

# Frank Genetti

## US Navy

### USS Casablanca — *Black Oil Gang*



**Frank Genetti**

US Navy  
USS Casablanca

Frank Genetti entered WWII as a volunteer at the age of 34. Selling all his farm equipment and livestock and moving his young family—wife Helen, small daughter Rosalie, and infant son Bill into town before he left for training at the Great Lakes Naval facility on March 3, 1944.

After training, Frank was sent to California where he was assigned to the USS Casablanca, MM3. Frank jokingly related the story that these ships were being produced at a rate of one every six months and were often called “Kaiser’s Coffins”. “The **USS Casablanca—CVE-55** was a United

States Navy escort aircraft carrier, nicknamed Kaiser’s Coffins, lead ship of her class, named after the city of Casablanca, Morocco where a naval battle had taken place in



**USS Casablanca**

Escort Carrier  
Crew of 860

1942.” (Wikipedia, 2015) When asked why the ship had been called that, Frank related originally the hulls were not made thick enough and the first ships had a habit of breaking in two when stressed at sea. Fortunately, by the time Frank entered the service this issue had been fixed.

Frank was assigned to the “Black Oil Gang” on the USS Casablanca. A part of the Engineering Department, the *Black Gang* was responsible for the fuel oil burners that heated water in enormous boilers to create steam.

Frank was very proud of that he had served aboard the USS Casablanca. When loaded the ship carried large amounts of supplies, especially gas and its upper deck would be filled with dozens of airplanes to be delivered to Hawaii and into the Pacific Theatre war zone. Also when

# Frank Genetti

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loaded the USS Casablanca would be accompanied by smaller Destroyer Escorts for protection, but on empty return trips back to California the USS Casablanca would be left unprotected.



**USS Casablanca**  
*Loaded with 28 Planes*

Frank related one harrowing experience when at sea. The seas were often rough and the waves would toss the 8000+ ton ship around like a cork. On one of these occasions a large wave hit the ship folding back over 30 foot of the deck. Luckily the ship was able to make it back to its California port where it and the crew spent several weeks in port while the ship was repaired.

When asked how he felt about the 1 year, 9 months and 2 days in the Navy, Frank said he would have actually enjoyed it if he hadn't had his family waiting for him back home.....because he missed them so very, very much. Frank did say the Navy afforded him the opportunity to see places, go places and have experience he would not have otherwise been able to have.

Frank George Genetti passed in 2010 and is greatly missed by his large loving family and his friends.

GILLESPIE - Frank George Genetti, 97, of Gillespie, died at St. Francis Hospital, Litchfield on Nov. 3 at 5:09 AM. He was born on April 19, 1913, in Gillespie to Charles & Rosa (Redolfi) Genetti. Frank married Helen Lorene Bouillon on March 28, 1937 in Gillespie. She preceded him in death on January 5, 2008. (They had been married over 75 years. ) He was retired from the Macoupin County Highway Department and a farmer. Frank served on the USS Casablanca during WWII. He was a member of the American Legion Post 554 of Carlinville, served on Gillespie City Council for 20 years and served while the municipal building was planned and constructed. Frank enjoyed wood working, gardening and playing cards. Survivors include sons, William (Jean) Genetti of Auburn, Francis (Rita) Genetti of Carlinville, daughters, Rosalie (Jim) Sandretto of Gillespie, Deborah (Randy) Cox of Gillespie, brother, Bernard Genetti of San Jose, CA; 13 grandchildren, 18 great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, spouse, daughter-in-law, Sherry Genetti; brother, Charles Genetti; brother, Leonard Genetti; sister, Dorothy Keck. Visitation will be on Nov. 5 at Kravanya Funeral Home, Gillespie from 5 until 8 PM. Services will be on Nov. 6 at 11 AM at SS Simon & Jude Church, Gillespie with Monsignor Larry Auda officiating. Burial will be at Holy Cross Cemetery in Gillespie. Memorials can be made to Holy Cross Cemetery in Gillespie.

Please enjoy the following album of Frank's WWII pictures and memories he shared with the Illinois Veteran & Community Classroom Project. He was the very first veteran interviewed for his project.

