

## Unknown Heroes of Delhi: Time Will Not Dim the Glory of Their Deeds

by Anita Klawitter, Delhi Historical Society

A week before Memorial Day, 2020 and quite by happenstance, I stumbled upon one of my most gratifying research quests. I was pandemic bored and perusing Facebook when I noticed a posting by the Delhi Township Veteran's Association announcing their upcoming gathering to honor Delhi's KIA (Killed in Action) Veterans. The post mentioned the gathering would be virtual due to Covid-19 regulations, but these Delhi heroes would be honored with the playing of TAPS, rollcall of names and laying of the wreath.

I recall at the time thinking it was sad that the event wouldn't be in person due to the pandemic. As the daughter of a WWII veteran, I, like most of the country, have a soft spot and true admiration for our veterans and the sacrifice they and their families make. I looked over the flyer that the Delhi Veterans Association posted and that's when the pieces to a then unknown puzzle began to fall into place.

I recognized one of the names on the flyer - John Spieker. His name was mentioned in the WWII letters my dad sent home! A few years earlier as a Christmas gift to my seven siblings, I compiled and typed up the letters my dad sent home during WWII from 1944 to 1947 into book form. The Spieker name stuck with me as two of dad's letters written on November 12<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945 to his sister Rosemary were so compelling; they basically detail how Larry Spieker - who I now know to be John's father -

*went on pass to Brussels. I went right by the place. it would have been no trouble at all. we had our own car. The grave is near Espen, Belgium. It will be hard getting up that way now because the passes to Brussels have been discontinued. I will be over here for a couple of months yet. I will try my best to get there."*

Dad's second letter dated December 2nd, 1945 to Rosemary reads in part: "You said you never received a letter from me in a week. The reason for that is, because it took me almost a week to make the trip to Belgium. That is to get the picture of Jack Spieker's grave. I took two rolls of film with me to make sure I

The flyer is titled "MEMORIAL DAY Virtual Gathering" and is organized by the Delhi Township Veterans Association. It is scheduled for Sunday, May 24, 2020, at 1pm at Delhi Twp. Veterans Memorial Park. Due to Covid-19, the event is a private virtual gathering on Facebook. The program includes a roll call of 19 killed-in-action heroes, playing of TAPS, and a wreath laying. A list of names is provided, with a note that some are not pictured. Contact information for the association is also included.

**Delhi Township Veterans Association**  
MEMORIAL DAY  
Virtual Gathering

Sunday, May 24, 2020 at 1pm  
Delhi Twp. Veterans Memorial Park at 934 Neeb Rd, 45233

Due to Covid-19 this is a private gathering that will air on Delhi Township Veterans Facebook page.

Roll Call of Delhi's nineteen Killed-in-Action Heroes  
TAPS  
Wreath Laying

Delhi Township Veterans Association  
PO Box 289202  
Cincinnati, OH 45238-9202

Phone: 513-471-8693  
E-mail: dtveterans@gmail.com  
Website: www.delhiveterans.com  
Twitter: @delhi\_veterans  
Phone: 513-471-8693

NOT PICTURED  
William L. Reiter  
William Schnicke  
John L. Spieker  
Clifford Story

*got some good pictures. I developed one roll which came out good, but the other roll I took to a German photo shop. They scratched the negatives a lot. I doubt if we can get a very good enlargement of them because of the scratches. The contacts are good, I am sure Larry will be satisfied with them. I put flowers on the grave for him."*

These two letters always stuck with me as they demonstrate that my dad – a larger than life figure who died when I was twelve - was quite a decent and compassionate man. I can only hope these photos helped a grieving father find a little closure over his son's untimely death.

I posted a copy of my dad's letters on the Delhi Veteran's Facebook page later that day, and within a few hours the Veteran's posted their response and appreciation and said they had no information on Jack or three other of the KIA vets to be honored and the information from my dad's letters was appreciated, as at least now they knew where Jack was buried.

