



Thomas W. King

Thomas W. King.

Corporal, U.S. Army

Born September 21, 1930

Killed in Action March 16, 1951

South Korea

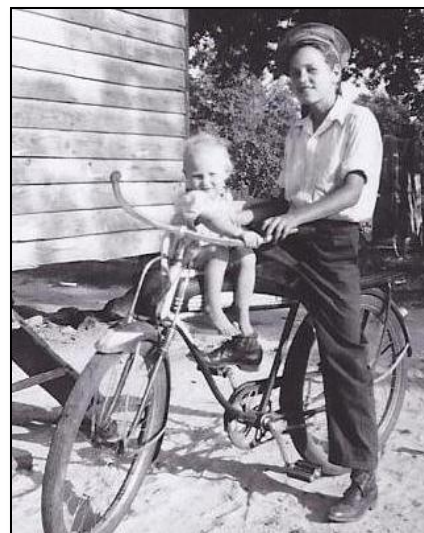
Some families have a long history of military service. The family of Thomas W. King is one of those with many of his relatives serving in conflicts as far back as the Civil War. Thomas' great-great grandfather was in the Civil War and died from measles while in service. He had two cousins that served in World War I, and two uncles and a cousin in World War II. Also Thomas' father served in the Navy and was in the Naval Reserves. Other relatives have served in more recent conflicts and continue to serve in the armed forces.

Thomas King was born on September 21, 1930, and was raised in Ebony in Brunswick County, Virginia and at nearby La Crosse in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, until he was 14, then his family moved several times, ending up in Hopewell, Virginia. He was the oldest child of Tom "Budd" and Myrt King and had three sisters; Mildred, Margaret and Myrtis, and one brother, Clarence "Jack". In addition, he had two older half sisters; Frances and Virginia Tanner, and two older half brothers; Eugene and Wilson Tanner. Thomas' paternal grandparents were John Anderson and Kate Mise King, and his maternal grandparents were John Lafayette and Harriet F. "Hattie" Moore.

During the 1930's, Thomas' family moved in with his paternal grandparents at Ebony. There in April 1940, many of Thomas' relatives lived together at Ebony including his parents, his siblings Mildred, Margaret and Jack, his paternal grandparents, as well as his aunts; Aillees, Eloise, Jewell, Wernice and Ruby, plus cousins Robert, Irene and Harvey Griffith, who were Ruby's children. At that location, the family all lived in the same big house and made a living by farming. Thomas attended Ebony School, just a short walking distance from their house. Later in the summer of 1940, Thomas' immediate family moved to La Crosse.

On December 19, 1941, soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor and while Thomas' family was living in La Crosse, his grandmother Kate and her daughters Wernice, Jewell and Aillees moved to Richmond. But the next month Jewell and Wernice returned to La Crosse to finish the school year, all the while staying with Thomas' family. That summer, Thomas' youngest sister, Myrtis, was born in August 1942.

Right: Thomas with his youngest sister, Myrtis in La Crosse, VA, summer 1943





Thomas' School Pictures

By living together as much as they did in Ebony and La Crosse, the King family became very close. For Thomas, his Aunt Wernice, who was four years older, was more like a sister. They played together and continued to have a close bond as they grew older. After the United States entered World War II, a number of Thomas' older relatives also joined the armed forces and Thomas' father was later drafted into the Navy in December 1943. However his father was released from active duty in August 1944 and placed in the Navy reserves when the military learned that he had five children.

Tragedy struck the whole King family on April 9, 1944, when one of Thomas' older cousins, Albert Griffith, one of Ruby's children, was killed in World War II. Then on December 24, 1944, tragedy struck again when Thomas' father died in a car accident, not long after Thomas turned 14 years old. Following his father's death, Thomas' mother and the kids moved from La Crosse to South Hill, Virginia. Jack said while they lived in South Hill, he remembers that he and Thomas worked on tobacco farms for \$1 per day. Then in December 1945, they moved in with relatives in Richmond, staying there briefly before moving to Hopewell in January 1946, where his family lived at 107 South 16th Avenue for many years.



Thomas' father, Tom "Budd" Baptist King

Starting in 1946, Thomas worked at the cookie company Southern Biscuit (later called FFV) on Marshall Street in Richmond and as an usher in a theater on Broad Street. While working at those places he stayed in Richmond with his grandmother Kate, Aunt Wernice or other relatives since his mother and his siblings were living in Hopewell at that time. His Aunt Aillees and her husband also worked at FFV then. Of this time period his sister Myrtis remembers:

“He was the most handsome man that I knew and I was always so excited to be around him. He was 11 years older than me, but he always took up time with his little sister. When he came home, he would always bring a box of cookies for us. He would ask me to get him a glass of water and to be sure it was a clean glass. I’m sure he asked me to do this for him so he and Mom could talk about adult things.”

