

**REMEMBERING GUADALCANAL**  
By Liz Engel, Herald-Citizen Staff  
Herald-Citizen newspaper, Cookeville, TN  
Tuesday, 7 August 2007

**PUTNAM COUNTY** – Hanging on the wall of **Berch Williams'** Putnam County home is a large shadow box filled with World War II medals, photos and letters.



It's only been recently that Berch, a former Marine, started sharing the stories inside the box – about how he was wounded twice in battle and twice had to take command of the troops because his captain was killed.

It's also a reminder of all the lives lost in the battle of Guadalcanal.

Today marks the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Guadalcanal – often referred to as the turning point of the war – fought between a period from August 7, 1942, and February 7, 1943. During that span, almost 6,000 Allied troops were killed. Many times, Berch said, soldiers fighting alongside him in the war didn't make it out alive.

“Just the fact that I survived while so many others were killed or wounded,” he said. “There are not a lot of us left. Sometimes it feels like a dream.”

And even though Berch was there, he still can't believe the years that now separate him and his memories.

“It's history now, but to me it's current,” he said.

“We had 214 men when we landed, but after we crossed 1,400 yards of Japanese airfields, I looked back and could only see about 97,” he said. “It's not that they were all killed or wounded, just that there was so much confusion.”



“But in all those battles, I never was afraid to die,” Berch said.

And in the shadow box are the various medals from his efforts in the war – a navy Cross, six Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart, just to name a few.

But the war is far behind him now, and Berch says every day is the best day of his life.

After returning home in 1945, Berch married the former **Nell Maxwell**, his wife now of 62 years. Together, the couple had three children, and Berch went on to get both a bachelor's and master's degree through the help of the G. I. Bill. Without it, he says, he never would have gone back to school.

He will turn 89 in October and says he would love to be able to tell his stories to schoolchildren learning about World War II.

“I did some crazy things, looking back now, but Good took care of me,” Berch said.

“I've had an unusual life.”

**Notes:** Nell Maxwell, d/o David Jerdon Maxwell & Tina Cooper. Berch Williams, b. October 1918 married Nell Maxwell on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1945. Children: Anne Faye Williams md Ernest Dee Ashburn; Sharon Williams md John Edward Watts & Marcia Williams md Russell King II.

**Nell Maxwell**, b. 9 November 1921. **She was the sister of William Walter Maxwell who md Jewell Argenia "Genia" Jernigan, d/o John Tilford Jernigan & Mahulda "Hulda" Jane Thompson.**

**LINEAGE:**

Samuel Maxwell 1781-1848) md Martha A. Patton (1780-1848) =

David Wood Maxwell (1822-1869) md Mary Elizabeth Shanks (1826-1888) =

William Cullom Maxwell (1854-1922) md Julia Ann Virginia Gentry (1854-1922) =

David Jerdon Maxwell (1882-1946) md Tina Cooper (1882-1973) =

Nell Maxwell md Berch Williams

<http://www.ajlambert.com>