Well, amateur sleuth that I am, I couldn't let it go and thanks to the skills learned through the Delhi Historical Society and my own genealogy research, I decided to see if I could find out more about Jack so he could have a proper biography like many of the KIA veterans have on the Delhi Township Veterans Associate website.

Within a few hours of researching via Newspapers.com, the U.S. National Archives, Find A Grave and Ancestry.com I was able learn John, who went by the name "Jack" was born on March 14, 1924 to Lawrence and Bessie (Knapp) Spieker, and lived at Box 172 Foley Road. Jack enlisted in the Army reserves on December 3, 1942.

Jack is the handsome young man in the center of this photo. Sadly, Jack was killed in action on March 8, 1945 just outside of Liege, Belgium by a German Burp Gun while jumping out of a disabled tank. I learned how Jack died from the daughter of another Delhi native, John "Mike" Kunnen, who served with Jack in WWII. Fortunately, Mike, pictured to the right of Jack, survived WWII to live a long life and just passed away in June of 2020.

Upon further research, I learned two years after Jack's death his remains were returned from Belgium and a funeral was held for him at the B.J. Meyer Colonial Funeral Home with a Requim Mass held at Our Lady of Victory on November 17, 1947. In April of 1948 his father requested a headstone from the military to mark Jack's final resting place at St. Joseph's Cemetery located at 8<sup>th</sup> and Enright.



I posted what I had learned about Jack to the Veteran's Association Facebook page and within a few hours, was again thanked, and this time a request was made: *Could I discover any information on the three additional Delhi KIA soldiers that the Delhi Veterans had no information on - William L. Reiter, William Schnicke and Clifford Story?* I felt it was my duty to at least try and spent the next several hours researching and learning of these men's short lives.

They say, "life is like a box of chocolates and you never know what you're going to get." While

researching these three men, I found two additional Delhi men who were Killed In Action. On one hand, it made me sad to think of their untimely deaths in a time of war, on the other – I was pleased they would now be remembered. Each of the KIA men either lived in or were originally from Delhi. Therefore, they would earn an engraved brick at the Delhi Veteran's Memorial on Neeb Road next to the police / administration building – their names and sacrifice now known for generations to come.

One of the new discoveries was a brother to the William Schnicke I was asked to research. I learned William had a brother named George who had been taken prisoner by the Japanese in WWII. I would discover that the brothers ended up dying five days apart, on opposite ends of the globe, in 1944. Another previously unknown KIA was discovered by Peg Schmidt, former President of the Delhi Historical Society, editor of the newsletter and volunteer extraordinaire. Peg learned of Michael Huwel, as she prepared a lecture for the DHS Speaker Series. Following is what we were able to uncover:

**William Francis Reiter**, who went by "Bill" was a Corporal in the United States Marine Corp. Born February 26, 1948 to August and Elizabeth Reiter of 306 Glen Oak Drive. Bill attended St. Dominic parish and played the saxophone in the Elder Marching Band and was a 1966 graduate of Elder High School. In addition to his parents, Bill left behind a brother Martin and a fiancée, Jacqueline Antunes. Bill was killed on August 26, 1968 at the tender age of 20.

**REITER**  
 Cpl. **William F.**, U.S.M.C., beloved son of August and Elizabeth Hermann **Reiter**, beloved brother of Martin **Reiter** and fiancée of Jacqueline Antunes, grandson of Josephine and the late Martin **Reiter** Sr., Adele St. Clare and the late Peter C. Hermann; Thursday, August 26, 1968; in Vietnam; residence, 306 Glen Oak Dr. Friends may call at the Vitt & Stermer **Delhi** Hills Funeral Home, 4619 **Delhi** at Robben Ln., on Monday from 4 to 9 P. M. Funeral, Tuesday, September 10, at 9 A. M. Celebrated Requiem Mass, St. Dominic Church at 9:30 A. M. Member of Elder Alumni Associate.