Thomas enlisted in the Army in July 1948 at age 17, two months before turning 18, and was sent to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina for basic training. While there he wrote a letter to his Aunt Wernice on July 21, 1948, in which he said *“Just a few lines to let you know I’m O.K. Tell everybody hello for me.”* He concluded in that letter *“Tell Grandma it is real hot down here.”*

In the Army, Thomas was trained in office operations, learning to type while in the service. He served at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina some of this time, continuing to stay in close contact with his family.



**Thomas’ Army Portrait
Camp Stoneman – January 1951**

Following his two year enlistment, he was separated from active duty on July 12, 1950, the month after the outbreak of the Korean War, and was placed in the Army Reserves. When the war escalated, Thomas was called back to active duty on September 20, 1950, two months after being previously discharged from active duty and the day before his 20th birthday. After going back into service he was stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky for a few months. By January 1951, he was at Camp Stoneman at Pittsburg, California and getting ready to go to Japan. Before Thomas went to Japan, he wrote letters home and called his Aunt Wernice a number of times from Kentucky and California to stay in touch with the family. In his last letter from California dated January 30, 1951, he wrote his mother that he was to leave for Fort Drake near Tokyo, Japan, in a day or two and he expected it would be about a 21-day ship voyage. That letter in Thomas’ handwriting is included on the next two pages.

Jan 30 51

Dear mom & all

I mail you a letter this morning
I got my orders today so I will write a
few lines to let you know my new
address. I will leave here Thur or Fri for
Camp Drake in Yankton, S.D. It will
take us about 21 days I think. I won't be able to
write on the boat, so I don't think I will
have time to write again until I get over
seas.

Tell Jack not to work too hard and
to write to me some time, and take care
of the kids until I get back. If I get
a change I will call you before I leave.

I am a letter home each to night
for some reason. Don't worry about me
I will be OK. I hope I don't have to be
over there too long.

(over)

[#]
Tell Ling hello for me and be good
untill I get back.

Well mam I can't think of any
thing else to write so I will stop for
now. Hoping to hear from you real soon.

As every Thomas

My new address will be

Cpl Thomas W. King

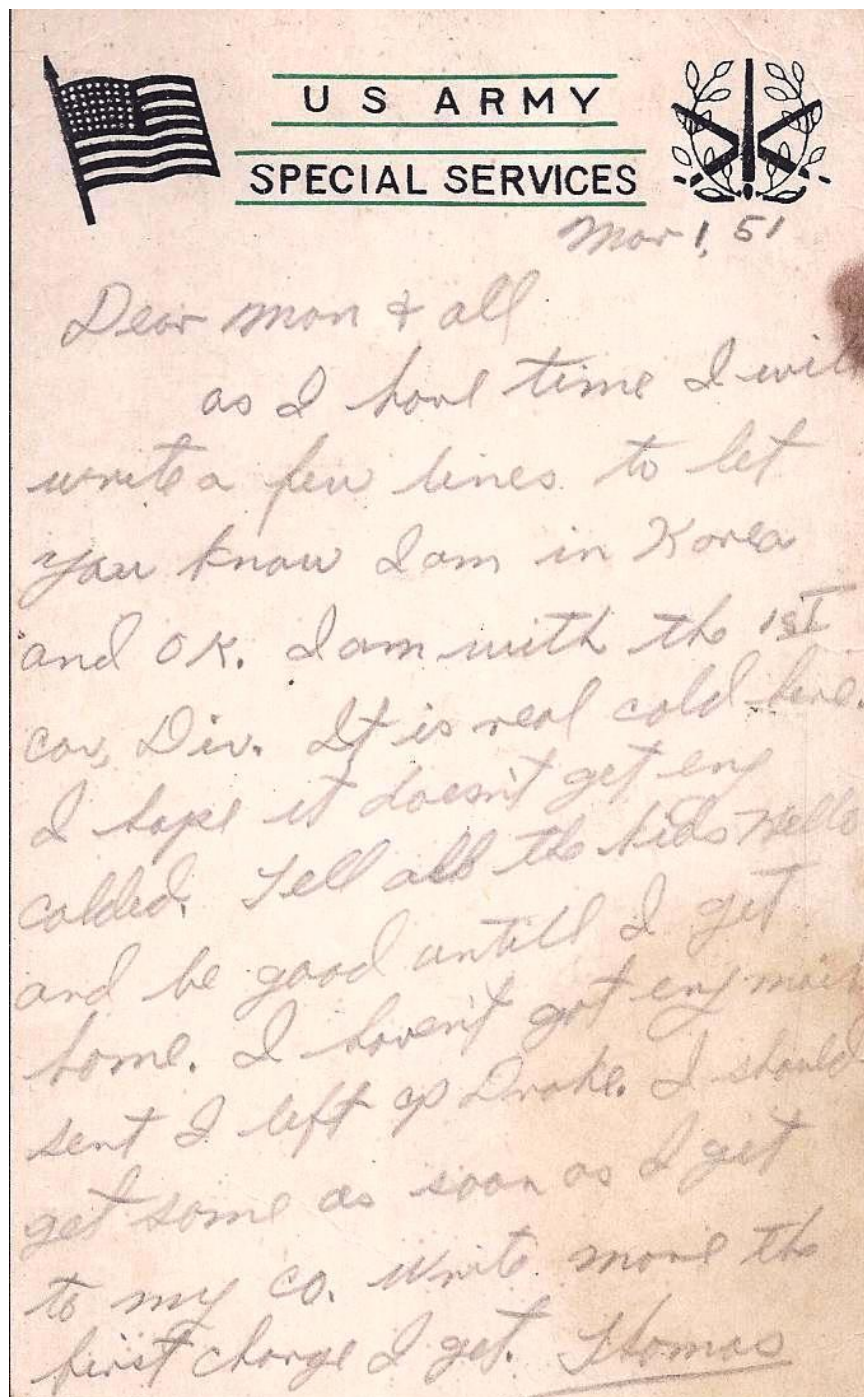
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Then on March 1, 1951, Thomas wrote the one page letter below to his mother letting her know he had arrived in Korea.



