

Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

Biographies for High School Students

John Borris (February 3, 1891-June 11, 1994)

John Borris was born February 3rd, 1891 in Pennsylvania. He was raised by his mother, Anastasia Nussell, and never knew his father. After getting a 4th grade education, he began to work in the coal mining industry to help his family.

In February of 1912, Borris was 21 years old. He enlisted in the US Army and was stationed at Fort Hancock, New Jersey. He was in the 136th Company and planted and tested mines. When World War I broke out in 1914, the United States chose to stay neutral until 1917. The American Expeditionary Forces were created by groups including Borris' Company. His unit was involved in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, which was one of the bloodiest engagements. This lasted from October 1, 1918- November 8, 1918. His unit broke through the German defenses. They worked mostly at night, which Borris attributes to why they did not lose many men. He served overseas from August 7, 1917 until September 16, 1919.

The war ended on November 11, 1918, but many soldiers including Borris could not return home until the next spring. There were various sporting events and educational programs instituted to keep the soldiers entertained. Borris received an honorary discharge on September 25, 1919 after returning to the US. He returned to the Army in 1921 and was again assigned to Fort Hancock. Here, he was a guard, train conductor, and chief planter responsible for planting and testing mines. In October of 1924, he was discharged from the Army for the last time.

Afterwards, he moved to Chicago where he met his wife, Irene Nehf. They lived with Irene's parents during the years of the Great Depression. In 1931, they had a son named Roger John Borris. Irene stayed at home while John worked as a US Mail Carrier. Although this provided him with steady employment during the Depression, it still came with its own financial challenges. He began to receive a WWI Veteran's pension in 1934 of \$10 per month for 20 months.

When WWII broke out, Borris registered for the draft despite being 51. He was not called to military duty. This was referred to as the "Old Man's Draft" in which men aged 45-64 were able to use their skills to help at home. In 1942, Irene and John had their second son named David. After the war, they moved to Phoenix, Arizona. In 1988, the two moved to Lakeland, Florida to be closer to their children. Borris passed away on June 11, 1994 at the age of 103. His wife passed away on January 11, 1997. They are buried in the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell.

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Henry Francis Cavicchi (September 4, 1896-July 30, 1991)

Henry Cavicchi was born on September 4, 1896 in Plattsburgh, New York. His father, Ercole Cavicchi, was born in Bologna, Italy. He immigrated to the United States in the 1880s. His mother, Elmina, was originally from Quebec, Canada. Italian immigration to the United States increased significantly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1880s, 300,000 people also came to America from Italy. By the 1890s, this number doubled. This rise in immigration is attributed to a shortage of jobs in Europe. Many immigrants from Italy were poor farmers or laborers, and many, like Cavicchi's father, were single men looking for better job opportunities. The large amounts of Italian immigrants continued until 1924, with the Immigration Act of 1924. This created quotas on immigrants based on race and country of origin and limited the immigrant population in America.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Ercole Cavicchi moved his family to Massachusetts. There he started his own business in pursuit of the American Dream. He was a gifted inventor and entrepreneur. Many of his inventions focused on polishing stone floors. He also filed a patent in 1917 for a design for ship's armor to protect civilian ships from torpedo attacks. This was likely inspired by German submarine attacks. The design would either catch the torpedo before it hit or deflect the torpedo.

Henry worked in his father's shop as a young man. He registered for the draft on June 5, 1918. He probably did not go overseas as the fighting ended two months after he enlisted. He was released from the navy in January of 1919. He enlisted as an Air Service Aircraft Rigger (ASAR). His job involved putting cables around military planes before they went into action. This says volumes about the growing importance of airplanes involved in warfare by the end of the war. Planes began to serve different functions in combat, and were mostly used to counter the German submarines. Airplanes were only about a decade old but they already were important to the success of the navy by the time Cavicchi joined. Cavicchi's work with airplanes foreshadows the growing utility and versatility of airplanes in warfare that would occur in World War II.

After the war, Henry returned to Massachusetts and married his wife Emily E. Sussex in 1922. They had four daughters and one son. Once he was back home, Cavicchi continued to work in his father's store, Cavicchi Polishing Machine Co. Ercole patented at least three inventions related to his polishing machine business. The most recognizable was a mower-like machine used to polish floors. Ercole retired in the 1930s and lived the last years of his life in St. Petersburg, FL. He died January 19, 1946. Henry Cavicchi worked with his brothers at the family business. He registered in 1942 for the Old Man's Draft. This was the conscription of men aged forty-five to sixty-four to help in the war effort at home. These men did not see combat but were used in various positions of domestic service. In 1940, Cavicchi kept a maid.