According to military records he was killed by hostile artillery/rocket fire during a ground fight in the Quang Tri province of Vietnam.

Thankfully, his body was recovered and he is buried at St Mary's Cemetery in St. Bernard.

While researching Bill Reiter, I found his Elder High School Band photo. Coincidentally, kneeling near Bill I recognized

Pvt. **John I. Spieker**, 20, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence J. **Spieker**, Box 172, Foley Rd., Delhi, was killed in action with an armored division in Germany, March 8. He entered the service in December, 1942, and went overseas last July. He was a graduate of Elder High School and attended Xavier University. He leaves a brother, Gregory. Memorial mass will be sung at 9 a. m. Tuesday at Our Lady of Victory Church, Delhi.





Ben Schmidt, husband of our very own Peg Schmidt. Ben himself volunteers at the DHS farmhouse and is the driving force of our annual flower sale. It was very unexpected to see Ben in a photo with one of the veterans I was researching so I gave Peg Schmidt a call and explained the research I was doing on behalf of the Delhi Veteran's Association. Peg then surprised me by asking if I knew of Mike Huwel, yet another KIA veteran from Delhi that laid down his life in Vietnam. Peg happened upon Mike while doing research for a presentation she was completing about Delhi in 1969.



**Michael Francis Huwell** - Mike was the son of George A. and Mary B. Huwel who lived on Foley Road in Delhi. He graduated from Elder High School with the Class of 1966. While attending high school he was the newspaper carrier for "The Price Hill News". A couple of weeks after graduating Michael enlisted in the Marines 20 June 1966 at a Cincinnati Marine Recruiting Office. Michael arrived in Vietnam and was assigned to the Weapons Platoon of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division.

During an engagement with enemy forces, at Hill 881 North and 8 kilometer west northwest of the Khe Sanh Airfield, Michael was wounded by shrapnel on the buttocks and back from incoming mortar fire and died as a result of a bullet entering the right lateral nose, causing massive

cranial damage and a left arm wound from hostile rifle fire, when the battalion was participating in Operation Beacon Star.

He had been in Vietnam for 10 months and 13 days and is buried at St. Joseph's Cemetery.

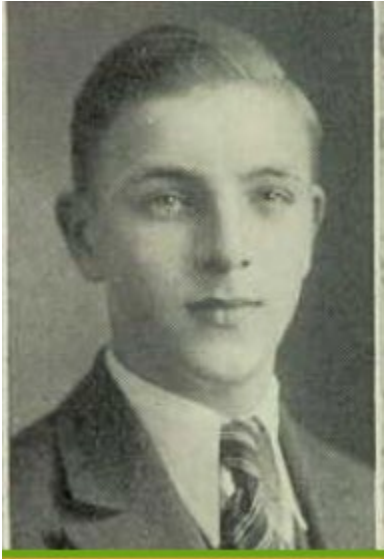


**Clifford Albert Story**, was born April 16, 1907 and died at age 37 on July 17, 1944 in France having served in the Infantry. Clifford was originally buried in France and later reinterred on September 3, 1949 at Spring Grove Cemetery. Clifford was the son of George L. and Cecila (Hermes) Story and left behind two sisters Grace and Lillian. I was unable to locate a photo of Clifford, but his enrollment papers list him as 5' 7" tall, 132 pounds with red hair and gray eyes. I was able to find in the July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1950 edition of the Cincinnati Enquirer the following memorial by Clifford's sister Lillian on the sixth-year anniversary of his death:

Pfc. **Clifford A. Story**, son of Mrs. Cecila H. Hermes, Box 9, Rapid Run Pike, was killed in action in France on July 17, the War Department has informed his family. He has been overseas with the Infantry since June.