Thomas wrote his mother again on March 3, 1951. In that two-page letter, shown below, he talked about seeing things he thought he would never see, such as the way people lived, all the rice patties and the mountains.

Mar 3, 51

Dear Mom + Kids

Well as I am in Korea and have time before supper I will write a few lines to let you know I am OK. I won't have much time for writing so don't worry if you don't hear from me. I will write every chance I get. My new address is on the outside. Tell every one hello and to write some time. I have seen a lot over here that I didn't think I would ever see. The way the people live, and another things. Tell Jack not work to hard and with the \$127.00 and the 30.00 that I am sending home you will be able to put some in the bank so I will have some when I come home. and then Jack and my self can get a car and some place to live. It is real cold over here, but not as cold as it has been. There is still some snow on the mountains. It is much over here but Rice patters and mountains.

123

well as it is about show time I will have to
stop for now. Hoping to hear from you real
soon. I don't know how long it will take for
this to get home. So let me know how long
it took. I am about 9000 miles from home I
think. Look it up from Korea to Va.

Well I can't think of any
thing else to write so I will stop
for now.

as every I know

P.S. send me some air mail stamps
not to money.

Below is Thomas' very last letter to his mother dated March 12, 1951, in which he said he was about 15 miles from the front lines, but didn't know if his company would move up to the front or move back.



