

1945 October 8-14

Men & Machines Moving Mountains

Mueller, With Army Engineers On Burma Road, Enroute Home

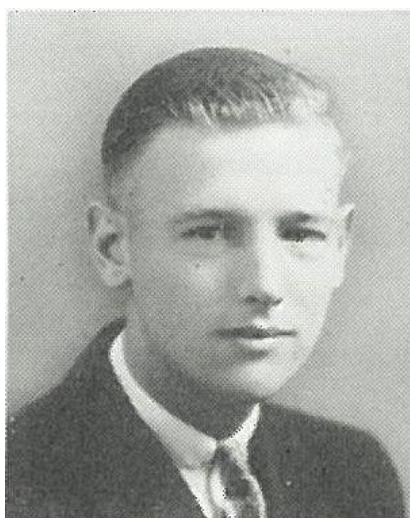
(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 October 14, page 3)

World War II demonstrated that the application of money, manpower, and machines could accomplish apparently impossible tasks in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

First Sgt. **John J. Mueller of La Crosse** was just one of the tens of thousands of men who fulfilled this role during the war.

John Joseph Mueller was born on January 26, 1919, in La Crosse, Wisconsin.¹ His parents were Carl and Mary (Sieber) Mueller.² Carl and Mary Mueller were married in La Crosse on June 6, 1917.³ In May 1923, Carl Mueller was hired as a patrolman with the La Crosse police department. He became captain of the third shift in August 1943 and retired from the police department in September 1945. Their residence was at 1116 South 3rd Street.⁴

A 1937 graduate of La Crosse Central High School, John Mueller played hockey in his junior and senior years. In his spare time, he liked to go fishing.⁵



John J. Mueller

(*Booster*, La Crosse Central High School yearbook, 1937)

After high school, Mueller graduated from the La Crosse College of Commerce and got a job at the Trane Company.⁶ His job at Trane was "punch press operator." He lived at home with his parents, a brother, and a sister.⁷

John Mueller joined the U.S. Army Air Force on July 23, 1941.⁸ He had basic training at [Ft. Belvoir, Virginia](#).⁹ In March of that year, Ft. Belvoir had begun basic military engineer training, so Mueller had that course to prepare him for the work he would do during the war.¹⁰

Mueller served in the [China-Burma-India Theater](#) during World War II.¹¹ He was part of the massive effort to keep supplies flowing to the Chinese to keep them in the [war against the Japanese](#). The jungles, mountains, rivers, and swamps of the region made this particularly challenging, even without the interference of Japanese troops.



Aerial view of the Burma Road
([National Museum of the United States Air Force](#))

Sgt. Mueller was a member of the [Burma Road](#) Engineers. His unit built airstrips, convoy way-stations, and restored part of the Burma Road used by the Allies during the [Salween campaign](#). The road they constructed between [Myitkyina](#) in Burma to [Tengchong](#) in China shortened the supply route from India to China by 200 miles. They also built the first [Bailey Bridge](#) in China.¹²

After the war ended, First Sgt. Mueller was transferred to Camp Ting Hao in [Kunming](#), China, in preparation for his return to the United States. Ting Hao (meaning "OK" in Chinese) was a tent city in the foothills of the [Himalaya Mountains](#).¹³

John Mueller was discharged from the Army Air Force on October 31, 1945.¹⁴

World War II created an urgent boon in construction at home and abroad. Military facilities, transportation infrastructure, ordnance factories, hospitals, and airfields were built or expanded under accelerated time tables because of the war.¹⁵ Even the massive headquarters for the United States armed forces, the Pentagon, was completed in just 16 months from September 11, 1941, to January 15, 1943, by more than 15,000 workers toiling around the clock.¹⁶ All of these projects, from the home front to the front lines, required enormous investments of time, manpower, and money. It was the engineers and construction workers who made all of it happen.



The Pentagon
([Encyclopedia Virginia](#))

Following his discharge from the armed forces, John Mueller returned to his job at the Trane Company. He worked there for 44 years until he retired as a production manager.¹⁷ He married Jane Ann Coughlin, who was a 1938 graduate of La Crosse Aquinas High School.¹⁸ They had two sons and two daughters.¹⁹

John Mueller lived to be 90 years old. He died on November 5, 2009, in Lexington, Kentucky, not quite two years after his wife died. He was buried at the [Camp Nelson National Cemetery](#) at Nicholasville, Kentucky.²⁰

The road to victory in World War II extended all the way from the interior of the United States to the most far-flung outposts overseas. Every yard of that road was paved by men like John J. Mueller of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

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Sources & Notes:

¹ The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri; *Draft Registration Cards for Wisconsin, 10/16/1940-03/31/1947*; Record Group: *Records of the Selective Service System, 147*; Box: 499; image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 2020 October 17).

² "John 'Jack' Joseph Mueller," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2009 November 7, page B3.

³ "In Ye Olden Times," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1927 June 7, page 3.

⁴ "Carl Mueller," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 9, page 2.

⁵ *Booster* [La Crosse Central High School yearbook] (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Central High School, 1937), 32.

⁶ Mueller, With Army Engineers On Burma Road, Enroute Home," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 14, page 3. The "La Crosse College of Commerce" is probably what is now Western Technical College.

⁷ 1940 U.S. census, La Crosse County, Wisconsin, population schedule, La Crosse, p. 18A, dwelling 1116, family 396, Carl and Mary Mueller; image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 2020 October 17); citing NARA microfilm publication T627, roll 4490.

⁸ U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs, *Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File*, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 2020 October 17).

⁹ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 October 14.

¹⁰ "U.S. Army Fort Belvoir: History," *United States Army*, 2019 April 10, <https://home.army.mil/belvoir/index.php/about/history>.

¹¹ "18 La Crosse Men Members Of Wisconsin Club In India," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 10, page 10.

¹² *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 October 14.

¹³ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 October 14.

¹⁴ *Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File*.

¹⁵ Hugh Conway and James E. Toth, "Building Victory's Foundation: Infrastructure," *Hyperwar Foundation*, accessed 2020 October 18, <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/BigL/BigL-4.html>.

¹⁶ Claudette Roulo, "10 Things You Probably Didn't Know About the Pentagon," *U.S. Department of Defense*, 2019 January 3, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Features/story/Article/1650913/10-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-the-pentagon/>.

¹⁷ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2009 November 7.

¹⁸ *Aquinas High School Alumni Directory* (White Plains, New York: Bernard C. Harris Publishing, Inc., 1993)

¹⁹ "Jane Ann Coughlin Mueller," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2007 December 15, page B3.

²⁰ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2009 November 7.