The *Golden Book* honors IU alumni who have served their country in times of war.

**What’s in a Name?**

*The Golden Book* in the Indiana Memorial Union is enclosed in a glass case.

It’s called the Golden Book, and its hundreds of pages — totaling about 10,000 names — list all the “sons and daughters” of Indiana University who served in battles ranging from the War of 1812 to World War II.

But names are meaningless without the stories behind them. These were people who lived, loved, sacrificed, and often died. “Killed in action” is the way it’s described, but that just touches the surface.
Philip Caldwell. They are posed in full uniform at an undisclosed white photo. The Logansport native towers over his fellow tank crew members of the U.S. Army’s 1st Armored Division: Newton was captured in 1943. After the battle, Kaser and Newton are wounded and captured. Newton has burns on

his hands and face. He is taken to a hospital in Bari, Italy that was once a convent. Eventually he is transported by train to Camp 59, a prison in the small Italian town of Servigliano. While a prisoner, Newton learns German and Italian. He has no intention of waiting out the war as a POW. Camp 59 is not a place anyone, escape is possible for those who are willing and brave.

Newton is both. There is an enemy to defeat and a career to start. Newton escapes with fellow POW Raymond Cox. They are among the 2,000 prisoners that flee Camp 59 during the war.

Many move throughout the Italian countryside to avoid detection while seeking a way back to Allied territory. Newton and another prisoner, Martin Majeski, meet Pietro Viozzi, who offers them haven at his farm near the small town of Santa Vittoria. Loneliness is not a problem. Four families live there. Newton and Majeski make it an even 30 people in the house.

Newton and Majeski become so much a part of the family (Newton gets an Italian name — Roberto Newtoni) that they decide to stay. They help work the farm. They make toys and teach children English. Pietro grows to love them as soon as they arrive. They become visible, a dangerous reality in a deadly world.

Nazis and Italian fascists are targets for raids and attacks behind the lines, and somebody has to pay. An order goes out in early 1944 to execute escaped prisoners and any Italians helping the Allies.

And then …

Dennis Hill is the administrator and main researcher for a website called Survivors of Camp 59 — Experiences of the Allied servicemen who were Prisoners of War at Servigliano, Italy. He talked with Newton’s nephew, also named Robert Newton, for details about the war experience. The nephew visited Italy in 1999, talked to surviving family members and wrote about his uncle. Additional insight was provided from Italian historian Filippo Ferrano, who interviewed Cesare Vouzi for a story that appeared in a July 2004 Italian publication. Cesare was just a young boy when his parents were captured as German Americans.

Accounts vary on exactly what happened next. According to Cesare, the Americans slept in the stables on a couch hidden by hay and animals, but were with the family during the day. Newton, in particular, liked to help with the animals.

Very early one morning on March 9, 1944, German troops appeared in town. One account suggested they were actually Italian fascists dressed as German soldiers.

The Americans hid in a ditch. Eventually, Cesare said, the Vouzis were told the Germans had left, so the Americans joined the family for breakfast.

Two German soldiers returned on motorbikes and went straight for the Vouzi house, even though other families were hiding escaped prisoners. The soldiers raised their guns and ordered everybody out, instantly recognizing the Americans. Cesare said a spy in the town must have told the Germans about the Americans.

The Germans took the Americans to a small wooded area near the Vouzis, brought them to stand near the water. Family members heard gunshots. One account said the men were shot in the back and kicked into the river. Another said they were ordered to dig their own graves and then shot.

Whatever the version, Robert Newton and Martin Majeski were dead.

The Germans returned to the Vouzi house and ordered everyone out, even an old aunt who had been bedridden for years. They set fire to the house, took money, food, and a horse and burned down the hay barn as an example to those who would help POWs.

The next day a man brought the bodies of the Americans into town on a horse and cart for burial. Cesare said the man, a poor farmer, demanded that the Vouzis pay for the expense. The Americans were buried in a Santa Vittoria cemetery. A few months later, the bodies were moved to an American cemetery in southern Italy. Several years later, their families arrived to take the bodies back home.

“Our family suffered,” Cesare said. “but no one ever regretted having given their lives to save others.”

In December of 2010, the Newton family — including a 99-year-old aunt — visited Indiana’s Memorial Union to see the Golden Book. Hill had asked Thom Simmons, the associate director for the Memorial Union, to have the book turned to the page that listed Robert Newton. Here is what the family saw: Newton, Robert Abey

Ex 1944

Logosport, Indiana

U.S.A. Tank Corps

Killed in action in Italy, March 9, 1944.

Just letters on a page?

Not even close.

There are other stories, of course. For those we must turn the page …

Russell Church’s last fiery seconds on earth left him with a choice — obey his orders and, perhaps, jeopardize the lives of his fellow soldiers; or disobey, complete his mission, and buy his decimated unit some desperately needed time.

