new aviation opportunities offered with the Army and the Navy. One had been a commercial pilot and joined the Chinese National Aviation Corporation (CNAC).

During World War II, CNAC was headquartered in India, and flew supplies from Assam, India into Yunnan, southwestern China through the “Hump Route” over the Himalayas, after the Japanese blocked the Burma Road. Despite the large casualties inflicted by the Japanese and, more significantly, the ever-changing weather over the Himalayas, the logistics flights operated daily, year round, from April 1942 until the end of the war. The CNAC was a smaller part of the overall re-supply operations which

included the U.S. Army Air Force's (USAAF) India-China Division of Air Transport Command.⁴

What do we know about them after they entered service? When, what happened, where, how? Many questions.



⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China_National_Aviation_Corporation

This project is intended to be a contextual framework around the word “remembrance”; to add a face and chronicle to every name.

For those in these pages, thank you. We remember.