

FRED JR. FABER PRIVATE FIRST CLASS U.S. ARMY

WORLD WAR II 1924 - 1945

WRITTEN BY MORGAN YOST
UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL
INSTRUCTED BY MEGHAN DUNN

DRAFT THIS IS A WORK-IN-PROGRESS
FOR TEMPORARY DISPLAY ONLY



Another West Virginia soldier from the 27th Infantry Regiment, Sergeant John Milkom, demonstrates the position from which he knocked out a Japanese tank on Luzon. *National Archives*

Fred Faber was born May 3, 1924, in Nashville, Arkansas,

to Fred and Lena Rossmeyer Faber. His mother was from Texas, while his father had come from New York. Fred Sr. toiled as a farmer in the agrarian community around Nashville. Like many farm families of the era, children contributed their labor and Fred Jr. began helping around the farm at age six. No doubt his two older siblings Grace and William contributed as well.

The Faber family roots were German, and they likely practiced the Jewish faith. Fred Jr.'s grandfather Erasmus was a Bavarian brewer who became a U.S. citizen in 1900. By 1920, farming was something of a family business: Fred Sr. is listed as the head of a household in Searcy County, Arkansas, that included not only his father Erasmus, but also his brother William, with all adult men in the household employed at farming. Sadly, Erasmus died in 1931, just as the Great Depression began to take its toll on the Faber family.

The Depression descended on Arkansas and the rest of the nation when Fred Jr. was just a boy. The Fabers may have sought recourse from the Nashville Production Credit Association, which offered short- and intermediate-term credit to farmers. If they did, it was not enough. Fred Sr. did not claim a single dollar in wages or salaries in 1940. The family moved into a rental property, abandoning the house they had owned in 1930. Fred Jr.'s formal education suffered as a result. He was no longer in school as of March 1,

1940, and only completed one year of high school. Perhaps in search of better opportunities, the Fabers decided to move to Martins Ferry, Ohio.

Fred Jr. and his parents were following more than job opportunities—they were also following family. Grace was already living in Marshall County, West Virginia, by 1940, and brother William had taken up residence in Martins Ferry, Ohio, as a press operator for Wheeling Steel Corporation based across the river in West Virginia. A major producer of sheet steel, galvanized nails, and other products, Wheeling Steel had one of its major factories at Martins Ferry. The Faber parents and Fred Jr. settled in Martins Ferry, while Fred Sr. found new work at Wheeling's J. L. Stifel & Sons, one of the nation's largest calico printing establishments.

The Stifel Company supplied France with textiles at the outset of World War II in 1939 and would furnish American soldiers with khaki throughout the conflict. Almost 90 percent of its production catered to wartime needs by 1943. With a mandatory draft in place by 1940 and large-scale rearmament in full swing, the Stifel Company probably needed all the employees it could get, leading to job opportunities for out-of-work men like Fred Sr.

Although Fred Jr. never returned to high school, he did receive supplemental vocational education at the National Youth Administration (NYA) Training School in Martins Ferry. The NYA, a New Deal agency established in 1935, provided work and education to young Americans between the ages of 16 and 25, a large group not covered by other New Deal work-relief efforts. The NYA helped young people just emerging into the workplace, whom the Great Depression had deprived of the opportunity to start building work experience. Fred took advantage of his time with the NYA to gain manufacturing skills. Once the United States declared war in 1941, the NYA began to facilitate the enlistment of soldiers.

At the age of 19, Fred Faber Jr. was drafted on August 3, 1943. His required Army service was slated for the duration of World War II, plus six months, and he entered the ranks as a private with the 27th Infantry Regiment ("Wolfhounds") of the 25th Division ("Tropic Lightning"). The Wolfhounds had acquired their nickname in Siberia at the end of World War I, as part of an ill-fated operation supporting Czarist forces against the communist revolution in Russia.

The fresh-faced Faber was joining a veteran outfit. The 27th Infantry was a regular army regiment that had been stationed in Hawaii when war broke out with Japan—some of its men were Pearl Harbor survivors. With their training and proximity to the theater of war, the Wolfhounds soon found themselves



A knocked-out Sherman tank near Urdaneta, Luzon, destroyed during a Japanese attack on the town while Faber's 27th Infantry were in the area. *National Archives*

to be one of the first army units in the fight, battling through the merciless jungles of Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands in 1942-43. The experiences of the 27th informed the now-classic James Jones novel *The Thin Red Line*.