***Submitted with great affection and by a grateful family friend:***

Vicki DeWitt  
Gillespie, Illinois



# ILLINOIS MEMORIES OF WWII

**Frank Genetti, Machinist Mate 3rd Class**

**USS Casablanca, Asiatic-South Pacific Theatre - 1943 to 1945**

*Memories Captured by  
Vicki DeWitt, Area 5 Learning Tech. Ctr.  
March 8-9, 2008*





**Frank G. Genetti,**  
Machinist Mate 3<sup>rd</sup> Class  
USS Casablanca  
March 13, 1943-December 14, 1945  
South Pacific Theater

## Chapters:

### I. Biographic Details

- Birthplace
- Family
- Pre-service Life
- Other Family in WWII

### II. Early Days of Service

- Entering Service—Why/Where
- Leaving Home
- Training
- Adapting to Military Life

### III. Wartime Service

- Service Theater /Duties
- Emotions Related to Service
- Friendships
- Communicating Home
- Off-Duty/Recreation on Board

### IV. War's End, Coming Home

- Location/Getting Home
- Reception by Family/Community
- Contact with Fellow Veterans

### V. Other Memories

- Additional Pictures

# **Chapter I**

## **Biographical Details**

- Birthplace
- Family
- Pre-Service Life
- Other Family in WWII

# Birthplace

Gillespie, Illinois

Born : April 19, 1913

Age: 95

Father: Charles  
Genetti

- Coal Miner

Mother: Rosa Genetti

- Homemaker



Macoupin Street 1914, Gillespie IL



Macoupin Street 1914, Gillespie IL

# Family

## Father & Mother

- Charles Genetti
  - Coal Miner
- Mother: Rosa Genetti
  - Homemaker

## Wife

- Wife: Helen Bouillon Genetti
- Married: March 28, 1937
- Deceased: January 5, 2008

## Children

- Rosalee Sandretto, Aug. 25, 1938
- Wm. Genetti, Jan. 22, 1944
- Francis Genetti, Sep. 1, 1950
- Deborah Cox, Nov. 27, 1954

## Siblings

- Charles
- Dorothy (Keck)
- Leonard
- Bernard – Surviving



Grandpa Charles and Grandma Rosa Genetti



Grandpa Wm, Grandma Rocelia Bouillon  
with Baby Rosalee, Helen and Frank



# GENETTI FAMILY



**Frank and Helen Genetti**  
**Wedding Day, March 28, 1937**



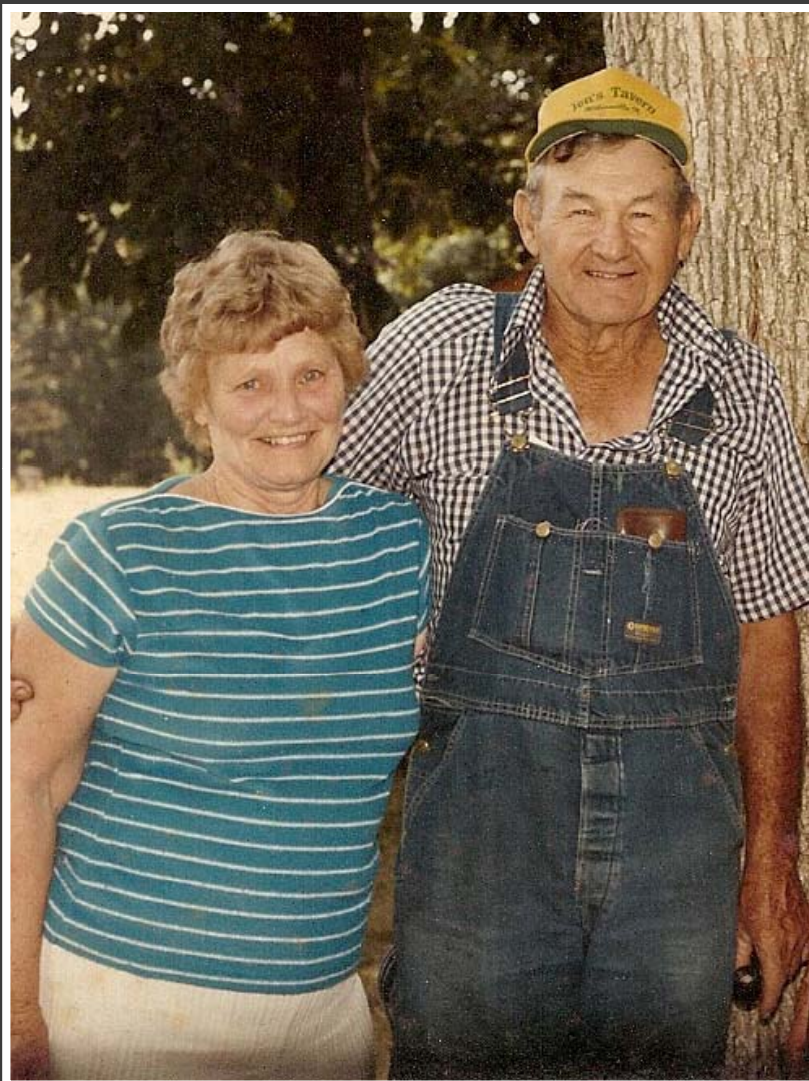
**Grandpa Charles and Grandma Rosa Genetti**



