



Dedicated to All Those Who Served

The stories of our area men who served in the military during WWII are too many to list but shouldn't be lost. This is just a small sample of our local soldiers' histories.

Valley City's 'Brownie' Cole Survived the Bataan Death March

Brownell Cole joined the army in 1940 expecting to train in the Philippines, and eager to see the world. But after the Pearl Harbor attack, he found himself on the front line, and a short time after that he found himself captured by the enemy.

It was April of 1942 when Cole was one of nearly 80,000 American and Filipino prisoners of war placed into formation and marched 60 miles in the tropic heat with no food or water. Thousands died on what would be known as the Bataan Death March. But Cole would survive only to face the horrors and atrocities of the Japanese POW camps for the next three and a half years.

In August of 1945, prisoners were freed from the camps. Cole made it through the burnt-out remains of Tokyo to an American ship. He weighed all of 95 pounds. He spent nearly a year recovering in a VA hospital in Iowa.

Although not originally from Valley City, through friends "Brownie" Cole came to love the area and chose to spend the remainder of his life here, becoming a vital part of the community.

STATEMENT
PEACE! PEACE COMES TO THE WORLD
AGAIN. IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME
TO SAY NOTHING OF YOU, TO ANNOUNCE IT
IS FOR ALL OF YOU TO KNOW THE JAPANESE
EMPIRE ACKNOWLEDGED THE
TERMS OF THE SUSPENSION OF HOSTILITIES
GIVEN BY THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT.
EVEN THOUGH THESE TWO NATIONS
DO NOT STILL REACH THE BEST AGREEMENT
OF A TRUCE. AS A TRUE FRIEND FROM
NOW I AM GOING TO DO MY BEST IN THE
FUTURE FOR THE CONVENIENCE OF YOUR
OWN LIFE IN THIS CAMP BECAUSE OF
HAVING BEEN ABLE TO GET FRIENDLY
RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM AND ALSO
THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT HAS DECLINED
HER OWN NATIONAL POLICY FOR YOUR
NATION. THEREFORE I HOPE THAT
YOU WILL KEEP AS COMFORTABLE A
DAILY LIFE BY THE ORDERS OF YOUR
OWN OFFICERS FROM TODAY WHILE

you are staying here. All of you will surely get
much gladness in returning to your own lov-
ing country. At the same time one of my
wishes for you is this, "Your health and
happiness calls upon your life hence -
forth and they will grow up happier
and better by the honour of your coun-
try. In order to guard your life, I
have been endeavoring my ability.
Therefore you will please cooperate
with me in any way more than usual, I
hope. I have enclosed the statement in
letting you know now that Peace - Peace
already has come.

This is the notice
read by a Japanese
Commandant of a
POW Camp at the
end of war. After
reading it, he dis-
carded the paper
and freed prison-
er Brownell Cole
(right) picked it up
as a souvenir.



Notable First Losses of the Area

From the first day of World War II, Valley City was directly involved with the loss of its first son, G. Winston Hammerud - a victim of the attack that instigated the war with Japan. Great confusion and hopes rose for his survival and were eventually dashed as the reality of war hit home for this little community nestled in the peaceful Sheyenne River valley of North Dakota far from Pearl Harbor.



George Winston Hammerud (left) graduated from Valley City in 1932 and worked at the local radio station, KOVC, where he was trained as a radio announcer. He enlisted in the US Navy in April 1940, reporting for duty in San Diego before being stationed in Pearl Harbor to serve as a radio signal man on the battleship USS Arizona.

Early November, 1941, his family received a letter saying he was en route to Long Beach and would spend Thanksgiving with a brother in San Diego. The Arizona never reached California, however, since it was ordered back to Pearl Harbor. Hammerud is buried or memorialized at Tablets of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial, Hawaii. He received the Purple Heart.

That same fateful day, **Vernon Jerome Eidsvig** of Kathryn, ND, and Seaman First Class on the USS Utah stationed in Pearl Harbor, was declared a casualty of World War II. Eidsvig is buried or memorialized at Tablets of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial, Hawaii. He received the Purple Heart.

