# WAY BACK WHEN

STORIES FROM THE PAST, TALES THAT LAST.

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Comments, Questions, Suggestions -- Email - sandman43@att.net


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## SPECIAL VETERANS DAY ISSUE

## V-MAIL

We are familiar with sending messages by email to our friends and family members which is nice. We don't have to wait days for mail delivery and it doesn't cost us anything as long as we have an internet connection. Another popular way to send messages is by texting on our phones. It seems most people seem to prefer texting rather than actually talking on the phone.

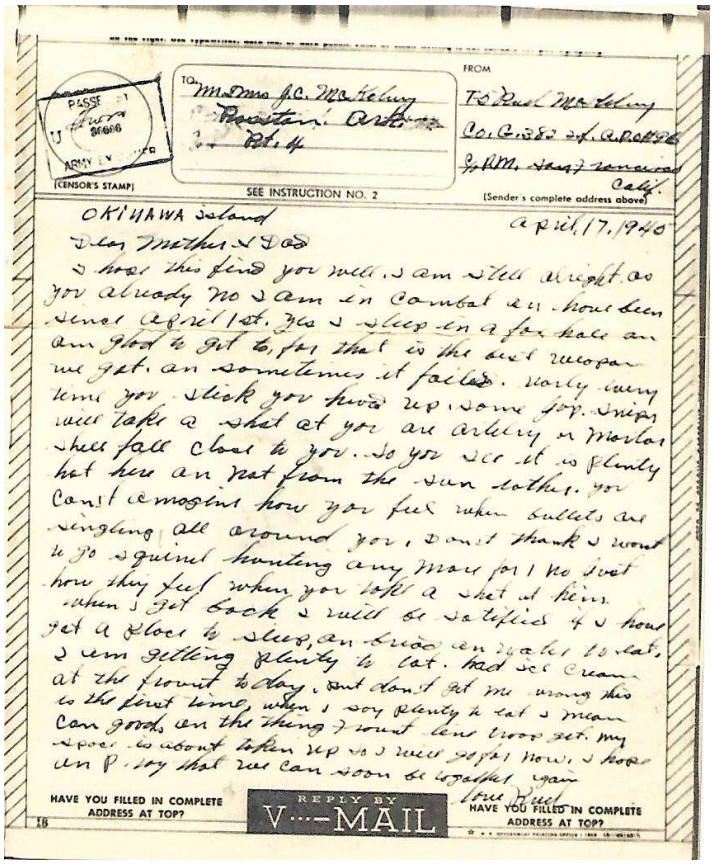
Back during the days of World War II in the 1940s, getting a message to a soldier stationed overseas was a problem. Getting a letter from home boosted a soldier's morale and let them know how things were going back home and vice versa. The problem was that the millions of letters being sent back and forth took up a lot of space on planes and ships that could be used for such things as food, fuel, and ammunition. To remedy this, the government came up with a system called Victory Mail or (V-Mail for short). This system was used from June, 1942 to November, 1945.

Here is how the system worked. If someone wanted to write to a soldier or sailor, they could pick up a form at their local post office or get one from a rural mail carrier. The form contained a space for the letter and had an envelope attached. Once the letter was ready, they attached a three-cent stamp for surface mail or a six-cent stamp for air mail. If someone in the military wanted to send a letter back home, they used the same system, but they were not required to pay postage.

The V-mail letters were sent to facilities in certain cities where they were opened and censored. Government censors made sure there was no information in these letters that could be used by the enemy. Then they were transferred onto microfilm as a thumbnail image. Each roll of microfilm could contain 1800 letters. When they got to the destination, the microfilmed images were enlarged and printed with the finished size being a little over four inches x five inches. It was then delivered to the person who was to receive it. This greatly reduced the weight and space required for transporting all the millions of letters. For example, 151,000 letters normally weighing over 2500 pounds was reduced to just 45 pounds.

I have several of these V-mail letters that my dad sent while he was in the service. One was addressed to me on my first birthday telling how he wished he could be with me to celebrate my birthday and hoped to be with me on my next birthday.

Here is one of his V-mail letters he sent to his parents in 1945 while he was stationed in Okinawa. I have transcribed it in case you can't read his writing.