**Grandpa Wm, Grandma Rocelia Bouillon**  
**with Baby Rosalee, Helen and Frank**



# FAMILY



**Frank & Helen  
Later Years**



**Frank & Helen  
March 28, 2007 – 70<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary  
With children – Rosalee, Bill, Franny, Debbie**

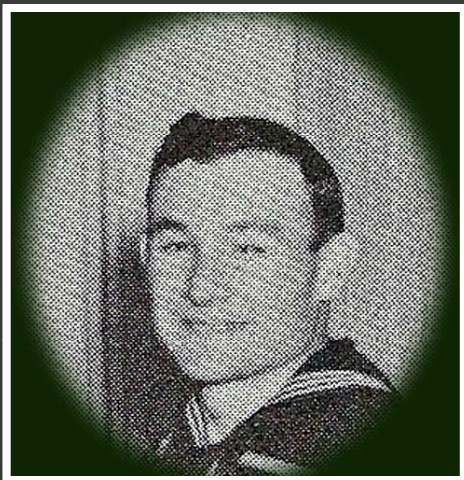


**Grandchildren  
Back row- Alicia, Becky, Brett, Brad, Abby, Gina  
Front row – Amanda, Joan, Brian  
Sitting - Grandma Helen and Grandpa Frank**

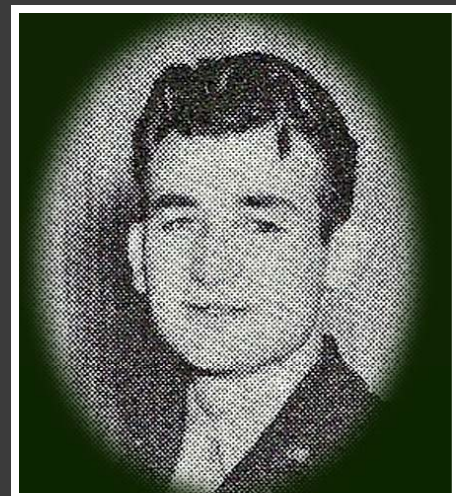


# GENETTI FAMILY

## FRANK AND HIS SIBLINGS



Frank