This suggests that he had a comfortable, middle class life. He retired to Florida with his wife Emily. He passed away July 30, 1991 in Manatee Florida at the age of ninety-four. Emily passed away two years later at the age of ninety-one.

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Edward Patrick Connolly (October 31, 1922-September 7, 1995)

Edward Connolly was born in 1922 to John and Emily Connolly in Boston, Massachusetts. He was the second youngest of seven children. His father worked as a police officer while his mother worked at home. His father became a well-known police officer after dealing with Harry Shappas, a thief who pickpocketed several women. In March of 1930, his father died suddenly. Edward's oldest sister Anna took charge of the house after their mother passed away during the Depression. Anne worked as a librarian while one of his other sisters, Theresa, worked as a clerk at an insurance company. By 1940, his brothers Joseph and Thomas were also working as clerks.

After America entered World War II, thousands of American young men enlisted in the military. Edward enlisted in the US Marine Corps on December 26, 1941. The Marine Corps became the Navy's main army fighting in the Pacific Theater of the war, and Edward went to the Pacific. On December 26, 1945, 23 year-old Edward finished his service with the rank of corporal.

After returning to Massachusetts after the war, he met and married Thelma Snell. They had two sons, Kevin and Mark. Edward decided to become a police detective, following in his father's footsteps. In January of 1955, he was shot in the chest while stopping five gang members from robbing the Astor Theater. In spite of being wounded, he shot back and chased them, ensuring that all five were apprehended. However, this incident caused him to retire from the police force. A few days later, on January 10, the city of Boston commended Connolly for his heroism. On May 25, 1956, the city of Boston authorized an act to give Connolly an annual pension paid out monthly for his heroic acts which left him disabled. It would be equal to his rate received as compensation for his retirement from the police force. If he died it would go to Thelma.

He retired and moved to Ft Lauderdale, Florida and then Brevard County in 1982. He passed away on September 7, 1995 and is buried in the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell.

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Rufe Goins (September 23, 1894 - December 25, 1988)

Rufe Goins was born on September 23, 1894, in Coal Creek, Anderson County, Tennessee, to George Washington Goins, a farmer, and Almeda A. Goins. He was the second youngest of seven siblings: Venie, Sarah, Nicy, Charles, Idella, Burnettie, and Millard. Although Goins was raised on a farm in rural Tennessee, he learned to read and write.

On May 29, 1912, at the age of 21, Goins enlisted in the United States Army. He served in the 19th Infantry Regiment in Texas for several years. At the time and place of Goins's service, the United States was engaged in the Border War with Mexico. During this war, the United States Army garrisoned American border towns, constructed forts alongside the border, and fought against Pancho Villa, a notable Mexican revolutionary. Goins was honorably discharged on May 28, 1915. After being honorably discharged, Goins worked as a coal miner in Jasonville, Indiana, a large mining community.

America entered World War I in April 1917. Goins re-enlisted in the United States Army on October 30, 1917. He served for two years and reached the rank of Private before he was released on June 20, 1919, serving more than half a year past the end of the war in November 1918. Unfortunately, there are no documents that detail his service during World War I.

After being released from the army, Goins returned to Tennessee and married Maude Etter Herrell in 1922. Their first son, Wade F. Goins, was born around 1927. Before 1930, the Goins family moved to the city of East Chicago, Lake County, Indiana, where Goins worked as a machines helper and laborer at a steel plant and Maude worked as a housekeeper. Despite high unemployment and suffering around the nation, Rufe could work in the Indiana steel industry, which included the Gary Works U.S. Steel Mill in Gary, Indiana, the world's largest at the time. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal played a key role in Rufe's life, passing legislation helping steel workers unionize. Plus, Rufe's service in the Army likely gave him an edge in finding work, as the New Deal prioritized veterans. This work helped Goins support his growing family. His second son, Donald Edward Goins, was born on June 27, 1935. The Goins family remained in Lake County, Indiana, through the 1950s. They moved to the city of Hammond sometime before 1952, where Goins worked as a blacksmith.