UNITED STATES ARMY
SPECIAL SERVICES

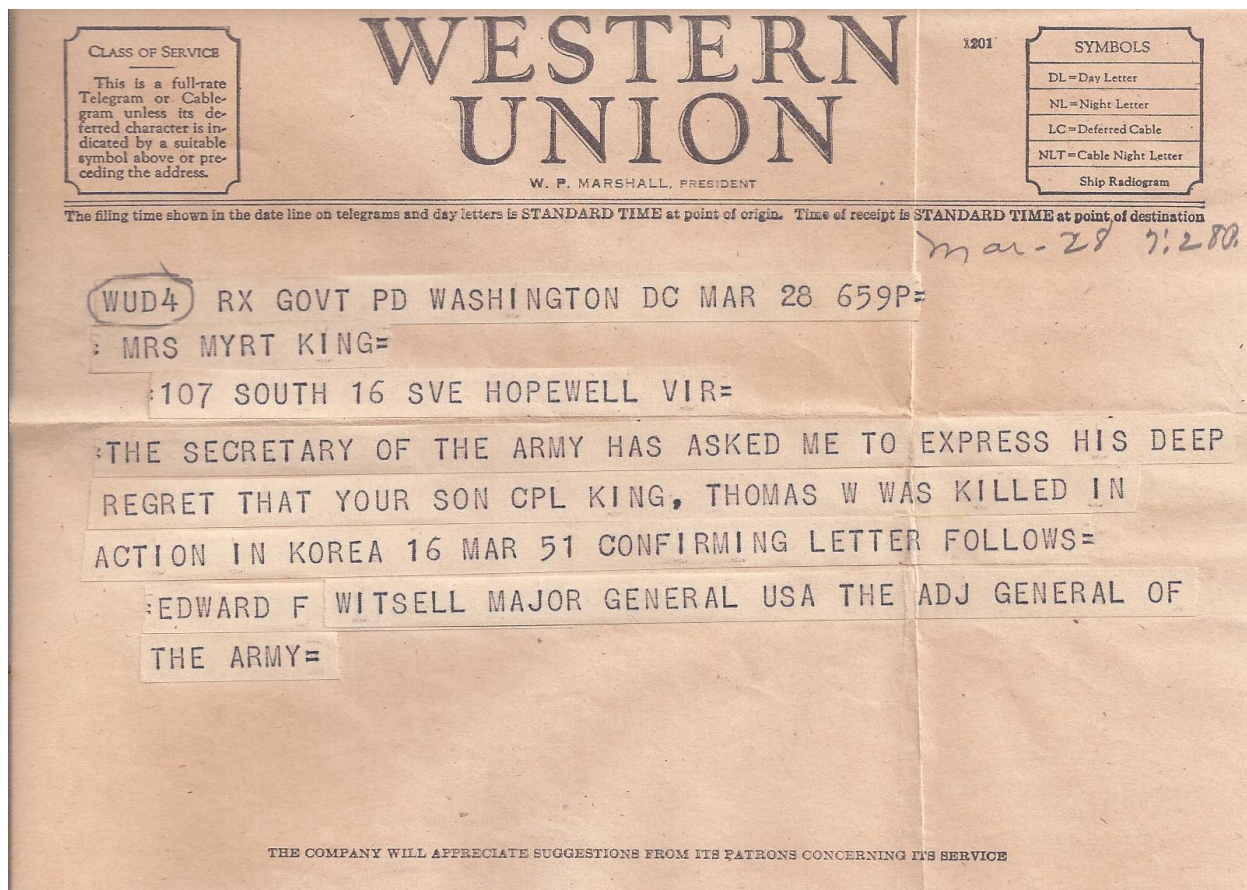
March 12, 1951
Mon. Morning

Dear Mom & kids

as I ~~have~~ just come from sleep and waiting to find out what we have to do, I will write a few lines to let you know I am OK. I don't know what is wrong with the mail I have been here about 14 days and still haven't got any. I hope I get some by tomorrow. I have heard that we will move then, I don't know if it will be to the front or if we will move back. But don't worry about I am with a good Co it is L Co they call it Love Co I am about 15 miles from the front lines now I think. I want you to get me a yellow Ribbon and send me in your next letter. And don't forget to send me something to eat. Some candy, cookies, or something. It is not very cold over here now. Well have cool night But not as bad as it was when I came here. Last night was the first time in about 3 or 4 days that the water froze. Well as I am running out of writing space I will stop for now. Tell everyone hello.
as ever Thomas

Also on March 12, Thomas wrote a separate letter to his grandmother in which he indicated that he expected to go to the front lines in a day or two and said, "But don't tell Mom". Apparently concerned about the possible length of the war, in that letter he asked his grandmother to "Let me know all about the war news and what they are doing in Washington."

Upon his arrival in Korea, instead of being assigned to office work as he was previously trained, Thomas was placed in a light weapons infantry combat position in the 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. On Friday, March 16, three days after he went into combat, Thomas was killed in action at age 20. His mother was notified of his death at 7:28 pm on March 28, 1951, in a telegram delivered by the military to her home in Hopewell. Below is the telegram received that evening, informing Thomas' mother that he had been killed in action.



Thomas' sister, Margaret, recalled when the notification was delivered:

"When the person knocked on our door, Jack helped Mom to the door to receive the telegram because she had the flu. They would not give the telegram to the children. Jack had to hold our Mom up afterward."

Myrtis also related *"They got in touch with relatives in Richmond and they came to Hopewell in the middle of the night."*

The confirming letter sent later informing Thomas' mother of his death was also signed by Major General Edward F. Witsell, Adjutant General of the Army. General Witsell's letter said in part *"I wish I could give you more information, but casualty reports of this nature are necessarily brief and contain only essential facts. However, provisions are made for an overseas chaplain or commander to send a letter containing any available details."* He concluded by saying *"I know the sorrow this message has brought you and it is my hope that in time the knowledge of his sacrifice for his country may be of sustaining comfort to you."*

While Thomas was stationed at Fort Campbell in late 1950, he met and became friends with a number of people, including a young lady named Ann Vaughan. Ann lived at Indian Mound, Tennessee and worked in the Army Reception Center. When Thomas' Aunt Wernice learned of his death, she wrote to Ann to let her know. On April 5, 1951, Ann wrote back to Wernice in which she said in part:

"He was a nice, likeable and lovable young man. I'm very glad I knew him, even if it was for such a short time. Maybe I can be a better person by having known him. He met all the kids here at the Mound and they all liked him a lot. He seemed to fit in our crowd and we felt as if we had known him all our lives. All of us were shocked and terribly hurt to hear of his death.

You probably wonder why I've written all this. Well, I just wanted to let you know that we all loved him and had some wonderful times together. Memories are better than nothing.

I wish there were some words that I could express to you, your mother and Thomas' family. I prayed for his safety after he left. Now I'll be praying for his family's comfort and also my own. God bless you all."

