

1945 March 26-April 1

Bloody Iwo

This week brought the first news of La Crosse County casualties in the Battle of Iwo Jima that was fought in the Pacific Theater from the middle of February almost through March 1945.

Before February 1945, most people had never heard of Iwo Jima. A month later this tiny eight-square-mile speck of land, smaller than the city of Onalaska, would touch all parts of the country, and the county, because of the sacrifices made there.¹

John Finanger Dies On Iwo

John A. Finanger, PhM3c, was killed in action on Iwo Jima, according to word received from the navy department recently by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. O. M. Finanger, 2002 Kane street.



Finanger, 19, was attached to the 28th Inf. Rgt. of the 5th Marine Division. He enlisted Aug. 17, 1943, and received his boot training at the Great Lakes Naval Training station.

After a boot leave he reported to Shoemaker, Calif., and later attended field medical schools at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, Calif., and Camp Elliot, Calif. He went overseas in September, 1944.

Besides his parents, he is survived by four brothers, Corp. Paul in England, Sgt. Oren of Camp Wolters, Tex., Pvt. Roald of Camp Hood, Tex., Earl of Wauwatosa, Wis., and two sisters, Mrs. William Hoogenhous, Onalaska, and Mrs. W. C. Brotherson, La Crosse.

In normal times, Iwo Jima was a barren, desolate, inconsequential lump of rock and volcanic ash in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with no redeeming qualities. But World War II was far from normal times. Even relative specks of land garnered attention merely because of their location. Just as real estate salespeople say now, it is all about location, location, location.

Iwo Jima was halfway between American-held [Saipan](#) and Tokyo, Japan. On the south end of the island was an extinct volcano named Mount Suribachi. The northern end of the island was dominated by "rocks, boulders, chasms, lava ledges, and steaming sulphur pits."³ An American intelligence officer described the island as one-third airfields and fortifications, one-third cane fields and scrub growth, and one-third barren. A plateau rose on the northern two-thirds of the island.⁴

The airfields are what made the island strategically important. Japanese on the island could give early warning of American [B-29 bombers](#) on the way to raid Japan. Japanese fighter-bombers from Iwo Jima had conducted air raids on American airfields in Saipan from October to December 1944. They succeeded in destroying more B-29 bombers on the ground than were lost in the air over Japan.⁵

The bombing campaign of Japan was a key motivation for the Americans to capture Iwo Jima. B-29 bombers were the only bombers with enough range to strike Japan from existing land bases. From Saipan in the Marianas to Japan was a 3,000-mile round trip that left almost no margin for error. Battle damage and bad weather forced B-29s to ditch in the ocean if they could not get back to Saipan, and this was an unacceptable loss of men and planes. The island could serve as an emergency landing strip for damaged bombers, as well as a base for [P-51 Mustang fighters](#) that could serve as escorts on bombing raids and perform their own strafing missions.⁶ B-29s could also use Iwo Jima as a refueling stop on the 16-hour flights to and from Japan.⁷ With refueling, the bombers could carry more bombs to drop on Japan.⁸

To defend Iwo Jima, its 23,000 Japanese troops had fortified the island with interlocking defensive positions in caves, tunnels, pillboxes, blockhouses, and other hidden positions. The Japanese could cover nearly the entire island with artillery and machine gun fire. They combined volcanic ash with cement to create very strong concrete; some of their concrete fortifications had walls eight feet thick.⁹ Early in the war, the main Japanese tactic had been mass charges. Now on the defensive, they more often fought from strong, well-concealed positions with the goal of killing as many Americans as possible before dying a glorious death for their emperor.

Seventy-four straight days of aerial and naval bombardment preceded the American invasion on February 17, 1945. Six battleships, along with cruisers and destroyers, shelled the island for two more days.¹⁰ First Lieutenant Arthur M. Knudson of La Crosse was the pilot of a [B-24 bomber](#) that flew several missions over Iwo Jima.¹¹ Staff Sgt. Harry Guy of La Crosse was a gunner on a B-24 Liberator that bombed Iwo Jima.¹² Lt. Robert K. Combellick of La Crosse flew a carrier-based [Avenger torpedo bomber](#) on missions at Iwo Jima.¹³ Sgt. David E. Ferries of La Crosse worked on maintenance and repair for the 318th Fighter Group that raided Iwo Jima before the invasion.¹⁴ Thomas James Hartley of La Crosse was a radioman for a carrier-based torpedo squadron that attacked Iwo Jima.¹⁵ Lawrence Hesselberg of Bangor was a crewman on one of those battleships bombarding the island.¹⁶

A surprising number of men from La Crosse County were involved in the battle of Iwo Jima. Among them were two friends and classmates from La Crosse Central High School's Class of 1944. One would be part

of one of the most famous episodes in American military history, and the other one was close enough to witness the result.

Kenneth S. Espenes was born in La Crosse on May 12, 1926, to Olaf and Cecelia (Breese) Espenes. He graduated from La Crosse Central High School in 1944. Espenes enlisted in the Marine Corps on February 14, 1944 when he was just 17 years old.¹⁷



Kenneth Espenes

(*Booster*, La Crosse Central High School yearbook, 1944, page 26)

Joining the Marine Corps with him on the same day at the recruiting station in the La Crosse Post Office was his friend and classmate, Bill Leisgang. Espenes and Leisgang had grown up three blocks from each other.¹⁸ William H. Leisgang was born February 15, 1927 in La Crosse.¹⁹ His parents were Mr. and Mrs. John Leisgang.²⁰ Leisgang's home was at 2105 Johnson Street, and Espenes lived at 1928 Jackson Street.²¹



Bill Leisgang

(*Booster*, La Crosse Central High School yearbook, 1944, page 29)

Espenes and Leisgang left for basic training in March 1944.²² They saw each other often during boot camp in San Diego.²³



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Bill Leisgang and Ken Espenes were home on leave when this photo was taken of them in their Marine uniforms.

(*La Crosse Tribune*, 2005 February 13, page A1)

After boot camp, Espenes went to [Camp Pendleton](#) in California, and then he went overseas in August 1944.²⁴ Espenes was a rifleman in the 3rd Platoon, Easy Company, 28th Regiment, 5th Marine Division.²⁵

Leisgang ended up in the 26th Marine Regiment of the 5th Marine Division where he was an assistant gunner on a machine gun crew.²⁶

The 5th Marine Division was one of three Marine divisions that would fight to conquer a small speck of a volcanic island in the Pacific Ocean. Espenes and Leisgang both knew the other was on Iwo Jima, but they did not see each other until after the battle when they were both in Hawaii.²⁷

Rockland Man Dies In Action

**Pfc. Blaine Hesselberg
Fatally Hurt On Iwo**

ROCKLAND, Wis.—(Special)—
Pfc. Blaine Melford Hesselberg,
son of Mr. and
Mrs. Harry Hes-
selberg, Rock-
land, was killed
in action with
the marines on
Iwo Jima, ac-
cording to word
received by his
parents.

