

The war took its toll on Monroe County in 1944

The fortunes of war did not smile on Monroe County in the fall and winter of 1944. Even the most callused local citizen could not ignore the effects of the war. It had a way of intruding in personal ways.

Each succeeding edition of the Bloomington newspapers brought the good news of gains by Allied troops on the European and Asian fronts. But interspersed on the pages were items that told of the human tragedies of people on the homefront.

The names were local, not unknown soldiers from somewhere else. Readers eyes scanned the articles for children of friends and neighbors. And some of their worst fears were confirmed. The names were close to home, down the block, around the corner and across the counter downtown — Applewhite, Hillenburg, Grubb, Baker, Martin, Hays, Whaley, Dooley.

Still, in some families there was room for hope. Some local soldiers were reported missing, rather than dead — soldiers with names like Robison, Reed, Dupree, Thompson, Brostic, Chambers, Ryros and Russell.

In the war years there weren't many Monroe Countians who had the leisure to



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

philosophize about the war. In December of 1944, workers at the Bloomington Limestone Company took some time off to receive an "E" Award for the quality and quantity of tank parts they produced.

Though the *World-Telephone* reported that rationing had been tightened again, there were other things to feel good about. On Dec. 16, a headline announced that Monroe County had exceeded its war bond quota.

Jan Struther, author of the book on which the movie, *Mrs. Miniver*, was based, dropped into Bloomington on Nov. 13 to speak in the Indiana University Auditorium. She pleaded for a peace attained through understanding and continued, "There is a big difference between understanding and tolerance."

Struther was not the only celebrity in town that day. Ernie Pyle, a former *Indiana*

Daily Student reporter, was awarded an IU degree for his distinction as a war correspondent. Then IU President Herman B Wells hailed Pyle as a "homespun Hoosier, world traveler, discerning reporter, unexcelled interpreter of the minds and hearts of men in peace and war and advocate for the rights of the soldiers in the ranks."

Life went on in other ways. Opal Fender married Albert Landis, and Fern Jackson became the bride of Roy Johnston in the First Christian Church. The Kiwanians observed Thanksgiving at the Graham Hotel.

There were no television bringing war bulletins into Monroe County homes. There were other places to find the latest news. It was not unusual to see people standing in front of the *Telephone* to read the Associated Press bulletins hand-printed on newsprint and hanging in the window.

Those same news watchers may have learned that Paratrooper William A. Cox was among the missing and expected to turn up in a German prison camp. Sent overseas in January 1944, he had "seen service in Italy, Africa, Sicily, England and Holland.

A particularly poignant story in that fall of 1944 described the effect of Sgt. Billy Hoadley's death had on his family and the community. The editorial comment began, "Words of sympathy are inadequate when a message comes from the War Department at Washington City that one of our Monroe County boys has fallen in battle on one of the far-flung fronts in Europe or Asia."

When the telegram arrived, it was the Western Union Manager, R.W. Suhrheinrich, who delivered it. The Hoadleys were living in the Graham Hotel, and the manager was afraid that the delivery boy would hand it to Billy's mother.

Continued the editorial, "He (Suhrheinrich) called Mr. Hoadley out and gave the telegram to him." Billy had been killed in Luxembourg on Oct. 28.

The writer reminded his readers that "Some 4,000 homes of Monroe County have boys and men in the services and 74 have already paid the supreme sacrifice. But every death message is the same terrible blow to loved ones."

The war was not all that far away.

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