OKINAWA Island
April 17, 1945

Dear Mother & Dad

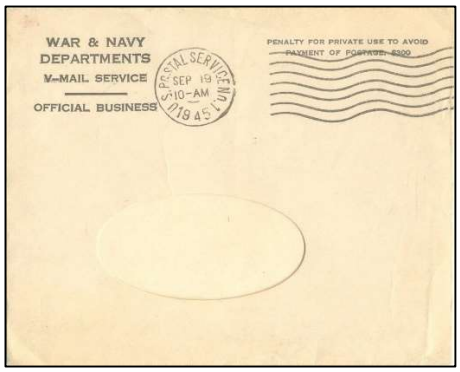
I hope this find you well. I am still alright as you already no I am in combat & have been since April 1st. Yes I sleep in a foxhole and am glad to get to, for that is the best weapon we get. an sometimes it fails. Nearly every time you stick you head up some Jap. Snipe will take a shot at you are artillery or Mortar shell fall close to you. So you see it is plenty hot here an not from the sun either. You Can't imagine how you feel when bullets are singing all around you, I can't thank I won't to go against hunting any man for I no just how they feel when you take a shot at them. When I get back I will be satisfied 4 & hour get a Block to sleep, an Lord an make to eat, I am getting plenty to eat. had ice Cream at the front today, but don't get me wrong this is the first time, when I say plenty to eat I mean Can goods an the thing I want less troop get my appetite is about taken up so I will close for now, I hope an P. Say that we can soon be together again

Love Ruel

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY V···-MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?




V-Mails arrived in this type envelope--

3.75 inches x 4.75 inches in size

*Dear Mother and Dad,*

*I hope this finds you well. I am still alright as you already no (know). I am in combat and have been since April 1st. Yes, I sleep in a foxhole and am glad to get to, for that is the best weapon we got and it sometimes fails. Nearly every time you stick your head up some Jap sniper will take a shot at you or artillery and mortar shells fall close to you. As you can see, it is plenty hot here and not from the sun either. You can't imagine how you feel when bullets are singing all around you. I don't think I want to go squirrel hunting any more for I know just how he feels when you take a shot at him. When I get back, I will be satisfied to have a place to sleep and bread and water to eat. I am getting plenty to eat. I had ice cream at the front today, but don't get me wrong, this is the first time. When I say plenty to eat, I mean can goods and the things front line troops get. My space is about taken up, so I will go for now. I hope and pray that we can soon be together again. Love, Ruel*

Note: My dad did continue to squirrel hunt after he got out of service.

My dad spent over three years in the Army during World War II. He was one of the lucky ones who was able to make it back home. Like many others, he never talked much about the war. While serving in the Pacific, he contracted a serious skin disease which he called jungle rot which affected his hands and feet and bothered him the rest of his life.

I am sure it was an exciting time for a country boy from Nevada County to be able to see parts of the world he had only read about in school, but being in the military in wartime is not quite the same as traveling to those places while on a vacation.

These men and women who served during World War II are sometimes called The Greatest Generation. That term is applied to those born between 1901 and 1927. They had endured the Great Depression during the 1930s and many of them served their country in World War II. We owe them and all veterans who serve in war or in peacetime a lot.

Most county court houses have a memorial on their grounds honoring those who served in various wars. Some books were published honoring those from Nevada and Ouachita counties who served in World War II. Other counties may also have these books. They contain pictures and a short write-up about each person. I have books for Nevada and Ouachita counties, but my Nevada County book does not have a cover. You

can sometimes find these books in county libraries or maybe even come across one in a garage sale. They are somewhat hard to find now. Here is the cover of the Ouachita County book and a picture of my dad and his information from the Nevada County book.

**McKELVY, RUEL M.**

T-5 Ruel M. McKelvy, son of Mr. and Mrs. James R. McKelvy, Bluff City, Ark., husband of the former Geneva Henry, attended Bluff City High school before entering the Army in October, 1942. Trained at Camp Adair, Ore., further training at Ft. Lewis, Washington. Saw action with the 96th Div., in the Pacific. Is now on duty in the Philippines.