Hesselberg was
born Jan. 2, 1924,
in Rockland, and
was graduated
from the Spar-
ta high school in
May, 1942.



HESSELBERG

He enlisted in the marine corps
in January, 1943, and attended
the marine paratroop training
school at Camp Gillespie, Calif.,
leaving that station April 20, 1943.

In July of that year he was sent
overseas as a paratrooper into the
South Pacific arena and took part
in the Bougainville campaign and
Empress Augusta bay battles.

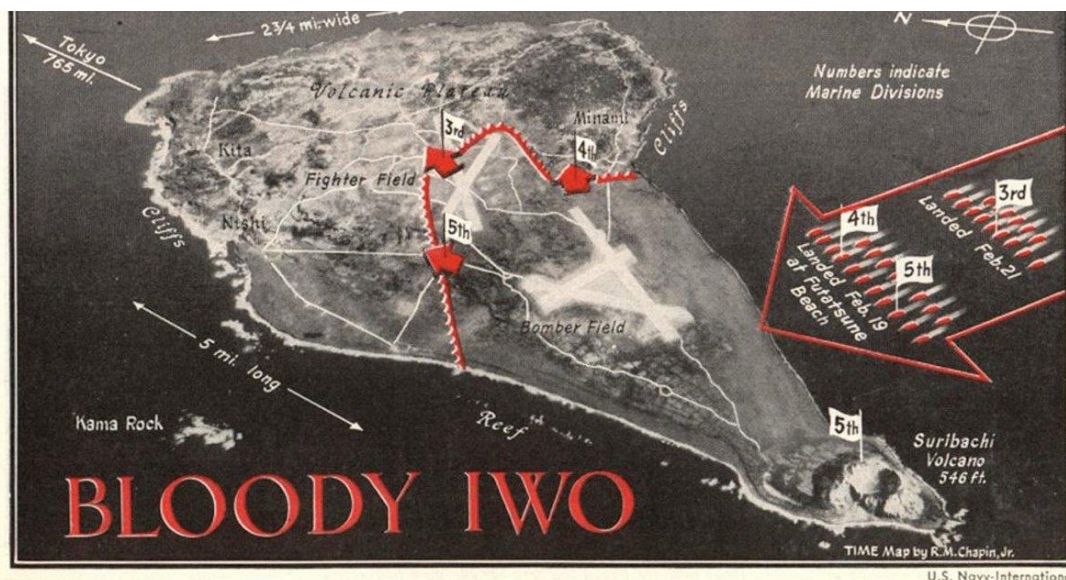
He returned to the states in Jan-
uary, 1944, and was given a 30-day
leave. Returning to his base in
March, he was reassigned to the
Fifth Marine Division and re-
ceived about five months of ad-
ditional training at Camp Elliot,
Calif.

In August, 1944, he again was
shipped overseas, this time with
the fifth division. In letters re-
ceived from him, his whereabouts
were never disclosed.

Hesselberg is survived by his
parents and the following sisters
and brothers, including three in
the service: Sgt. Holland Hessel-
berg, somewhere in France, SF2c
Roy Hesselberg, based in Cali-
fornia, and AS Vernell Hesselberg,
stationed at Great Lakes.

He also has three brothers at
home. They are Carmen, Dean
and Gordon. Two sisters also sur-
vive. They are Rosella and Ruth
Hesselberg.

Blaine's father served overseas
for a year during World War I.



Time magazine

An 800-ship invasion fleet closed in on Iwo Jima.²⁸ On February 19, 1945, the invasion force unleashed another two-hour bombardment while 30,000 Marines prepared to hit the beaches.²⁹

The first wave landed on the black sand beaches at 9:00 a.m. All was quiet in the beginning. Two hours later, after the landing area was crowded with troops and vehicles, the Japanese opened up with a hailstorm of fire from Mount Suribachi and other high ground around the beaches that tore into the Marines. Joe Rosenthal, an Associated Press photographer who later took the famous flag-raising photograph on top of Mount Suribachi, said, "No man who survived that beach knew how he did it."³⁰

Photo # NH 104210 USS LSM-140 unloading on Iwo Jima



(NavSource Naval History)



Marines on the beach at Iwo Jima with Mount Suribachi in the background

([Defense Media Network](#))

Corporal Guilford J. Hanesworth, a 1943 graduate of La Crosse Central High School who lived at 1232 S. 17th Street, wrote: “. . . anything you read about Iwo isn’t exaggerated a bit. No story could print the true facts about an island like that. . . . Their pillboxes and block houses were all covered with weeds and grass, so that you couldn’t see them even if you stood on them. Jap snipers had long ago dug holes and tunneled into dead tree trunks and sawed off the branches to peer and fire through. . . . The whole island seems to have been undermined with trenches and caves. The whole island was one mass arsenal, too.”³¹

Holmen Marine Killed In Action

Dies On Iwo Jima
February 23



WELDON

EUGENE

HOLMEN, Wis. — (Special)— Marine Corp. Weldon G. Wells, 20, son of Mr. and Mrs. Guy Wells, was killed in action on Iwo Jima, Feb. 23, according to a telegram reaching Holmen Monday. He was previously in combat at Roi, Saipan and Tinian before transferring to Iwo Jima with the 4th Division.

Enlisting in the marines, he entered service May 26, 1943, going to San Diego, Calif., for boot training. His fleet training was received at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, Calif. Leaving for overseas duty later in the year, his first base was in the Marshall island.

Wells was born in La Crosse March 13, 1925. The family has lived at Holmen since 1934. He was confirmed a member of the Holmen Lutheran church by the Rev. H. C. Smeby in 1939 and attended the Holmen high school before joining the marines. During the 22 months he was home only once spending two days here on a brief leave.

Surviving besides his parents are two sisters, Mrs. Myron Nerby, Holmen; Mrs. Joseph Kopczynski, Boston, Mass.; two brothers, Glenn, Holmen, and Pfc. Eugene Wells, who, overseas more than three years, is now with Patton's 3rd army in Germany; two nephews, a niece and his grandmother, Mrs. Paul Herde, of 308 Avon street, La Crosse.