Private Fred Faber probably went through basic training close to home, perhaps in Ohio or Indiana. Many 27th Infantry recruits appear to have completed their final training at Fort Ord, California. Another Wolfhound who joined the unit in theater in 1945, Earl McWilliams, had his basic training at Camp Hood cut from 16 weeks to 12—as men were rushed off to combat zones—and was then moved to Ord. Live fire infiltration training took place there on the California coast, where the men were also made to swim a minimum of 250 yards in the ocean in case their transport ships were ever torpedoed or sunk by enemy aircraft (this was considered the minimum safe distance to avoid being sucked down with the wreck). Only in retrospect did the war seem close to an end, as bloody battles consumed lives across several continents.

Faber probably joined the regiment in the Pacific during an eight-month training period on New Caledonia. The Wolfhounds still had a long battle ahead as part of General Douglas MacArthur's campaign to retake the Philippines, and the unit needed to be remolded after losses in the Solomons. According to Sergeant Glenn Brassell, a machine gunner in 1st Battalion, Company D on New Caledonia, the Wolfhounds "did forced marches and got two or three a week on ten-mile hikes . . . Got our legs in shape for, we

FRED JR. FABER

knew we were going to the Philippines . . . they pre-scheduled us for northern Luzon, Lingayen Gulf.”

The amphibious landings at Lingayen Gulf in January 1945 did not mark the beginning of ejecting Imperial Japanese troops from the Philippines. That process had already begun the year before on Leyte. The vast Philippine Islands had to be pursued as individual operations, and Luzon held the ultimate prize: the capital of Manila. The Wolfhounds’ 25th Division was being held as a reserve force, floating offshore for two days after initial landings began on January 9 preceded by enormous naval and aerial bombardments. Sergeant Brassell remembered of the giant invasion armada, “It must have been six, seven hundred or a thousand ships in that convoy. . . . it was just as far [in] front of us as we could see and just as far behind.”

On the north flank of the beachhead, however, the 43rd Division met fierce resistance (other beaches were virtually unopposed) and needed reinforcements. The 27th Regiment landed with the rest of the 25th Division on January 11, and was instructed to push inland to establish a line between Urdaneta and Binalonan (approximately the line Highway 2 follows today) in support of I Corps. By January 18, Faber’s regiment had occupied Urdaneta, still smoldering after a failed Japanese counterattack.

The next four months would be a hard, methodical slog northward for the 25th Division. Constant Japanese snipers, artillery fire, counterattacks, and natural obstacles took their toll. In the dense, mountainous jungle around Balete Pass, fights were close and savage. Private First Class Rodney C. Barrett, who arrived with other 27th Infantry replacements in April, described the kind of encounter so often experienced by the Wolfhounds:

In front of me about 10 ft. down the trail I saw this head of a Jap looking up at the machine gun nest, he did not see me. It was my first to see a live Jap. I knew I had to shoot, I took aim and fired. The impact from my rifle knocked my helmet over my eyes, I had to push it back up to see if I had hit him. I knew I had hit him because I heard his helmet fly off and roll down the hill. Then I heard all of this yelling in Japanese and throwing the bolts on their rifles but I did not hear any firing from their direction.

Then I heard a shot from my left, the Jap that [Sergeant] Mahoney was trying to get had fired at me. . . . The bullet went through the roots of the tree, splattering wood slivers into the left side of my face and cutting through my GI jacket. . . . At the time I only knew that I had been hit. I turned back to tell Mahoney that I was hit, when I looked back, Mahoney’s helmet was off, his head was lying back on a tree stump and blood was running down the side of his head and out of his ear. Then I heard someone whisper, “Mahoney is dead”.

The dragging pace of American advance between March 30 and April 12 gave the Japanese precious time to reinforce defenses on the heights of Myoko

Ridge protecting Balete Pass—the passage the overstretched 25th Division had been fighting to secure since late February. Japanese defenders put up stiff resistance, sometimes slowing the 27th to gains of only a few hundred yards for several days.

Balete Pass was the last great battle of the war for the 27th Infantry—and for Fred Faber. While fighting raged on the slopes and in the gullies around Myoko Ridge on April 19, he received a mortal wound to the face from artillery shell fragments. He died before reaching a hospital. Fred Faber was one of 685 men of the 25th Division to die taking Balete Pass.

Three years passed before Fred’s remains were returned to the United States. Although he was born in Arkansas, and his family lived in Ohio, Fred was not interred in either state. Instead, he made one final journey to West Virginia, where he was buried in Grafton National Cemetery on August 4, 1948.

After Fred’s death, the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) filed a card for the fallen soldier as part of their nationwide survey of Jewish war veterans. This survey, which began to take shape in 1941, rigorously compiled a lengthy record of Jewish military service by interviewing family members and working with local communities to identify more than 200,000 Jewish military personnel in all branches. Given the procedures by which the JWB Bureau of War Records file cards were generated, it seems unlikely that Fred Faber Jr. would have received one without the consultation and approval of his mother Lena, who is listed on the card.

