

Earl Jesse Bracken

Earl Bracken was born on December 2, 1898 in Sumner, Wisconsin to William R Bracken (1869-1903) and Ellen (Ella) Philips Bracken (1879-1950). Fay's parents were young in 1900 when his Dad worked for the sawmill in Sumner. His Mom is 22, home with brother Earl, age 2 and Fay who is 10 months. His father would die just three years later. In 1905, Ella would marry Frank Desair who worked as a carpenter. The family moved to Rice Lake, Wisconsin. By 1910 they were living in Richland, Kansas but the marriage does not work out so at about age 12, the family moves to South St Paul, Minnesota to live with relatives.

At age 19, Earl is working as a fireman/horseman for the Minneapolis/St Paul & Sioux Railroad.

He is living in Minneapolis but his mother is living in South St Paul. Earl enlists in the US Marine Corp on December 22, 1917, where his younger brother, Fay is already a Marine. He trains at Paris Island, South Carolina and is assigned to the 144th, 3rd Replacement Battalion. He ships out from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on the USS Henderson in route to Brest, France on April 23, 1918, just 10 days after his brother. He has received the sharp-shooter qualification. He is reassigned to the 140th, still part of the 5th Marines. His first battle is his last, as the unprepared Marines enter the Belleau Woods on June 6, 1918. Considered one of the bloodiest Marine conflicts in US History, nearly 1,000 members of the combined US Marine and Army forces were wounded during the first day of this battle. In all, nearly 10,000 were injured, died or were listed as missing when fighting ended on June 26th. The men were under constant heavy machine gun fire, sharpshooters and barbed wire traps. They prevailed, winning all nine counter attacks by the Germans. The French decorated every man that survived, the Legion of Honor Medal, for saving Paris which was about 45 miles away. Earl was wounded in the battle by an explosion of a high power shell. The extent of his injuries are not known but a newspaper article mentions that he was injured in the left foot and his WWII draft registration lists him with a glass eye and missing finger. He spends several weeks in the hospital in France and additional days at the US Naval Hospital in Norfolk, Virginia when he is back in the States. He waits here for a disability discharge and receives it in April 1919.

He returns home to South St Paul, Minnesota where he farms briefly and then takes a job at Swift & Company as a Broiler Maker Helper. He receives \$60 to travel home and a Tuition Bonus in the amount of \$240. He ends up in Kentucky by 1930. We believe he married in about 1940 to a Maude or Martha but no marriage records could be found. His health condition worsens and from about 1949 until he died on May 29, 1955, he is a patient at the Vets Home in Louisville, Kentucky. He was 63. He is buried at Zachary Taylor National Cemetery.

Earl had a younger brother, Fay who also served in WWI as a US Marine.