

Story from Denise Robinson
Volunteer who ensured that a Veteran's grave did not remain unmarked

Yesterday after 75 years, 1 month, and 11 days, (at Green Mount Cemetery) a headstone was finally placed on the grave of ARM1/C Chester Adrian Eichelberger.

Chester was born in Baltimore. At the age of two, his family moved to Ferndale where he was raised. Like his father, Chester enlisted in the Navy prior to graduation.

Chester was part of the first task force that arrived in Iceland in July 1941 as part of the Navy's neutrality patrol. In November 1941, Chester arrived back in Norfolk where he was sent to advanced radio/transmission school. In December 1941, the Baltimore Sun noted that Chester was home, visiting his family and classmates in Ferndale.

On 2 October 1942- as part of USN VP84- Patrol Bomber Squadron Chester arrived back in Iceland. He was assigned to Lt. Harvy H Luce's crew.

On 27 December 1942- a squadron from VP-84 took off from Keflavik, Iceland on an anti-submarine sweep. A snow squall appeared and instead of flying around it, Lt. Luce decided to fly through it (as he had done before) Fifteen minutes after take-off PBY-5A Buno 04402 encountered violent turbulence. The plane lost altitude, crashed, and exploded. All 9 crew were killed.

Chester's remains were returned to the US in November 1947 aboard the SS Connolly. His body was then transported to Baltimore via train. He was laid to rest in Green Mount Cemetery on 25 November 1947. His father died shortly after he was buried, and his mother and brother moved to California. A headstone was never placed on his grave. People who visited Greenmount Cemetery never knew they were walking by the grave of someone who gave his life for our freedoms. For a time, Chester was forgotten.

Until I came across a website that listed the men who died from Anne Arundel County - next to his name it stated: "burial location unknown". I immediately checked the ABMC site, and he was not listed on the veterans burial locator website. I found his name listed on the SS Connolly transport records so I knew his body was brought back to the states.

With help from my friend, Heather Puckett (a historian at Fort McClelland), we were able to locate the final resting place of ARM1/C Chester Eichelberger- the main reason he was lost- he never received the headstone he was owed by the US Government (VA). Since his family had moved to California, no one knew where he was. No flag, no honors were ever placed on his grave, until now.

ARM1/C Eichelberger's application for a headstone sat for over a year- pushed from one person to another- lagging in St. Louis. It wasn't until I contacted Senator Van Hollen's office that his application was pushed through. I know of four applications for Anne Arundel County men (died in WWI and WWII) whose paperwork is lost - stopped at one place or another. There are most likely many more throughout the state.

This year marks the 105th Anniversary of WWI- 2025 marks the 80th Anniversary of WWII- Is there a way to set up a small committee to help with finding and pushing through the paperwork to get the headstones these men deserve? Let Anne Arundel County take the lead in the state.

Over the weekend I spoke with ARM1/C Chester Eichelberger's nephew - he lives in Bend Oregon- his parents divorced- he grew up with his mother and he had no idea his Uncle was in an unmarked grave at

Green Mount. He assumed his Uncle was buried overseas like many of the men from WWII. I was able to tell him about his Uncle's service, all the work we are doing here in Anne Arundel County to make sure men like his father are honored and remembered.... John and/or Senator Elfreth is there a way we can get a proclamation made for ARM1/C Eichelberger's sacrifice and service?

I am in contact with Dick Tobias- (he was responsible for passing legislation to get Gold Star Highways across the country).- Mr Tobias along with representatives from the VFW and American Legion would present him with the proclamation on the county/state's behalf.

More work to be done in regards to the men who died while serving- let me know your thoughts and/or ideas.

Thank you to the staff at Green Mount Cemetery. Shawn and Lyle especially. When I called Green Mount Cemetery and told them I suspected ARM1/C was buried there- from his transport records I had a time frame for his burial. To find Chester I had to research his family tree a bit. I suspected Chester might be buried next to his grandfather who died in 1930. Most cemeteries- say come look- or when we get a chance we will look, but Shawn when I told him ARM1/C died during the war, he promised to call me back by the end of the day. Shawn went through the old burial records until he found ARM1/C records- then walked to the lot- that is when we discovered he was in an unmarked grave. (as is his grandfather)

Once again I have written way too much, and not enough for our men who gave their all.

Thank you for reading and for caring.

Take care

Denise