La Crosse Tribune, 1945 April 1, page 4

The volcanic ash on the island caused multiple problems. It was not only hard to walk in, it also bogged down vehicles. There was almost no way to dig a foxhole for protection, so the Marines were very exposed.

In two days of fierce fighting, the Marines had captured one-fourth of the island and the southernmost airfield. [Lt. General Holland Smith](#) was already saying, "The fight is the toughest we've run across in 168 years [in Marine Corps history]."³² In the first 48 hours of the invasion, the Marines suffered 3,650 killed and wounded (76 per hour). A contemporary account described the fighting this way: "Every yard of the advance was made under a steady hail of Japanese machine gun motar (sic), rifle and rocket fire over wet, rocky slopes criss-crossed with revetments, pillboxes, blockhouses, and reinforced sniper holes. Mines and tank traps are plentiful."³³

By the third day, the 3rd Marine Division, on ships as a floating reserve, had to be committed to reinforce the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions already in the fight.³⁴

The Marines were at the base of Mount Suribachi on the fourth day. After ships and planes bombarded the mountain, a group of Marines reached the peak on the morning of February 23, 1945.³⁵ It had taken them 28 hours to fight their way up the 45-degree slope of the 566-foot mountain against stiff resistance by Japanese defenders in caves and dugouts that had to be cleared out by flamethrowers, grenades, and rifles.³⁶

One of the men with a flamethrower was Corporal [Charles W. Lindberg](#) of Grand Forks, North Dakota. After reaching the top of Mount Suribachi, Lindberg and five other Marines tied an American flag to a 20-foot water pipe and raised it at the peak. Troops watching from below started to cheer and ships sounded their whistles. Marine photographer [Lou Lowery](#) took photos of this flag-raising. The celebration was short-lived because of a Japanese counter-attack less than a minute later.³⁷



The first flag raising photographed by Lou Lowery
[Charles Lindberg is standing on the right]

([Minnesota Public Radio](#))

Pfc. Kenneth S. Espenes of La Crosse was a member of the 40-man patrol that reached the top of Mount Suribachi that morning.³⁸ He was carrying a [Browning Automatic Rifle \(BAR\)](#) providing cover fire for his platoon.³⁹ Espenes had been wounded by a mortar round on the first day of the battle, but he had recovered enough to be with the patrol that day fighting its way up Mount Suribachi.⁴⁰ He was within 100 feet of his comrades raising the flag.⁴¹



ESPENES

Kenneth Espenes

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 May 20, page 5)

Bill Leisgang, his friend and classmate from Central High School, was 500 yards away from Mount Suribachi when the U.S. flags went up. During the flag raising, Leisgang was in the midst of fierce fighting still going on around the base of the mountain. He was able to look up and see the flag.⁴²

Sgt. Robert Carey, 23, of La Crosse, was with the 3rd Marine Division, and “saw the marines who raised the first flag on Iwo Jima.” A former member of the Sketch Club in La Crosse, Carey made his own drawing of the event.⁴³

While Charles W. Lindberg was away refilling his flamethrower tank, a Marine officer ordered a bigger flag to be put up in place of the first one (he was also afraid the first flag would be stolen). [Joe Rosenthal](#), an Associated Press photographer, was on a ship when the first flag was raised. But he was at the right spot at the right time four hours later when six Marines raised the second flag on top of Mount Suribachi. His photograph won a [Pulitzer Prize](#), was depicted on a [three-cent stamp](#), and immortalized with a [memorial sculpture at Arlington National Cemetery](#).⁴⁴



The second flag raising photographed by Joe Rosenthal

[\(International Photography Hall of Fame & Museum\)](#)

Kenneth Espenes knew all six of the Marines who raised the famous second flag. "Some better than others," he said 60 years later.⁴⁵

The Marines would not have even had a flag to raise had it not been for Lt. Stanley Christensen of La Crosse. Christenson had been in the Navy since 1931, one month after his graduation from La Crosse Central High School. Just before the Marines left his ship, a Marine lieutenant came to Christensen and asked if he could round up a flag for them. They had forgotten to get one when they were assembling their gear. Lt. Christensen found a flag and gave it to the Marine officer, and some time later that flag was flying at the top of Mount Suribachi.⁴⁶

A Marine colonel put the first flag in a safe. The second, more famous flag, flew on top of Mount Suribachi for three weeks "before it was torn to shreds by the wind."⁴⁷

The rest of the battle lasted longer than that. By the dawn of the fifth day, over 5,000 Marines had been killed or wounded. That was three for every two minutes of combat, and losses continued at the same brutal pace. With tanks, flamethrowers, grenades, satchel charges, and even bayonets, the Marines had to clear Japanese positions yard by yard. Some had to be taken more than once as more Japanese came up from tunnels to re-occupy positions.⁴⁸ For the Japanese, there were no reinforcements and no re-supply. It was a fight to the death.

Bill Leisgang said later, “. . . the rear areas were as bad as the front, because Japanese who were bypassed would shoot at you.” He continued, “Nights were bad . . . The Japanese would infiltrate. We had three guys to a foxhole---one always had to stay awake.”⁴⁹



Marines on the black sands of Iwo Jima

(National Park Service)

Kenneth Espenes was wounded a second time on March 3, and this one took him out of the battle. He was hospitalized in an army hospital in the Marianas before being flown to a naval hospital in Hawaii.⁵⁰

Sgt. Wayne H. Bruchman, 24, whose parents lived at 1420 Liberty Street in La Crosse, had been in the Marines since July 1940. He later said he had more close calls on Guam than on Iwo Jima. His platoon of the [21st Marine Regiment](#) fought up the middle of the island. Bruchman said there was wind and dust all

the time on Iwo Jima. Before he left the island on March 25, Bruchman ran into James Squier and Bob Hackner, both of La Crosse.⁵¹

Corp. Downey Dies On Iwo

Corp. William E. Downey, 20, son of Mr. and Mrs. G. D. Downey, 918 South 10th street, died of wounds received in action on Iwo Jima, according to word received by the family from the war department Friday night.

Corp. Downey was born in La Crosse June 24, 1924, and was graduated from Central high school in 1941.



DOWNEY

He enlisted in the marine corps in January, 1942. He spent a short furlough at home before going overseas in January, 1943. He was in the invasions of Bougainville and Guam.