Due to the war situation, Thomas' remains could not be returned home immediately. He was finally returned to the United States in October 1951, for interment at the Mise Family Cemetery in Blackridge, Virginia. Thomas had told his mother if anything ever happened to him, he wanted to be buried near where his Grandmother King would eventually be buried, which is also where his father was buried in December 1944. The military had informed Thomas' mother by telegram when his remains would arrive at the La Crosse train station, which was scheduled for Friday, October 19, 1951 at 2:09 pm. His immediate family was at the station when the train carrying Thomas arrived and they watched as his flagged draped coffin was transferred off the train for transport to the funeral home. The Crews Funeral Home in South Hill handled Thomas' funeral, which was held with full military honors including a rifle squad on Sunday, October 21, 1951. Two chaplains from Camp Pickett, J. G. Killinger and D. E. Hill, officiated the funeral, and soldiers from Camp Pickett assisted with the service. Numerous members of American Legion Post 79 from South Hill attended and served as pall bears. His sister, Myrtis, who was 9 years old at the time, said about the funeral:

"I remember being in the church for services and then being outside waiting for procession to the cemetery. At the grave site, I remember the military men and taps, being sad and crying, and seeing the flowers on his grave."

At the time of his death, Thomas was survived by his close knit family including his mother, Myrt King; his five sisters, Margaret, Mildred, Myrtis, Frances and Virginia; his three brothers, Jack, Eugene and Wilson; aunts Wernice, Ruby, Aillees, Eloise and Jewell, great-aunt Pearl Tanner; uncles Vurnard and Willie, as well as his grandmother Kate I. King, grandfather John A. King and numerous cousins.

In recognition of his service, Thomas was posthumously awarded the following:

The Purple Heart
National Defense Service Medal
Korean Service Medal
Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation
United Nations Service Medal
Republic of Korea War Service Medal
Combat Infantryman Badge

In Thomas' honor, his name is inscribed on the City of Hopewell War Memorial Monument on 15th Avenue, two blocks from where his family lived at the time of his death. His name is also inscribed on the War Memorial Monument at the Prince George Regional Heritage Center at Prince George, Virginia and on the wall at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Virginia. In addition, he is listed on the Korean War Project Remembrance website database.

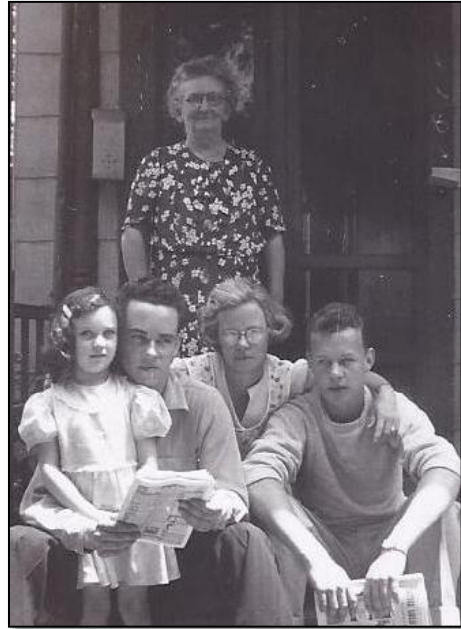
At the time this biography was developed, Thomas was survived by his sisters Myrtis and Margaret, his brother, Jack, and his Aunt Wernice, as well as numerous nieces, nephews and cousins who all continue to treasure his memory. The collection of information, mementos and pictures included in this document are preserved and were provided by his Aunt Wernice Robertson, brother Clarence "Jack" King, sisters Myrtis Josey and Margaret Taylor, and niece Cathy Scarborough.



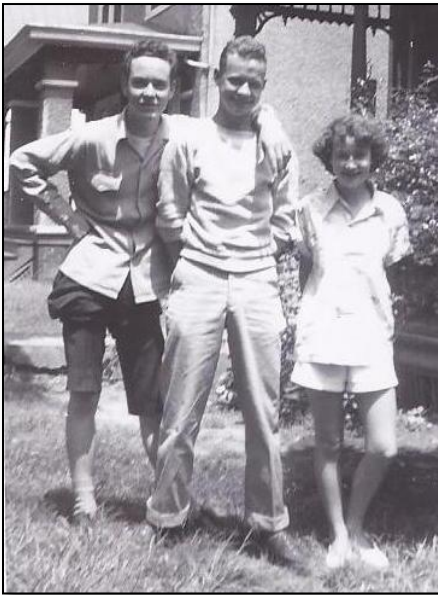
Thomas and some of his Family Members



***Front: cousin Virginia Chandler.
Back row left to right: sister Margaret, brother
Jack and sister Myrtis in Richmond, VA***



***Standing: Thomas' grandmother Kate King
Sitting: cousin Virginia Chandler, Thomas,
mother Myrt King and brother Jack***



