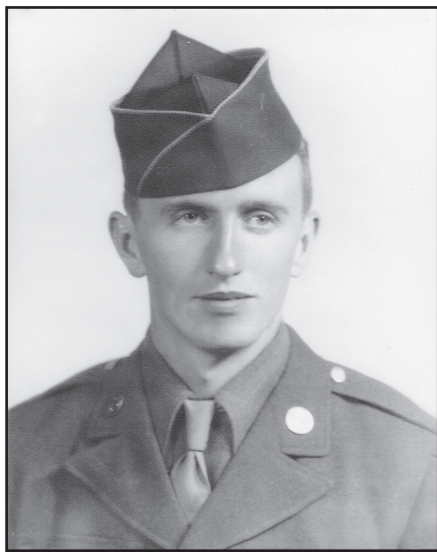


Veterans recall life during, following World War II



BROOKS COOMER

Continued from front page

At one point, the ship Burton served on was docked at an island when the Japanese attacked. He was on watch that night and witnessed the planes drop their bombs and make suicide dives.

"You talk about scared to death, I was scared to death," Burton said.

On Burton's ship alone, there was extensive damage, five men died and 37 men were wounded. The other ships left, leaving Burton and his crew stranded on the beach for three days.

Burton did not sleep during that time, and he recalled with a chuckle that when he finally did get to sleep, there was an attack and nobody could wake him up.

Sometime later, Burton's ship was 90 miles out from Hiroshima when an atomic bomb was dropped. The men on watch could see the attack, but they did not know what it was at the time.

Burton's ship was also there in Tokyo Bay for the signing of the Japanese surrender agreement. When they called for men to go ashore, Burton raced to be the first one. He saw that Tokyo "was tore up, too."

Coomer, who was nick-

named "Rebel" because he "was from the south," remembers his personal experiences during the war.

In Manila and Yokohama, he had to break up local Soviet-armed groups and take their guns. He said these events were "pretty adventurous."

One of the events Coomer remembers most vividly is when he got a kidney stone while stationed in Yokohama, Japan. It was the first of eight he would have over the years and it put him in the hospital for about a week.

"No pain any worse," Coomer said. "I woke up one night about 12 o'clock and I thought I was about dead."

While he was in Yokohama, he was serving with the Military Police shortly before the surrender of Japan. He remembers the day he was on duty alone and everybody started celebrating, but he did not know what was going on.

"I was on duty by myself, and all at once guns start going off all around me, and I thought that the Japs had broke through the town," Coomer said. "I had a pretty bad feeling, but General MacArthur came along and he said that the Japanese had surrendered and people were celebrating."

Burris, who was never directly on the front lines but was close enough to hear the big guns and feel the vibrations, remembers stories with a twist.

At one point, there were a

couple of American pilots who were shot down and captured by the Germans. The two pilots escaped and snagged a couple German uniforms, which they put on over their own uniforms.

According to Burris, the pilots, in those uniforms, went to meals with the Germans and drove around in a German jeep.

When it got dark, the pilots drove back towards the Americans. They took off the German uniforms and painted an American flag on the jeep and got back safely.

Life after the war

When the war was over, the veterans were glad to head back home.

"I was just tickled to death," Burris said. "When we landed in New York coming home, everybody up on the deck looking out on the landing, boys was crying and everything."

According to Burris, the Red Cross met the soldiers there with doughnuts.

Coomer came back home through Washington State and other northern states during a cold part of the year, but he was still very glad to be back.

"I felt pretty good," he said with a laugh.

Burris came home to his wife and the baby that was born while he was gone. He settle in working on a farm.

Coomer went to college and then went back to teaching in schools. The first school he went back to teaching at was a rural, two-room school, like the one he taught at before he went to war. He taught there with his older sister.

"I taught there three years, upper grades. And my sister took the lower grades," Coomer said.

Before he got a job in

Cincinnati making furniture, Burton met the woman who would be his wife for 64 years.

