

November 7, 2005

Dear Reader,

Ever since I was a child, I would walk into my grandparents' house and see the picture of a young sailor on the wall next to a portrait of an exploding, sinking ship. I knew that the picture was to memorialize my great-uncle, Bill Bettinger, but I never knew much about how the ship exploded, or exactly how Bill died. I never really knew anything about Bill as a person. To me, Bill was just this man who died in World War II. I must say that after researching and interviewing for this project, I have come to a new understanding of Bill as a person, and what his life might have been like. I feel more connected to him, and learning more about his life and death made me feel as though I missed out on meeting a great family member.

My interviews with my great-aunt, Margie, and my great-uncle, Paul, were so helpful and important to me in getting to know Bill better. I took a few Sunday afternoons to spend time with Bill's brother and sister. Each time I met with one of them, I was introduced to another facet of Bill's life. I was touched deeply as I was brought closer to Bill by seeing the feelings they had for their brother in their eyes and in the tone of their voices. They remembered their brother as if they just lost him yesterday, and I could hear their love for him as they spoke. Both Margie and Paul were very happy to share their memories and anything else they could to keep Bill alive in all of our hearts.

A great thing about interviewing Margie and Paul was that they were in two different places during the war. Paul had a different point-o