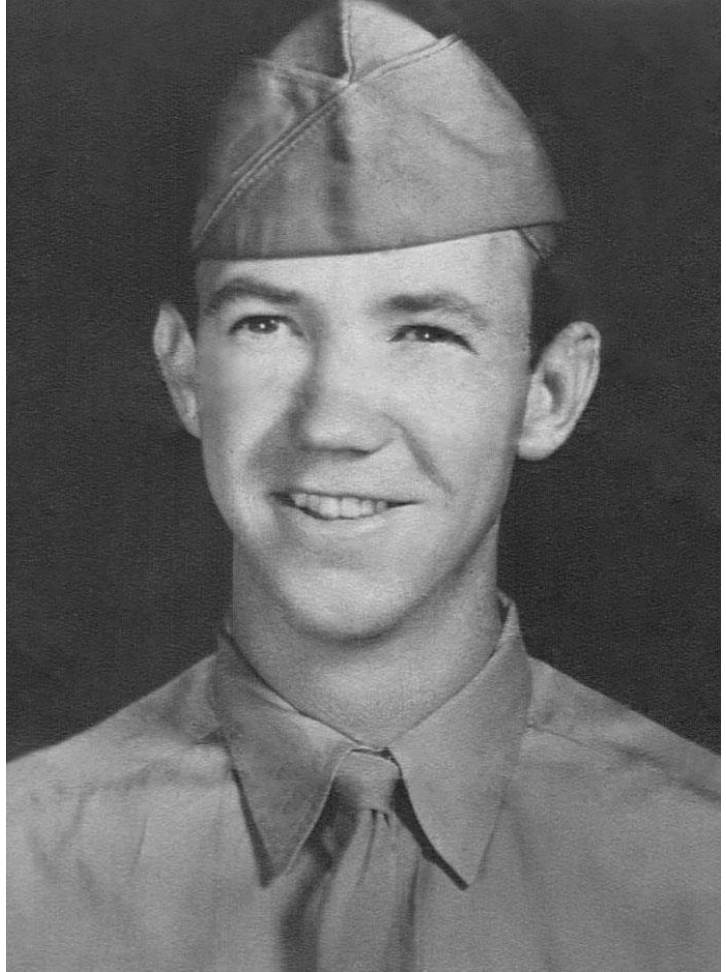


# Louis C. Petersen

Compiled by Judy Hansen  
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Louis Conrad Petersen is the son of Conrad and Pearl Gerstner Peterson. He was born in Alpine, Utah County, Utah on May 8, 1920. He has a sister Luana, and brothers Elwood, Darwin, and Charles. Louis completed three years of High School at American Fork High. He enlisted in the Army on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 1941 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Louis was described as a 6 ft. 140 pound man with Hazel eyes, Brown hair, and light complexion.

Louis was in basic training at Camp Roberts, California and was also stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington; San Luis Obispo, and Presidio, California. He married Georgia Lou Willis on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1943 in Fresno Beach, Fresno, California. They are the parents of two children Delina Lou and Raymond. He also trained in Alabama and then stationed in New York for two months before going overseas in the European Theater.



Louis C Petersen serial # 39679834 was assigned to Co. B, 394<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment, 99<sup>th</sup> infantry division. This put him right in the middle of the infamous Battle of the Bulge. The 394<sup>th</sup> arrived on November 6<sup>th</sup> 1944 in LeHavre, France. The 394<sup>th</sup> became the most decorated unit in WWII but this was not without a cost. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, *"The Battle of the Bulge was 'undoubtedly the greatest American battle of the war'. It was also one of the bloodiest. The U.S. suffered well over 80,000 casualties."* The casualties from the Battle of the Bulge amounts to approximately 10% of all American combat casualties in World War II. Louis was one of these casualties.

This battle began Dec 16, 1944 and went through January 25, 1945. By this time Adolf Hitler had visible signs of tremors and was suffering dementia. Hitler advocated they were to fight until the best came out on top and he was determined his team was the best. He ordered that traitors would be sent to Siberia. His men were willing to die before being sent there. This really was Hitler's last ditch effort to win the war. He brought his men on with full force. The 393<sup>rd</sup>, 394<sup>th</sup>, and 395<sup>th</sup> were instrumental to the efforts of this battle. The German plan was to control the Losheim Gap which was a narrow 5 mile road in the densely forested Ardennes region. Although the 394<sup>th</sup> and 395<sup>th</sup> did not know it at the time, they delayed the German's

intent of taking this road by eight hours in December 1944. They defended this road with everything they had which allowed the allied troops more time of preparation and planning and delayed the planned German attack. The 394<sup>th</sup> and 395<sup>th</sup> were extremely outnumbered and this was so amazing to the Germans that even one of their top commanders had made comments how a group of inexperienced boys could fight so well. Not only did they fight hard but the conditions were some of the worst ever. December 1944 was the coldest on record in the memory at the Ardennes forest where the battle took place.

Quoted by Billy Clampett of the 99<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 395<sup>th</sup> infantry Regiment, *"In the Ghost Front area, where the main thrust was made, the 395th and the 394th were hit hard; . . . I had no idea that we were leap-frogging. I only knew that, endlessly, we were marching, digging in, freezing, getting shelled, and moving out, and going through it all again. Ammunition bearers in a heavy weapons company do not access to the big picture-in the Ardennes in December 1944, this probably was a good thing."*

Louis was reported as killed in action in Belgium on January 3, 1945. His remains were temporarily buried in the Henri-Chapelle military cemetery in Belgium. After the war ended in 1947, eight ships were refitted to carry heavy steel coffins in efforts to return U.S. fallen soldiers to their home country. Louis was one of the first to be brought back home to American soil on October 26<sup>th</sup> along with 6,248 others. He came home on the *Joseph V Connolly* and arrived in a New York Harbor that was filled with flowers floating on the water. He was accompanied by Sgt. Billie M Reece and arrived back in American Fork, Utah on Thursday November 20, 1947 at 9:30. A graveside service was held with Commander Clark L Tolton of the American Legion Post 49 officiating where he was buried permanently in the American Fork City Cemetery. His name is honored on the American Fork Cemetery Veterans Honor Wall.

*"It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived."* ~Gen. George S. Paton Jr.

This story is a combined effort of the Lehi Historical Society and the Stories Behind the Stars project, a national effort of volunteers to write the stories of all 400,000+ of the US WW2 fallen on Fold3. Related to this, there will be a smart phone app that will allow people to visit any war memorial or cemetery, scan the fallen's name and read his/her story.

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