In addition to his parents, he is survived by two sisters, Mary Louise of Rockford, Ill., and Betty at home; and one brother, Gerald at home.

A requiem high mass will be said at St. Wenceslaus church Tuesday at 9 a. m.

La Crosse Tribune, 1945 April 8, page 1

One of the men helping to back up the Marines with artillery fire was First Lieutenant John S. Coleman of La Crosse; he had been an attorney before the war.⁵²

Pfc. Joseph J. Polodna, 1106 S. 11th Street, La Crosse, was a communications man with the 3rd Marine Division. His job was to string telephone lines and operate a switchboard.⁵³

Corporal John E. Thiel of La Crosse, a radio operator with the Army Air Corps, landed on Iwo Jima four days after the invasion. He had a close call when a Japanese mortar shell landed about 50 yards from his

foxhole one night, and a piece of shrapnel "tore my shelter half almost in two." He said anyone moving around after dark was shot at because they were assumed to be Japanese infiltrators.⁵⁴

Pfc. Marshall DeClute, 1240 Farnam Street, La Crosse, was with the 3rd Marine Division at Iwo Jima.⁵⁵

Twenty-year-old Staff Sgt. Richard Foehser, a member of the 4th Marine Division, was part of the Iwo Jima operation.⁵⁶

Another local Marine with the 4th Division at Iwo Jima was Corporal Halley H. Young, a 1942 graduate of La Crosse Central High School.⁵⁷

One Marine from La Crosse was awarded the [Silver Star](#) for bravery during the battle. Platoon Sergeant Richard N. Eide, son of Mr. and Mrs. Erling Eide of 230 21st Place, attacked and destroyed a Japanese emplacement with hand grenades, even though he was wounded twice in the effort. One of the Japanese soldiers escaped. When Eide's weapon jammed, he pursued Japanese soldier for about 30 yards and finished him off with another hand grenade.⁵⁸



EIDE

(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 July 31, page 5)

A number of La Crosse County men were on Navy ships supporting the invasion of Iwo Jima.

- William M. Peterson, La Crosse, ship's cook on a light cruiser⁵⁹
- Lt. John Felton, La Crosse, served on the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Franklin*⁶⁰
- Coast Guardsman Chester M. Heth, La Crosse, was a [coxswain](#) on an [LST](#)⁶¹
- Carpenter's Mate Archie N. Iverson was on a transport ship⁶²

- Willis Bangsberg, formerly of La Crosse, was an 11-year Navy veteran when his ship participated in the Iwo Jima operation⁶³
- Kenneth L. MacMonagle, photographer's mate, and William Nowak, chief storekeeper aviation, were brothers-in-law who lived at 1027 Cameron Avenue in La Crosse⁶⁴
- Elton R. Beodeker, fire controlman, whose home was at 910 Hood Street in La Crosse, was a crewman on a destroyer⁶⁵
- George E. Bettin of 441 South 21st Street in La Crosse was on a heavy cruiser⁶⁶
- John Lloyd Gullickson of 1215 Winnebago Street, La Crosse, was a radioman on the transport ship *USS John Land*⁶⁷
- Daniel P. Grodevant, 22, of 1329 Charles Street, La Crosse, was a [boatswain's mate](#) on the light cruiser *USS Miami*⁶⁸
- Bill Esterle of 2138 Charles Street, La Crosse, took part in the Iwo Jima invasion⁶⁹
- A sub-chaser that included 19-year-old Eddie Albitz of 406 S. 3rd Street, La Crosse, paid a visit to Iwo Jima⁷⁰
- George E. Bettin, 441 S. 21st Street, La Crosse, was a [shipfitter](#) on the heavy cruiser *USS San Francisco*⁷¹
- The battleship *USS Nevada* bombarded Iwo Jima with Seaman Second Class Milton N. Kelsey of 2619 Onalaska Avenue, La Crosse, on board⁷²
- Charles E. Wallen, an aerographer's mate from Onalaska, served on the oiler *USS Marias*⁷³
- The transport *USS Grimes*, with Seaman First Class Irvin W. Romskog of Holmen on board, evacuated men from Iwo Jima while under fire⁷⁴
- George Lee of West Salem served on the destroyer *USS Cone* at Iwo Jima⁷⁵
- Motor Machinist Mate First Class Oliver Olson, 1336 Avon Street, La Crosse, was on the battleship *USS West Virginia*⁷⁶
- Donald J. Finn, Storekeeper Third Class, 821 Hagar Street, La Crosse, served on the combat transport *USS Golden City*⁷⁷
- Ben R. Callum, 621 Avon Street, La Crosse, was a seaman on the destroyer *USS Wedderburn*⁷⁸
- Truman Gray Stellich of West Salem was a quartermaster on the light cruiser *USS Astoria*⁷⁹
- Verle C. Moe, 225 S. 7th Street, La Crosse, was on a battleship at Iwo Jima⁸⁰
- Richard C. Lofgren's salvage ship, the *USS Mataco*, towed a couple of damaged ships from Iwo Jima to Guam⁸¹
- Myson Roy Berg of La Crosse was a seaman on the aircraft carrier *USS Cabot* at Iwo Jima⁸²
- Melvin J. Sobkowiak of La Crosse was a seaman on the battleship *USS Indiana* at Iwo Jima⁸³
- Another seaman from La Crosse whose ship was at Iwo Jima was Albert Roy Hefti, on board the destroyer *USS Cummings*⁸⁴
- The destroyer *USS Irwin* included George Robert Storandt of La Crosse on its crew⁸⁵
- LeRoy Butterfield of 124 West Avenue North, La Crosse, was a seaman on an aircraft carrier that had been converted from a cruiser⁸⁶
- The aircraft carrier *USS Bennington* included two La Crosse sailors on its crew: Leonard J. Zabawski of 227 Pearl Street and Conrad H. Erickson, of 2221 13th Place⁸⁷
- Q. M. Sweeney, 742 N. 22nd Street, La Crosse, was a radarman on the destroyer escort *USS Kendall C. Campbell*⁸⁸
- Loyal Eldon Haeuser, 524 S. 6th Street, La Crosse, was an aviation machinist's mate on the escort aircraft carrier *USS Petrof Bay*⁸⁹

At least one sailor from La Crosse County died in the Iwo Jima operation when the escort carrier [USS Bismarck Sea](#) sank after being struck by a kamikaze attack.