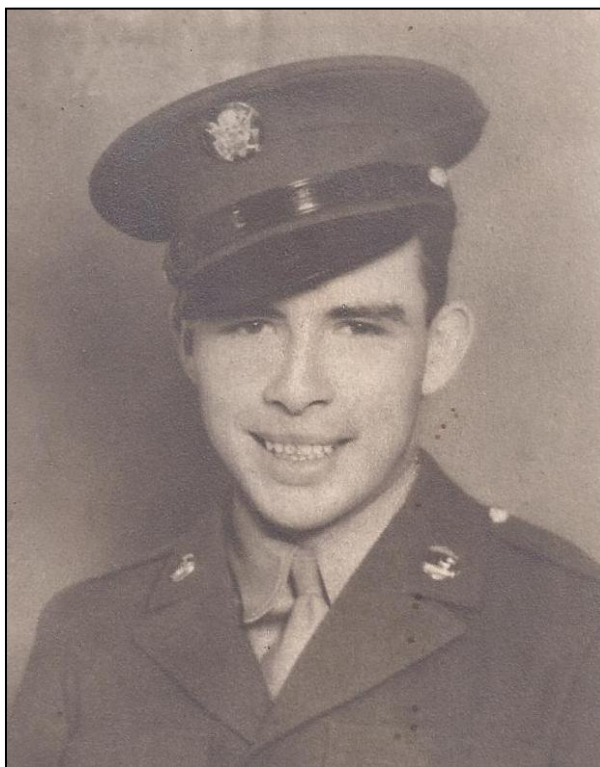
***left to right: Thomas, brother Jack
and sister Mildred***



***left to right: Aunt Wernice,
grandmother Kate King & Thomas in uniform***



Thomas, age 13, his Aunt Ruby and older cousin Robert W. Griffith carrying flowers to memorial service on Sunday, May 28, 1944 for Ruby's son, Albert, who was killed in World War II. The service was held at Fulton Baptist Church and officiated by Reverend Anderson.



Albert L. Griffith, Thomas' cousin that died in combat on April 9, 1944. Although a memorial service was held for him the following month, his remains were not returned to the United States until 1948.

Gifts from Thomas

Thomas sent the gifts below while in service that are still owned by the recipients. The toy elephant was sent to his youngest sister, Myrtis, and the shirt was sent to his Aunt Wernice.



Memories of Thomas W. King
by Wernice King Robertson

I don't remember anything about Thomas' first years since I was only four years older than he. I do remember him later when he and his parents moved in with us. We always got along, whether it was doing chores or playing games. We made up most of the games. If other nieces or nephews were there, we would play ball, if only the two of us were there, we would play horseshoes. He never got upset if I won, which I did most of the time. We had a medal for the winner, and quite often I was the receiver of it. I wondered if sometimes he let me win since I was a girl.

When Thomas found out that his new brother's name was Clarence, he refused to call him by that name. Instead he called him "Jack" after an older family friend that spent a lot of time with him. To family, Clarence has been "Jack" ever since.

My father, John A. King, was a farmer. My three brothers, Willie, Vurnard and Tom "Budd", worked on the farm as they were growing up. They left one by one as they got older. Willie trained to work on automobile bodies. Vurnard trained as a mechanic and he also served a year in the CCC (1934-1935). He lived with an Aunt in Detroit for a year, and in 1939 he went into the U.S. Army and was discharged in the summer of 1945. Budd married Myrt and they worked in a cigarette factory, and he did other public jobs. In between jobs Budd and his family would move back with us. As Thomas and I grew older, we were more like brother and sister.

One fall day Thomas and Jack were outside cracking black walnuts with a hammer when the turkey gobbler decided to help. They hit him on the head to chase him away not knowing they had killed him, but they didn't tell their Grandmother. When she found the dead gobbler she didn't know what caused his death and was afraid to cook him. We missed a turkey dinner.

We moved to the big city (Richmond) December 19, 1941, and Thomas' family remained at La Crosse. My brother Willie carried my sister Jewel and I back on January 4, 1942, to live with Budd, Myrt and their children, Thomas, Mildred, Margaret and Jack to finish out the school year. When the school year ended, Jewel and I joined my Mother and one sister in Richmond. Thomas' family remained at La Crosse. Then in August 1942, Budd and Myrt's fifth child, Myrtis was born.

Thomas' father, Budd, was drafted into the Navy on December 27, 1943, and he was discharged on August 24, 1944. In the wee hours of the morning of December 24, 1944, a Western Union deliveryman knocked on our door so loud that it woke up everybody in the house. We all ran downstairs just knowing it was bad news. It was a telegram delivery for my mother and my brother-in-law opened it. We thought it was going to be from the War Department saying something had happened to my brother, Vurnard, who was serving in the Army in Europe. To our shock and surprise it was about Budd who had recently been discharged from the Navy. We were so thankful that Vurnard was safe, but very saddened to hear Budd had been killed in an auto accident. Gasoline was rationed then because of the war, so we had to double up to go be with his family and stay for the funeral. There were no seat belt

laws then, children and teens sat on the adults' laps for the trip. Mr. Collier, owner of the farm where they lived, let us have some gas to get back home.

I remember Christmas Eve night Thomas said, "I wonder if Santa Claus is coming for my brother and sisters tonight." We assured him that he would. I was working part time after school in Thalhimer's Department Store. I had saved and with my discount, I was able to buy what I thought were some nice gifts including a dress shirt for Budd. Myrt and the children remained at La Crosse afterwards. Following one of my visits with them, I needed a ride to the train station. Thomas, who was still a young boy then, took me to the station on the cross bar of his bike and I returned home. In late 1945, Myrt and children moved to Richmond and then to Hopewell in January 1946.

