

Henry S Haberman (middle name not known, probably facetious middle initial) was born 17 June 1888 in Kolb, Saratov, Volga Region, Russia. He immigrated to the United States in either 1908 or 1909 and like many Germans from Russia, he initially settled in the farming community of Sutton, Nebraska. Henry married Wilhelmina “Minnie” Hofmann on 18 January 1912 in Clay County near Sutton, Nebraska. Wilhelmina was the daughter of Jakob Hofmann and Rosina Griess. They were ethnic Germans who immigrated from Russia and settled in Sutton in the early Twentieth Century. The Haberman family originated in the Volga Region of Russia; whereas the Klein, Hofmann and Griess families originated in the Black Sea Region of Russia, now Ukraine. They all settled in and around Sutton and obviously interacted with each

other probably through their Evangelical Lutheran church.



*Ted on Meyer farm, circa 1940*

Not much is known about Henry Haberman after Minnie died. The United States 1930 Federal Census shows him living as a lodger to Louie and Alta Bruggman in Portland, Oregon where Henry was employed as a machine operator in the furniture industry. He was 42 years old but still not a US citizen. The 1940 US census shows Henry married to Blanche McNitt and now living in Signal Hill, Los Angeles County, California. He was a general laborer in the building repair industry. This same census indicates Henry was living in York, Nebraska in 1935. He was also a naturalized citizen by the 1940 census. Willie as well as several other people (no obvious family connection) were living with Henry and Blanche in the 1940 census, but not Eddie or the other children.

Theodore, Wilbert and Edward lived with the David and Marie Becker family in Sheridan, Nebraska after their mother's death in 1923. Lenore was married before 1930 (she was no older than 17 when she married) and was living in York, Nebraska. Apparently, Henry either abandoned his sons or "farmed" them out to other families who could take better care of them. The Great Depression had started in October 1929 and the Dust Bowl drought in the mid-West was underway by 1934. So it is very likely Henry

just could not physically, emotionally or financially raise his children.

Some in the family have less kind thoughts about Henry and his leaving the kids to fend for themselves. But that is not for this story. That is for others to report.

Lenore, Theodore, Wilbert and Edward are second cousins, once removed to the author.



Edward "Eddie" Haberman was born in rural York County, Nebraska on 12 December 1920. He was the fourth of five children born to Henry S and Wilhelmina (Hofmann) Haberman. His baby sister, Rosie, died as an infant (two months old) when Eddie was himself only one year old. His mother would die nine months later at the age of thirty-six. Eddie was two and half years old. Family stories tell Wilhelmina's death was due to complications of childbirth with Rosie. Eddie had three older siblings

who survived childhood: sister Lenore, born in 1910 in York County, Nebraska; and, brothers, Theodore "Ted" Henry born 15 October 1917 in Keene, Nebraska and Wilbert "Willie" in 1920 in York County, Nebraska.

The records do not show where Eddie lived between the 1930 and the 1940 census. The 1940 census shows David and Marie Becker still living in Sheridan but neither Ted, Willie or Eddie are shown as living in the household. Eddie may have been one of

the many homeless drifters in the mid-West living from household to household as told in “The Grapes of Wrath” by John Steinbeck. We know Eddie was living with the Becker family in 1930 but by the 1940 census he was living with Nellie Van Ostoand and others as a border in York City, Nebraska. Eddie was twenty years old and working as the assistant manager for Woolworths Store.

Eddie enlisted in the US Army on 6 February 1941 and was sent to Fort MacArthur, San Pedro, California. He was 20 years old, stood five foot eight inches tall and weighed 144 pounds. His service number was 19051668. He had four years of high school (no indication of high school graduation), was a “sales clerk” as a civilian, and enlistment was for the “Philippine Department.”

Although he was the youngest boy in the family, Eddie was the first to join the military. He enlisted before the outbreak of World War II and before any draft or general patriotic citizenry mobilization. At least one family story tells of Eddie’s need to join the military because he had “gotten a girl in trouble” and a judge said he had to either marry her or join the Army. Ironically, the better choice would have been marriage.

