IN SERVICE

by Jeffrey Vinikoor, Chair, Humanities Department
On August 8, 1942, Russ Frederick ’39 waded toward the Laguna Point beach on the northern coast of Guadalcanal. He couldn’t have known then that one of his Newark Academy classmates would save his life later that day. When the United States entered the Second World War, Frederick, a top athlete at the Academy, heeded the national call to action without hesitation. His friends did the same. Frederick served in one of the first Marine landing parties that raided Japanese forces on the South Pacific island.

Through densely moist air, two miles inland from the beach, Japanese machine gunners fired on Frederick’s platoon. Hit in the left knee, he fell to the ground. After fainting from pain and blood loss, Frederick found Al Haas at his side. Haas, who played with Frederick on the Academy’s football team only years earlier, served as a Private First Class in the elite Marine Raiders Battalion.

Although Haas left the Academy before graduation, when he came across Frederick, wounded and semi-conscious, he did exactly what one would expect from a fellow soldier and Minuteman: He carried his comrade across mountainous terrain back to the American boats. Thanks to his former classmate’s bravery, Frederick emerged from the attack alive – one of only three survivors from his entire platoon.
WHILE THE STORY OF FREDERICK AND HAAS REFLECTS THE HONOR AND SACRIFICE OF A GENERATION OF AMERICANS – over 400,000 of whom died in the Second World War – it also serves as a reminder of the role that Minutemen of the “The Greatest Generation” played in securing freedom around the world. Along with millions of other people across the nation, scores of Academy alumni heeded the call to serve in order to ensure freedom at home and abroad. This December, as the nation commemorates the 70th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the event that launched the United States into the Second World War, it seems appropriate to look back on how the war impacted Newark Academy and to honor those alumni who risked their lives in the armed services.

The history of the Academy on the eve of the conflict and throughout the war reflects, above all else, a resolute commitment by students, faculty and alumni to ensure the success of the nation’s military endeavors and, ultimately, the triumph of freedom.

In 1942, the student editors of the The Minute Man implored their peers to ignore the trifles of youth and instead to focus on preparing to support the war effort. “In time of war,” they wrote, “there is no word for fun or play. There is no room for ‘teen-age kids.’ We’re all men now, whether it’s too soon or not; and as men, we must thrust ourselves into our tasks, letting no second go by in which we haven’t accomplished something worthwhile.” They begged their peers to remember that “some moldy geometric theorem, a word or two of German, a trick learned at football practice, may mean the difference between life and death.” Both intrigued and anxious, the students followed the conflict intently. Many of their brothers, fathers, and cousins faced grave danger daily, some in the Mediterranean and Europe, others in the South Pacific, others still on the shores of America’s oceans. The boys knew they too might be called to the colors.

No individual embodied the wholehearted commitment to the war more than the Academy’s wartime headmaster: H. Paul Abbott. Appointed in 1940, Abbott distinguished his administration by introducing aviation and naval science courses into the curriculum – courses that he, as an experienced sailor and pilot, taught himself. One can imagine looking through the windows of the schoolhouse on First Street to find Abbott, an enthusiastic, enterprising leader, teaching celestial navigation to a group of 16-year-old boys. Only weeks into his second school year, however, Abbott abruptly resigned to accept a commission in the Navy. Even from afar, he continued to instill in the boys the values of service and scholarship. In a letter to students, he urged them to stay focused on their schoolwork. “Finish your high school training and remember the only passing grade in a navigation problem is 100 percent,” he wrote. “The fellow who is only sixty or seventy percent right is the lad who cannot find the airplane carrier he left.”

Abbott, who did not return to the Academy after the
end of the war, schooled the students in the classroom so that they could best serve their country. Others in the school community similarly responded to the national call. Several young male teachers enlisted, and a handful of female teachers left to follow their husbands. The Academy even saw one of its own trustees, Jerome B. Wiss ’13, commissioned as a captain in the U.S. Army Air Corps. No student questioned that he too would adorn an olive drab shirt or a peaked cap after graduation, although most boys sought to enter into officers’ training programs that would first require them to enroll in college for three or four semesters. A handful of students interrupted their studies—some voluntarily, others after induction by the local draft board—in order to begin their service. Still others graduated earlier than normal, in the winter of their senior year, as the Academy allowed some seniors to take their final exams early so that they would not have to return to high school after the war. In December of 1942, six months before his graduation, senior Paul Chase became the first Academy student called to serve. A year later, The Minute Man reported that the average age of the Academy’s seniors—“sixteen years, eleven months, and ten days”—was the lowest it had been since 1918. Despite the loss of many seniors, the Academy’s student population continued to grow during the war.

The demands of war mobilization impacted student life in myriad ways. Food rationing and shortages challenged the kitchen staff to cook with limited access to sugar, butter, and most canned products. Of course, there were certain foods the boys didn’t miss. “All will probably be very sorry to hear that spinach is also difficult to obtain,” quipped The Minute Man in 1942. The shortage of paper, supplies, and manpower made printing the Polymnian difficult in 1943, yet the publication still made it to press. Outside of school, the students watched as their parents faced the challenges of food and fuel rationing.

