



*Image Source courtesy of his nephew, Kenneth Bleau, and his cousin Chris.*

## **IHS 1936 - Kenneth Bleau - D Day 1944**

**June 2017**

By Aileen Carney Sweeney  
June 2017

### **Brittany American Cemetery - Kenneth Bleau**

#### [Kenneth Bleau grave details](#)

There are two main American cemeteries in France. The first is Normandy Cemetery. Normandy Cemetery overlooks Omaha Beach (one of five primary beaches affiliated with the June 6th 1944 D-Day landing) in Normandy and contains the graves of 9,386 of American military dead.

A second American cemetery is located 1.5 miles southeast of the village of St. James and 12 miles south of Avranches. This is ~100 kilometers (60 miles) south and west of Normandy. This cemetery is Brittany Cemetery. Kenneth Bleau is buried at Brittany Cemetery along with 4,409 other American soldiers.

Source: American Battle Monuments Commission European Region,

2000

Name: Kenneth Bleau  
Rank: 2nd Lieutenant  
Cemetery: Brittany  
Plot: D  
Row: 13  
Grave: 7  
Serial Number 1294967  
Unit: 16th Infantry, 1st Division  
Date of Death: August 1, 1944  
Decorations: DSC PH/OLC

Kenneth Bleau was awarded these honors.

### **Distinguished Service Cross**

The Distinguished Service Cross, established by Act of Congress on 9 July 1918 but retroactive to 6 April 1917, is awarded to a person who, while serving in any capacity with the United States Army, distinguishes himself or herself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States, while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing or foreign force, or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party. The act or acts of heroism must have been so notable and have involved risk of life so extraordinary as to set the individual apart from their comrades. In precedence for valor, the Distinguished Service Cross ranks immediately behind the Medal of Honor.

### **Purple Heart**

The Purple Heart is awarded to members of the Armed Forces of the United States who after 5 April 1917 have been wounded or killed in action against an enemy of the United States or an opposing armed force, while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict, as the result of acts of enemy or hostile opposing forces, as a result of terrorist attacks or attacks on peacekeeping forces since

28 March 1973, or by friendly fire in circumstance as described above.

### Kenneth Bleau IHS 1936

1943 - Lt. Kenneth Bleau married Mary Jane Space, of Clinton, in Utica on April 17, 1943. The marriage took place just prior to his departure for the service. Miss Space made her home with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Space, Clinton. Lt. Kenneth Bleau was killed in action August 1, 1944 in Normandy. A War Department telegram was sent to his wife, Mary Jane Space Bleau, informing her of his death.



1936 Kenneth Bleau

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### Newspaper Accounts of D-Day Heroics

#### LT. KENNETH BLEAU DIES IN FRANCE AUGUST 1ST 1944

Son Of Louis And Bessie Suters Bleau,  
Former Residents,

Killed In Action August 1st

[Waterville Times - 1944 Aug. 24.](#)

Lt. Kenneth Bleau, 26, of Iliion, was killed in action August 1 in Normandy, according to a War Department telegram sent Monday to his wife, Mary Jane Space Bleau, Clinton, who informed his mother, Mrs. Bessie A Bleau of Iliion.

Lieutenant Bleau was born in Iliion, a son of the late Louis B. and Bessie Suters Bleau, both of whom were residents of Waterville for several years.

By a strange coincidence Lieutenant Bleau apparently was killed the same day he had written a letter to his mother in which he said he was feeling fine and would probably be in action soon.

### **In Normandy Campaign**

He had participated in the Normandy campaign since its inception, having been one of a trio who killed 100 Germans on D-Day while following a commander who had said that to stay on the beach was to be killed, so why not fight and be off the beach.

The lieutenant lost most of his men in that advance, but the group pushed on into Colleville, some 3,000 yards, and he and 12 others were still there the next day grimly holding a courtyard when reinforcements arrived: A presidential citation was awarded for the action.

The young fighter, who would have been 27 next Sunday, received only a slight ear wound in all his Normandy fighting and considered himself In good shape for continuing, according to letters sent home.

He has been overseas since May, 1943, leaving about two years after he entered the service. He enlisted in the Air Force in February, 1941, and was transferred to Officer Candidate School some months later. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in October, 1942, at Fort Benning, Ga. He also trained with the ski troops.

### **Married in 1943**

He married the former Miss Space in the spring of 1943, just prior to his departure. She makes her home with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Space, Clinton.

Lieutenant Bleau was graduated from Iliion High School, being active In football and basketball. He was also an outstanding swimmer and diver.