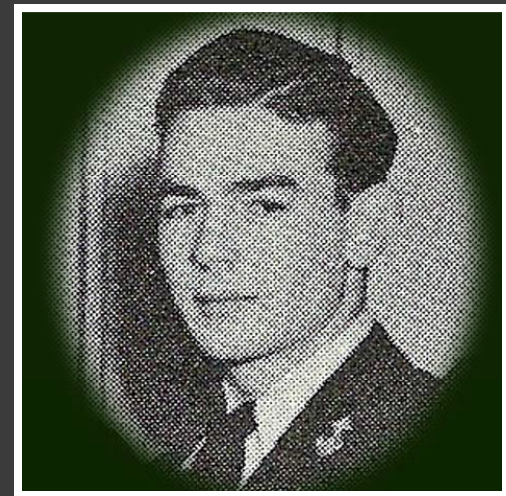
Charles



Dorothy Genetti Deck



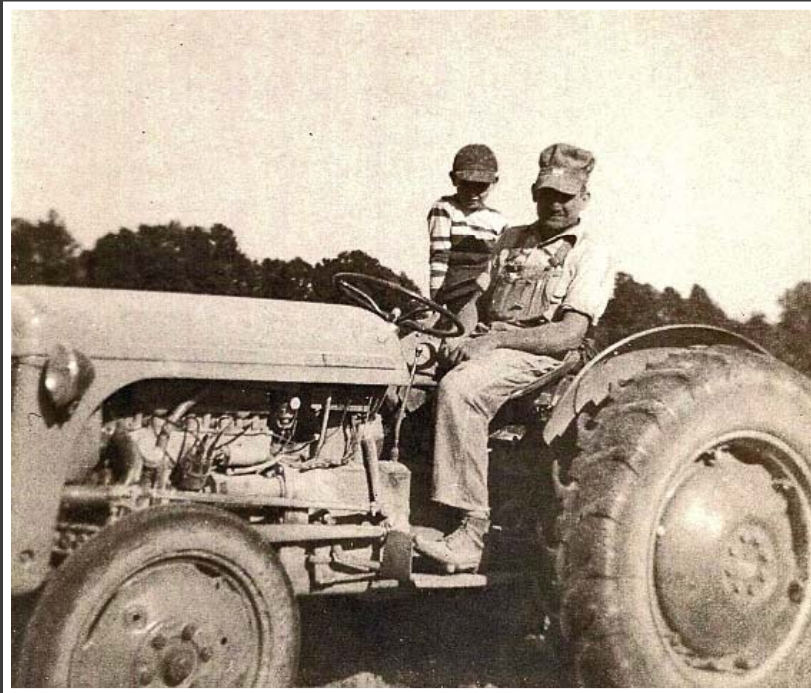
Leonard



Bernard



# LIFE BEFORE WWII



Frank and son, Bill, on the farm.

*Frank and Helen made a conscious decision to sell his farm equipment and horses before signing up for the Navy.*



Frank, Helen, 5-yr. old Rosalee and 1-yr. old Bill  
*Frank in his 30's enlisted in the Navy and was  
Immediately shipped to Great Lakes for training.*



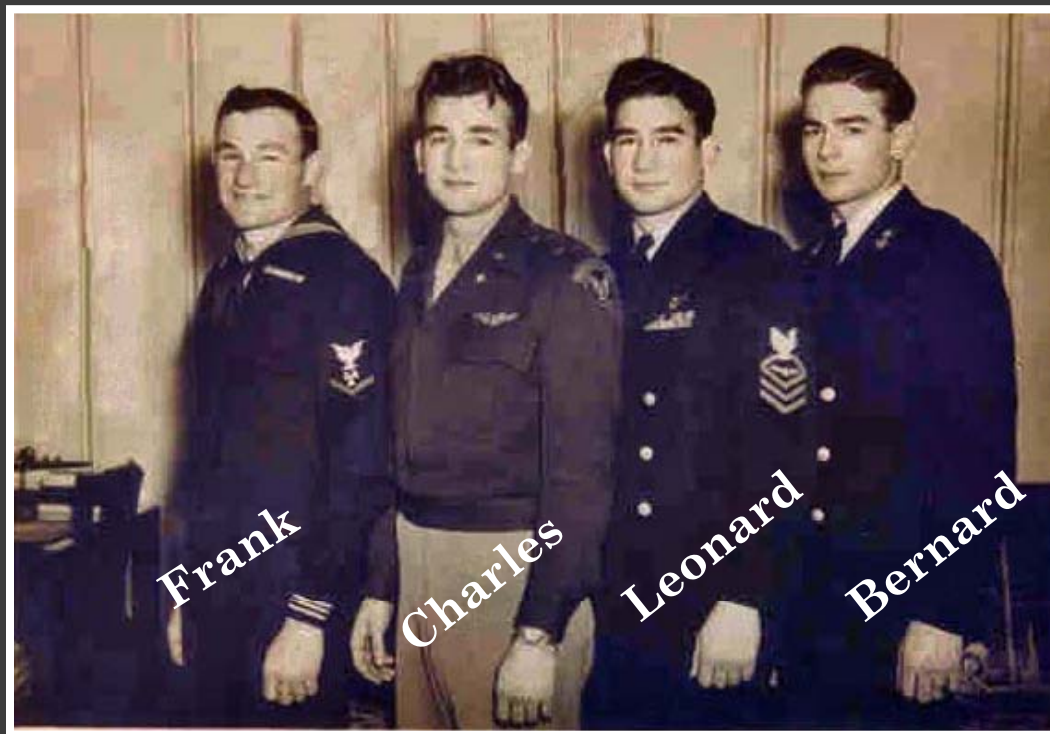
Frank hauled coal with horses and farmed before entering WWII