Through it all, the students remained captivated by the war. Student leaders urged their peers to support the war effort by purchasing ten- and twenty-five-cent War Savings Stamps. In an appeal to the students to support the purchase of stamps, the editors of The Minute Man begged, “Is it asking too much to sacrifice some ice cream every day for a few stamps a week?” By early 1943, the students surpassed their initial $1,000 fundraising goal—a sum equivalent at the time to the cost of a new car!

The students also honored their classmates and teammates who died in defense of the nation and its ideals. Almost every edition of The Minute Man during the war featured a front-page obituary detailing the loss of a young alumnus. Those alumni included Captain Robert Andrae ’37, a noted athlete and editor of the Polymnian, who represented the United States at the 1936 Berlin Olympics and met his death in 1945 while returning to Berlin with the Seventh Army. Tom Allen ’41, a record-setting track star at the Academy, died in a plane collision in Florida in 1943. And Ted “Corcy” Corcoran ’38, a baseball star and drama club member, perished in an Army bomber crash in 1942. An article in The Minute Man noted that Ted “died in the line of duty and Uncle Sam is proud of him—proud because he risked and lost his life in order that others might live in freedom. Newark Academy too is proud of her son. Indeed, while we mourn his loss, we take this as an added incentive to help in every possible way the cause for which he so gallantly died.” Twenty-five other Newark Academy alumni also sacrificed their lives for that cause.

Beyond its contributions to the Second World War, Newark Academy holds a special place in the overall history of our nation. The school was founded on the eve of the
Revolutionary War and was impacted by that conflict as well, as the British ignited the first school building after they discovered American troops using it as a barracks. As members of a community that has not merely weathered conflicts but has contributed to the ultimate triumph of freedom in this nation and abroad, we have a special obligation to remember our history.

While almost 70 years have passed since the United States entered the Second World War, the memory of the conflict lives on. This is particularly true here at the Academy. In their studies of 20th century American and world history, a new generation of students seeks to understand the events that caused the war, the experience of Americans on the home front, and the heroism of the soldiers who helped combat tyranny. Students examine not only Churchill’s speeches and Roosevelt’s Fireside Chats but also the stories of common citizens and soldiers: the diaries of fallen troopers and the stirring tales of men and women who lived through the war. Students find the era haunting – a uniquely engrossing period in American and world history.

One can find memories of the Second World War and its legacy outside of the classroom as well. Although he didn’t fight in the Second World War, Sam Coursen ’45 grew up watching boys a few years older than he risk their lives in Europe, Africa, and Asia. At the Academy, Coursen served as president of his class and captain of the football team. After his graduation, he attended the United States Military Academy, West Point. He died in 1950 while defending his platoon in Korea, an action for which he earned the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously. In 1951, the Academy dedicated a playing field in his honor. A plaque unveiled at the dedication read: “His heroism is a magnificent symbol of the valor and devotion of his fellow alumni who have made the complete sacrifice.” The plaque now stands in front of the Academy’s football field in Livingston, which is officially known as Coursen Field. And before every home game, each player on the Academy’s team passes by and touches the stone monument in recognition of the courage and commitment that Coursen and so many others demonstrated.

Each time students enter the Hawkes Memorial Library, they are reminded of the sacrifice of Lieutenant Alan Steinberg ’42. As associate editor of The Minute Man during his senior year, Steinberg issued a stirring rebuke of the excessive confidence he feared would lead to an Allied defeat. “Totalitaria works seven days a week,” he wrote. “However paradoxical it might seem, it would be better that we have fear of our enemies than such bloated confidence to think that it will take little effort to crush them.” A local daily newspaper reprinted his piece. After graduation, and a brief stint at Brown University, Steinberg entered the Army Air Force. He died in action in France in late 1944. His picture still hangs on the library wall, along with a plaque noting his accomplishments. The memorial serves as a testament to his generation’s service, a reminder to today’s students that the great sacrifices of their forebears make possible the opportunities they enjoy today.
AMONG ITS ALUMNI BODY, NEWARK ACADEMY BOASTS MANY MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY. Here are a few of the many who stand proudly in the Academy’s tradition of service. We thank them – and all of the alumni who have served – for their sacrifice.

NATHANIEL ROSENGARTEN ’35
Known for his humor and public speaking skills as a student at the Academy, which he attended for seven years, Nathaniel Rosengarten joined the U.S. Army several years after his graduation from the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business. Rosengarten served in England, Belgium, and France. While working in the European Theater Headquarters in London, Rosengarten was surprised to find agents arresting his secretary one morning; unbeknownst to him, she had served as Heinrich Himmler’s secretary earlier in the war. After three years of active duty, Rosengarten returned to his family business. He currently resides in Colorado.