Thomas spent a lot of time with his Grandmother and me as well as other family in Richmond. He worked at Southern Biscuit (FFV) in 1946 and later as an usher at a theatre on Broad Street. One night I had just gotten home from work. The sidewalk was up to our house on the corner and a fence was from the house around the small yard. As I opened the door to go down the hall I heard someone on the porch behind me. I thought that someone had jumped over the fence onto the porch. With that I ran down the hall through the dining room to the kitchen door past my mother and sister. About the time they asked me why I was running, Thomas came through the dining room door. I didn't know it was him behind me and he had scared me so bad.

Growing up we never had a telephone. After high school while attending Smithdeal Massey Business College and with a full time job, I had a phone installed June 27, 1948. When Thomas enlisted in the Army, he called us collect quite often. His Grandmother or I would always accept the calls. He also wrote to his grandmother often. The last letter Thomas wrote to her while he was still in the United States was written on his way to Camp Stoneman, California and dated January 13, 1951. One call came from Clarksville, Tennessee and the next one from California. While he was waiting to go to Korea I received several calls, the last one on January 31, 1951.

Before he went to California, Thomas wanted to come home for Christmas 1950, but he didn't have leave. He told them that this would be the first time he had not been home for Christmas. He was given a pass to come home and it was the LAST time the family got to see him. He was killed in Korea, March 16, 1951.

I remember the call from Jack when they received the telegram that Thomas had been killed. Thomas always said he wanted to be buried in the Mise Cemetery where his Grandmother would someday be buried. His father was already buried there.

Through all these years I have carried his picture and newspaper article that says "Don't tell Mom". I shall always remember the one who was like another Brother.

Newspaper Articles about Thomas' Death and Funeral

'Don't Tell Mom,' GI Wrote; Soon After, He Dies in Action

Twenty-one-year-old Corporal Thomas W. King wrote his grandmother, Mrs. Kate R. King, of 1717 Third Ave., early in March that he expected to go into the front lines in Korea in a day or two.

"But don't tell Mom," he said. The Hopewell soldier was referring to Mrs. Myrtle King, of Hopewell, widow of T. B. King.

His mother found out about it later when she got a telegram from the Department of the Army.

Corporal King was killed in action on March 16—just three days after he went into action with the First Cavalry Division. No further details were available.

Corporal King, who attended Hopewell High School, went into the Army in 1948. Last July he was placed on reserve status. He was called back to active duty in September and his first letter from Korea was dated February 28. The last was written March 12.

In one of his last letters home, the soldier, who has three sisters and a brother, requested of his grandmother—

"Let me know all about the war news and what they are going to do in Washington."



CPL. THOMAS W. KING

Military Funeral for Cpl. Thomas W. King

A full military funeral service was conducted Sunday at 3:00 P. M. at the family cemetery near LaCrosse for Corporal Thomas W. King, 21, son of Mrs. Myrtle King of Hopewell, who was killed in service March 16. Two army chaplains from Camp Pickett and several soldiers assisted with the services and taps. A large turnout of the American Legion Post No. 79 of South Hill assisted in the flag service and as pallbearers.

Besides his mother he leaves five sisters, Mrs. Virginia Scott, of Lockmont, Alabama; Mrs. Frances Pruitt, of Petersburg; Misses Mildred, Margaret, and Myrtis King, all of Hopewell; one brother, Clarence King, of Hopewell; also two half-brothers, Eugene Tanner, Boston, Mass., and Wilson O. Tanner, of Hopewell.

Hopewell Soldier Killed In Action On Korean Front

A Hopewell soldier, Cpl. Thomas J. King, was killed in Korea on March 16, according to an official announcement received here by his mother, Mrs. Mert King, of 107 South 16th Ave.

Cpl. King, who would have celebrated his 21st birthday on September 21st of this year, had only been at the front line three days when he was killed in action.

The letter informing Mrs. King of his death was signed by Edward F. Witsell, Major General, United States Army, Adjutant General of the Army.

Details Not Available

General Witsell's letter said in part: "I wish that I could give you more information but casualty reports of this nature are necessarily brief and contain only essential facts. However, provisions are made for the overseas chaplain or commander to send a letter containing any available details."

He also pointed out that battle-ground conditions made it uncertain as to when such a letter would arrive. He concluded by saying:

"I know the sorrow this message has brought you and it is my hope that in time the knowledge of his sacrifice for his country may be of sustaining comfort to you."

Cpl. King in addition to his mother, who is a widow is survived by three sisters: Mildred Maire, Margaret Lee and Myrtis Elizabeth; and a younger brother, Clarence Anderson, all of whom make their home with their mother.

Was Reserve

At the time of his death, Cpl. King, who attended Hopewell High School, was on active duty having been called up as a member of the reserves. He was serving with the infantry in Korea.