# OTHER FAMILY IN WWII

## GENETTI BROTHERS

*(ALL RETURNED HOME SAFELY)*



**Frank G. Genetti**

**Enter Navy: 3-13-1944**

**Trained: Great Lakes**

**USS Casablanca , MM3**

**Awarded: Am. Theatre  
Ribbon, Asiatic Theatre  
Ribbon,**

**Served: 1 yr.. 9 m. , 2 d.**

**Charles Genetti**

**Entered: Army as an**

**Aviator on 5-26-1944**

**Assigned:**

**Served: Pacific Theatre**

**Discharged: 4-5-1946**

**Leonard J. Genetti**

**Entered: 12-15-1942**

**Trained: Navy Aviator**

**Chief Electrician's Mate**

**Awarded: Combat Air  
Crew w/3 Star, Asiatic –  
Pacific Theatre Ribbon,  
Philippine Liberation  
Ribbon w/2 Stars**

**Served: 3 yr., 2m., 8 d.**

**Bernard Genetti**

**Entered: 1-29-1944**

**Trained: Army Air Corp.**

**Served:**

**Awarded:**

**Served: 1950-??**

# **Chapter II**

## **Early Days of Service**

- Entering the Service –  
Why/Where
- Leaving Home
- Training

## II. Early Days of Service

- Entering Service—Knowing he would be drafted, Frank joined the Navy.
- Leaving Home-- Frank was promptly sent by train from Litchfield, IL to the Great Lake, IL
- Training – Frank only received 6 weeks of training before being sent by train to San Diego to be assigned to his ship the USS Casablanca
- Adapting to Military Life—Frank was assigned given the Black Oil Gang. His job on the ship was to maintain one engine vital to the ship's operations.



*Main Gate*  
U. S. NAVAL TRAINING STATION, GREAT LAKES, ILLINOIS  
REAR ADMIRAL, JOHN DOWNES U.S. NAVY, COMMANDING OFFICER



Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, IL



# **Chapter III**

## **Wartime Service**

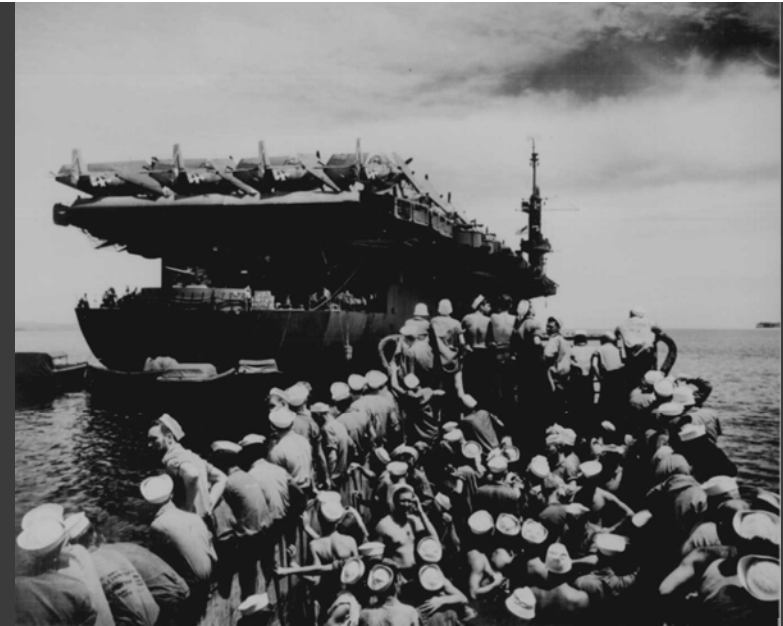
- Service Theatre/Duties
- Emotions Related to Service
- Friendship
- Communicating Home
- Off-Duty/Recreation on Board