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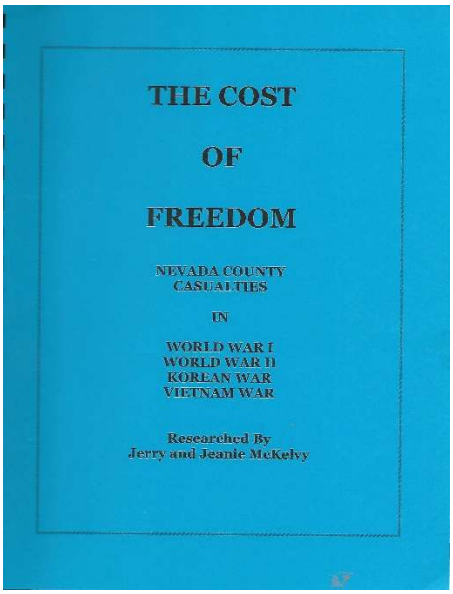
## THE COST OF FREEDOM




The war memorial at the Nevada County court house has the engraved names of 75 men from Nevada County who died while in service during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. A few years ago, my wife and I searched the county newspapers and other sources to find out more about these men. We put the information we collected into a booklet called The Cost of Freedom. The booklet contains 103 pages. I placed a copy of the booklet in the Nevada County library.

Here is a list of the 75 men. If you would like information about any of these men, send me an email and I will send you the information we collected. You can find my email address in the heading on page 1.

Names of men who died while in service from combat, accidents, or illness during World War I, World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War whose names are engraved on the War Memorial at the Nevada County court house.

PFC Lillard N. Adams – World War II
T Sgt. James S. Allman—World War II
S. Sgt. Earlie Baker—World War II
A. B. William R. Barnard—World War II
Pvt. Therman Beasley – World War II
CPL Ernest Beaty—World War II
Pvt. Raymond D. Boggess—World War II
CPL Fred C. Bright—World War II
Pvt. William Marvin Bright—World War II
S. Sgt. Paul S. Brown—World War II
CPL Floyd M. Brown—Korean War
S2C Horace E. Butler—World War II
Pvt. Woodrow Campbell—World War II
S. Sgt. Terrell M. Caudle—World War II
1 Lt. Carl Cheney—World War II
PFC James T. Cook—World War I
PFC James T. Cummings—World War II
Pvt. Claude W. Davis—World War II
Pvt. James E. Delaney—World War II
Pvt. John S. DeWoody—World War II
Pvt. Donald W. Dillard—Korean War
PFC H. D. Dillard—World War II
CPL A. G. Dorman—World War II
S1C Robert Edwards Jr.—World War II
Capt. Charles W. Eley—Korean War
PFC Coney Ellis—Vietnam War
Pvt. Johnny D. Ellis—World War II
PFC D. C. Fuller—World War II
T Sgt. Homer T. Glanton—World War II
Pvt. Thomas M. Greer—World War II
Joseph Hackney—World War I
Leonard Hamby—World War I
Garland Hardwick---World War I
2 LT Leo Hicks—World War II
ENS James T. Hildebrand—World War II
Pvt. Samuel Hooker—World War I
PFC Edgar M. Hovarter-World War II
T Sgt. George W. Hunt Jr.—World War II
CPL Elvin Hunter—World War II
PFC Coy G. Jones—World War II
PFC L. J. Jones—World War II
Pvt. J. L. Lentz—World War II
ENG. Fred W. Litton—World War I
S. Sgt. James R. Logan—World War II
Pvt. Ray McAteer—World War II
Tec. 3 William C. McCants—World War II
2 Lt. William L. McDougald—World War II
Sgt. Joseph R. McMurray—World War II
Sgt. James McSweeney—World War II
Sgt. Leo Mann—World War II
S. Sgt. James W. Maroon—Vietnam War
Jabe H. Moore—World War II
S1C Harl C. Nelson—World War II
John M. Nelson—World War II
PFC Watson J. Nichols—World War II
Sgt. John N. Nolen—World War II
S. Sgt. Jay Roy Norman—Vietnam War
Pvt. Luther M. Rinkle—World War II
Sgt. Carl E. Rowe—World War II
PFC Morrilton C. Rowe—Korean War
PFC James B. Saunders Jr.—World War II
S. Sgt. James Schmitt—World War II
T. Sgt. Loyce M. Smith—World War II
PFC Ruel Spencer—World War II
PFC John T. Stewart—World War II
S Sgt. Robert C. Stewart—World War II
PFC Dale Stuart—World War II
Lt. Frank C. Stuart—World War II
William C. Sutton—World War II
CPL William H. Thomason—World War II
Lt. William E. Thornton—World War II
Robert A. Turner—World War II
STM 2c Fred D. Vanhook—World War II
Pvt. Arthur Williamson—World War II
PFC Lyal V. Wood—World War II

