Colby Students in World War II

By: Makhieba Simon
During WWII a total of 1350 Colby men and women served in the U.S armed forces.

The campus was open to a training detachment of the Army Air Force, where over 1500 men received training.

Several students who served in the war were reported missing in action and some were captured and taken as prisoners.

Colby students and alumni who died as members of service units in World War II totaled 61, including women.
Colby Students served in every branch of the U.S. armed services.

Changes The Entire Appearance Of Old Colby College Students Take Tough Commando Course
• 60 men were KIA (Killed In Action).

• 9 men were reported MIA (Missing In Action) while on oversea missions.

• 9 men were captured and held as POW (Prisoners Of War) in German and Japanese prison camps.
William Lyman (KIA)

- William Lyman was one of many Colby men who died in battle.

- On July 13, 1943 Lyman’s ship was blown apart after two dive bombers planted a bomb on it’s deck.

- Due to his location at the time of the attack, there was no chance of survival for Lyman.
OVER DUSSELDORF

In a letter written to Coach Millett a few weeks before he was reported missing in action (see page 24), Sgt. John C. Kitchen, ’42, tells informally about the life of a bomber navigator with the Royal Canadian Air Force.

“We are very happy over here on this side of the Atlantic—thriving on the environment and hospitality, which by the way is excellent. At first it was rather difficult for some of the boys to get used to English and Air Force slang, which can get one into a lot of trouble since they use the same words with different meanings from the ones we are accustomed to. But it is surprising how quickly one can orient himself to all this and really like it. Now there are more Canadians and Americans drinking four o’clock tea than Englishmen. They are grand people.

“Life on a squadron is all it is cracked up to be. We are happy to be flying under RCAF colors again—not that we didn’t like the RAF, because they treated us grand while we were with them—but because I have not forgotten that I am a Canadian.

“I have checked one of my operational trips off the list. It is too bad we are not permitted to tell you much about it, but you will be happy to know that there is less of Düsseldorf standing now than before we visited them. I did not forget the fraternity on that raid; on one large bomb I printed DKE, so tell the boys we left our calling card in Germany.

“Our new kits are super and we are terrifically thrilled with them. The American boys are putting on a good show over here and we are mighty glad to have them with us. From all reports they are going over big with the English people.”

John C. Kitchen (MIA)

- Kitchen was one of several Colby men reported MIA.

- Had he been found, he would have graduated from Colby in 1942.

**John C. Kitchen, ’42**

Word was received at the Alumni Office on October 12th that Sgt. John C. Kitchen, Royal Canadian Air Force, had been reported “missing in action.”

Kitchen was born at Fredericton, N. B., on September 25, 1919. He entered Colby in 1938 and left at the end of his sophomore year, enlisting in the RCAF shortly thereafter. He was a member of the Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity.

Sgt. Kitchen has been on active duty in England for some time. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Kitchen of Fredericton, N. B.
Robert Lucy Jr. (POW)

- Robert Lucy was one of several POW.

- He was primarily reported MIA, then discovered to be imprisoned in a German prison-camp.

- Lucy was later liberated by Russian troops.
Life as a student soldier

• Most Colby students trained for the war while they were enrolled in school.

• After training they were usually sent to domestic or foreign army bases.

• Soldiers were placed in special squadrons, or units, based on their training capacity. The comradeship within squadrons were possibly the closest experience students had to campus life.
Students who survived the war often returned to Colby to complete their degrees.

Others continued to pursue service in the U.S armed forces.

Many earned medals and awards for their bravery and service in World War II.
Topics For Classes Might Include....

- “The History of Colby College”
- “Colby College during World War II”
- “American POW in World War II”
- “World War II through letters”
- “U.S participation in World War II”
- “World War II from a Colby Students perspective”