

HERITAGE

70/40: WORLD WAR II (1945-2015) • VIETNAM WAR (1975-2015)

Brokaw: Recalling The Heroes

BY TOM BROKAW
For the Press & Dakotan

On Dec. 7, 1941, war came to America and Yankton answered the call. National Guard units were activated, other young men were drafted or enlisted in the Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. Wives banded together to form an emotional shield against news of wounds or, worst of all, missing in action or killed in action (KIA).

My wife Meredith and her mother, Vivian Auld, moved in with Guy and Edith Harvey, Vivian's parents. Meredith remembers the solemn ritual of gathering beside the large cabinet radio to hear the nightly war news. Meredith's father, Merritt, was away for almost five years, a front line surgeon through North Africa and Italy.

Cliff, "Kip" Larson I knew as the genial proprietor of the Blue Moon Drive-In with its signature dish, broasted chicken. I had no idea that shortly after his star athletic years at Yankton High, he was landing gliders in the invasion in the south of France.

Ken Henseler was a medic with the Marines on Peilulu, the Corps' most savage battle of the war.

My father's dear friend, Elmo Christiansen, was a Coast Guardsman off San Francisco, looking out for Japanese submarines.

Don Allan came to Yankton as a football coach and stayed as a producer of championship teams, a wise counselor to students and a local historian. I knew he had been a star athlete at Augustana, but I did not know he fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He never talked about it.

The beloved Hod Nielsen flew reconnaissance missions over the beaches of Normandy before D-Day and planned to spend his post-war years seeing the world — that is, UNTIL the day a German warplane chased him out over the English Channel. Hod decided that, after the war, he wanted to return to the welcoming arms of Yankton.

Yankton's 147th Field Artillery battalion was acti-