He studied physical education at the University of Alabama and was diving champion while there. Before entering the Army he was employed by Remington Rand In Iliion.

Besides his mother and wife, he leaves three sisters, Mrs. George Finnegan, Washington, D. C; Mrs. Thomas Lockyer, Iliion; and Mrs. Harry Seymour, Chicago; also four brothers, William, Herkimer; Carl and Louis, Iliion and S. Sgt. Raymond Bleau, with the Signal Corps in France.

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**Lt Kenneth Bleau  
Meets Death  
On Battlefield**

## Distinguished Service In Invasion Earned Praise Of Commanding General

[Clinton Courier - 1944 Aug. 24.](#)

Lieutenant Kenneth Bleau, of Iliou, whose wife is the former Miss Mary Jane Space, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence E. Space, of Clinton, was killed in action in Normandy on August 1. A War Department telegram received by Mrs. Bleau on Monday gave no details.

In action continuously since DDay, Lieutenant Bleau won widespread recognition and the personal congratulations of Major-General Clarence R. Huebner for his part in the invasion when his company was credited with saving a division. Landing under enemy fire, the unit suffered casualties that cut its numbers to a third and was finally bottled up with Germans on all sides. During the night, the little group fought wildly, and when they were relieved in the morning a count showed that they had killed more than 100 Nazis.

Lieutenant Bleau, who would have been 28 years old on Sunday, received the Purple Heart decoration for wounds received in the invasion of France, and had been recommended for decorations. He had been overseas since May 1943. He enlisted in the Army Air Forces in February 1941, entering officer candidate school some months later, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in October 1942, at Fort Benning. He also trained with the ski troops.

Kenneth married in Utica on April 17, 1943. Mrs. Bleau has, since her husband's departure for overseas duty, been taking postgraduate work at Columbia University, and is now at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence E. Space, 61 Utica street, Clinton.

*Clinton Courier - 1944 Aug. 24*

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### **Kenneth Bleau dies in war Posthumous Award Is Presented At Army Ceremony**

[The Clinton Courier - 1945 Mar. 25](#)

Presentation Of the Distinguished Service Cross, posthumously awarded by the President to her husband, Lieutenant Kenneth Bleau, of 61 Utica street, Clinton, in the headquarters of District No. 3, Second Service Command, in Syracuse yesterday, by Colonel F. S. Swett, the district commander.

Present at the ceremony with Mrs. Bleau were her mother, Mrs. Clarence E. Space, and Mrs. Bessie Bleau, of Iliion, mother of Lieutenant Bleau. Soldiers of District 3 formed a color guard while other personnel of the district formed a military background. The citation accompanying the award read as follows:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy on 6 June, 1944, In . . . Second Lieutenant Bleau, with complete disregard for his own safety, personally reconnoitered a path through an intricate and dense mine field under heavy artillery, mortar and small arms fire. He then led his men through the gap to a German-dominated ridge. When his unit was completely surrounded on the ridge by enemy riflemen, and two hostile machine guns fired at point-blank range, threatening to annihilate his company, Second Lieutenant Bleau crawled forward to within twenty yards of the weapons and destroyed the gun and crew with hand grenades. He then fearlessly charged the second emplacement, and knocked it out of action."

"Later, during two hostile counterattacks, Lieutenant Bleau engaged the enemy in violent hand-to-hand combat, personally killing five Germans and wounding many others. By his heroic achievement, exemplary bravery, and devotion to duty, Second Lieutenant Bleau acted in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces."

Lieutenant Kenneth Bleau, of Iliion, whose wife is the former Miss Mary Jane Space, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence E. Space, of Clinton, was killed in action in Normandy on August 1. A War Department telegram received by Mrs. Bleau on Monday gave no details.

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Kenneth married in Utica on April 17, 1943. Mrs. Bleau has, since her

husband's departure for overseas duty, been taking postgraduate work at Columbia University, and is now at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence E. Space, 61 Utica street, Clinton.

*The Clinton Courier - 1945 Mar. 25*

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**Lt Kenneth Bleau**

**DSC Awarded**

**D-Day Hero**

[Ilion Sentinel - 1945 Mar. 15.](#)

The action, which won for 2nd Lt. Kenneth Bleau of the 1st Infantry, son of Mrs. Bessie Bleau, Charles St., the Distinguished Service Cross, is described in the citation from the War Department, which has been received, by his mother and his wife, the former Mary Jane Space, Clinton. The action took place in Normandy on June 6, 1944 but the medal will be awarded posthumously as Lt. Bleau, after recovering from an ear wound for which he was awarded the Purple Heart, was killed in action on August 1, 1944.