Hold Rites For John C. Olson

Was Sailor On Board U. S. Naval Carrier

Memorial services for John Clayton Olson, Ftc, who lost his life at sea Feb. 21, will be held at Our Savior's Lutheran church Sunday at 9:30 a. m. Boy Scout troop No. 13 will attend in a body.

Olson is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Carl J. Olson, 1300 West avenue, south, two sisters, Carol and Joan, and one brother, Philip.



OLSON

He was born May 16, 1924, in Hibbing, Minn., and attended grade and high schools in La Crosse, graduating from Central high school in June, 1943. He was employed at the Moen photo shop.

Entering the service immediately after graduation, he received his boot training at the Great Lakes naval training station. His only leave was after boot training. His father, a veteran of World war I, missed seeing his son in uniform as he was with the first contingent sent out to build the U. S. air base in Greenland.

Attended Diesel School

Olson attended diesel engine school at Norfolk, Va. At that time an explosion wrecked a number of hangars and he wrote that his Boy Scout training was helpful when he was called upon to give first aid to the injured.

He was sent out on the Destroyer Escort U. S. S. Reynolds for a time and then because of illness was transferred to the Bremerton naval base where he was enrolled in the navy V-12 program.

His next assignment was the V-8 division on the Escort Carrier Bismarck Sea. After taking part in battles at Saipan, Luzon and Leyte, it was sunk off the coast of Iwo Jima while covering the landing of the marines.

According to a letter from Capt. John Lockwood Pratt, skipper, "the action occurred in the vicinity of Iwo Jima, southeast of Japan on Feb. 21, shortly after sunset. We were subjected to heavy enemy air attack during which the ship suffered mortal damage. It was necessary to abandon her to save as many lives as possible.

Water Was Rough

"We launched life rafts and all had life belts. However, the water was very rough and within a short time it became quite dark. This made it difficult work for the four destroyers who were picking up survivors. However, they searched continuously all night and on the following day six additional ships joined the search, assisted by aircraft.

"The death of any young man is a cruel blow and particularly in the case of one of Olle's caliber. We had one of the finest crews that I have ever sailed with and your son was an outstanding member. Olle was very much interested in his work and always did an assigned task well. He was well liked by all who knew him and a real shipmate. We will fight all the harder because of him to bring this war to a close."

In addition to those killed, a number of other men from La Crosse County were wounded on Iwo Jima:

- Corporal Calvin Mitchell, a 19-year-old veteran of Bougainville and Guam, was wounded while serving with the 3rd Marine Division.⁹⁰
- Private First-Class John E. Collins of Onalaska was wounded in both arms and the back.⁹¹
- Platoon Sgt. Richard N. Eide, 22, of La Crosse, was wounded by shrapnel.⁹²
- James Harry K. Dierkop of La Crosse, who had survived shrapnel wounds on Guam, suffered a concussion from a bomb blast on Iwo Jima.⁹³
- Corporal Joseph E. Gilles Of La Crosse was wounded on March 3.⁹⁴
- Private Giles Hackner of La Crosse was wounded in the arms, chest, and hip.⁹⁵
- Private Ramon Gartner of Onalaska was wounded in the left arm and right hand.⁹⁶
- Private Bernard Thill of Onalaska was wounded on March 8.⁹⁷
- Lynn Nichols of Bangor took shrapnel in the leg.⁹⁸
- Corporal William W. Clow of La Crosse lost his right hand and was wounded in the shoulder.⁹⁹
- Corporal Carl J. Fuchs of La Crosse was also wounded on Iwo Jima.¹⁰⁰
- Corporal Guilford J. Hanesworth was with several other men on a Patrol Torpedo boat when it was hit by a phosphorous shell. He suffered burns on his face, head, and leg.¹⁰¹
- Pvt. Walter O. Olson, 18, of West Salem, was wounded on Iwo Jima.¹⁰²
- Pfc. Donald J. Opitz, 1031 Green Bay Street, La Crosse, was wounded on Iwo Jima.¹⁰³
- Harold Manske, 19, of 2630 State Street, La Crosse, a machinist mate in the Navy, was wounded at Iwo Jima.¹⁰⁴
- Navy Seabee Harold Hendrickson of 521 Winnebago Street, La Crosse, was wounded on Iwo Jima and hospitalized on Guam.¹⁰⁵
- Pfc. Donald A. Wensole of 1120 La Crosse Street in La Crosse received a Purple Heart¹⁰⁶
- Gunnery Sgt. Julius C. Wittenberg, a former member of [Carlson's Raiders](#), was wounded by a hand grenade at Iwo Jima and hospitalized at Guam before being sent to a hospital in Honolulu¹⁰⁷

Helping care for the wounded men were at least four people from La Crosse County. On board the hospital ship *USS Bountiful* was pharmacist's mate Norbert B. Landmeyer of 1552 Charles Street in La Crosse.¹⁰⁸ John H. Rooney, 217 N. 11th Street, La Crosse, served in an evacuation hospital attached to the Fifth Amphibious Force of the United States Marines.¹⁰⁹ Lt. Evelyn Lunde of La Crosse was a Navy nurse at a hospital in the Marianas Islands.¹¹⁰ Michael J. Poehling, hospital apprentice, of 823 Cass Street, La Crosse, was stationed in Fleet Hospital III at Guam.¹¹¹

The battle of Iwo Jima did not end until March 26 when about 300 Japanese attacked one of the airfields, killing about 50 fighter pilots, [Seabees](#), and Marines in construction units. Mopping up operations by an Army regiment, that went on into the summer, killed another 1,600 Japanese.¹¹²

Out of the 23,000 Japanese soldiers on the island, only 216 surrendered.¹¹³

By March 17, two airfields on Iwo Jima were made operational by the Americans.¹¹⁴ Even before that, on March 4, the first B-29 in distress had landed on Iwo Jima. In the first three months after the battle, 851 B-29 Superfortresses made emergency landings on the island. These planes carried 9,361 crewmen; many would have been lost were it not for the Iwo Jima airfields.¹¹⁵

One of those saved was Captain L. M. Woodiwiss of West Salem. A bombardier on a B-29, he bailed out of his plane over Iwo Jima when it could not return to its base on Saipan. He went home to his wife, the former Phyllis Nelson, after completing 25 missions.¹¹⁶

Among those working at the airfields was Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Irvine T. Weier of 729 Division Street, La Crosse. He made sure the planes of Marine Bombing Squadron 612 were gassed up, oiled, and serviced before missions, and he also checked the planes after they returned for possible repairs. The unit flew missions from Saipan before moving to Iwo Jima even as Japanese snipers were still taking shots at Americans.¹¹⁷

Acquiring this piece of real estate had come at a high price. The Marines had suffered close to 26,000 casualties with almost 6,000 killed, plus another 363 Navy men killed. This was the highest American casualty rate of the Pacific Theater in World War II.¹¹⁸

Following the battle, it took a while for the three Marine divisions to regroup and their wounded to heal.