Pvt. Edward A. (there’s that pesky middle initial) Haberman was assigned to Service Support Company, 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment

(not 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division) on the Philippine Islands. A regimental service support company had 115 men and contained a company headquarters, a regimental headquarters platoon for the regimental staff, and a transportation platoon that fielded twenty-nine cargo trucks. The trucks were used to carry supplies and/or troops, but were not sufficient in number to move the entire regiment in a single lift. His actual company assignment is not known but since he had four years of high school education, it seems reasonable he could have been assigned to clerical duties.

The 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, nicknamed the “Polar Bears”, was one of just a few regular Army units established in a foreign country. The 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment was formed on 13 August 1916 at Fort William McKinley in Manila, Philippine Islands. In World War I, the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment was sent to North Russia and Eastern Siberia to protect the Eastern Front and the Trans-Siberian railway. After the war, the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment returned to garrison duty in the Philippines. When war broke out between China and Japan in early 1932, General Douglas MacArthur, then the military advisor to the Philippine Government, established a Filipino defense force for the protection of Luzon Island,

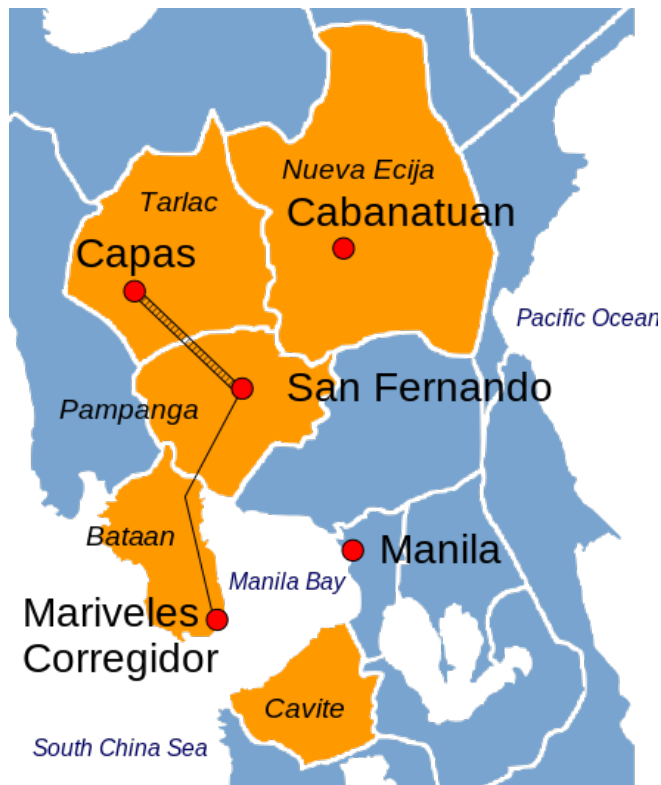
the largest, most populated island in the Philippines. Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, the Bataan Peninsula and



*Unit patch for the 31st  
Infantry Regiment*

Corregidor Island in Manila Bay are on Luzon.

The Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) attacked the US Navy Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii on 7 December 1941. On the morning of 8 December, the IJN attacked the American aircraft at Clark and Iba Air Fields on Luzon destroying MacArthur's airpower. The Japanese Army began its invasion of the Philippine Islands on



*Route of the Death March*

10 December and on 23 December MacArthur ordered a withdrawal of his forces to Bataan and Corregidor. The 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment was assigned to cover the withdrawal of troops onto the Bataan Peninsula. They halted the Japanese invasion who then waited for reinforcements from China. The Japanese renewed their attack on the peninsula on 6 April resulting in the surrender of the defensive forces on 9 April.

Eddie was one of those who surrendered on the Bataan Peninsula and was marched to the prison at Camp O'Donnell.