The citation says: "For extraordinary heroism in Action against the enemy on June 6, 1944. In . . . 2nd Lt. Bleau, with complete disregard for his own safety, personally reconnoitered a path through an intricate and dense mine field under heavy artillery, mortar and small arms fire."

"He then led his men through the gap to a German dominated ridge. When his unit was completely surrounded on the ridge by enemy riflemen, and two hostile machine guns fired at point blank range threatening to annihilate his company, 2nd Lt. Bleau crawled forward to within 20 yards of one of the weapons and destroyed the gun and crew with hand grenades."

"He then fearlessly charged the second emplacement and knocked it out of action. Later during two hostile counter attacks, 2nd Lt. Bleau engaged the enemy in violent hand to hand combat, personally killing five Germans and wounding many others."

Mrs. Kenneth Bleau was informed that the decoration would be forwarded to the commanding general, 2nd Service Command, Governor's Island, who will select an officer to make the presentation.

*Ilion Sentinel - 1945 Mar. 15*

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**Attends Ceremony For  
Posthumous Presentation  
Of Son's Award**

[Ilion Sentinel - 1945 Apr 5.](#)

Mrs. Bessie Bleau, Charles Street, was in Syracuse last Wednesday for the posthumous presentation of the Distinguished Service Cross to her son, Lt. Kenneth Bleau who was killed in action in France on August 1.

Present at the ceremony with Mrs. Bleau were her mother, Mrs. Clarence E. Space, and Mrs. Bessie Bleau, of Ilion, mother of Lieutenant Bleau. Soldiers of District 3 formed a color guard while other personnel of the district formed a military background. The citation accompanying the award read as follows:

This award, second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor, is the first to be made to an Ilionite in World War II, and the medal itself was presented to Lt. Bleau's widow, Mary Jane Space Bleau, at Syracuse Army headquarters by Maj. Gen. Sweat. The ceremony was also attended by young Mrs. Bleau's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Space, Clinton.

"A series of acts "of exceptional bravery on the first day of the invasion of France were listed in the citation accompanying the award which was published in a previous issue of the Sentinel.

Lt. Bleau, a graduate of Ilion high school class of 1936, was outstanding as a football player and diver and was diving champion at the University of Alabama.

*Ilion Sentinel - 1945 Apr. 5*

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KENNETH BLEAU

*Confidence is that feeling by which the mind embarks in great and honorable courses with a sure hope and trust in itself.*



RAYMOND BLEAU

*A just fortune rewards the deserving.*



IHS Class of 1936

### Raymond 'Pete' and Kenny Bleau IHS 1936

Brothers, Raymond 'Pete' Bleau and Kenny Bleau, were members of the same class at Iliion High School. They graduated with the Class of 1936. All the Bleau brothers were known for their athleticism.



Cedar Lake Diving Platform  
Image courtesy of  
Shirley (Burns) Momberger Tippett White IHS '46

Carl and his brother, Kenny, were known for the difficult dives they performed from the raft's third-tier diving board at the Cedar Lake Golf Club. - Note (Carl was featured on the Alumni Site Cover Story for August 2014.)

Kenneth Bleau won the diving event in the 1934 Ilion water carnival. Kenneth was the first

person to have his name inscribed on the new diving trophy.

The Utica Daily Press carried two stories, in the August 20 1934 edition, which featured four of the five Bleau brothers. ["Bleaus Defeated in Tennis Finals"](#) and ["Bleau to Have Name on Diving Trophy"](#)

Kenneth Bleau graduated from Iliion High School in 1936 and was active in football and basketball. He was also an outstanding swimmer and diver. He studied physical education at the University of Alabama

and was diving champion while there. He trained with the ski troops in the Air Force.

Kenneth Bleau was the 1936 recipient of [Ilion's Lever Cup](#). The awarding of The Lever Cup goes back to 1924 when Harold 'Boots' Lever presented the cup, February 3, 1924, as a tribute to [William Hempstead - Class of 1916](#), and [William Schletterer](#), former students in the High School, who lost their lives in World War I. This was a sad foreshadowing for Kenneth Bleau.

The Bleau family plot, in Ilion's Armory Hill Cemetery, also contains a plaque that honors the memory of Kenneth Bleau.



1936 Kenneth Bleau - Ilion Armory Cemetery

### [References Cited](#)

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