Kenneth Espenes and Bill Leisgang were part of the American occupation forces in Japan for a short time. They were discharged from the Marine Corps in 1946.¹¹⁹

Espenes continued in the Marine Corps Reserve and served again in the Korean War.¹²⁰

William Leisgang worked at Northern Engraving before joining the Air Force as an aviation cadet in June 1948. He entered pilot training on July 1, 1948.¹²¹

John Wayne, who never served in the armed forces but was a hero in numerous war movies on the silver screen, starred in a 1949 Hollywood movie about the battle of Iwo Jima---*The Sands of Iwo Jima*.



([Turner Classic Movies](#))

Several local veterans of the battle helped provide some additional authenticity to the story when the movie premiered at the Rivoli Theater in January 1950.



(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1950 January 19, page 7)¹²²

Bill Leisgang was married to La Vonne Mlsna for 55 years before her death, and they had four children. A lifelong aviation buff, Leisgang built and flew experimental aircraft. He was a member of the La Crosse Flyers Club and the [Experimental Aircraft Association](#). Leisgang was also a member of the American Legion Post 52, [the Marine Corps League](#), [Fifth Marine Division Association](#), and the [Veterans of Foreign Wars](#) Post 1530.¹²³

Kenneth Espenes married Mary Catherine McKoskey ("the girl next door") on January 17, 1953, in La Crosse. They were married for 58 years and had five children together. He was a member of the American Legion Post 52, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1530, Fifth Marine Division Association, the Marine Corps League, the [Military Order of the Purple Heart](#), and the [Disabled American Veterans](#).¹²⁴ Espenes was a member of the La Crosse Police Department for 29 years, retiring as a sergeant.¹²⁵ After his retirement in 1981, he enjoyed camping and traveling, and "shaking dice with his police buddies."¹²⁶

Sixty years after the battle of Iwo Jima, Kenneth Espenes and Bill Leisgang got together for a joint interview with a *La Crosse Tribune* reporter.¹²⁷



DICK BINIKER/LA CROSSE TRIBUNE

From left, Ken Espenes and Bill Leisgang look at Espenes' copy of a book on the Fifth Marine Division in World War II. Leisgang's uniform is on the table.

(*La Crosse Tribune*, 2005 February 13, page A1)

The following year, in November 2006, the 80-year-old Espenes traveled to Washington D.C. for the dedication of the [National Museum of the Marine Corps](#) in Quantico, Virginia. He and the other eight survivors of the Iwo Jima flag-raising platoon had breakfast at the White House with President George W. Bush. Then it was on to Arlington National Cemetery for the Veterans Day wreath laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, followed by a visit to the [National World War II Memorial](#). Even 61 years later, Espenes said, "The sight of the dead and the wounded is something I can never forget."¹²⁸

Kenneth Espenes was 85 years old when he died on September 22, 2011, at his home in La Crosse. Funeral services were at Holy Trinity Catholic Church. He received military and police honors by the U.S.

Marine Corps Funeral Honor Guard, the American Legion Post 52, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1530, and the La Crosse Police Department Honor Guard. There was a private family burial in the Catholic Cemetery.¹²⁹



(*La Crosse Tribune*, 2011 September 25, page C-7)

William Leisgang was 86 years old when he died on January 25, 2014, at the Gundersen Medical Center. In accordance with his wishes, there was no public visitation or funeral service.¹³⁰

In the February 2005 interview, Bill Leisgang said, "The real heroes of Iwo Jima are the guys in the cemetery."¹³¹

He was not the only veteran who has modestly said that, but we can say that they were all heroes.

Revised: 2021 March 3

Jeff Rand
Adult Services
La Crosse Public Library
jrand@lacrosselibrary.org

Sources & Notes:

¹ The city of Onalaska is 10.13 square miles, according to "Wisconsin Land Area City Rank," *USA.com*, accessed 2020 March 30, <http://www.usa.com/rank/wisconsin-state--land-area--city-rank.htm>.

² John Alden Finanger was killed on the first day of the battle of Iwo Jima. A Navy medic attached to the Marines, he was tending to a wounded Marine when a mortar shell landed next to them and killed them both. Finanger had

convinced his mother to let him drop out of Logan High School when he was 17 so he could enlist. According to Finanger's brother, Roald, his mother blamed herself for John's death the rest of her life. "Every time Christmas came she went to pieces." (Chris Hardie, "'Tell their stories,'" *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2009 May 25, page A4.)

³ Louis L. Snyder, *Louis L. Snyder's Historical Guide to World War II* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 342.

⁴ Donald L. Miller, *The Story of World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 532.

⁵ Miller, 530-531.

⁶ Miller, 527-528.

⁷ Snyder, 343.

⁸ "Fierce Struggle Raging For Iwo," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 19, page 1.

⁹ Snyder, 342-343.

¹⁰ Snyder, 343.

¹¹ "Lieut. Knudson, In Iwo Jima Raids, Completes 40 Missions," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 18, page 4.

¹² "Guy Brothers, Veterans In Military Service, Back Home From Pacific, European War Areas," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 December 9, page 3.

¹³ "Liet. (jg) Robert K. Combellick," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 August 26, page 11.

¹⁴ "Ferries In Group Receiving Meritorious Service Plaque," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 August 12, page 12.

¹⁵ "Hartley Given Naval Award, 2 Gold Stars," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 August 30, page 8.

¹⁶ "With Our Boys In The Service," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 April 12, page 1.

¹⁷ "Kenneth S. 'Sarge' Espenes," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2011 September 25, page C-7.

¹⁸ Steve Cahalan, "Friends since high school, two local Iwo Jima vets recall battle," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2005 February 13, page A1.

¹⁹ "William H. Leisgang," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2014 January 27, page A6.

²⁰ "Sketch Club," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1944 June 5, page 4.

²¹ "Recruits Leave For Marine 'Boot' Camp," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1944 March 27, page 4.

²² *La Crosse Tribune*, 1944 March 27.

