

# 'Freedom flies on the wings of sacrifice'

*Iowa Army Ammunition Plant memorial honors 1947 fatality victims*

**By Brooke Waller**

*formerly Iowa AAP Public Affairs*

MIDDLETOWN, Iowa -- Imagine if you traveled to see the name of your deceased grandfather honored on a memorial. Then you arrive to the memorial site and anxiously scan through all of the names listed on the smooth grey and black granite stone memorial, only to find that your grandfather's name is not listed. Steve Koellner made a promise to himself the oversight would be corrected, and the Koellner family name would be honored and live on for decades to come.

Steve Koellner never met his late grandfather, but that makes his passion even stronger to let others know of his grandfather's heroic action and self-less character to help others.

On May 30, 1947 two workers from the installation Harvey McCannon, 19, and Paul Koellner, 41, were involved in a toxic accident where a boiler caught on fire and backfired into the railroad shop. Koellner went back into the shop and tried to save McCannon from the flames, but unfortunately, it was too late and both were killed in the accident.

Steve Koellner, the grandson of fatality victim Paul Koellner, saw a news story in *The Burlington*

*Hawkeye* newspaper about when the Eagle Park memorial was dedicated.

He visited IAAAP in late December 2010 to see his grandfather's name on the Eagle Park Memorial but did not find it there.

He then contacted Debra Wirt, the chairperson of the memorial committee to investigate why his grandfather's name was not listed on the memorial.

"I went to see the memorial between Christmas and New Years. Expecting to see his name listed and to take some photos, I was shocked when I realized someone had overlooked him. After spending some time talking to Debbie Wirt, and providing proof through news articles, I could see that (it) was a mere oversight," said Steve Koellner.

"Our goal was to make sure that we included all of the names on the memorial--my worst fear and nightmare that we would miss someone's name," said Wirt.

Wirt and other committee members investigated into the matter further. The committee received documents from Steve Koellner that confirmed there had been two fatalities at IAAAP.

Shortly after receiving those documents, Wirt called the National Archives and Records Administration, NARA, in St. Louis and they sent a packet of documents to confirm the 1947 accident.

Christine Shirvey, a memorial committee member used the phone book to see if she could find any living relatives of Harvey McCannon. Shirvey was able to find Harvey McCannon's sister, Sand Kay, who was two-years-old at the time of her brother's death. When

**"Memorial"**  
continued on page 9



# Memorial

*continued from page 8*

McCannon passed away his wife Gloria McCannon was pregnant with their unborn daughter. The wife and daughter of Harvey Cannon are now deceased.

In an effort to commemorate all Iowa AAP workers who have given their life supporting our nation's defense, the Eagle Park Memorial was built July 2006. IAAAP government and American Ordnance contractor personnel worked together planning the construction and dedication of the memorial.

The ground breaking dedication service was held October 29, 2009

with IAAAP Commander, Lt. Col. Tommie Hewitt.

Eagle Park Memorial is located inside the gates of IAAAP. The memorial is open to the public to come visit.

Currently there are 66 names listed on the memorial and when Koellner and McCannon's names are added it will bring the total to 68. According to Wirt, the chair person of the memorial committee "Paul Koellner and Harvey McCannon's names are scheduled to be engraved in the memorial spring 2011 before Memorial Day."

"It is so fitting that my grandfather was part of the greatest generation,

because in my eyes he is the symbol of bravery and all that it stands for," Steve Koellner.

Steve Koellner looks forward to the day when he is able to visit the Eagle Park Memorial and glaze his eyes upon *Paul Koellner* engraved in the smooth grey and black granite stone memorial.

JM  
C

**Remembering** The Iowa Army Ammunition Plant remembers former employees who have lost their lives in on-the-job accidents with a memorial at the plant. During the 2011 Memorial Day holiday, two more names will be added to the site, years after an oversight.