The Bataan Death March began on 10 April. Over 80,000 Filipino and US Army prisoners were marched sixty-eight miles without water, stops or relief from the sun and heat. They were brutally and summarily executed along the way as were any Filipino civilians who tried to give the prisoners food or water. About 1,600 of the prisoners were members of the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, practically all of whom were sick and malnourished from defending Bataan. The prisoners were separated into groups of about 100 men for the march which took some five or six days. The atrocities committed by the Japanese Army during the march are well documented so they are not repeated here. The Bataan Death March ended at Camp O'Donnell located at Capas, in North Central Luzon. There is no official accounting of the prisoners who died on the march. Unofficial estimates mention approximately 10,000 of the prisoners died on the march, of which approximately 1,000 were Americans. Those who survived, like Eddie, became a prisoner of war at Camp O'Donnell.

Camp O'Donnell was a pre-war Filipino training area that was turned into a POW camp by the Japanese. The Japanese segregated the Americans and Filipinos so on 6 June 1942, the American prisoners were taken from Camp O'Donnell to another POW camp at Cabanatuan. The Filipino prisoners remained at Camp O'Donnell where many received conditional pardons. The Japanese closed the camp in January 1943 but not before an estimated 1,600 Americans and

26,000 Filipinos had died from the harsh conditions at the camp.

Conditions at Cabanatuan were equally brutal. Cabanatuan is about 50 miles east of Camp O'Donnell and was subdivided into three camps. The Americans from Camp O'Donnell first went to Camp #3 which was

of the hospital so named because there was zero chance they would survive. Even the Japanese doctors would not enter this ward. Survivors of the ordeal describe work details carrying corpses out the hospital in numbers. Estimates of deaths at Cabanatuan totaled some 2,400 with 30 to 50 deaths daily. Most



further divided into three labor groups to construct roads and airfields for the Japanese. Daily rations was a rice gruel with an occasional tablespoon of rotten camote (a Philippine sweet potato). One ounce of carabao (water buffalo) meat was served once a week. Water was supplied from a local ditch; toilets are not even described in the historical narrative. Perhaps the most gruesome description of their conditions at Cabanatuan is the "hospital." Each day an attempt was made to clear the barracks of the dying. They were moved to the "zero" ward

prisoners welcomed the opportunity to be transported to Japan, hoping for better conditions.

Japan realized it could not retain control of the Philippines so in late 1944 the American prisoners were crammed by the thousands into unventilated holds of unmarked "hell ships" for transport to Japan as slave labor. On the ships, the men had no place to lie down or escape the heat and stench...many died standing. On 10 October 1944, after 915 days in captivity (two years, six months, 1 day), now Sergeant

Eddie Haberman along with some 1,780 POW's was loaded onto the prisoner



*Arisan Maru*

transport ship *Arisan Maru* destined for Formosa. This was just before the Battle of Leyte Gulf and liberation of the Philippine Islands by US forces led by General of the Army Douglas MacArthur (“I shall return...I have returned”). In a twist of historical irony, Eddie’s brother, Ted, was serving onboard *USS Maryland* (BB-46) as it provided gunfire support for MacArthur’s invasion at Leyte, in the southern islands of the Philippines. Ted, at this time, did not know his brother was a POW, some 700 miles north of him on Luzon.

The ironic historical twists continue. The US submarine *USS Shark* (SS-314) sank the *Arisan Maru* just off the coast of China two weeks after it left Luzon with Eddie onboard. It was 24 October 1944 at approximately five o’clock in the evening. The *Arisan Maru* showed no markings or flag to indicate that it was carrying American prisoners of war or

anything other than war materials. The torpedoes from the *Shark* hit aft of midships causing the *Arisan Maru* to split in two, killing the 1,795 Americans onboard. Before abandoning their ship, the Japanese cut the rope ladders into the prisoner holds. Those prisoners who did escape the sinking ship were deliberately left behind by the Japanese destroyers escorting the transport ship. The destroyers did rescue the Japanese survivors. And the destroyers did find and sink the *Shark* with all eighty-seven men aboard.



