

## *Loren E. Love*

### Summary

Loren Love's story is one that shows that war heroes sometimes come from unexpected backgrounds. In his life before the war, Love showed a passion for music as he was a part of the pep band, various orchestras, and even the president of a musical fraternity. Once he had graduated from Washington State College, he taught in Omak as a music teacher before the war broke out. He enlisted with the Marine Corps as an officer and saw action on Tarawa and Saipan where he was mortally wounded. His life of leadership in band made him a natural leader that was beloved by his men.

### Early Life and WSC Years

Loren Elmer Love was born November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1917 in Connell, Washington. Loren was the oldest of three children and the only son. The family moved to Colville in 1929 and Loren attended Colville High School, becoming a part of the school orchestra. After graduating high school in 1934, he then attended Washington State College from 1935 to 1940. Love was an extremely active student during his time at WSC as he was a part of many different clubs that mainly focused on music. By the time he graduated in 1940, he was a member of the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity and was President of the Phi Mu Alpha, a fraternal society dedicated to music. Loren played bassoon in the band, sang in the choir, was the student director in the symphony orchestra, and also led the pep band during basketball season. <sup>1</sup> All these clubs and positions showed that Love was a natural leader and well-liked by his peers. He was also one of ten men in

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<sup>1</sup> Chinook. Pullman, WA: WSC, 1940. Accessed May 5, 2018.  
<http://content.libraries.wsu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/chinook/id/27391/rec/41>.

the running for “most handsome man” on campus.<sup>2</sup> When he graduated in 1940 he left with degrees in Music and Education.

### *Omak, Tarawa, and Saipan*

After graduating from WSC, he went to teach music in the Omak school system. After war broke out, he finished the school year as a teacher and he enlisted in the Marine Corps in the spring of 1942. Before he received his call to the Officers Training School, Love worked in the Biles-Coleman Lumber Company until November.<sup>3</sup> He trained with the Marines at Quantico, Virginia where he was commissioned and reached the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. Love would leave for overseas in July of 1943 where his first action would be during the Battle of Tarawa. He reached the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant after the battle and would see combat on Saipan in June 1944. The landing on Saipan was particularly contested by the Japanese and Love came to the forefront in the early stages of the battle as his citation reads;

“For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity as leader of a regimental weapons platoon attached to the Sixth marines, Second marine division, in action against enemy Japanese forces at Saipan, Marianas Islands, on June 15 and 16, 1944. With his platoon units disembarked at various points on the heavily fortified beach, First Lieut. Love boldly faced concentrated artillery, machine-gun and mortar fire to reorganize his men, and fearlessly proceeded across fire-swept areas, personally guided them to a designated area. Immediately leading his platoon into action, he fought valiantly against a fanatic enemy, contributing essentially to the success of the landing and the expeditious establishment of the beachhead. When Japanese forces launched a counter-attack against the sector held by his unit the following day, First Lieut. Love skillfully deployed his men, and accurately directing their gunfire, succeeded in repelling the vicious onslaught. Despite serious wounds received during the action, which subsequently proved fatal, First Lieut.

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<sup>2</sup> "Six Finalists Chosen For Publications Ball Queen Race; Handsome Men Vie." Washington State Evergreen, April 10, 1940. Accessed May 5, 2018.

<http://content.libraries.wsu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/evergreens/id/14616/rec/7>.

<sup>3</sup> "Silver Star Given Lieut. Love Posthumously." The Omak Chronicle, July 12, 1945.

Love, by his brilliant leadership and indomitable fighting spirit, had served as an inspiring example to all members of his platoon, and his unwavering devotion to duty throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States naval service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.”<sup>4</sup>

Loren Love died of his wounds at sea and was that is where his body was laid to rest. His parents first received word of his injuries and the announcement of his death came a few weeks later. For his actions, Love was posthumously awarded the Silver Star and a Purple Heart. <sup>5</sup> A few months after his death, a letter arrived at the local paper in Omak from a fellow soldier of Love, Lt. Wiggin, that detailed his actions on Saipan as well as sadness for the loss of his friend. Lt. Wiggin’s letter confirms what was told in his citation, that Love was busy directing the platoon during a fierce Japanese attack. He was struck in the shoulder by a bullet and was taken back to the ships for medical treatment. Apparently, the bullet had deflected once it hit his shoulder and ricocheted to vital parts of Love’s body and this led to his eventual death aboard the ship. The rest of the article detailing the letter from Wiggin is him speaking about Love’s character and their friendship;

“He was one of the finest men that I ever knew, a true gentlemen and a good friend. He was a man of extremely high standards, who managed to maintain them in spite of the rough nature of this life and many of his associates-and he was respected for them”.

“As an officer he was of the best. He was a fine leader of his men. He taught them well, protected them, fought for them and led them in battle. In this, a military service with the best officers in the world, he was of the best”.

“As a fellow he was well-liked. We had a lot of fun together and did some serious thinking together. I can truthfully say that I miss him as I would my brother”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dechant, Susan. "Loren Love." Northeast Washington Genealogical Society. 2012. Accessed May 5, 201/. <https://newgs.org/upload/files/LoveLoren.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> “Comrade Writes of Lt. Love’s Death”. The Omak Chronicle, November 2, 1944.

This emotional letter best represents the character of Loren Love in not only his military service but his life at WSC. His leadership skills manifested and were honed in his music clubs for which he had an obvious passion for. When reading his citation and Wiggin's letter, the image one might have of Love stands in stark contrast to what he actually looked like and his life before the war. He was a tall, slender man with an unassuming name that one wouldn't attach to someone who fought gallantly in the war. In his college years he was active in many musical groups and taught music at schools once he had graduated, things no one would think of when reading of his skill in combat. Someone that Love seems reminiscent of is Captain John H. Miller, played by Tom Hanks, in the movie "*Saving Private Ryan*". In the movie, Miller is the fearless leader of his squad but his men do not know where he is from. They are shocked to find out that their brave captain was merely a schoolteacher, a background none would have expected from a hardened man. Loren Love's story shows that extraordinary men are oftentimes just like any other person.