²³ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.

²⁴ "Raised First Flag On Iwo," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 20, page 5.

²⁵ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2011 September 25.

²⁶ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.

²⁷ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.

²⁸ William F. Tyree, "Waves Of Marines Hit Beaches As Invasion Gets Under Way," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 19, page 1.

²⁹ Snyder, 343.

³⁰ Miller, 536. Sgt. John Basilone, the first enlisted Marine to win the Congressional Medal of Honor in World War II for his heroism on Guadalcanal, was killed on the first day at Iwo Jima. (Hamilton W. Faron, "First Marine Winner of Congressional Medal Killed in Iwo Battle," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 8, page 7.)

³¹ "Local Soldier In Iwo Invasion Wounded By Phosphorous Shell," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 13, page 4.

³² "Marines Wage Toughest Fight In Their History For Iwo Jima," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 20, page 1.

³³ Al Dopking, "Marines Suffer 3,650 Losses In First 48 Hours on Iwo Jima," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 21, page 1.

³⁴ Al Dopking, "Fleet Units Damaged In Battle For Iwo Jima," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 22, page 1.

³⁵ Snyder, 344.

³⁶ Elmont Waite, "Mount Suribachi Won By Yanks," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 23, page 1.

³⁷ "Last survivor proud of first Iwo Jima flag," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1988 May 30, page 5. On March 1, 1945, Charles Lindberg's right forearm was shattered by a Japanese sniper bullet.

³⁸ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 May 20.

³⁹ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.

⁴⁰ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2011 September 25.

⁴¹ Steve Cahalan, "Honoring the past," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2006 November 7, page A1.

⁴² Cahalan, 2005 February 13.

⁴³ "Marine Veteran Sketches For Recreation In South Pacific," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 10, page 12.

⁴⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1988 May 30. Despite some misconceptions, Rosenthal's photograph was not staged. Out of the six Marines who raised the first flag, only three of them, including Charles Lindberg, left Iwo Jima alive. Of the six who raised the second flag, only three of them survived the battle. ("Identify 6th Marine In Flag-Raising Photo," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 10, page 10.) The movie cameraman who recorded the second flag raising was also killed. Wisconsin native John Bradley, a 21-year-old Navy corpsman from Appleton, was credited with being one of the six men who raised the second flag on Mount Suribachi. He was later wounded on Iwo Jima. ("Badger Among Mount Suribachi Flag-Raisers," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 9, page 3.) He survived the war but almost never granted interviews about his role in this historic event. In 2016, the Marine Corps stated that John Bradley was not one of the flag raisers, and the man for decades who was identified as Bradley was actually Pfc. Harold Schultz. The six Marines who raised the second flag were Cpl. Harlon Block, Pfc. Harold Keller, Pfc. Ira Hayes, Pfc. Harold Schultz, Pfc. Franklin Sousley, and Sgt. Michael Strank. (Luis Martinez, "Marine Corps again corrects who was in iconic Iwo Jima flag-raising photo," *ABC News*, 2019 October 17, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/marines-correct-identity-member-raising-flag-iconic-iwo/story?id=66348494>.)

Willard Ross, a 14-year-old high school student in Kansas City, suggested Rosenthal's photograph as the basis for a statue before the battle was even over. ("Propose Statue Of Suribachi Flag Raising," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 13, page 5.) The National Flag Code Committee objected to President Truman's proposal to place a depiction of the flag-raising on a stamp because they did not like the idea of the U.S. flag "being licked behind its back, pounded onto envelopes, smeared by and run through cancelling machines." ("Protest Iwo Picture On A Postage Stamp," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 8, page 1.

⁴⁵ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.

⁴⁶ "Navy Officer Provided Flag For Marines At Mt. Suribachi," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 1, page 3.

⁴⁷ Miller, 547. In May 1945, Rene Gagnon, Ira Hayes, and John Bradley raised the Iwo Jima flag over the U.S. Capitol as part of a ceremony for the Seventh War Loan drive. Billed as "the flag that was raised by marines on Mt. Suribachi," this had to be the first flag since the second one was destroyed on Iwo Jima. Joe Rosenthal's photograph was used on the official posters for the Seventh War Loan drive. ("Raise Famous Iwo Flag Over Capitol," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 8, page 2.) Later that month, Gagnon, Hayes, and Bradley met the mothers of three of the Marines who had raised the flag and had later been killed in the battle, during a war loan drive event on Wall Street in New York. ("Three Survivors Of Mt. Suribachi Meet Mothers Of Dead Trio," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 16, page 2.) In 2019, private historians provided evidence that Corporal Harold P. Keller, and not Rene Gagnon, was in Joe Rosenthal's famous flag-raising photograph. ("Correction to the Identity of Marines in Photograph of the Flag Raising on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima," *United States Marine Corps*, 2019 October 17, <https://www.marines.mil/News/Press-Releases/Press-Release-Display/Article/1991234/correction-to-the-identity-of-marines-in-photograph-of-the-flag-raising-on-moun/>.)

⁴⁸ Miller, 551.

⁴⁹ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.

⁵⁰ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 May 20. His obituary states that he was wounded for the second time on March 1, 1945.

⁵¹ "Guam Offered More Hazards Than Iwo Battle, Reports Marine Sergeant Returning To City," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 20, page 7. See also: "Squier Boys Get Together," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 29, page 4.

⁵² "Lieut. John S. Coleman In Iwo Island Battle," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 4, page 7.