Fred’s burial under a Latin Cross insignia, rather than a Star of David, seems to have been human error. Innocent mistakes such as these were common in the aftermath of the war and many remain to be corrected, a process usually driven by individual families or dedicated nonprofits, such as Operation Benjamin. In Faber’s case, the three-year gap between his death and the repatriation of his remains may have generated the discrepancy. What is most certain about Fred Faber is his willingness to serve his nation as an American citizen and patriot to liberate the Philippine people from Imperial Japanese hegemony, and to sacrifice his life in defense of the United States.



NATIONAL JEWISH WELFARE BOARD						DEATH I.A.	
BUREAU OF WAR RECORDS						ALPHABETICAL CARD	
Automated	Last Name (Caps)		First	Middle	Rank	Serial #	Age
	FABER		Fred	Jr.	Pvt.		
	Next of Kin		Relationship				
	Mrs. Lena Faber		Mother				
	Address		City	State	Credit		
	3968 E. 71st St.		Cleveland, Ohio		same		
	Source of Information						
	OWI SER. NO. 64 pg. 3645						
	Branch of Service		Action Area		Honor Roll Date		
	Army						
	Worker Consulted		Family				
	Inquiry Date		Follow-Up Dates				
	none						
	\$		do 11/12/45				

INTERMENT IN THE GRAFTON NATIONAL CEMETERY				CEMETERY			
TO: THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.				ALLIANCE SYMBOL (Cross, Star)			
NAME (Last, first, middle initials)				STATE			
FABER, FRED JR.				OHIO			
RANK				PFC			
SERIAL NO.				35225573			
DATE OF BIRTH		DATE OF DEATH		DATE OF INTERMENT		GRAVE LOCATION	
MONTH	DAY	YEAR	MONTH	DAY	YEAR	SEC. OR PLST.	ISSUE OR LOT NO.
MAY	3	1924	APRIL	19	1945	AUG	4
REMARKS (Authority for interment, previous or other no. order, disinterment, etc.)				DATE HEADSTONE ORDERED AND ALL NUMBER			
Auth. Marker # SF 111-R				TATE, GA. 6 OCT 1948			
WW II dead returned from Santa Barbara, P.I.				3781710			
RAILROAD STATION FOR FREIGHT				SIGNATURE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF NATIONAL CEMETERY ON ORN OF POST OR POW CEMETERY			
GRAFTON WEST VIRGINIA				Jesse S. [Signature]			
POST OFFICE ADDRESS				431 WALNUT STREET GRAFTON WEST VIRGINIA			
QMC FORM 14 (REV 1-48) Previous editions may be used				(See instructions on reverse side) 15-48920-1			

Faber’s National Jewish Welfare Board (top) and National Cemetery Administration (bottom) cards. Note box checked “Latin Cross” in the top right of the latter card. NARA

LEFT: Japanese column of at least 30 vehicles destroyed on Luzon by the 27th Infantry’s artillery. NARA



SOURCES FULL BIBLIOGRAPHY TO BE INCLUDED IN FINAL VERSION

SOURCES

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Full bibliographies will be included in the final draft of each biography, available later in the summer of 2024.

The West Virginia National Cemeteries Project is a program of the West Virginia Humanities Council, funded in part by the Veterans Legacy Grant Program of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and initiated in 2021. All biographies produced as part of this program are composed by West Virginia high school students, who conduct original research on veterans interred at the Grafton National Cemetery or the West Virginia National Cemetery, both of which are located in Grafton, Taylor County, West Virginia.

As home to one of the nation's first National Cemeteries—founded shortly after the Civil War—the community of Grafton has longstanding traditions of honoring America's veterans, including the longest continuously celebrated Memorial Day parade in the United States. The Grafton National Cemetery, located in the heart of the city and founded in 1867, is typically the endpoint of each year's parade. Since the Grafton National Cemetery began to run short of space during the 1960s, the West Virginia National Cemetery was dedicated in 1987, just a few miles outside of Grafton.

The West Virginia Humanities Council is proud to thank the following organizations for their participation in the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project: West Virginia Archives and History, the West Virginia University history department, Taylor County Historical and Genealogical Society, Taylor County Public Library, Grafton High School, and University High School.

Please refer comments or questions to the West Virginia Humanities Council
 1310 Kanawha Blvd E, Charleston, WV 25301
wvhuman@wvhumanities.org
www.wvhumanities.org
 304.346.8500



Veterans Legacy Grant Program
 Department of Veterans Affairs
 Washington D.C.

