

## From The Ames Tribune

By Lyn Keren, Staff Writer

"Taps" rang through the Iowa State Memorial Union Great Hall as three former Iowa State University students who were killed while serving in World War II were honored during the ISU Gold Star Hall ceremony on Monday.

The annual ceremony honors ISU students who lost their lives while in military service in a war zone. These names are engraved in the limestone walls of the Gold Star Hall.

The ceremony included stories of each fallen soldier, speeches from military representatives, presentation of the colors by members of Iowa State ROTC, singing of the National Anthem and a performance of "Taps."

William "Howard" Butler was the first individual honored during the event. Retired U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Dame P. Divine told Butler's honoree remembrance story.



Medals awarded to service members of the military were on display in the Iowa State Memorial Union, Gold Star Hall, after the ceremony. Iowa State held a Gold Star Hall ceremony honoring three fallen veterans on Monday.  
Photo By Lyn Keren / Ames Tribune

Butler was from Indianola and studied agricultural engineering at Iowa State in 1940. Three months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Butler enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force. He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps starting as an aviation cadet in 1942 and earned the rank of captain in 1944. Bulter died on July 18, 1945, in Chengkung, China, after his plane crashed shortly after takeoff, killing him instantly. His body was returned to Warren County in 1948.

The second veteran honored was Robert Vance Rannells. He was honored by retired U.S. Navy Cmdr. Daniel A. Buhr. Rannells transitioned from his hometown of Dunlap, to ISU as an agronomy student. "It was Robert Vance Rannells' never-ending need for adventure that led him to the U.S. Air Force," said Buhr.

Rannells enlisted in the U.S. Air Force Reserves and become a radio operator on a B-29 bomber. Buhr said radio operators were essential for a B-29's mission because their responsibility was to disrupt the enemy's war economy. On April 1, 1945, Rannells died on the coast of Saipan, Japan, after his B-29 took off from the base and crashed in the Pacific Ocean, exploding on impact.

Rannells was awarded a Purple Heart and Citation of Honor posthumously. Buhr said his award read, "In success, combat missions ... under prolonged periods of physical and mental strain, and undaunted by many hazards faced regularly and continuously, (Rannells) displayed such courage and skill in performance of his duty as to reflect great credit on himself and the Army Air Forces."

Retired CEC, U.S. Navy Cmdr. Beth L. Hartmann, honored veteran Richard Wayne Suesens' story, at the ceremony. Suesens became a mechanical engineering student at ISU in 1937. The Burlington, native enlisted in the U.S. Navy Reserves and appointed as aviation cadet soon after. Three years later, Suesens was promoted to U.S. Navy Lieutenant, Junior Grade.

Suesens was announced missing in action on June 4, 1942, after an attack in the Midway Islands near Hawaii, after multiple pilots flew into battle against Japanese planes and destroyers. Suesens was declared killed in action a year later on June 5, 1943. He was awarded a Purple Heart and the Navy Cross posthumously in 1942. His heroic actions in the war also resulted in a U.S. Navy warship being named in his honor. The warship was commissioned on April 26, 1944 and decommissioned in 1947. Hartmann said the ship encountered countless obstacles, but stood strong at the end of its life. "Maybe those men knew there were more than guns protecting them in that ship," Hartmann said.

All families of the honored soldiers were given medals after their veteran was honored.

The playing of "Taps" and Retrieval of Colors were conducted to end the ceremony.

The Gold Star Hall includes names on approximately 600 ISU veterans who have died in wars including World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Somalia and in the Global War on Terrorism. Names are added to the wall as they become known, and service members are honored in the university's Veterans Day observance.



The Presentation of Colors was performed by the ROTC color guard at the beginning of the ceremony. Iowa State held the Gold Star Hall ceremony honoring three fallen veterans on Monday. Photo By Lyn Keren / Ames Tribune