**In Loving Memory**  
Of our beloved brother, uncle and son,  
**CLIFFORD A. STORY**  
who passed away July 17, 1944.  
Deep in my heart lies a picture  
More precious than silver and gold,  
It's a picture of you, dear Clifford,  
Whose memory will never grow old.  
Sadly Missed by Sister Lillian and Family.

## William Schnicke



The final veteran I was researching for the Delhi Veteran's Association was William Schnicke. He was one of the original KIA veterans from the flyer who was missing a biography. The very first thing I found in searching for William was his obituary. I was astounded to learn from his obit that he had a brother George who was reportedly being held as a POW by the Japanese since 1942. After hours of research I was able to confirm the brothers, both of whom served in WWII, had died only 5 days apart in December 1944 - far from home and on different ends of the earth.

William born about 1915 (I was never able to find an official DOB) was the youngest child of Harry and Mary (Hoffman) Schnicke. Harry was a musician and violin maker and the family's primary residence was at 228 Stetson Street near the University of Cincinnati. William attended Hughes High School and studied to become a Civil Engineer at the

University of Cincinnati. Sometime between the 1930 and 1940 census the family moved to 456 Greenwell in Delhi, parents, Harry and Mary lived there until their deaths in 1955.

I learned William was active with the Boy Scouts, the 1934 UC yearbook shows William attended a Cadet Officers Ball. I found that William and his fiancé Adele Wentzel applied for a marriage license on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, however, I could not find evidence that they had ever married. William's subsequent military records list him as single.

At the time of his death William was a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in the Army, 20th Infantry Battalion, 10th Armored Division who was KIA on December 20, 1944 in Belgium and is buried in the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery in Liege, Belgium. William was awarded the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Clusters.





**George Schnicke** was born on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1910 and was an older brother to William. There were eight children born to parents Harry and Mary (Hoffman) Schnicke: Fred, Morris, Irene, Lucille, Florence, Viola, George and William.

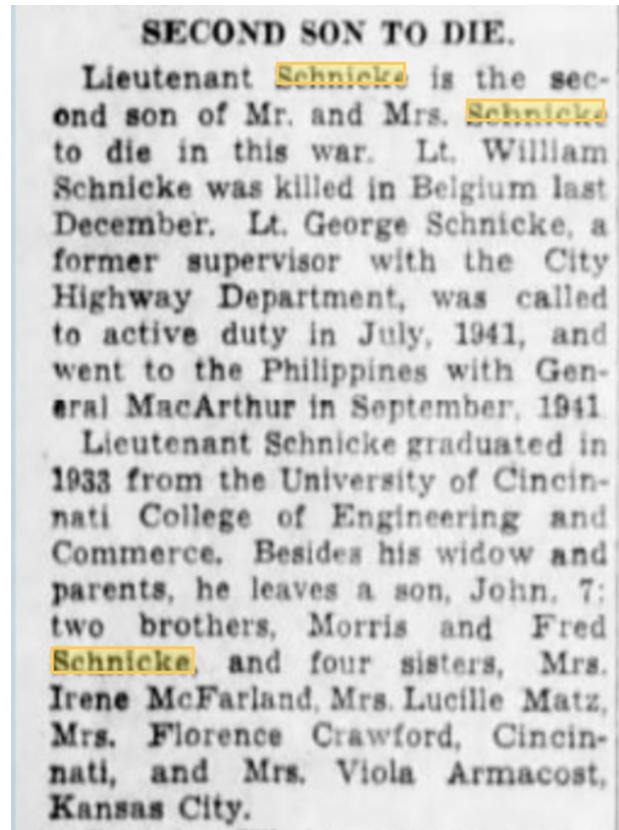
George graduated from the University of Cincinnati College of Engineering and Commerce in 1933. He married Nellie Sandoz, residing in Golf Manor, at the time of his death George had a 7-year-old son, John Henry. George worked as a supervisor for the City Highway Department and was an Officer in the Reserves. He was called to active duty in July 1941 and went to the Philippines with General MacArthur in September 1941.