JAY KISLAK ’39
The only student from his class to commute from Hoboken to Newark, Jay Kislak went to the University of Pennsylvania following his graduation from the Academy. There, he learned to fly under the University’s Civilian Pilot Training Program. Graduating from Penn in only three years, he enlisted in the Navy in 1942 and served in active duty as an aviator for three and a half years. He spent most of his time during the war testing and transporting airplanes.

BILL HARDIN ’44
The son and nephew of Newark Academy graduates, Bill Hardin played football at the Academy with Sam Coursen ’45. After graduation, Hardin attended Princeton University for three semesters in order to qualify for the Navy Air Corps’ V-5 program. Because the war had ended by the time he finished his pre-flight school in August 1945, Hardin transferred out of the Air Corps and into the Navy. He spent his Naval career as a Seaman Second Class supporting the Navy’s decommissioning efforts. A longtime resident of New Jersey, Hardin has seen 11 family members (including his sons, William ’71, David ’73 and Peter ’75, and his grandson, David ’07) graduate from the Academy.

BERNIE LEROE ’61
A football player during his three years at Newark Academy, Bernie Leroe went on to the University of Notre Dame, where he earned a degree in finance and a commission as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy. His first assignment aboard the USS Lake Champlain brought him to the Sargasso Sea to receive the Gemini V astronauts. Leroe then completed a tour of duty in Vietnam, where he worked both in an operations unit in the Rung Sat Special Zone and as a River Patrol Boat captain. He left Vietnam to attend Damage Control School in the San Francisco Bay. Upon graduation, he returned to South East Asia as the Damage Control Officer aboard the USS Edson. In total, Leroe spent four years of active duty in the U.S. Navy and five years in the U.S. Naval Reserves. He estimates he traveled at least 44,000 miles at sea during his career. He now resides in New Jersey.

MICHAEL WAGNER ’66
As a student at Newark Academy, Michael Wagner, inspired by his experience in Blackie Parlin’s class, knew that he wanted to become a history teacher. Soon after his graduation from the Academy, however, at the height of the Vietnam War, he joined the United States Air Force, beginning a laudable 34-year military career, most of which he spent as an Officer Special Agent with the Air Force Office of Special

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Investigations. As an OSA principally involved in counterintelligence investigations, he spent much of his career overseas including 13 years in the Middle East. He served in two wars and six major contingency operations. Several years after his retirement in 2002, Wagner earned his teaching certification. He now teaches history at Yokota High School at Yokota Air Base in Japan. Patti, his wife of 28 years, teaches at the same school, and together they oversee the school’s Model United Nations program.

WILLIAM KAPLAN ’69
A member of one of the first Newark Academy classes to graduate from the Livingston campus, Bill Kaplan, a wrestler during his days at Newark Academy, enjoyed a long and varied career in the U.S. Air Force. After his graduation from the Academy, Bill attended Lehigh University, where he joined Air Force ROTC and earned an AFROTC scholarship. During his 25 years of service, he worked on a variety of projects, including the development of the F117 stealth fighter in the early 1980s and the Defense Support Program satellite system during Desert Storm. Bill retired as a Colonel in 1998 and was awarded the Defense Superior Service Medal by the Secretary of Defense. Currently, he operates his own knowledge management consulting company.

RAJ BUTANI ’90
Raj Butani fondly remembers the good friends and the colorful teachers he had during his years at Newark Academy. A dedicated student and talented musician and athlete, Butani attended Lehigh University after his graduation. There, he participated in ROTC and completed a six-year BA/MD combined degree program with the Medical College of Pennsylvania (now part of Drexel University) in Philadelphia. He completed his internal medicine residency and gastroenterology fellowship training while stationed at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, from 1996 to 2002 and subsequently began his staff duty tour in 2002 at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, where he worked as an Army gastroenterologist. In August 2004, he deployed to Iraq as a battalion surgeon and medical officer. After a one-year tour, during which he received the Combat Medical Badge and Bronze Star Medal, he returned to Hawaii to complete his active duty service. He subsequently relocated to Bellevue, Washington, where he is now a gastroenterologist in private practice with a multi-specialty group named Overlake Internal Medicine Associates. He is married to Mona, a dentist, and has two young sons.

MICHAEL GREENBERG ’91
A talented scholar and athlete during his time at Newark Academy, Michael Greenberg played on the Academy’s tennis team for four years, during each of which the team won its conference championship. As a senior, he served as team captain. After graduation, Greenberg attended the United States Military Academy, West Point. In 1995, he was commissioned into the Quartermaster Corps, and today he continues to serve in the Army as a financial management officer. During his years of service, Greenberg has participated in three combat deployments and duty in many locations. He is currently the assistant chief of staff, comptroller for the 1st Theater Sustainment Command based in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Past assignments include platoon leader, executive officer, company commander, comptroller, and instructor. A decorated officer, Greenberg’s awards include the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army and Joint Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, Pathfinder Badge, Airborne Badge, Air Assault Badge, German and Australian Jump Wings.