-
- ⁵³ "Veteran Of Three Invasions In South Pacific Back Home," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 14, page 9.
- ⁵⁴ "Dust Blows During Rain On Iwo, Local Soldier Writes," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 1, page 14. Thiel comments on the food, the dust, and the weather.
- ⁵⁵ "DeClute, Taking Part In Four South Pacific Battles With 3rd Marines, Is Given Discharge," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 16, page 14.
- ⁵⁶ "Marine Sergeant At 18 Years La Crosse Man's Achievement," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 25, page 12.
- ⁵⁷ "Marine Vet Is Discharged," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 25, page 14.
- ⁵⁸ "Eide Wins Silver Star Medal, Purple Heart In Iwo Attack," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 31, page 5.
- ⁵⁹ "Sees Action In 2 Oceans," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 4, page 5.
- ⁶⁰ "Second Cup Of Coffee Delayed Felton's Trip To Bridge Of Franklin As Jap Bombs Struck," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 10, page 3.
- ⁶¹ "Heth On LST At Ocean Base," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 10, page 5.
- ⁶² "Iverson, Wearing 5 Stars For Navy Battles In Pacific, Home First Time In 18 Months," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 10, page 7.
- ⁶³ "Veteran Of 11 Years In U.S. Navy Service Has Record Of Only 10 Months On Shore Duty," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 1, page 4.
- ⁶⁴ "Kenneth L. MacMonagle," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 5, page 16.
- ⁶⁵ "Boedecker, Navy Vet Of More Than Five Years, Boasts 12 Stars On Pacific Campaign Ribbons," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 15, page 4.
- ⁶⁶ "Bettin Is On Heavy Cruiser," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 15, page 10.
- ⁶⁷ "Is Radioman On Transport," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 19, page 3.
- ⁶⁸ "Grodevant On Cruiser Miami In Western Pacific Theater," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, page 10.
- ⁶⁹ "Esterle Twins Meet For First Time In Three Years On Luzon," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 August 5, page 3.
- ⁷⁰ "Sub-Chaser Life Isn't Any Picnic," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 August 12, page 3.
- ⁷¹ "Navy Veteran Of 33 Months On Famous Heavy Cruiser San Francisco Is Given Promotion," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 5, page 3.
- ⁷² "Celebrate V-J Day On Nevada," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 9, page 4.
- ⁷³ "Onalaskan Is On Oiler In Pacific," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 16, page 4.
- ⁷⁴ "Holmen Man On Ship Landing First Forces To Occupy Japan," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 16, page 4.
- ⁷⁵ "George Lee Receives Discharge from Navy," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 September 20, page 1.
- ⁷⁶ "Olson On USS West Virginia In Sagama Bay Near Tokyo," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 23, page 3.
- ⁷⁷ "Finn In Six Major Actions," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 23, page 11.
- ⁷⁸ "Callum, In On Shelling Jap Coast, Returns To Tokyo Bay," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 30.
- ⁷⁹ "Stellich Back On Astoria," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 3, page 3.
- ⁸⁰ "Moe Serving In Task Force," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 4, page 13.
- ⁸¹ "Veteran Of Six South Pacific Navy Battles Counts Hurricane As Worst War Experience," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 7, page 9.
- ⁸² "On Aircraft Carrier," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 20, page 2.
- ⁸³ "Local Seaman Back In U.S.," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 1, page 5.
- ⁸⁴ "Returns From Duty In Pacific For Navy Day," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 4, page 9.
- ⁸⁵ "On Pacific Destroyer," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 23, page 3.
- ⁸⁶ "Serves On Aircraft Carrier Converted From Old Cruiser," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 December 2, page 13.

-
- ⁸⁷ "Serve On Bennington," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 December 7, page 10.
- ⁸⁸ "Enroute Back To U.S.," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 December 9, page 9.
- ⁸⁹ "City Man On Support Carrier In Bloody Okinawa Conquest," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 December 30, page 12.
- ⁹⁰ "Corp. Mitchell Injured," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 17, page 3.
- ⁹¹ "Two Onalaska Men Casualties," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 18, page 10.
- ⁹² "Report Eide Hurt On Iwo," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 22, page 7.
- ⁹³ "Local Marine Injured Again," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 31, page 6.
- ⁹⁴ "Report Corp. Gilles Injured On Iwo Jima," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 1, page 6. See also: *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 3, page 5 for a photo of Gilles receiving the Purple Heart.
- ⁹⁵ "Pvt. Giles Hackner Is Wounded On Iwo," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 11, page 5.
- ⁹⁶ *La Crosse County Record*, Onalaska, Wisconsin, 1945 April 12, page 1. See also: "Boys At War," *La Crosse County Record*, Onalaska, Wisconsin, 1945 November 15, page 1.
- ⁹⁷ "Pvt. Bernard Thill Wounded On Iwo," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 17, page 10. See also: *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 7, page 13 for a photo of Thill receiving the Purple Heart.
- ⁹⁸ *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 April 19, page 2.
- ⁹⁹ "Corp. Clow Wounded," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 19, page 4.
- ¹⁰⁰ "Speaks From Hospital," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 23, page 3.
- ¹⁰¹ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 May 13.
- ¹⁰² "With Our Boys in the Service," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 June 14, page 1.
- ¹⁰³ "Given Purple Hearts," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 25, page 8.
- ¹⁰⁴ "Harold Manske," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 August 26, page 3.
- ¹⁰⁵ "Two Brothers In Army, Navy Meet On Guam," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 September 16, page 9.
- ¹⁰⁶ "Receive Discharges," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 19, page 14.
- ¹⁰⁷ "Marine With Carlson's Raiders Gets Release, Has 131 Points," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 December 2, page 13.
- ¹⁰⁸ "La Crosse Sailor Serving On USS Bountiful, Hospital Ship," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 4, page 14.
- ¹⁰⁹ "Rooney Serves With Evacuation Hospital," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 2, page 7.
- ¹¹⁰ "La Crosse Navy Nurse Serves At Base Hospital In Marianas," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 15, page 2.
- ¹¹¹ "Was At Guam Hospital Base On V-J Day," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 8, page 3.
- ¹¹² Miller, 556.
- ¹¹³ Snyder, 344.
- ¹¹⁴ Morrie Landsberg, "2 Airstrips On Iwo In Use," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 17, page 7.
- ¹¹⁵ "Dividend In Lives," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 1, page 6.
- ¹¹⁶ "With Those In Service," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 October 18, page 1.
- ¹¹⁷ "Weier, Marine Bombing Unit Line Chief, Given Citation," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 25, page 9.
- ¹¹⁸ Snyder, 344.
- ¹¹⁹ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.
- ¹²⁰ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.
- ¹²¹ "Leisgang Now Aviation Cadet Training Unit," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1948 June 17, page 26.
- ¹²² The 1949 movie referred to in the photograph caption should be the "[Sands of Iwo Jima](#)" starring John Wayne.
- ¹²³ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2014 January 27.
- ¹²⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2011 September 25.
- ¹²⁵ Cahalan, 2006 November 7.
- ¹²⁶ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2011 September 25.
- ¹²⁷ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.
- ¹²⁸ Cahalan, 2006 November 7.

¹²⁹ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2011 September 25.

¹³⁰ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2014 January 27.

¹³¹ Cahalan, 2005 February 13.