**A Kaleidoscope of Color – by Don Mathis**

It was a beautiful day in Germany back in the early 1970s; the sun was shining bright and the autumn air was brisk. I was the clerk for the First Battalion, 68th Armor, and all my roommates were drivers. J.C. drove the ambulance, Charles drove a tank, and Bruce drove a jeep. And on this day, the four of us got into Bruce's jeep to go joyriding.

It was not hard to find an off-road trail in the hills above Baumholder. Soon we were high in deep forest, driving on a carpet of leaves, pushing forward into a curtain of oranges and browns and yellows. The route soon narrowed to one lane as we continued into the thick woods.

After a few miles, J.C. said we should go back; the thicket was so dense it would be hard to turn around. "I've been driving these trails for years," Bruce said. "I know when it's time to turn around." I was concerned we would get lost, but Bruce assured me that we could always radio for help. "But I'm not going to get lost," he said.

The passage continued to constrict. Soon we were traveling on nothing more than a cow path. Another 300 yards and we couldn't see the trail anymore at all. Bruce was just driving between the widest spaces among the trees. He finally decided to turn around – but there was no room for that.

He put it in reverse and started backing up, guiding his way through the view in the plastic window in the back of the canvas roof. The jeep antenna, about 10 feet long and normally held back by a clip, popped loose.

I had the front seat view through the windshield and the leaves knocked loose by the antenna swallowed the jeep. Rich apricot hues bounced off raisin radiance and recoiled against harvest golds. Colors of coral and salmon blended with cinnamon and saffron.

Bruce heard his passengers clamoring with excitement as the essence of autumn smothered the front of the jeep. Bruce would glance towards the windshield as he continued backing up to catch a glimpse of this living lava lamp of organic colors, but his riders had the best view of all.

A solid sheet of leaves – no, it was thick as the earth itself, but tinctured with the iridescence of the equinox – entombed us in a hurricane of hues. Honey and hazel and henna ricocheted off chestnut and chocolate. Rusty pumpkin copper colors joined the smoothie of peaches and papayas and pomegranates.

It was as if we were inside a kaleidoscope – a treasure chest exploding with jade, topaz, opal, garnet, agate and tiger's eye. I have always admired God's creations. But on this autumn day, the Creator completely outdid His self.

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Our area of Arkansas has been experiencing a major drought for several weeks. Fire danger is great and we have seen fires develop in many areas. The normal rainfall for our area is 54 inches per year. So far, I have measured 27.4 inches at my house and we only have two more months to go.

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|---|---|---|---|
| Jan. – 1.5 inches | Feb. 1.5 inches | Mar. – 2.9 inches | Apr. – 6.3 inches |
| May – 3.5 inches | June- 2.7 inches | July – 5.6 inches | Aug. – 2.1 inches |
| Sep. – 1.0 inches | Oct. – 0.3 inches | | |

I came across a website that shows extreme weather history for each zip code. I typed in the zip code for Bluff City, but a footnote said the measurements were actually taken at Prescott. The records go back to 1890. Here is what it shows:

Record high temperature----118.9 degrees on August 4, 1897
Record low temperature-- minus 9 degrees on Feb. 16, 2021
Maximum rainfall in one year—93.07 inches in 2009
Least rainfall in one year—31.57 inches in 1936

Hopefully, we can get some good rainfall in the next two months or 2026 will go down In the record books as one of the driest years on record.