He had seconds to decide …

Church had been a varsity swimmer at IU, graduating in 1939. He was athletic and charming and popular. He also was tough and fiercely competitive. He raced about the man he served with.

In September of 1941, he was a lieutenant stationed in the Philippines as a pilot in the Army Air Corps. One day members of his unit, the 17th Pursuit Squadron, went swimming. A soldier got caught in the undertow and was pulled out to sea. Church saw him and kept him afloat until other soldiers could get a boat from a nearby village and rescue them. He was honored for his actions.

By December of 1941, United States officials knew there was a strong likelihood the Japanese would attack, but didn’t feel quite ready. Many believed the Japanese would hit the Philippines first because it was closer to Japan. Instead, on Dec. 7, 1941, they attacked Pearl Harbor. Nine hours later, they invaded the Philippines.

Most of the American planes were destroyed in the initial attack. The ones that survived (mostly P-40 fighter planes with shark mouths painted on the noses) were just used for scouting the area. The Americans couldn’t afford to lose any more planes in battle.

By Dec. 10, the Japanese had landed near the Philippine town of Vigan, where Church and his unit were stationed. Five days later, Japanese troops and 25 planes had settled onto a nearby field. Americans decided to attack. The mission was led by Lt. Boyd “Buzz” Wagner, who had already shot down four enemy planes. He needed a wingman and picked Church, one of the squadron’s most experienced pilots.

According to an AirForce-Magazine.com story by John L. Frisbee, Wagner went first and dropped six 30-pound fragmentation bombs on Japanese planes neatly positioned on the field. Church was next, but by then the Japanese had started shooting. Church’s plane was hit and burst into flames. Wagner ordered Church to turn back and bail out. Church did not. He knew the Americans couldn’t afford to waste this opportunity. It might help the squadron hold on until reinforcements arrived. It might save lives. So he dropped all his bombs, destroying many Japanese planes as he could before his P-40 crashed, killing him.

“I know that Church knew he was facing certain death when he decided to remain with his side,” Wagner told Frisbee. “What Russell Church did at Vigan was the most courageous thing I have ever seen in this Pacific war.”

Church was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his bravery. It was reported the Japanese saw his self-sacrifice and buried him with full military honors. And then …
DIGITIZING THE GOLDEN BOOK TO MEET 21ST-CENTURY NEEDS

The Golden Book has met the golden computer age. Is that a good thing?

You’d better believe it.

Indiana University officials have digitized the more than 10,000 names in the 50-year-plus book that lists everyone with an IU affiliation who served in military action ranging from the War of 1812 to World War II.

Margaret Barcheld of IU’s Veterans Affairs Office says the goal is to have “a computer display so people can browse through the book. We haven’t even through the whole book because it’s old and fragile.”

“Some of the World War II veterans have their stories as part of the Oral History Project. Every page will be digitally photographed. Completion of the project was celebrated on Nov. 11, Veterans Day.

Barcheld says plans include a new Golden Book that would include the names of those who served in wars after World War II.

“It’s a long-term project,” she says. “We have significant funding needs, but we’d love to see the old version and a new volume with (Internet) links to stories and places about the individuals named in there.”

Harold B. (Pete) Goldsmith, the IUB dean of students, is the driving force behind the project. Every page will be digitally photographed. Completion of the project was celebrated on Nov. 11, Veterans Day.

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“The Memorial Room of the Indiana Memorial Union hosts the Golden Book, which lists the names of Indiana University alumni who served their country in the wars of the republic. The book also lists the names of donors whose funds were used to construct these IU buildings: the old Memorial Stadium, the Memorial Union, and Memorial Hall in the Agnes E. Wells Quadrangle.

TRUE GOLD

ALUMNI/INDIANA.EDU/MAGAZINE
The book, which rests on a base made from a hand-carved mantle from an old Roman palace, is displayed in the Memorial Room (dedicated in 1969), which is located across from Starbucks in the Memorial Union.

The room includes a pair of religious-themed stained glass windows. One, titled “The Flight into Egypt,” shows Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus riding a donkey and is estimated to be more than 700 years old. The other, called “The Epiphany or Adoration of the Kings,” is more than 500 years old. Both came from Indianapolis Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Booth Tarkington, who acquired them from the collection of an Austrian count and used them in his Meridian Street home. They were donated by Mr. and Mrs. H. Frederick Willkie, who bought Tarkington’s home after he died in 1946.

On the floor is a bronze plaque with the inscription, “In memory of the sons and daughters of Indiana University who have served in the wars of the republic.” Tradition says no one should step on the plaque.

There is also a portrait of William Lowe Bryan, IU’s president from 1902 to 1937. It was under his leadership that the drive to build the Memorial Union was proposed and completed in 1932. The digital display of the Golden Book sits beneath the portrait of Bryan, across the room from the printed book.

At one time the Golden Book was left open and its pages turned daily. Now it is preserved in a locked glass case. — P.D.