His first enlistment was made here in Hopewell in July, 1948 and he was separated from the service on July 12, 1950 and was called back to active duty on September 20, 1951.

After being called up, his first station was at Camp Campbell, Ky., after which he was sent to Japan. According to letters received by his mother he was in Japan on February 22 and in his last letter dated March 12, he was 15 miles from the front and was expecting to move up to the front at any time.

Funeral Scenes for Thomas W. King



***Arrival of Thomas' Flagged Draped Coffin
at the La Crosse, Virginia train station***



***Thomas' Coffin at the Crews Funeral Home in
South Hill, Virginia***



***Honor Guard at Mise Family Cemetery in
Blackridge, Virginia***



***Arrival of Thomas' Coffin at the
Mise Family Cemetery***

Thomas W. King Service Awards



Service Ribbons

Left: UN Korean Service Award

***Middle: Korean Service Award with two
Campaign Stars***

Right: National Defense Service Award



Korean Presidential Unit Citation



Army Good Conduct Medal

Thomas W. King's Purple Heart Award (below and next page)

Back of Purple Heart with name inscribed



Front of Purple Heart



**The City of Hopewell War Memorial Monument
and Thomas' inscription on the monument**



Virginia War Memorial, Richmond, Virginia and Thomas' Inscription on the Wall

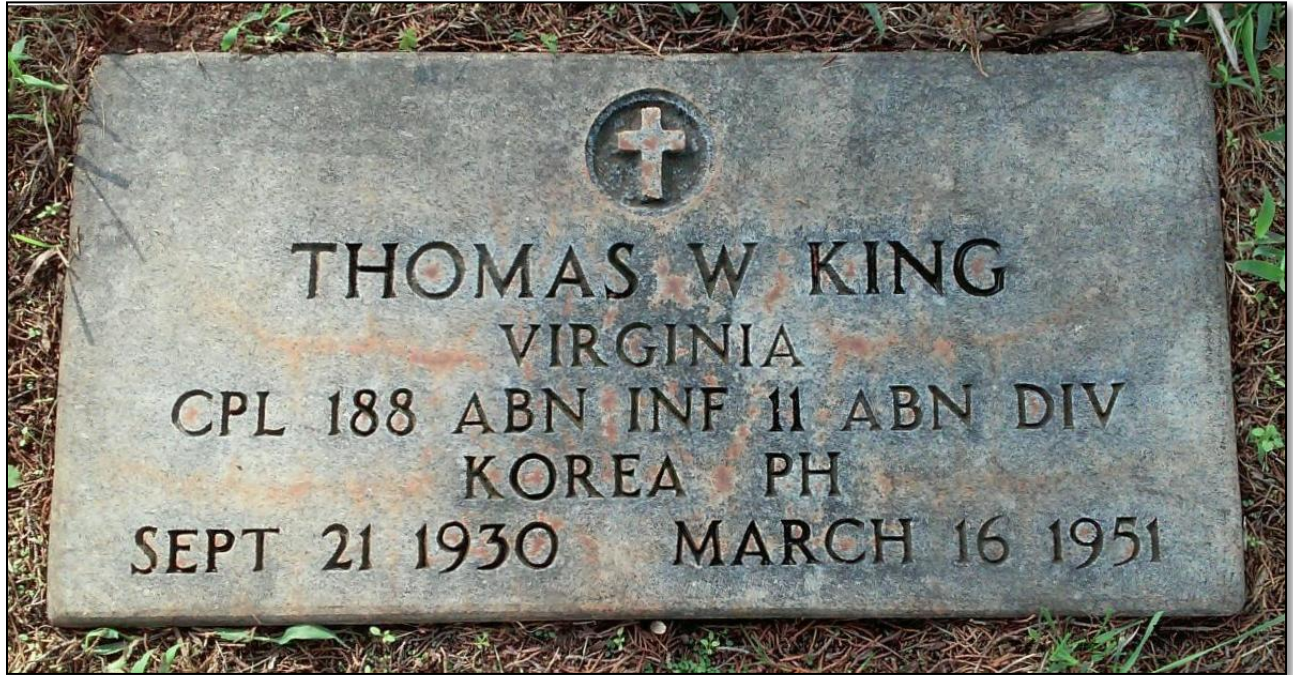


★ THOMAS W. KING

**Prince George County War Memorial and Thomas' Inscription
at the Historic Prince George Courthouse**



THOMAS W. KING



Final Resting Place

Mise Family Cemetery

Blackridge, Virginia

This memorial tribute made possible by support of:

J.T. Morriss and Sons

The Bank of Southside Virginia

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Williamson

Mrs. Jeanette Wallace

Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey McCants

Mrs. Alvah Wagner

The Family of Thomas W. King

Jack & Janie King

Myrtis K. Josey, and daughters Cathy Scarborough and Teresa Adams

Betty K. Robertson, and Karen and Bob Mills

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