*USS Shark (SS-314)*

There were only a few surviving POW’s. Eddie was not among them. He was 23 years old. His remains were declared “non-recoverable” by the American Graves Registration Service, Far Eastern Zone. His name is listed on the Tablets of the Missing, Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, Manila, Philippines.

Theodore “Ted” Haberman was next to join the military.



Ted enlisted in the US Navy on 5 April 1941.  
He went to boot camp at Naval Recruit

Training Command, San Diego, California  
and then reported for duty onboard *USS*





*Naval Recruit Training Station, Sand Diego, California*



*Maryland* (BB-46) 21 June 1941. Boot camp was just long enough to get his seabag.

The *USS Maryland* was home ported in Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii. As a fresh recruit, he no doubt was assigned to the “deck crew” to do ordinary seaman duties. He later became a Boatsman Mate which at that time was a “right arm rate” one of the select ratings in the 1940 Navy. All other job ratings were on the left arm. Ted was very proud to be a right arm rate.

Ted survived the attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941. According to Wikipedia: “*Maryland* was moored inboard to *USS Oklahoma* to port, connected by lines and a gangway. Forward was *USS California*; *USS Tennessee* and *USS West Virginia* were astern. Further aft were *USS Nevada* and *USS Arizona*. The seven battleships, in what is now known as “Battleship Row.” *Maryland* was struck by two armor-piercing bombs which detonated low on her hull. The first



*Maryland along side the capsized Oklahoma. West Virginia burns in the background.*

struck the forecastle awning and made a hole about 12 ft by 20 ft. The second exploded after entering the hull at the 22 ft water level at Frame 10. The latter hit caused flooding and increased the draft forward by 5 ft. *Maryland* continued to fire and, after the attack, sent firefighting parties to assist her compatriots, especially attempting to rescue survivors from the capsized *Oklahoma*. The men continued to muster the AA defenses in case the Japanese returned to attack. In all, two officers and two men were killed in the attack.” Ted never said what he did during the raid but I suspect he was onboard during the raid since he was so fresh out of boot camp.

Ted remained on *Maryland* throughout the war. *Maryland* was engaged in the battles at Tarawa, Kwajalein Atoll, Saipan, Leyte Gulf and Okinawa. After the war, *Maryland* made five voyages between the west coast and Hawaii returning more than 8,000 service men to the United States.



Ted eventually was promoted to Boatswains Mate 2nd Class (BM2/c) and served as a coxswain...a sailor who has charge of a ship's small boat and crew and usually steers the boat. While he never talked of his war time service, he did relay to me his efforts as a coxswain to ferry soldiers to the beach and to retrieve bodies and body parts from the water on his return trip to *Maryland*.

Ted also had an aversion towards officers, calling them "socks of shit." His story was a female officer forced him to be discharged at the end of the war against Ted's desire to stay in the Navy. Even though I was a commissioned Naval officer, Ted still referred to me as a sock of shit, but as he often added: I was his favorite sock of shit.

Ted married Esther May Walker in May 1951 in Colorado. At one time, Ted tried to open a gasoline service station on Main Street in Loveland, Colorado, but that endeavor did not work out, so Ted became a mechanic and equipment operator for various construction companies throughout the west. He worked for some time on the irrigation canal systems in the Fresno Valley in California that supplies water to a vast number of farms and orchards. Ted and Esther had no children, none the less, they were quite involved in the lives of their many nieces and nephews, all of us having very fond memories of Uncle Ted and Aunt Esther. They eventually settled on a lot on Macintosh Lake near Tenino, Washington, just down the lake from the home of Bob and Wilma (Meyer) Boyer.



*Somewhere in the South Pacific*



*An intriguing photo from Ted's collection. No idea who, what, when or where the photo was taken.*



Wilbert Haberman was the last of the brothers to join the military. He was drafted into the Army on 26 March 1942 at Fort MacArthur, San Pedro, California. His records were lost in the archives fire but family stories recall his not serving outside of the United States. He never married. And that's all that is known of Willie.