Like many retirees, Goins moved from Hammond, Indiana, to Tampa, Florida in 1959. It is possible that Goins moved to Tampa to retire, since he was 65 at the time of their move. While living in Tampa, Maude Goins worked as a homemaker and was a member of the Tampa Baptist Church. Rufe Goins died on December 25, 1988, in Tampa, Florida, at the age of 94. He was buried at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida, on December 28, 1988. His wife, Maude, died ten years later and is buried with him.

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William Otto Grupp, April 1, 1901-November 17, 1988

Firefighter Second Class William Otto Grupp was born April 1, 1901 in Brooklyn, New York. His parents were German-born William F. Grupp and New York-born Elizabeth Grupp. In 1910, William F. Grupp was employed as a machinist and the family resided in New York.

On July 5, 1918, William Otto Grupp enlisted into the United States Navy at the age of eighteen. He was discharged on June 14, 1919. Grupp served in several locations. He was stationed in Newport, Rhode Island from June 5, 1918 to August 28 as a Fireman Third Class, then to a naval base in Norfolk, Virginia from August 28, 1918 to September 6th, where he was promoted to Fireman Second Class. On September 1918, Grupp served on the USS Indiana until November 8, 1918. He was then sent to the receiving ship in New York where he remained until the end of the war. According to his granddaughter Denise Surdukowski, Grupp occasionally worked in the infirmary and once helped transport mules. He also worked on the USS Indiana, a training ship off the coast of Tomkinsville, New York and in the York River near Virginia. William returned to his parents' home in 1919.

The Grupp family chose to keep their German name, a remarkable choice considering American Anti-German sentiment at the time. Historian Peter C. Weber states that as the American home front sought to “eradicate” German culture, German-Americans either de-Germanized or stuck together. Historian Frederick C. Luebke elaborates further that German Americans reacted in several ways to American “superpatriotism.” Some celebrated their German heritage, while others hid it. Luebke concludes that “most Germans in America held attitudes somewhere between the pro-German and superloyalist extremes.” William Grupp and his family’s decisions seem to support this conclusion. The Grupp family did not change their name to a more “American” one. This suggests a deep pride in their heritage. However, William also served the United States in the First World War, alluding to a pride and responsibility towards his American heritage.

William married Katherine Riebling in 1921 in New York. Katherine was born August 8, 1901 in Queens, New York. In 1920, she was working as a packer in a knitting house, and living with her brother-in-law. By 1925 she and William had their own home. The couple had two daughters, Katherine and Dorothy. Katherine worked as a janitor while William worked as a chauffeur for Borden’s Milk. During the Great Depression, Katherine’s brother John Riebling lived with them.

At some point after 1940, William went on to work for Schlitz Beer. The brewery, founded in 1849, would later become renowned as “The beer that made Milwaukee famous.” Like many breweries opened in the nineteenth century, Schlitz was an outlet for many German-Americans to safely and beneficially express their heritage, as well as make a name for themselves. After facing rationing and anti-German sentiment during the Second World War,



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Schlitz would ultimately become the best-selling beer in the United States by 1950. William remained under their employ until retiring.

William died November 17, 1988 in Hudson, Pasco, Florida, followed by Katherine Grupp in February 24, 1991. Both are buried in the Bushnell National Cemetery. Their daughters, Katherine and Dorothy, are the Grupp's Legacy. Schlitz Beer was on the decline by 1970 as an independent company, and was ultimately acquired by their rival Pabst Brewing Company in 1999. Katherine currently suffers from dementia, while Dorothy is in the care of her children. The Grupp legacy continues to this day under William and Katherine's grandchildren who cherish their grandparents' memory.

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Archie Hawkins (February 12, 1902 - February 27, 1989)

In February 1902, not quite 40 years after the abolition of slavery, Doc and Lilly Hawkins gave birth to a boy named Archie. Archie was raised in northern Florida in the city of Lloyd. Hawkins was illiterate and worked as a farm laborer in Lloyd. World War I began in 1914 but America did not enter until April 1917. Many African Americans were eager to fight in hopes to gain more rights and liberties by serving their country. Hawkins joined the Army along with approximately two hundred other black men from Jefferson county. Hawkins attempted to register for the draft on two separate occasions changing his birth year to make him twenty-one and eligible for service. On September 26, 1918 Hawkins was drafted.