First Lieutenant **Clarence Edward Van Ray** (right) was serving in the Philippines in early 1942 when his Valley City family was told he was missing and perhaps a prisoner of the Japanese following the fall of Corregidor May 6, 1942. He was held as a POW for nearly three years and suffered the Bataan Death March only to die of acute colitis aboard the Japanese Hell Ship, Brazil Maru, in January of 1945. He was buried at sea and is memorialized on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines. He received the honors of the Silver Star and the Purple Heart.



Leslie Neumann of Litchville

In late 1940, Leslie Neumann (left) enlisted in the Army Air Corp; he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in 1941.

When the Marines landed on Guadalcanal in August 1942, Neumann was in the group of bombers that bombed Japanese bases to make the landings possible. He was awarded a Silver Star for "gallantry in action" for these raids as co-pilot of a B-17 aircraft, and an Oak Cluster in December 1942, when he and his crew flew combat duty for 64 hours on less than 5 hours of sleep.

His plane was struck by anti-aircraft fire in February 1943, but was able to return to base. He was back to combat within a month. Further medals awarded for gallantry and bravery in action included a second Oak Leaf Cluster, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal and a Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster. For his military service, he received a WWII Victory Medal.

On May 21, 1943, his Flying Fortress failed to return from a bombing raid and listed as "missing in action." Neumann was declared dead January 8, 1946, and promoted to rank of Captain posthumously. There is a gravestone for him in Litchville.

Rhiney Weber of Valley City

Valley City's Rheinhold 'Rhiney' Weber (right) entered the US Army Infantry, 88th Division, in 1943; he was captured by the enemy in October of that same year. He would be held as a prisoner of war for six months in Stalag 7A in Germany until May of 1944.

Weber became active in veterans' issues and programs upon his return home, receiving membership to the Valley City VFW club in 1945. He was tapped to be the National POW/MIA Vice Chair in September of 2002. He was also active in the DAV, AM-VETS, and American Legion Club, as well as being a member of the VFW Honor Guard.



We Remember Our Local Veterans Who Gave Their All in World War II

- Louis A. Allard • Bill Baldwin • Benjamin Barnard • Bernard S. Bennison • Ervin D. Bergan • Willard Brandt • Merrill C. Brimer • Melvin G. Busche • Orville E. Carman • William M. Carney • Orville M. Chilson • Guy A. Combs, Jr. • James Cunningham • Leland I. Cunningham • Erling N. Dahl • Freddie A. Dickhoff • James A. Diemert • Glen T. Elliott • Blair Flegal • Harold L. Frostad • David H. Gassmann • Donald J. Gibson • Milton L. Graalum • Warren C. Gray • George W. Hammerud • Woodrow W. Hamilton • Howard I. Hansen • Derald C. Holland • Leslie G. Hull • Leonard Hurley • Willard R. Johnson • Jordan E. Keister • Edwin Kienzle • Russell M. Kinzer • Leonard B. Kjelland • Ward H. Knable • Frank S. Koehn • Louis Larson • Lawrence J. Lavey • Earl H. Leland • Robert C. Lindner • Wallace E. Loken • Henry A. Lovaas • Kenneth Maier • Wayne P. Maresh • Gordon L. Martilla • Henry J. McClaflin • Roland D. McKay • Floyd R. Miller • Martin J. Millner • Gerhardt P. Moen • Melvin Monson • Everett L. Murray • Harold Myrhow • David L. Mythaler • Arthur K. Nelson • Leslie Neuman • George A. Nielson • James Noonan • Kenneth R. Olson • Glenn Opdahl • Thomas Pegg • Leo J. Peyton • Lester R. Pfaff • Robert B. Pfusch • Harvey J. Phillips • Robert P. Ployhar • Mervin E. Radke • Russell Raykjalín • Quinten Robel • Clarence Rue • Kermit P. Rufsvold • Ervin E. Sherman • Eldred Stafney • George H. Stephenson • Palmer Swenson • Donald A. Syverson • Wilbert A. Teigen • Toivo T. Toumie • Clarence E. Van Ray • Paul Wallin • Eugene K. Wicks • Oral M. Winson • Clarence T. Workman • Stanley G. Workman • Lawrence A. Yanish • Orvel P. Zdeb •



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Veterans Memorial Park (shown here) on Main Avenue in Valley City was dedicated in the summer of 2004. It is used for many special occasions and has in the past hosted summer concerts by the 188th Army Band of the North Dakota National Guard.