### III. Wartime Service

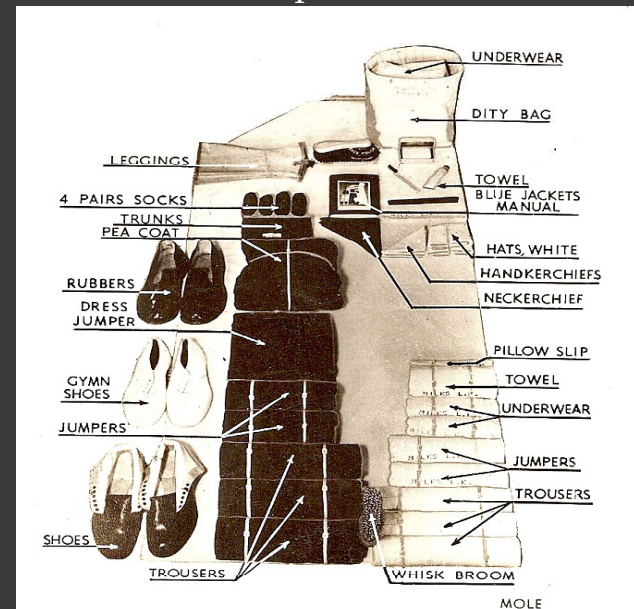
- Service Theater /Duties



Frank's ship transported airplanes, gasoline and other supplies in the Pacific Theatre.