After he got back to his house, his cousin who lived down the street came by for a visit with a couple female friends. When they were about to leave, one of Burton's cousins said to one of the girls that he was going to kiss her before they left.

"And they did, and the other girl was standing there looking at me like that and I said to her, 'I'm going to kiss you, too,'" Burton said.

Six months later he married that girl.

"I think she's the prettiest girl I ever saw," Burton said. "I told I went over halfway around the world and come back home and found her right in my own house."

By James D. McIntosh Jr.
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Carl Burris was part of the Air Forces 14th Fighter Group during WWII.

Child abuse panel calls for parent drug testing

FRANKFORT – Amid an epidemic of drug use in Kentucky, a state panel on child abuse is calling for parents to undergo drug tests if a child dies unexpectedly in their care.

The Child Fatality and Near Fatality External Review Panel released its annual report Monday with nine key recommendations to improve protective services for the roughly 19,000 children who fall victim to abuse and neglect each year in Kentucky.

Panel members reviewed 116 cases, involving 73 child fatalities and 43 near-deaths. Of those, 77 cases had a history with the state Department of Community Based Services.

Chiefly, the report recommends developing a standardized protocol for drug screening parents — and other caregivers — as part of an investigation into an unexpected child death.

It also calls on the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services to develop a statewide public-awareness campaign to promote safe sleeping prac-

tices and educate new parents on the dangers of bed sharing.

Additionally, the report recommends programs to educate parents about abusive head trauma, link high-risk families with community services, coordinate investigations, make court proceedings more transparent and study the workload for social workers.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services said in a statement Monday that officials will review the report over the coming weeks and evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of any proposals.

While the cabinet values the panel's suggestions and welcomes its feedback, we have not yet had an opportunity to digest the panel's recommendations," it said.

But Rep. Tom Burch, D-Louisville, the chairman of the House Health and Welfare Committee, warned that the cabinet has failed to follow up on problems before.

"Unless we put pressure on the cabinet and keep

their feet to the fire, they may or may not do anything," he said.

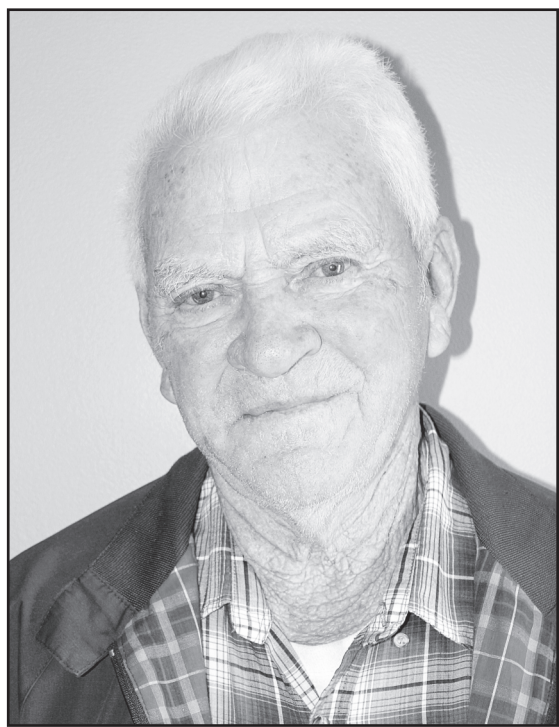
According to the report, 29 percent of deaths or near-deaths resulted from physical abuse while 15 percent were related to medical neglect.

Around 10 percent—eight fatalities and seven near-deaths—involved a caregiver who was under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time. But tests were not administered in 95 percent of the cases the panel

examined this year.

Panel members concluded that substance use is likely a much stronger factor in child injuries. Panel members considered recommending drug tests last year but stopped short amid concerns that it would further upset grieving parents.

But Roger Crittenden, a retired Franklin Circuit judge who chairs the panel, said making drug tests a standard procedure could help law enforcement and child-welfare investigators.



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