

Platten Clan

Thomas Vielé Platten

The three stars on the cenotaph are in memory of my uncles who served in World War II. The stars were placed in a triangular formation on the middle right side of the north face of the cenotaph. The Platten boys included my father Jack who was born severely deaf and could not serve in the military. Next in line was Donald. He served in the army in the Pacific theatre, ending the war as a lieutenant in the Army on an island in the Central Philippines. **Next was Thomas. He served as a bombardier on a B-17 and was shot down and killed on his 13th mission somewhere over Yugoslavia, a mere month after arriving in Casablanca. He had been based in Italy and they were targeting manufacturing facilities.** The last of the Platten boys was Peter. He served as a tank commander in Patton's army, and after the war served as part of the post war occupation trying to restore order and civilization to a devastated Europe. He later was called up to serve in Korea, but only served as a training officer. He stayed in the Reserves, and ended his career as a full colonel.

My generation of Platten boys includes my brother John, who served in the army in Germany during the Cold War. He translated Polish language intercepts to track military operations by the Soviet block from 1964-68. My cousin Peter, son of Donald, served in the army as a radio operator (sergeant) in Vietnam. He was injured there in 1969 and was evacuated to a military hospital in Germany. He lived in Cranbury, NJ for many years after his service with his wife and daughters. I served as an officer aboard a destroyer in the Navy from 1969-1972, mostly in the Atlantic Ocean, but also in the Middle East during a flare up of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Uncle Tom's son was born after he had been killed. His name is also Tom, and he served in the U.S. Coast Guard for four years.

In all, these two generations of Platten boys served the country for a total of 25 years at the cost of one life. There is no doubt that Uncle Tom would have contributed greatly had he survived as his three brothers all were larger than life performers, all Princeton University graduates, one ran his own research company, one was a main line Philadelphia lawyer, and the other became the Chairman and CEO of Chemical Bank before it merged with Chase Manhattan.

We all served with pride. We remember our parents' service with great pride and gratitude.

Rob Platten

Longtime resident of Princeton

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