

William Holleran Jr., a Manchester hero

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fifth in a series of articles about Manchester's heroes, the men and women who served in our country's armed forces during World War II.

MANCHESTER — William J. "Billy" Holleran Jr. was 18 when he was drafted into the U.S. Army Infantry as he was entering his senior year at Manchester's Central High School. He was 19 and in Belgium's Ardennes Forest when he died in the Battle of the Bulge, the largest battle fought by the Americans in World War II.

Billy was among the 600,000 American troops who participated in the battle that began on Dec. 16, 1944, and ended on Jan. 25, 1945. Unfortunately, Billy was among the 81,000 Americans killed in the battle. It's hard to grasp the enormity of the American losses until you consider that the city of Manchester had a population only slightly larger than the 81,000 losses.

There's more I could write about Billy, but my words would pale in comparison to his. With the permission of the Holleran and Murphy families, I am honored and proud to include the following V-Mail letter he sent to his mother shortly before his death.

*Belgium
Jan. 6, '44*

Mom Darling,

This is the first chance I've had to write since France, as I've been up in the front lines. Christmas and New Years had little meaning this year but there's always the future to look at. Everyone's been grand about writing but I suppose they'll get disgusted and quit as I haven't got the time to wash much less write. You told me to request anything I wanted so here it is. Please send all the Candy and Cookies you can. I'd also like a little glass mirror. Out here all you think of is the grand cakes and pies Mom used to make.

Everyone('s) been telling me what a grand little sister I have and from all indications she's quite a heart breaker. Would you please write Ruth Holleran in Schenectady and Ruth Newton, Eva, and Mary Johnson telling them how much I enjoy their letters.

*Well Sweetheart give my love to Dad and Glo and keep writing.
Love,
Billy*



COURTESY

At age 18, William J. Holleran Jr. of Manchester was drafted into the U.S. Army Infantry as he was entering his senior year at Central High School.

William J. Holleran Jr. was killed by a mortar shell on Jan. 15, 1944, nine days after writing the letter. He was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and was buried in a U.S. military cemetery in Belgium. Later his body was returned to the

United States, where he was interred in Manchester's St. Joseph's Cemetery.

Billy's dad, William J. Holleran Sr., a World War I veteran and a member of the Yankee Division, was past state commander of the New Hampshire Veterans of Foreign Wars. His mother, Rita, was active in the Gold Star Mothers, Inc. Billy's brother-in-law, Bob Murphy, is a past commander of Sweeney Post and a World War II veteran.

There's no memorial in Manchester honoring Billy or the other men and women who served in the armed forces during World War II. It's time this void is filled, and you can help. The Manchester Veterans Council and the Manchester World War II Memorial Committee are in the process of raising the money necessary to build a permanent World War II Memorial in Veterans Park.

Please send your donations to the Manchester World War II Memorial, One City Hall Plaza, Manchester, NH 03101.

For more information, visit the Memorial's Web site at www.ManchesternhWWIIMemorial.com.

— Gene Mackie