

Summer 2007

Linfield in the War Years

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Recommended Citation

Henberg, Marvin (2007) "Linfield in the War Years," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 4 : No. 1 , Article 13.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol4/iss1/13

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Approaching the sesquicentennial

Linfield in the war years

(Editor's note: This vignette provides a look back through 150 years of history as Linfield approaches its sesquicentennial in 2008. Marvin Henberg, professor of philosophy, is writing an illustrated history titled *Inspired Pragmatism: An Illustrated History of Linfield College*. Barbara Seidman, dean of faculty, is editing the text and will write an afterword for the book. It will be available through the Linfield College Bookstore this fall.)

Though founded prior to the American Civil War, McMinnville College's place on the frontier insulated it from that terrible conflict. No records have come to light of any founders or students serving for either the Union or the Confederacy. Oregon Baptists did split between pro- and anti-slavery factions, with McMinnville College subscribing to the anti-slavery cause.

The first recorded alumni to die during combat – Bertie Clark and Frank Hibbs – participated with at least 17 other McMinnville College students in the Spanish-American War of 1898. Eleven nurses and two interns left the Good Samaritan Hospital to provide medical services in that conflict, as well.

The First World War found McMinnville College graduate and army Lieutenant Leonard Hopfield, class of 1901, drilling roughly 75 men from his alma mater for enlistment at the end of the spring semester of 1917. Roughly 167 McMinnville College men were veterans of the conflict, with at least six killed in the line of duty. Good Samaritan sent off 103 graduate nurses to Army hospitals, many serving in France.

Mobilization for World War II at Linfield was commensurate with the size and gravity of that conflict for the nation. Over 500 alumni, faculty members and trustees saw service, with 25 listed as dead or missing in action. Nurses from Good Samaritan also rallied to the cause, with over 100 enlisting. In 1945, a liberty ship, the S.S. Linfield Victory, was commissioned at the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation in Portland.

No records can be found of alumni lost in the Korean War, the first for which draft deferments became available for college students. Films of Korean War soldiers being treated for battlefield wounds were shown during a 1952 chapel program to bolster Linfield's turnout for the annual Red Cross Blood Drive.

College draft deferments continued during the Vietnam War-era, but became controversial and were ended by a draft lottery among all selective-service registrants in December of 1969. By this time the country was deeply divided on the merits of the war, and the student-rights movement came to the fore at Linfield as across the country. According to *Linfield Bulletin* records, which may not be exhaustive, at least five alumni died in Vietnam. They were Army Captain Richard Goss '54, Army Lieutenant Ralph Leroy Williams '62, Navy Lieutenant Stephen Richardson '63, Navy Lieutenant Wayne Alan Armstrong '63 and Army Lieutenant Paul H. Eklund '63. Eklund received posthumous awards of the Bronze Star Medal and the Silver Star Medal.

The most recent Linfield graduate to die in defense of country was Army First Lieutenant Erik McCrae '01, who died in Baghdad, Iraq, on June 4, 2004. English Professor Lex Runciman published a fitting tribute to McCrae in the fall 2004 edition of *The Linfield Magazine*.

– Marvin Henberg



This plaque, listing the names of Linfield students and alumni who were killed in World War II, used to hang in Memorial Hall. The name of Hubert A. Santo was subsequently added.

– Rob Reynolds photo reproduction