George was initially listed as MIA and later reported as a Japanese POW on May 7, 1942. His younger brother William serving in Europe certainly would have been aware of his POW status, and aware that Japanese labor camps were notoriously brutal.

Per a news article I found, the family had no contact with George until two years into his captivity when the family received a post card stating he was being treated well and uninjured. According to the records I found George was transferred to various Japanese POW camps in the Philippines during those 2 years. Near the end of the war when the Japanese knew the war would be lost, they began moving prisoners aboard various POW transfer ships. Sadly, the ship George was on was sunk by a US submarine. George died on December 15, 1944 during transportation from Olongapo to San Fernando, PI.

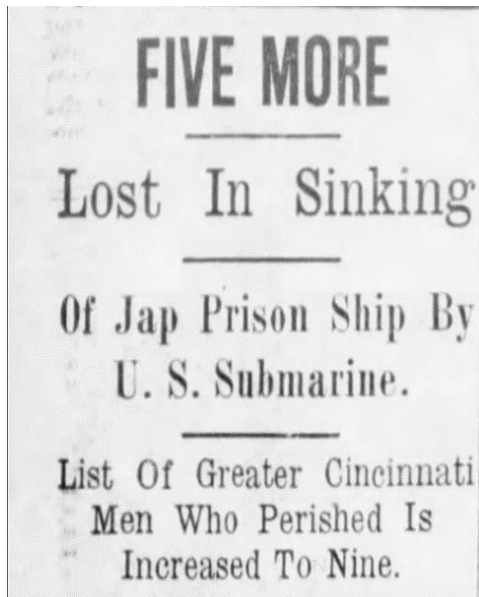
Military records list George as US Army 1st Lieutenant in the 91st Coast Artillery Regiment, Philippine Scouts. His body was listed as buried at sea. Records read: Executed, Died in Ship's Sinking or Result of Ship

Sinking, Shot While Attempting Escape, December 15, 1944. George is memorialized at the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines; he was awarded the Purple Heart.



SCHNELL SIDNEY	SGT	AIR CORPS	NEW YORK
SCHNICKE GEORGE	1 LT	91 CA REGT (PS)	OHIO
SCHNIER SEYMOUR	CPL	501 BOMB SQ 345 BOMB GP (M)	NEW YORK
SCHNITZLER GORDON M	S SGT	33 BOMB SQ 22 BOMB GP (H)	MO
SCHOCH ROY M	CPL	33 BOMB SQ 22 BOMB GP (M)	INDIANA
SCHOCK JOHN L	COL	1 GEN HOSP	NEBRASKA
SCHOEBERLE KENNETH E	PFC	192 TANK BN	WISCONSIN
SCHOENECK LAWRENCE S	2 LT	194 TANK BN	MISSOURI
SCHOETTEL THEODORE	2 LT	44 FTR SQ 18 FTR GP	OHIO
SCHOLL JAMES H	2 LT	370 BOMB SQ 307 BOMB GP (H)	TEXAS
SCHOLL RALPH E JR	TEC 5	1819 ORD CO (AVN)	FLORIDA
SCHOMAKER ELMER R	TEC 4	59 CA REGT	NEBRASKA





