

NORRIS COSTNER

It was in 1936 that I first came to know him. One night in the teacherage at Piedmont his teacher, Mrs. Franklin Biggerstaff, was grading papers, and she made the remark that Norris was one of her outstanding pupils. Then I saw him - A very clean, clear-eyed youngster, bounding in restless energy, so typical of American youth.

I watched him as he grew. No youth loved stiff competition as Norris loved it. In scholastic marks, in public speaking, and in dramatics he exerted a remarkable spirit of contest. Norris did not accept things just because they were in print. He was independent in his thinking and in his actions. He gave his opponent no ground.

In remembering Norris and my associations with him I am confronted with many "Firsts". A few of them follow: As you know, he was the first son of Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Costner; In practically every examination I ever gave his class he was the first to hand in his paper, and often his paper was in by the time I had completed writing the questions on the board and dusted the chalk from my hands; on true-false exams he more often than not made the first and highest mark, and I remember that he could answer them with uncanny accuracy (his answers were always short and terse) he was first in memorizing his part in the Junior and Senior plays; (I was very impressed with his performance in "Behind The News") On the first day of the school year he was always the first pupil to pay his book-rent; and Norris was the first Lawndale service man to make the supreme sacrifice for his country. For that last "First" he has made himself "First" in the hearts of his Community.

Private First Class Wyle Norris Costner of the U. S. Marines was born January 22nd, 1926 in Lawndale and attended Piedmont School, being graduated from that institution in 1942. On October 18th, 1943 he volunteered for service in the Marines. He trained at the Marine Base in San Diego, California, in Camp Elliott, California, and later in Honolulu, T. H. On June 16th, 1944 he was killed in action in the South-Pacific Theatre of War.

Of him, Professor M. L. Turner, his high school principal said, "I am sure that all who have had intimate dealings with Norris could not fail to be impressed by his candidness. He was a young man of strong convictions and he was ever ready to stand by his convictions irrespective of what others might say or think. His was a life completely devoid of the spirit of hypocrisy and sycophancy."

The last first-hand word from Norris - through a person who saw him often in Honolulu, was that Norris had gained to 175 pounds, and that his arms were as solid as a dollar; that he was in splendid spirit, and was proud to be a Marine. Could we be justified in believing that Norris was among the "First" to the front on that day when he gloriously made the supreme sacrifice? More glory can be added to his effort if we, who will miss him most, acquire a deeper meaning of the things for which he gave his life, so that he shall not have died in vain.

Taft S. Putnam.