

DISCLAIMER

This biography is a rough draft and a work-in-progress.
The research has not been completed, so there may be errors and omissions.

This record also lacks 1950 federal census data.
Please return to Tuscania1918.org in the future to see if a revised and
finalized version is available.

Abbreviations:

b = born

d = died

F: = Find A Grave (www.findagrave.org)

NOK = next-of-kin

TUSCANIA

Howe, Merle Henry
1896 MI – 1945 Philippines



Merle Henry Howe



Both photos from Merle Henry Howard's Find A Grave 56773045





From biography at: <http://rebel6.blogspot.com/2019/08/colonel-merle-howe-you-go-there-and.html>



The “Joe Wehner Trophy” instituted by Merle Howe in 1926 – namesake of his son Joseph Wehner Howe - Another extensive biography at:

<https://www.govserv.org/US/Wyoming/183142265065503/126th-Regimental-Association>

Also from his Find A Grave 56773045:

Colonel Merle H. Howe was killed on 30 August 1945 in an airplane accident while communicating with the Supreme General of the Japanese Imperial Forces, Tomoyuki Yamashita during the negotiation for surrender of all Japanese Forces in the Philippine Islands.

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He was the son of Henry W. Howe (1864-1916) & Edith Adell Knight Howe (1872-1944).

1900 United States Federal Census (12 June 1900): Fremont Township, Isabella County, Michigan (sheet 3A, family 55) - Merle H. Howe (4, April 1896 Michigan).

1910 United States Federal Census (11 May 1910): Fremont Township, Isabella County, Michigan (sheet 9A, family 135) - Merle Howe (14 Michigan).

He graduated from Central Michigan Normal School in 1917.

Merle H. Howe (21, born 11 April 1896 Isabella County, Michigan) of 208 E. Maple, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, signed up for his World War I Draft Registration Card (Form 1604, No. 102) on 30 May 1917 in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. He was a Cadet in the R.O.T.C. at Fort Sheridan, Illinois in the service of the United States Government. His mother was solely dependent on him for support. Merle was single and was described as tall, of medium build, with grey eyes and light colored hair.

He entered the service as a Private on 15 August 1917. Merle completed First Officers Training Camp at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, 15 May to 15 August 1917 and was assigned to 3D Company, 10th Regiment; SN O-131962. He served as an air corps pilot during WWI.

Merle Henry Howe of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan met Virginia Mullen at a dance for young student pilots in 1917, and they were married in 1920. They settled in Grand Rapids in 1920, where Merle

Howe began a 20 year career in \*teaching at Union High School and, a few years later, a second career as an officer in the Michigan National Guard (32nd Infantry Division). In the ensuing years, they had four children, two girls and two boys: born March 19, 1922; Marion September 3, 1924; John Thomas July 18, 1928; and Joseph Wehner August 30, 1932.

\*Over the years Merle taught High School Life Certificate, Aviation, Arithmetic, General Science, Electricity and Auto Repair.

1925 National Guard Register: 1 Lt. Merle H. Howe (11 April 1896 Michigan) - Serv Co., 126 Infantry, Grand Rapids, Michigan

1927 National Guard Register: Capt. Merle H. Howe (11 April 1896 Michigan) - How Co., 126 Infantry, Grand Rapids, Michigan – ORC Inf capt 11 December 1926 O131962

Pvt AC 15 August 1917 to 06 January 1918

1 Lt AC 07 January 1918 to 19 February 1919

2 LT Infantry 20 January 1923

1 Lt 11 August 1923

Capt 07 July 1925

Merle Howe (33 Michigan) is found in the 1930 United States Federal Census (05 April 1930) for Grand Rapids (Ward 3), Kent County, Michigan (sheet 6B, family 94) along with his wife, Virginia Howe (29 Illinois) and children, Marion Howe (5 Michigan) and John Howe (1 8/12 Michigan). He was 24 and Virginia 19 when they married. Merle was a high school teacher.

1934 National Guard Register - 28 May 1934: Capt. Merle H. Howe (11 April 1896 Michigan) – Co K, 126th Infantry, Grand Rapids, Michigan – NGUS Inf capt 28 May 1934 O-131962

Pvt Pvt1c AC 15 August 1917 to 04 January 1918

ORC 1 Lt AC 03 January 1920 to 07 March 1925

2 LT Infantry 20 January 1923

1 Lt 11 August 1923

Capt 07 July 1926

Merle was Captain and Commander of Company K, 126th Infantry, Michigan National Guard, at Grand Rapids, Michigan, on 15 October 1940.

In 1940, when the 32nd Division was called into Federal service for pre-war training in Louisiana, the family moved with Merle Howe to share the experience together. When the division moved to Massachusetts in 1942, after war had come, the family moved there. When the Division was sent to Australia, his wife and children moved back to Grand Rapids.

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Lieutenant Colonel Howe earned the Distinguished Service Cross, at the direction of General Douglas MacArthur, during action in the Buna Campaign that day. Lieutenant General Eichelberger, the Commander of I Corps, paid tribute to Howe and several other officers of the 32nd Division when he wrote after the war: "There were many great combat commanders among

the National Guard officers of the 32nd Division. In crises, I would like to have them again as comrades. I can mention only a few here: Colonels Merle H. Howe of Michigan and Herbert M. Smith of Wisconsin..." (Eichelberger, Robert L. *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo*. 1950)

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS (DSC)

Rank: Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army

Unit: G-3 Officer Headquarters 32nd "Red Arrow" Infantry Division.

Date of Action: 5 December 1942

Citation: The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross to Merle H. Howe (O-131962), Lieutenant Colonel (General Staff Corps), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy while serving with Headquarters, 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division, in action against enemy forces on 5 December 1942, near Buna, New Guinea. During an attack on Buna Village, when men of a rifle company short of Company officers were checked by heavy small arms and mortar fire at close range, Lieutenant Colonel Howe personally exposed himself to the enemy fire, moving among the advanced groups and encouraging the men to resume the attack. He led them in an attack, gaining ground which, held and consolidated, assisted materially in an advance on the succeeding day. Lieutenant Colonel Howe's outstanding leadership, personal bravery and zealous devotion to duty at the cost of his life, exemplify the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States and reflect great credit upon himself, the 32nd Infantry Division, and the United States Army.

General Orders: Headquarters, South West Pacific Area, General Orders No. 64 (28 December 1942).

PURPLE HEART

Rank: Lieutenant Colonel

Unit: G-3 Officer Headquarters 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army

Awarded on: November 15th, 1943

Action: For wounds received in action near Buna Village, New Guinea on December 5, 1942.

Details: Headquarters, 32nd Infantry Division, General Orders No. 81 (15 November 1943).

SILVER STAR MEDAL (SSM)

Rank: Lieutenant Colonel

Unit: 127th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army (127th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army)

Awarded on: January 22nd, 1943

Action: Merle H. Howe, Lieutenant Colonel, Infantry, Commanding Officer, 127th Infantry, Army of the United States. For gallantry in action near Tarakena, New Guinea, January 16, 1943. On that date Lieutenant Colonel Howe made a personal reconnaissance of the front line area across the Konombi River. With utter disregard for his personal safety, he continually exposed himself for heavy enemy sniper fire from enemy positions fifty yards away, and secured valuable information for future operations. Lieutenant Colonel Howe's actions were over and above the ordinary call of duty and inspired his men to greater efforts.

Details: Headquarters, U.S. Forces, Buna Area, General Orders No. 17 (22 January 1943).

SILVER STAR MEDAL (SSM)

Rank: Lieutenant Colonel

Unit: 127th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army (127th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army)

Awarded on: January 24th, 1943

Action: Merle H. Howe, Lieutenant Colonel, Infantry, Commanding Officer, 127th Infantry, Army of the United States. For gallantry in action near Giruwa, New Guinea, January 19, 1943. During an attack on Giruwa, Company E, 127th Infantry was being held up by heavy enemy machine gun fire. With utter disregard for his personal safety, Lieutenant Colonel Howe went to the foremost elements of the company and while under constant heavy enemy machine gun and sniper fire, directed the destruction of the enemy resistance which resulted in the continuance of the advance on Giruwa.

Lieutenant Colonel Howe's courage, coolness, and exceptional leadership was an inspiration to all the troops.

Details: Headquarters U.S. Forces, Buna Area, General Order No. 18 (24 January 1943). This award was obtained in the form of an Oak Leaf to be worn on the ribbon of the first award.

BRONZE STAR MEDAL (BSM)

Rank: Colonel

Unit: 127th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army (127th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army)

Awarded on: December 2nd, 1944

Action: Colonel Merle H. Howe, Infantry, United States Army. For meritorious achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy near Afua, New Guinea, from 19 July 1944 to 30 July 1944.

Details: Headquarters, 32d Infantry Division, General Order No. 96 (2 December 1944).

LEGION OF MERIT - US MILITARY

Rank: Colonel

Unit: 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army (128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army)

Awarded on: July 25th, 1945

Action: Colonel Merle H. Howe, Infantry, United States Army. For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services in Luzon, Philippine Islands, from 28 March to 10 May 1945. Assuming command of an infantry regiment [128th] while it was engaged in sustained action with a stubborn enemy, Colonel Howe, through his gallant and incisive leadership, maintained his command at a high peak of morale and combat efficiency despite heavy casualties it had already suffered. While skillfully directing his forces in hotly contested action along the Villa Verde Trail, he made frequent personal visits to forward positions and through his advice and encouragement inspired his men to attack the enemy with renewed vigor and to capture or destroy strategic objectives. Colonel Howe's brilliant and dynamic leadership and his willingness at all times to share the hardships and dangers of his men, contributed in high degree to his regiment's success in the Luzon Campaign.

Details: Headquarters, United States Army Forces, Pacific, General Orders No. 71 (25 July 1945).

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS (DSC)

Rank: Colonel, U.S. Army

Unit: 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd "Red Arrow" Infantry Division.

Date of Action: 11 May 1945

Citation: The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Second Award of the Distinguished Service Cross to Merle H. Howe (0-131962), Colonel (Infantry), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy while serving with the 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division, in action against enemy forces on 11 May 1945 at Luzon, Philippine Islands. During the fighting along the Villa Verde Trail, Colonel Howe, commanding an infantry regiment, went forward to a battalion position to observe the operations of forward elements. Shortly afterward he accompanied an advance patrol which was reconnoitering a route for tanks along the slope of a hill. Half of the patrol had traversed a narrow ravine when the enemy suddenly opened fire from concealed positions and seriously wounded a man directly in front of Colonel Howe. Taking charge of the patrol, immediately Colonel Howe sent two men forward to evacuate the casualty, and then directed covering fire into caves from which the enemy had fired. After directing removal of the wounded man to safety, he organized the patrol for sealing the caves, but was soon wounded by enemy mortar fire directed on the group. Despite the intense enemy fire he refused first aid, continued to direct the demolition squad in finding a route of approach to the caves, and assisted in providing covering fire while the caves were closed with pole charges. Under his direction five caves were sealed and over thirty enemy killed. Colonel Howe, by his quick and heroic action and his effective employment of the few troops at his disposal, prevented numerous casualties, extricated his men from a grave situation, and inflicted many losses on the enemy. His outstanding leadership, personal bravery and zealous devotion to duty at the cost of his life, exemplify the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States and reflect great credit upon himself, the 32d Infantry Division, and the United States Army. General Orders: Headquarters, U.S. Forces-Pacific, General Orders No. 53 (1945). This award was obtained in the form of an Oak Leaf to be worn on the ribbon of the first award.

AIR MEDAL (AM)

Rank: Colonel

Unit: 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army (128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army)

Action: Colonel Merle H. Howe, Infantry, United States Army. For meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flights on Luzon, Philippine Islands, from 1 April 1945 to 10 August 1945. During the period Colonel Howe made more than twenty aerial flights in unarmed liaison planes over enemy held territory. More than ten of these flights were made over the Villa Verde Trail area for reconnaissance of enemy positions. As a result of these flights Colonel Howe had a clear picture of the tactical situation and an accurate idea of what he would encounter. The balance of his flights were over enemy territory in the area for reconnaissance of patrol routes and the locating of enemy pockets. Due to Colonel Howe's flights, patrols were routed over the most advantageous terrain and their missions accomplished expeditiously. For his courage, disregard

for his personal safety, and participation in these operations, Colonel Howe established a high degree of meritorious achievement.

Details: Source: 32nd Infantry Division Citation, 25 July 1945, Brig Gen. Robert B. McBride, Commanding.

PURPLE HEART

Rank: Colonel

Unit: Commanding Officer 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division "Red Arrow", U.S. Army

Action: For military merit and for wounds received in action resulting in his death August 30, 1945.

Details: Posthumously awarded. This award was obtained in the form of an Oak Leaf to be attached on the ribbon of the first award.

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"A tragedy of particular poignancy for the veterans of the 32D Division's long series of campaigns from Papua to Luzon was the death of COL Merle H. Howe in an airplane accident. In the Saturday Evening Post article previously referred to, COL Howe was called "a sort of living symbol of what the Division had been through." General Eichelberger, in his book, makes several highly complementary references to COL Howe: "a stalwart fighting man," "the driving leader who helped make the Buna victory possible," and "I never knew of a more determined or more courageous fighter." The former Grand Rapids school teacher and longtime National Guard officer was 49 years old when he died at the moment of victory.

COL Howe, commander of the 128TH Infantry at the time of his death, had served with distinction throughout World War II with the 32D Infantry Division. The only commanding officer who commanded the 126TH, 127TH and 128TH Regimental Combat Teams in various campaigns against the Japanese Imperial Forces. Inducted into service October 15, 1940 as Captain of Company K, 126TH Infantry, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was killed in an airplane accident while communicating with the Supreme General of the Japanese Imperial Forces, Tomoyuki Yamashita during the negotiation for surrender of all Japanese Forces in the Philippine Islands.

Yamashita reported the details of the accident to General Gill:

#### GENERAL FIELD HEADQUARTERS

Imperial Japanese Forces in the Philippines

August 31, 1945.

Major General W. H. Gill,

Commanding General, 32nd Infantry Division

Kiangan, Mountain Province

Sir:

It is with extreme regret that I inform you that your liaison plane dispatched on the afternoon of August 30, for the purpose of communication with my headquarters crashed in the vicinity of the Third Rest House. The plane dropped one communication tube and was circling once more to drop another communication when it crashed at 1534 o'clock. The cause of the unfortunate

accident is believed to be engine trouble.

Of the crew, Col. Merle H. Howe died instantly while Lt. Edgar T. Irvine was injured. The latter's injury consists of bruises on his right forehead, left lower lip and the right side of the back of his head. His injury is not believed serious.

We immediately sent medical officers to the scene of the accident to treat the injured, to take proper care of the dead and to preserve the scene of the accident. Please rest assured that every possible step has been taken.

In the above manner, Col. Howe died in the line of duty. In view of the unchanging zeal and friendship, from start to finish, with which the late Col. Howe served and distinguished himself in the present negotiations between the Japanese and United States Armies, I, on behalf of the entire Imperial Japanese Army and myself, express our deepest condolence.

At the same time, the injured pilot has my deepest sympathy and I have ordered my subordinates to take every step in the treatment of his injury. From the bottom of my heart, I pray for his early recovery and hope that he will be able to return to his post at the earliest possible date.

I, hereby, hurriedly inform you of the gist of the unfortunate accident and at the same time express my sincerest condolence.

Yours respectfully,  
GENERAL TOMOYUKI YAMASHITA  
Highest Commander, Imperial Japanese Army  
In the Philippines.

Source: <http://www.32nd-division.org/history/ww2/32ww2-12.html>

Three days later, at 0800 hours on 2 September 1945 General Tomoyuki Yamashita, accompanied by a small staff, walked out of the mountains of northern Luzon and surrendered himself to the 32D Infantry Division on a hilltop near Kiangan, Luzon. The next day he formally surrendered all Japanese forces in the Philippines. The war was over.

HEADQUARTERS 32D INFANTRY DIVISION  
APO 32,

11 September 1945.  
GENERAL ORDERS  
NO.....308

The death of Colonel Merle H. Howe, Commanding Officer of the 128TH Infantry Regiment, who was killed in action while participating in an aerial flight on 30 August 1945, is announced with

deep regret.

For many years Colonel Howe served his country with distinction. Enlisting as a private on 15 August 1917, he emerged from World War I as an Air Corps pilot with the rank of First Lieutenant. He completed more than a year of service in France during World War I.

When the 32D Infantry Division was re-activated in October 1940, Colonel Howe once again volunteered his services and was assigned to the 126TH Infantry as Regimental S-3, and later rendered invaluable services as Division G-3 during the early stages of the Division's overseas service in World War II. Serving successively as Commanding Officer of the 127TH, 126TH and 128TH Infantry Regiments, he demonstrated exceptional ability and a devotion to duty which earned him the respect and admiration of officers and men throughout the entire Division.

In recognition of his great qualities of leadership and the manner in which he performed his duties during World War II, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Service Cross, The Legion of Merit, The Silver Star, the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star, the Bronze Star Medal, the Air Medal, the Purple Heart, the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Purple Heart and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

The memory of Colonel Howe's valiant deeds, his unselfish faithful service and fine soldierly qualities will long live in the minds and hearts of the officers and men of the 32D Infantry Division. His was an honorable and distinguished career and in his death the nation lost one of its finest citizens, the "Red Arrow" Division one of its most distinguished soldiers.

ROBERT B. McBRIDE, JR.,  
Brigadier General, U.S. Army,  
Commanding.

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Red Arrow Men

Stories About the 32nd Division on the Villa Verde

The Colonel Was a School Teacher

The former Grand Rapids high school teacher was not sitting in his own sandbag quarters in the gully in the mountains off the Villa Verde.

A Jap shell had landed on the slope above his dugout, caving a small landslide into the quarters of Col. Merle H. Howe, commander of the 128th Infantry Regiment, former history, science and math teacher at Union High School in Grand Rapids.

"The Japs had these hills dug out like a prairie dog town," Col. Howe said. "Our boys had to dig them out or seal them up. I always get a kick out of hearing one of my officers say to one of his men, 'Hey, Joe, take a pole charge and blow out that Nip hole.'"

When the 32nd first started fighting on the Villa Verde, each company had an assault team. After 120 days of fighting the Jap in the mountains, almost every rifleman was a one-man assault team!

That means that every GI had learned how to handle a demolition charge — a pole charge or a hand charge!

Col. Howe is a front-line leader. When I last saw him he was still limping around the front lines with a Jap hand-grenade slug in his right leg. He refused to go to the rear.

"Some day," he said, "I'll have that piece of shell cut out."

Here is Col. Howe's story of the fighting on the Villa Verde:

"The Japs were experts at defensive fighting in the mountains," he explained. "In the draws we found two holes covering a trail. But another hidden hole would conceal a machine gun. It would cut loose at our boys.

"But our GI's learn quickly. What makes the American soldier the best fighting man in the world is the fact that he can readily adapt himself to anything new.

"Our boys learned to find the blind spots to the caves. If four caves were protecting each other, the GIs would knock off a cave on the flank. This made a blind spot on the next one.

"I was following a patrol one day. The last man went wide on the curve. A Nip stood up and fired at him. He started after him, and found six adjoining holes full of Nips. That's the way the fighting went. We found often that the trail side of the caves was too tough. Our boys had to circle and crack 'em from the rear of the cave. Hard work. Tough climbing. But successful!

"I'm a bit proud of our regiment. We cracked Salacsac Pass, and Hill 508 (the Japs called it Kongo) and Hill 505 (the Japs called it Mt. Tenno). They commanded everything on the Villa Verde. But my boys cracked them!"

Col. Howe paused a moment to open a message from a battalion commander up ahead on the trail, reached for the phone. Later he resumed his story.

"Take Hill 505," he continued. "We cracked it by digging. On our perimeter, the Japs were shooting 35 yards away at us with machine guns. We dug a tunnel only three feet deep, a mere slit trench really. We had to go 35 yards to the Nip positions; they were on the crest of the slope.

"Our boys dug with trenching tools, with sandbags in front of them as they dug, pushing the sandbags along with the Jap machine guns chewing at the bags.

"We got one of our machine guns in the slit trench at night. The next day the Nip machine guns cut loose. Our men would duck, raise up, cut loose with ours. In one hour we knocked out their

main machine gun.

"Our boys set off a pole charge when we got up to the Nip positions, blew them to hell. We found one of our armored-piercing machine gun bullets wedged down the barrel of the Nip machine gun. That's shooting, brother!

"Weird things happened. Some nights our men on the top of a hill couldn't sleep since the Nips were digging like the devil on the hillside below them!

"We kept gnawing away at the Nips. We finally broke them. Our people began to hear explosions in the earth under them. The despondent Nips were blowing themselves up with their own hand grenades.

"One of our machine guns had been firing from a position for four or five days. One day the Japs came digging out of a hole near it."

Howe laughed and said to Maj. Dave Anderson, of Lansing, "Hey, Andy, remember that tug of war?"

"Sure do," said Andy.

"Well," said Col. Howe, "one night in the moonlight a Yank in his foxhole on a slope looked down. He saw a Jap machine gun poking its nose out of a cave we thought was sealed. Poking its barrel through the dirt. A lot of our troops were below it.

"GI's are wonderful! This GI reached down with his Garand and hooked on to the Jap machine gun barrel with his rifle. He pulled. The Jap pulled. For a few minutes it was a tug of war. The GI fired eight shots. The Jap let go. The GI got him the next morning.

"'George' Company had positions the size of a postage stamp on Hill 506, with the Japs all around. Sent a combat patrol up there to help the company out. They started digging in, discovered a big Jap cave right in the middle of our defense perimeter, blasted the cave with demolition charges.

"But the Japs are unpredictable. At 3 a. m. five Japs dug their way out of the sealed cave. A Nip officer with a saber in both hands rushed a GI. The GPs carbine jammed.

"He grabbed the saber with his hands. The Jap pulled away, slashing at the GI. The saber hit our rifleman's helmet, knocked it down on his face, blacked both his eyes. But the lad was game! He grabbed the Jap saber with his hands, took it away from the officer, and killed him. We polished off the rest of the Nips.

"Take Hill 505. Our boys were digging in, making a perimeter defense on the crest of the hill. The Japs were digging in on the other side of the hill.

"Some of our boys caved in on them, dropping 10 feet into the Jap cave. That's how they wiped out the Japs — fell right into them."

Now you know, from the words of Col. Howe, how tough, how violent the Villa Verde campaign was. But our boys won it!

Source: Red Arrow Men Stories About the 32nd Division on the Villa Verde, by John M. Carlisle, 1945 Arnold-Powers, Inc., Detroit, pages 141-145

From "The Sinking of the Tuscania" by Marilyn C. Gahm, www.tuscaniamemorial.org –

Merle Henry Howe, a 1st lieutenant in the 158th Aero Squadron, taught history, science and mathematics for 20 years in Union High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan, beginning in 1920. As an officer in the Michigan National Guard, he went to war again in 1940, first as a lieutenant colonel and then as a colonel. He received several honors for heroism for his service in the 32nd Infantry Division – the Distinguished Service Cross (for service in New Guinea on December 5, 1942), the Purple Heart (in the same action), the Silver Star medal (near Tarakena, New Guinea, January 16, 1943), the Silver Star (for gallantry near Giruwa, New Guinea, on January 13, 1943), the Bronze Star (near Afua, New Guinea, in July 1944), the Legion of Merit (Luzon, Philippines, March through May 1945), the Distinguished Service Cross Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster (Luzon, Philippines, May 11, 1945), the Air Medal (Luzon, Philippines, April through August 1945), the Combat Infantryman Badge - and finally the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Purple Heart, this award for the fatal wounds he received on August 30, 1945.

Colonel Howe died at the age of 49, in an airplane accident, while in the process of communicating with Supreme General Tomoyuki Yamashita of the Japanese Imperial Army, during negotiations for the Japanese to surrender the Philippines. Yamashita wrote to U.S. Major General W.H. Gill on August 31, 1945, that it was "with extreme regret" that he was notifying Gill of Howe's death. "Col. Howe died in the line of duty. In view of the unchanging zeal and friendship, from start to finish, with which the late Col. Howe served and distinguished himself in the present negotiations between the Japanese and United States Armies, I, on behalf of the entire Imperial Japanese Army and myself, express our deepest condolence." Three days later, Yamashita and his staff surrendered to the 32nd Infantry Division. The next day, Yamashita surrendered all Japanese forces in the Philippines. World War II was over.

Brigadier General Robert B. McBride, Jr., in announcing Howe's death, wrote "The memory of Colonel Howe's valiant deeds, his unselfish faithful service and fine soldierly qualities will long live in the minds and hearts of the officers and men of the 32D Infantry Division. His was an honorable and distinguished career and in his death the nation lost one of its finest citizens, the 'Red Arrow' Division one of its most distinguished soldiers."

SECTION A	MERLE H. HOWE COL 128 INF 32 DIV MICHIGAN AUG 30 1945 100									
	INSCRIPTION (Rear) (Service Number)									
	0131962									
	PERMANENT CEMETERY FT. MCKINLEY 7701					BLOCK A	ROW 5	GRAVE 100	☐ S OF D ☒ CROSS	
SECTION B	CREED X	RACE 6	SEX 1	DECORATIONS DSC (OLC) LM SS BSM (OLC) AM PH (2 OLC)						
	TEMPORARY CEMETERY 7749			BLOCK	ROW 103	GRAVE 5454	D-D NUMBER		ARM 1	
	NAME AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN MRS. VIRGINIA M. HOWE (wife) 352 RICHARD TERRACE, S. E. GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.							ROSTER REFERENCE 11 Prospect Avenue N.E. 108		
	REMARKS 3,									

U.S., Headstone and Interment Records for U.S., Military Cemeteries on Foreign Soil, 1942-1949 for Merle H Howe
https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9170/images/42861_1521003239_0889-01903?treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true&pld=33304

ALQUIST — Mrs. Marion Howe Alquist passed away June 5, 1994. She was a victim of polio and contracted the disease in 1953, before she succumbed to it in 1994. She was a native of Grand Rapids, born Marion Howe, daughter of Virginia M. Howe and Col. Merle H. Howe, who commanded Michigan troops in combat in the South Pacific in World War II. Mrs. Alquist was educated at South High School and in Louisiana and Massachusetts, and earned a bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University. For some years after suffering polio, she served as a tutor in mathematics. She has been an at-home employee of the Red Cross for 22 years, bringing families together at times of grave illness or natural disaster. Mrs. Al-

quist was active as mother to her daughters, grandmother to her grandchildren, in her church, and in several social service organizations devoted to advising and counseling victims of abuse, alcoholism and drug addiction. She is survived by her beloved husband Robert L. Alquist, a retired teacher from Grand Rapids Junior College; two daughters, Charlene and Christine Alquist; four grandsons, Nathaniel, Tobias, Benjamin, and Michael; her mother Virginia M. Howe, sister Mrs. Virginia H. Gmeiner of Florida; brothers, John T. Howe of California and Joseph W. Howe of Virginia. Funeral Mass will be celebrated Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church with

Obituary of daughter Marion Howe Alquist – last few lines missing from source (which is uncited) -

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-89NM-GKCY?i=1036&cc=2215693&personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AQ2TS-PZTL>

**Four Central Michigan Men
Taken Safely from Tuscania**



Four Central Michigan boys are numbered among those rescued from the Tuscania. They are: Howard A. Kenyon of Durand; Ernest Monroe of Webberville; Lieut. Merle Howe of Mt. Pleasant, and Sergeant A. E. Moore, of Elsie.

Ernest Monroe, 22, of Webberville, enlisted in the 26th Engineers, Co. F, Nov. 23. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Monroe, reside on a farm about a mile south of this village. He has always assisted his father with the work on the farm.

Lieut. Merle Howe, of Mt. Pleasant, was one of the soldiers aboard the Tuscania. Lieut. Howe's father died about two years ago and since that time his mother, Mrs. Henry Howe, has been a resident of this city. The family until two years ago lived near Winn, 12 miles southwest of Mt. Pleasant. Lieut. Howe is 22 years old. He attended the Central State Normal here and would have graduated from the advanced rural school course had he not enlisted in the first officers' training camp at Ft. Sheridan in May. He remained in training there until two weeks before the camp closed when he was transferred to the ground school of aviation at Champaign, Ill. From there he passed with high marks to

the flying school at Bellville, Ill. He received first lieutenant's commission in January. He was in the 158th aero squadron. Mrs. Howe realizing that her son might meet with disaster has for the past few months been preparing for self-support by attending Central State normal.

Sergeant A. E. Moore of Elsie, was on the Tuscania. Mr. Moore enlisted from Elsie, Dec. 21, 1917, and was sent to Camp Custer. Later he was transferred to the American University camp, Washington, and during this time has been doing special duty. Sometime after Jan. 23, 1918, he sailed for France. Mrs. Moore received news Friday evening through Detroit and the local board that her husband had been rescued.

Howard A. Kenyon of Durand, enlisted in Engineers' Sanitary Squad, 32nd division, September 22, 1917, at Camp Custer, he was later transferred to Camp MacArthur, Waco, Tex. From there he went to Camp Merrick, N. J. His father, G. R. Kenyon lives at 611 Fitzgerald st., Durand. A letter written to his parents Jan. 23, stated that he had arrived at Camp Merrick, N. J., "safe and sound," and was very eager to complete the trip.



Front row, left to right: Edith Knight Howe (the Mother), Clarence Hall (son of Ida Howe Hall and Charles Hall), Merle Henry Howe, and Henry Howe (the Father).
 Back row, left to right: Ida Howe Hall, Charles Hall (Ida's husband and father of Clarence Hall), and Lena Howe.
 — Photo prior to 1915. Only known photo of Henry Howe, who died in 1915.

<https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/tree/69698979/person/48244807492/media/47c51d7d-3983-4a1e-b876-17dd0d606dca>

Name: Merle Henry Howe

Name variations:

Military:

On Tuscania: 158th Aero Squadron – 1st lieutenant

Serial number: Army officers in WWI were not assigned serial numbers

Entered service from: Mount Pleasant, Allegan MI

Sailed on “Tuscania” as: Merle H. Howe

Next-of-kin on “Tuscania”: mother Edith Howe, 510 S. Fansher Ave., Mt. Pleasant MI

Returned from war on: “Rotterdam” 1919

Sailed on return ship as: Merle Howe

Next-of-kin on return ship & rank: list does not include NOK (1st Lt, Air Service)

World War I draft registration (1917): as Merle H. Howe - b. 11 Apr 1896 Isabella MI; res: 208 E.

Maple, Mount Pleasant MI. Single. “Cadet, R.O.T.C., United States Government, Fort Sheridan IL.”

Military experience: “none except what I am receiving now.” Registered on 30 May 1917, before national registration day (5 Jun 1917).

National Tuscania Survivors Association 1939 roster: 621 Deming St., Grand Rapids MI

World War II draft registration (1942):

Veterans Administration Military Index: unable to locate

Enlisted

Discharged

Address:

Rank/unit:

Birth & death:

Born: 11 Apr 1896 Mount Pleasant, Isabella MI

Died: 30 Aug 1945 Ifugao Province, Cordillera, Philippines (in WWII action)

Find A Grave record: 56773045, presence on Tuscania indicated in flower

Burial location: Manila, Metro Manila, National Capital Region, Philippines

Cemetery: Manila American Cemetery & Memorial

Tombstone: veteran cross: Col 128 Inf 32 Div Michigan

Father: Henry W. Howe, 22 Feb 1864 Highlandville, Essex MA – 15 Feb 1916 Mount Pleasant, Isabella MI. Buried in Green Cemetery, Strickland, Isabella MI.

Find A Grave: 191902481

Mother: Edith Adell Knight Howe, 8 Sep 1872 Ionia Co. MI – 12 [Find A Grave] or 22 [MI death record] Apr 1944 Mount Pleasant, Isabella MI. Daughter of Ceylon Wilber Knight (NY) & Sally Matilda Borden (MI). Buried in Green Cemetery, Strickland, Isabella MI. The informant on her MI death record was her daughter, Mrs. Charles (Ida) Hall.

Find A Grave: 216998991

Parents' marriage: 1891

Spouse: Virginia Mullen Howe, 16 Apr 1900 IL – 2 May 1997 MI. Daughter of Charles Thomas Mullen (1860-1929) & Annie C. Reynolds (1862-1938), of Belleville IL. She met Merle at a dance for young student pilots in 1917. After their 1920 marriage, they settled in Grand Rapids MI in 1920, where he began a 20-year career teaching at Union High School & serving in the MI National Guard. In 1940, when Merle's unit was called to training in LA, she moved their family there. In 1942, she & the family moved to MA when Merle's unit moved there. She then moved back to Grand Rapids MI when his unit was transferred to Australia. After a brief home leave in 1944, Merle returned to the Philippines where he died in an airplane crash. Virginia began knitting for the Red Cross in 1918 & continued to do so until her eyesight failed in the 1980s. Buried in Chapel Hill Memorial Gardens, Cascade township, Kent Co. MI.

Spouse Find A Grave: 163542791

Marriage: 8 Mar 1920 Belleville, St. Clair IL. Merle was age 24, Virginia was age 20.

Children:

- Virginia Howe Gmeiner, 19 Mar 1922 MI – 14 Apr 2000 Key Largo, Monroe FL. SSN 379-14-3527. Married 18 Sep 1942 in Cook Co. IL to Donald C. Gmeiner. Her father Merle was in service in Australia. - Resident of Key Largo FL in May 1997.
- Marion Howe Alquist, 3 Sep 1924 Grand Rapids, Kent MI – 5 Jun 1994 Grand Rapids, Kent MI. SSN 374-20-6711. Graduate of South High School; earned a bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University. - At age 22, obtained marriage license in Kalamazoo Co. MI with Robert L. Alquist. They married 7 Apr 1947 in Grand Rapids, Kent MI. – In 1953, Marion contracted polio; she never truly recovered & died from its effects. Was an at-home

employee of the Red Cross for 22 years. She & Robert had 2 daughters. - Resident of Grand Rapids MI.

- John Thomas Howe, 18 Jul 1928 Grand Rapids, Kent MI – Registered for the WWII draft in Grand Rapids, Kent MI, b. 18 Jul 1928 Grand Rapids MI, resident of 353 Richard Terrace, where his NOK, his mother Virginia Howe, also resides; he is unemployed. - Resident of Los Altos CA in 1993 & May 1997. Worked in the engineering & science fields in the Palo Alto CA area. Aerospace articles cited at:
<https://arc.aiaa.org/doi/abs/10.2514/8.5956?journalCode=arsj>
- Joseph Wehner Howe, 30 Aug 1932 MI. Named for Lt. Joseph Frank Wehner, a WWI pilot whom Merle knew & admired, who died in the war. Merle considered Joseph Wehner the greatest hero & instituted the Joseph Wehner Trophy in 1926 for the National Guard. - Valedictorian of Central High School (1950) which earned him a scholarship to Princeton University, from where he graduated in 1954. Resident of Annandale VA in May 1997

Siblings:

- Ida V. Howe Hall, May 1892 MI - . At age 15, she married Charles Hall on 13 Feb 1908 in Mount Pleasant, Isabella MI. - They had 1 son, Clarence Joseph Hall, born 1908 MI, died 14 Jul 1970 Ann Arbor, Washtenaw MI, buried in Riverside Cemetery, Mount Pleasant, Isabella MI, F: 75039469. Clarence married Berenice Cecilia Taylor (1913-2008) on 10 Feb 1931 Mount Pleasant, Isabella MI. She later married a Rice. - At age 52, Ida obtained a divorce from Charles Hall on 13 Dec 1944 in Isabella Co. MI.
- Lena R. Howe Staley, 27 Sep 1899 Mount Pleasant, Isabella MI – 31 Jul 1978 Oceanside, San Diego CA. Married Victor Staley from OH in 1918. They had 2 children; Victor died 1953. Buried in Crown Hill Cemetery, Wheat Ridge, Jefferson CO. F: 216999307
- Florence Myrtle Howe, 1901 MI – 23 Feb 1902 Isabella Co. MI. Died at age 10 months, 10 days. Buried in Lincoln Township Cemetery, Mount Pleasant, Isabella MI. F: 163534255

Pre-war:

From biography at: <http://rebel6.blogspot.com/2019/08/colonel-merle-howe-you-go-there-and.html>

The family lived in southeast Fremont township of Isabella County MI on an 80-acre farm in Section 26. Merle attended Rust and Hay School (township district no. 5) with sister Lena. Both went on to study at Central State Normal College by 1917 (the forerunner of Central Michigan University). His father died the year before Merle went to war.

Merle met his future wife, Virginia Mullen, at a dance for young student pilots, in 1917.

Wartime:

From biography at: <http://rebel6.blogspot.com/2019/08/colonel-merle-howe-you-go-there-and.html>

Merle entered the service 15 Aug 1917 having completed R.O.T.C. He was assigned to the 3rd Co. of the 10th Regiment. He was a private until 6 Jan 1918 when he was appointed 1st lieutenant in the Air Corps & assigned as a pilot in the 158th Aero Squadron. Then the Tuscania sunk & his unit re-formed in England as a pursuit squadron, but never entered combat.

“Lansing (MI) State Journal” 11 Feb 1918 p 1 – Mrs. Edith Howe received a telegram that her son Merle C. [sic] Howe was saved. [Merle’s middle initial also appears as T. in some 1918 newspapers.]

Post-war:

From biography at: <http://rebel6.blogspot.com/2019/08/colonel-merle-howe-you-go-there-and.html>

After the war, Merle returned to Central State Normal College & graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in teaching. Merle married Virginia on 8 Mar 1920. The couple settled in Grand Rapids MI at 22 Highland St. SE. Merle was employed as a teacher & faculty athletic event manager at Union High School on Turner Avenue. His mother, also a teacher, taught in the 1-room Little Brick School in Deerfield Township west of Mount Pleasant. During his 20 years at Union High School, Merle taught electricity, arithmetic, history & general science. The couple’s 4 children were born in Grand Rapids.

In Jan 1923 Merle joined the Grand Rapids unit of the MI National Guard & was appointed a 2nd lieutenant. In Aug 1923 he was promoted to 1st lieutenant. Three years later he was promoted to captain, in charge of the Howitzer Company & subsequently Co. K. On 15 Oct 1940 the 32nd Division was mobilized to federal duty.

Following his training at Infantry School at Fort Benning GA, he & his family moved to Louisiana. In 1941, Howe attended the Army Staff & Command School at Fort Leavenworth KS. When the division moved to MA in 1942, the family moved there. When the 32nd Division was ordered to San Francisco CA to leave for Australia, Virginia & the 4 children moved back to Grand Rapids MI.

When the 32nd Division left for Australia, Merle was a major, having been promoted Apr 1942. A few months later he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. In Sep 1942, his oldest child Virginia married Donald C. Gmeiner.

Merle earned the Distinguished Service Cross & Purple Heart for actions in the Buna Village campaign in Dec 1942. The unit was sent back to Australia & Howe was promoted to full colonel. He was awarded the Silver Star on 24 Jan 1943. A second Silver Star (with Oak Leaf) on 24 Jan 1943. He also earned a Bronze Star.

Merle returned home to Grand Rapids MI in Nov 1944 on a 30-day furlough. Here he met his two-month-old grandson, Don Gneimer Jr. He was the guest of honor at a 126th Infantry veterans dinner & led the Veterans Day parade.

Merle returned to the 32nd Division & was assigned to the division staff at Leyte, Philippines. On 25 Jul 1945 Merle received the Legion of Merit award for his service in Luzon from Mar to May 1945 & a second Distinguished Service Cross, Oak Leaf.

“Detroit News” reporter John “Jack”) Carlisle wrote an article “The Colonel Was a School Teacher,” which appeared in his 1945 book, “Red Arrow Men: Stories about the 32nd Division on the Villa Verde.”

Merle played a prominent role in the surrender of Japanese forces on Philippines, with Lt. General Tomoyuki Yamashita. Howe had dropped the Japanese commander surrender instructions from a plane. On 20 Aug 1945 – the eve of the actual surrender of Luzon and 16 days after WWII had official ended – while making a second aerial pass to drop final surrender instructions in the mountains of norther Luzon – Merle died when his small plane crashed. Merle was posthumously awarded a second Purple Heart.

Obituary:

Social Security number: 572-66-7013

Censuses:

1900 Fremont, Isabella MI – conducted 12/13 Jun 1900

Henry Howe, 36 MA, Feb 1864, parents b. England, married 9 years, farmer

Edith E., 27 MI, Sep 1872, parents b. MI, gave birth to 3 children, 3 are living

Ida V., 8 MI, May 1892, at school

Merle H., 4 MI, Apr 1896

Lena R., 8 months, Sep 1899

1910 Fremont, Isabella MI – surname indexed as Hoke

Henry Howe, 46 MA, parents b. England, married 19 years, farmer, home farm

Edith, 37 MI, parents b. MI, gave birth to 4 children, 3 are living

Merle, 14 MI

Lena, 11 MI

& hired man Micial Hall, 24 MI, farm hand, working out

1910 Lincoln, Isabella MI – his sister Ida

Charles Hall, 19 MI, parents b. Canada, in 1st marriage, married 2 years, farmer

Ida, 17 MI, father b. PA, mother b. MI, in 1st marriage, gave birth to 2 children, 1 is living

Clarence, 2 MI, parents b. MI

1930 Grand Rapids, Kent MI

Merle Howe, 33 MI, father b. MA, mother b. MI, teacher, high school, WWI veteran

Virginia, 29 IL, father b. IL, mother b. MO

Marion, 5 MI

John, 1 year 8 months MI

1940 Mount Pleasant, Isabella MI – same house in 1935 – his sister Ida

Charles Hall, 49 MI, manager, own Standard station

Ida, 47 MI, laundress, at home

Clarence J., 32 MI, station attendant, retail gas [son]

Bernice, 26 MI, press operator, auto manufacturing [daughter-in-law]

William C., 7 MI [grandson]