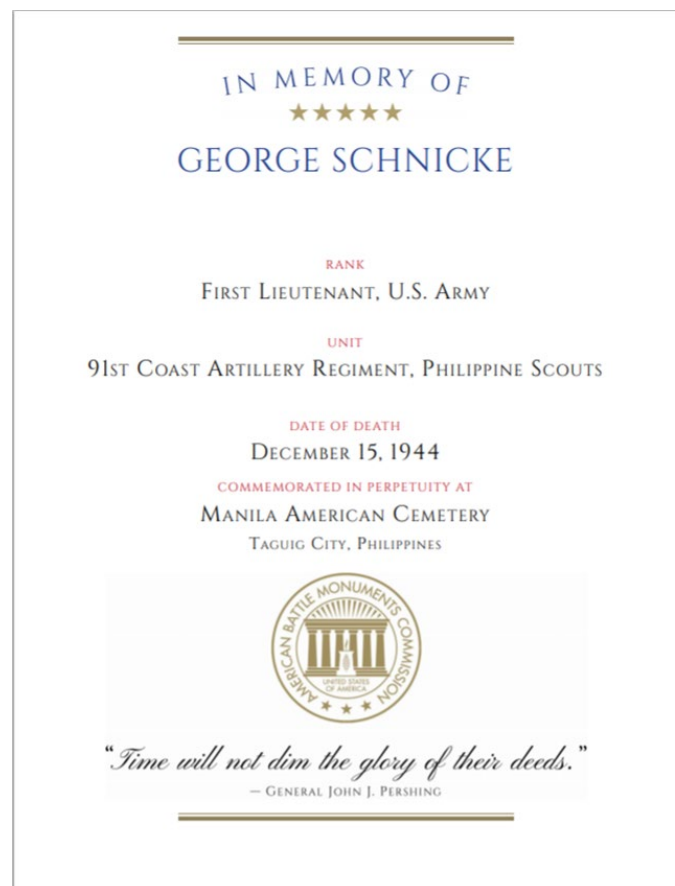
This is the 1945 headline that listed the death of Lt. George Schnicke. "FIVE MORE – Lost in Sinking – Of Jap Prison Ship By U.S. Submarine – List of Greater Cincinnati Men Who Perished is Increased to Nine." In researching the date "December 15, 1944 and Philippine ship sinking" I learned the US was unaware that US prisoners of war were on the ship the *Oryoku Maru* which was under attack at Olongapo, Luzon on December 14–15, 1944. Per a former US POW and survivor of the attack: "With U.S. forces about to retake the islands in late 1944, the Japanese began moving thousands of other POWs to locations closer to Japan." To do so, Japanese troops herded them by the hundreds into the holds of merchant ships that also carried supplies and weapons. "We threw our packs into the deep hold and quickly followed down the long ladder into the darkness, herded by the guards and their bayonets," Jacobs recalled several years later in a narrative, noting that

where he was being held was not as crowded as some others:

The prisoners had been so crowded in these other holds that they couldn't even get air to breathe. They went crazy, cut and bit each other through the arms and legs and sucked their blood. In order to keep from being murdered, many had to climb the ladders and were promptly shot by guards. Between twenty and thirty prisoners had died of suffocation or were murdered during the night.

If that was not bad enough, the merchant ship was a target for U.S. planes and submarines, whose crews did not know they were also loaded with American and Allied POWs. In *Death on the Hellships: Prisoners at Sea in the Pacific War*, Gregory Michno estimates that more than 126,000 Allied prisoners of war were transported in 156 voyages on 134 Japanese merchant ships. More than 21,000 Americans were killed or injured from "friendly fire" from American submarines or planes as a result of being POWs on what the survivors called "hell ships."

This research was some of the more melancholy yet satisfying I have ever conducted. So many Delhi men lost their lives, leaving behind distraught parents who needed closure in asking for a photo of their son's grave in Belgium, to a family losing not one, but two sons during WWII. I often wonder what would have been if their lives hadn't been cut so short. It is satisfying though that we now have their stories and biographies will be written for six men who were previously lost to time.



The final item I found on George Schnicke was a certificate attached to his record on the Manila American Cemetery website. On it was a quote from General John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I, it read: "Time will not dim the glory of their deeds."

Thanks to the efforts of the Delhi Township Veterans Association, those who served our country, and once lived in Delhi are permanently remembered at the Veterans Memorial located on Neeb Road. Viewing all those engraved names is a powerful reminder that freedom is never free, and time has not dimmed the glory of their deeds.

Written by: Anita L. Klawitter, Delhi Historical Society