Hawkins was assigned to a segregated support unit in Jacksonville Florida. This was a cavalry regiment that never saw any action overseas, however they still faced dangers such as disease and workplace dangers in the camp. After three hard months, Hawkins was discharged on December 14, 1918 with the end of World War I.

After the war, Hawkins, along with other black veterans, faced hostility from the community. The summer after the conclusion of war saw many episodes of violence, racism and discrimination that came to be known as the Red Summer. A “Welcome Home” reception held on September 25, 1919 claimed to be “free to all men in uniform,” yet, African American veterans were excluded from the event.

Through his service Hawkins became literate but faced many obstacles after the war ended. Hawkins remained in Lloyd, Florida until he moved to St. Petersburg in 1929, where he worked as a landscape gardener until he retired. He had a daughter named Doris Washington who fostered eight children, ten grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Hawkins died on February 27, 1989 in Pinellas county, Florida and is remembered at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida.

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Earl J. LaPan (August 24, 1908 - February 19, 1996)

Earl J. LaPan was born in Lowell, Massachusetts on August 24, 1908. Throughout his life, Earl J. LaPan was an accomplished artist, with many of his works still on display in southern Florida. Earl LaPan began his art career in New Jersey and moved to Florida during the Great Depression, painting several works of art throughout the hotels of Miami.

During the Great Depression, artists like Earl LaPan benefitted greatly from New Deal policies such as the Federal Arts Project. From 1935 to June 1943, the Federal Arts Project spanned 48 states and had many active community art centers, including art centers in Miami and the Florida Keys. Throughout the Great Depression, Earl LaPan created over 300 murals depicting tropical scenes.

Earl LaPan's work as an artist came to a pause when he was drafted into the Army Air Corps. Unfortunately, any military documents that may have further recorded LaPan's time in the Army Air Corps have been difficult to recover.

After World War II, Earl LaPan married Alice Pearse in Miami. There, he went back to work as an artist. Among the most notable of his pieces is *The Mariner*, a fourteen-foot statue created for the Mariner Bank in 1978 which cost \$18,000. After the bank closed, the statue was moved to Phil Foster Park.

Another statue created by LaPan was two rearing horses, standing ten feet high, and weighing one ton. Because lack of repair, one of the horses fell during a storm in 2005, and the other was deemed a danger to the community so the entire statue was replaced a year later.

Earl J. LaPan served his country in World War II, but he went on to become a famous sculptor and painter after the war. Some of his most notable achievements in life were from his work as an artist. The murals and statues that he created are now becoming eligible as historic landmarks, and will ultimately be a legacy that he leaves behind.

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Peter Nadzeika Sr. (January 5, 1919 - January 1, 1996)

Peter Nadzeika was born a first-generation American citizen in Newark, New Jersey on January 5, 1919. Peter's parents, either Zenon or Zeno and Eva Nadzeika, immigrated to the United States from Lithuania. Peter's mother, Eva, immigrated in 1906 and his father immigrated to New York in 1910. Peter grew up with his older brothers Frank and John in Morris County, New Jersey. Before the war, Peter worked in textile manufacturing, as well as on his parents' farm and tavern. Farmers throughout the country felt the impact of the Great Depression in the 1930s as prices for agricultural goods suddenly declined. However, truck farms in New Jersey like the Nadzeika family's sold goods to "nearby urban centers" and so they "fared better than those in states dependent upon the production of cotton, wheat, and hogs." Funds from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and other New Deal programs provided aid to New Jersey residents to ameliorate hunger and unemployment, and it is possible that the Nadzeika family benefitted from these measures.

Peter enlisted as a private on March 7, 1941, at the age of 22. When he enlisted he was a single, unmarried man and had completed four years of high school. John Nadzeika also served in the war as a Merchant Marine. Peter went home after the war and worked in his father's tavern alongside his brothers. In 1975 Peter moved to New Port Richey, Florida. Peter had two sons, Peter Nadzeika Jr., and Michael Nadzeika, and at the time of his death had five grandchildren. Peter's obituary in the *Tampa Tribune* mentions his service, alluding to its importance in his life by stating that he "was a retired tavern owner, Catholic and a veteran of World War II, serving in the U.S. Army." Peter lived in New Port Richey for the remainder of his life, until he died on January 1, 1996, just shy of his 77th birthday. He was buried at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida.