

Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

Biographies for Elementary Students

John Borris (February 3, 1891-June 11, 1994)

John Borris was born February 3, 1891 in Pennsylvania. He was raised by his mom, Anastasia. He went to school until 4th grade. Then he worked in the coal mines. In 1912 John was 21. He joined the Army. He worked with exploding mines. When America entered World War I in 1917, John fought overseas. He did not go home until after the war ended. The soldiers had classes and sports to keep them entertained after the war was over while they were overseas. He went home in 1919.

When he got home he went into the army again from 1921 until 1924. When he left the army, he moved to Chicago. Here he met his wife Irene. They had a son named Roger in 1931. During the Great Depression, they lived with Irene's parents. John registered for the draft in World War II and used his skills in America. He had another son named David in 1942. After the war, they moved to Arizona.

In 1988, John and Irene moved to Florida. John passed away June 11, 1994 at the age of 103. Irene passed away on January 11, 1997. They are buried in the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell.



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Henry Cavicchi (September 4, 1896 – July 30, 1991)

Henry Cavicchi was born September 4, 1896 in New York. His dad was named Ercole. He moved from Italy to America. There were a lot of Italian immigrants. Henry's mom was named Elmina. She moved to America from Canada. Henry's dad started his own business. He made an invention to polish stone floors. He also invented a way to keep ships safe from German submarines in World War II. When Henry was young, he worked at his dad's store.

Henry registered for the draft in June 1918. He was in the Navy. He worked with planes. Airplanes would become very important by World War II. After the war Henry went home to Massachusetts. He married Emily Sussex in 1922. Henry and Emily had four girls and one boy. Henry worked with his brothers at his dad's store. In 1942, Henry signed up for the Old Man's Draft, but he did not fight. He retired with his wife in Florida. Henry died in 1991. He was 94. Emily died in 1993. She was 91.

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Edward Patrick Connolly (October 31, 1922-September 7, 1995)

Edward Connolly was born in 1922 in Boston, Massachusetts. His parents were named John and Emily. His dad worked as a police officer and his mom stayed at home. His father became well known for stopping a thief who stole from women. In March of 1930, his dad died. Edward's oldest sister Anna became the head of the house when their mother died. She worked as a librarian. Some of his other siblings worked as clerks.

Edward signed up for the Marine Corps in 1941 after the US joined WWII. He fought in the Pacific. In 1945 when he was 23, he finished his service with the rank of corporal. After the war, he went back to Massachusetts. He married Thelma Snell. They had two boys, Kevin and Mark. Edward chose to become a police detective like his father. In 1955 he was hurt trying to stop a robbery of a theater. He caught the thieves even though he was hurt. Edward retired from the force after this. The city of Boston saw him as a hero for stopping this crime. He retired and moved to Florida in 1982. He passed away on September 7, 1995. He is buried in the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell.



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Rufe Goins (September 23, 1894 - December 25, 1988)

Rufe Goins was born in 1894 in Tennessee. Rufe had seven brothers and sisters and he was the second youngest child. Rufe grew up on a farm and learned how to read and write. When Rufe turned 21, he joined the army. He helped America fight against Mexico. Then he was sent home, but when America went to war in World War I, Rufe joined again. After the war, Rufe got married and had two boys. Rufe worked in a steel mill during the Great Depression. When Rufe and his wife got old, they moved to Florida.



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William Otto Grupp (April 1, 1901-November 17, 1988)

William Otto Grupp was born in 1901 in America. Both of William's parents were born in Germany. William joined the Navy during World War I so he could help America win the war. During World War I, America fought against Germany. After the war, not many people liked the Germans so many people would become more American by changing their names. William's family did not do this because they were proud to be American and German. William got married and had two daughters. William worked for a German drink company. Working for this company allowed William's family to be proud of their German background. William worked for this company until he was old and moved to Florida. William died in Florida.



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Archie Hawkins (February 12, 1902 - February 27, 1989)

Archie Hawkins was born in 1902. This was about forty years after slavery ended. When Archie was little, he could not read or write. He worked on a farm. America went to war when Archie was only fifteen years old. During this time, many black people wanted to be treated better so they signed up for the war. Archie had to lie about his birthday and tell people he was twenty-one so he could join the military. Finally, Archie got picked.

When the war ended, Archie and other black people were not treated nice. There was a party for the people who were in the war but Archie could not go because of the color of his skin. Archie became a gardener and had a family. Now, Archie is in the Florida National Cemetery, where his family can still go visit him.



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Earl J. LaPan (August 24, 1908 - February 19, 1996)

In 1908, Earl J. LaPan was born in Massachusetts. Earl was a famous painter in South Florida. He moved to Florida during the Great Depression, a time when a lot of Americans did not have jobs. Earl got a job as an artist. When World War II started, Earl had to stop making art and had to become a soldier. When the war was over, he came back to Florida and started making statues. He made one statue of two horses that was ten feet tall. Earl J. LaPan served his country in World War II, but he went on to become a famous sculptor and painter after the war. Many of his pieces of art are left behind today in Florida.



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Peter Nadzeika Sr. (January 5, 1919 - January 1, 1996)

In 1919, Peter Nadzeika was born in New Jersey. He had two older brothers, Mark, and John. Peter's parents moved to America before he was born. Peter worked on his family's farm. Peter signed up to work for the army when he was twenty-two. Peter served in World War II. When the war was over, Peter came home. Peter moved to Florida and had a family. Peter is now at the Florida National Cemetery where his family can still visit him.