USS Casablanca Ship and Crew of 700



#### *Bag Lay-out*

U. S. NAVAL TRAINING STATION,  
GREAT LAKES, ILLINOIS  
REAR ADMIRAL, JOHN DOWNES U S NAVY,  
COMMANDING OFFICER

Navy Military Bag and Its Contents

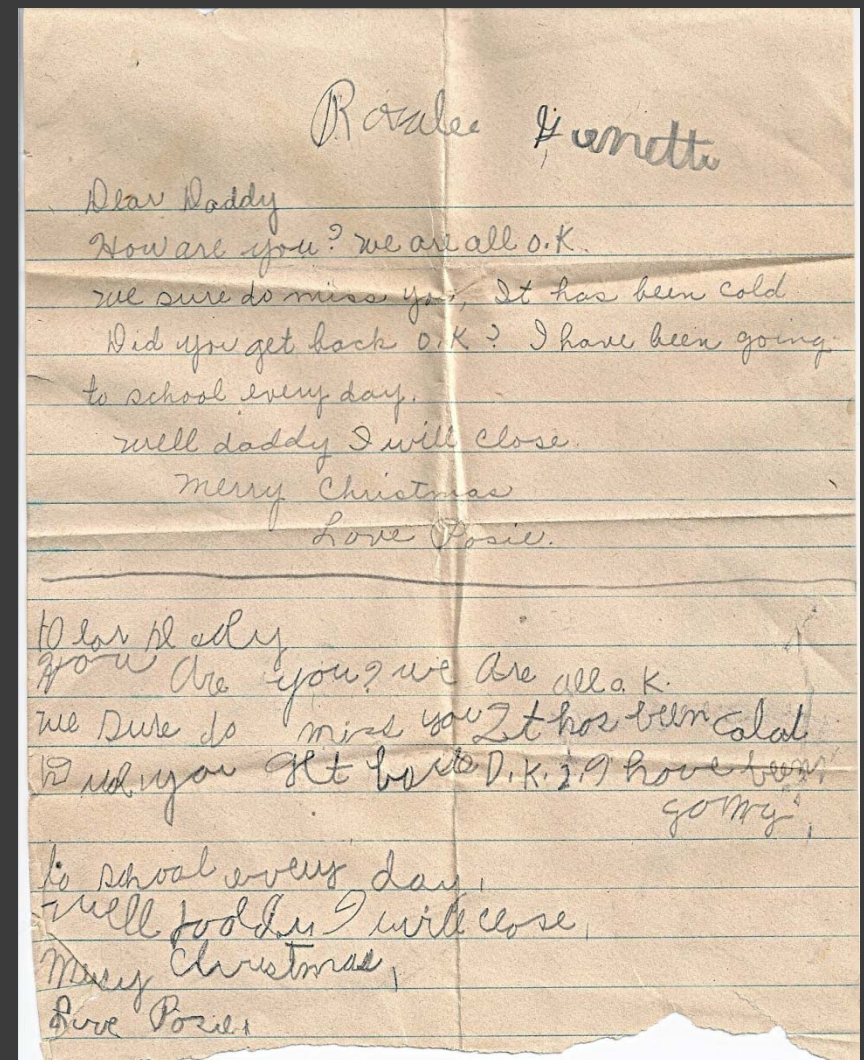


### III. Wartime Service – cont.

- Emotions Related to Service
- Friendships
- Communicating Home



Frank made a life-long friend from Highland. Above are the Genetti's along with their friends, the Frey's from Highland., IL



While at sea, letters from home were precious and infrequent. Above is a Christmas letter Frank received from his 6 yr. old daughter, Rosalee, which had to be rewritten by his wife.



### III. Wartime Service – cont.

#### III. Off-Duty/Recreation on Board



Pollywog to Shellback – Upon crossing the Equator all newbies were initiated--heads were shaved, men were paddled and tossed into a vat of water – on smaller ship men were simply thrown overboard.



Liberty was taken either on visited islands or in US supply ports in California.



Large ships were equipped with canteens, gym areas and guys who were willing to make their own fun.

# **Chapter IV**

## **War's End & Coming Home**

- Location/Getting Home
- Reception by Family & Community
- Contact with Fellow Veterans

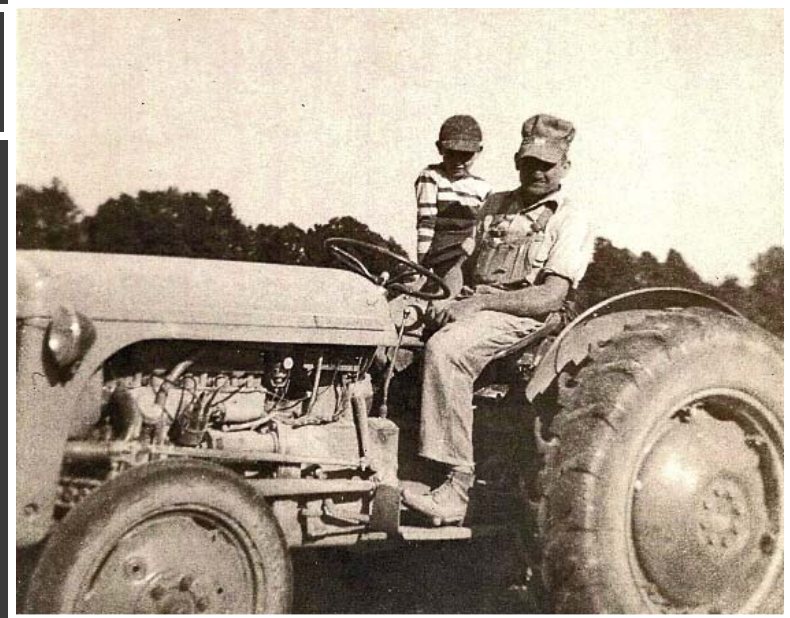


## WAR'S END, COMING HOME

Frank came home to no fanfare. After a 21 month absence, he found Helen washing dishes as he came in the back door. Frank returned to farming with his sons, Billy and Franny.



Franny is driving and Bill is supervising



Frank and Bill on the Ford Ferguson  
*Frank returned to farming after WWII*



Young Helen with her sons Bill and Franny



# **Chapter V**

## **Other Memories**

- Additional Pictures and Documents
- (To be Added Soon)

# Credits and Sources

- PowerPoint created by Vicki DeWitt, Area 5 Learning Technology Center, Edwardsville, IL. [vdewitt@lth5.k12.il.us](mailto:vdewitt@lth5.k12.il.us)
- Funding for the Illinois WWII Classroom Project has been provided by the Illinois WWII Memorial Board. <http://www.ww2il.com>
- Memories, photos and images were provided by Frank Genettii and his family from Gillespie, IL