Hedrick, William Clay





ENS William Clay Hedrick Jr.

BIRTH 12 Feb 1919
Mount Sterling, Montgomery County, Kentucky, USA

DEATH 5 Jul 1943 (aged 24)
At Sea

MONUMENT Manila American Cemetery and Memorial
Manila, Capital District, National Capital Region, Philippines
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PLOT Tablets of the Missing - Navy

MEMORIAL 56760879 · View Source

Local Man Reported Missing In Action

Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Hedrick, Winchester, have received a telegram from the navy department stating that their son, Ensign William Hedrick, is missing in action in the Pacific theater.

Ensign Hedrick, former Winchester high school student, graduated from Mt. Sterling high. He was a teacher in the Mt. Sterling school system for two years.

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Hedrick Awarded Gallantry Medal

Ensign William Clay Hedrick, Jr., has been awarded the silver star for gallantry in action, according to word received by his father, William C. Hedrick, Sr., 148 Linden avenue.

According to the presidential citation, Ensign Hedrick was serving on board the destroyer, U.S.S. Strong, when it was torpedoed and sunk by enemy Japanese forces off Kula gulf in the Solomon islands July 5, 1943. He has been missing in action since that date.

The young officer was serving in the capacity of assistant communications officer and when the order to abandon ship came he insisted on remaining below decks in order to destroy secret matter and was completing his task when the ship went down, the presidential order read.

Ensign Hedrick attended the Winchester high school and was a graduate of the Mt. Sterling high school and Transylvania college, Lexington. Prior to entering the service he was employed here at the Greyhound bus station and taught school in Mt. Sterling and Danville. He received his naval training at Notre Dame University and Northwestern University Midshipmens' school, Chicago.

Ensign Hedrick has a brother, Gano Hedrick, who is serving with the U. S. army somewhere in England. He has five other brothers and five sisters.

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LOST AT SEA - Billy was killed in a battle the day before the Battle of Kula Gulf, Solomon Islands. His ship, the USS Strong DD-467 was struck down by a Japanese Long Lance torpedo. He and 45 of his shipmates and fellow officers died that night. His body was never recovered, but a memorial plaque was placed on the family stone. We will never forget him, and will always love him.

Billy attended Transylvania University in Lexington, KY from 1936-1940, graduating Magna Cum Laude. He was the only one of the 11 surviving children of William and Emma to attend college on a full scholarship and to graduate, earning a degree in French and English with an emphasis on education. He returned home to Mt. Sterling and taught at his old high school, the Mt. Sterling City High School for two years before being called into service with the Naval Reserve. He received Naval Officer's Training at Notre Dame University and Northwestern in Chicago and his officer's commission on October 9th, 1942. He departed from Boston in December of 1942 with the Strong, on his way to the Pacific Theater. With his death, he left behind the broken hearts of his family, the loving sisters who worshiped him, memories to treasure and a story yet to be told.

He was so much more than the Naval Ensign who died in the performance of his duty. He was a son, a brother, a teacher, a citizen of Mt. Sterling and Lexington, Kentucky who had many friends and loved life. He loved classical music, writing, reading great books, and spending time with his nieces and nephews. His story is worthy of being told. I'm working on it.
Here is just part of my effort to honor him and the men he served with aboard Strong:
http://www.projectuss-strongdd467.com

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56760879/william-clay-hedrick