

Monument In Vernon Cemetery Brings Memories Of Famous S4 Submarine

By Carl and Elizabeth Shamhart

The gravestone of Dewey Victor Haney stands to the left and only about 50 feet, after one enters Vernon Cemetery, in Vernon Twp. The inscription "DIED ON S4 SUBMARINE DEC. 17" leaves a lot unsaid.

As a boy of seven, I vaguely recall seeing the newscast about the S4 Submarine sinking. But, I'd forgotten the details. And, as a young man had also joined the Navy and had been aboard a sub for a short time.

The other day as I gazed at the picture of the clean-cut sailor on the stone, and read the inscription, curiosity got the better of me. Next day my wife and I went to the Portsmouth Library to find the story.

There were many headlines and stories during the year of 1927. The story about Charles A. Lindbergh flying across the Atlantic in his airplane, the "Spirit of St. Louis," excited and pleased the whole nation. But another story brought sadness to the nation. Just as the holiday season was beginning, on December 17, the S4 Submarine had sank off the coast of Provincetown, Mass.

The James Edward Haney family of Vernon Twp. was shocked when they read in the Tuesday, Dec. 20 paper how the Coast Guard Cutter, the CG-17, had accidentally ran down the S4 Submarine. Although badly damaged, the CG-17 made it back to port. But the S4 had gone to the bottom in 101 feet of water



Gravestone of Dewey Victor Haney in Vernon Cemetery

with all forty hands on board. Mr. Haney had received a letter just a few weeks before from his son, Dewey, who was, at that time, a member of the S4 crew.

On Wednesday, Dec. 21, the newspapers told how six of the sailors were spared death, but were trapped in a watertight compartment in the bow of the sub. No names were given in this story.

Thursday morning, Mr. Haney entered the Western Union office at Portsmouth to send a message of inquiry about his son. But a message was already waiting from the Navy Department. It read

No recoveries have been reported on the submarine S4, which sank off Provincetown, Mass. The last report to the Navy indicates that your gallant son, Dewey Haney, 24, second class cook on the ill-fated craft, is among the lost. You will be advised further if any bodies are

recovered."

Mr. Haney had hoped that somehow Dewey had not been among those 40 crewmembers. But now that hope was vanquished. All he could do was go home, tell the family the sad news, and wait.

While James and Cora Haney waited, more news stories were published, none of them good. The gallant efforts of divers to keep the six survivors alive, with an air hose through an intake valve on the sub, had failed. The messages that had been tapped out in code had fallen silent. High winds, rough seas, and freezing weather had also hampered raising of the sub. Hours of waiting turned to days, days turned to weeks.

Many memories must have come back to the Haney family while they waited. Like that happy day in 1903 when Dewey, their first, had been born near West Liberty, in Morgan County, Kentucky, and their move to Rowan County a few years later. And how, as a small boy, Dewey gave them a scare when he lost the end of toe chopping wood, and what a big help he was when they moved from Rowan County to Ashland in 1922, where he joined the Navy two years later, at the age of 21. And how in 1925 the family had moved to Vernon

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Twp. in Scioto County, Ohio. And that same year Dewey had been transferred from the USS Bushnell to the S4 Submarine. But most of all they must have been remembering what a kind and generous son he had been those 24 years.

On Thursday, Jan. 12, their waiting ended. They received a message: Dewey's body had been recovered and would arrive at Portsmouth on Friday or Saturday.

Dorothy Collett, of Lyra, a friend of the Haney's, drove Mrs. Haney to Portsmouth to meet the train bearing Dewey's body. Dorothy related this meeting. "When Mrs. Haney met the Military Escort she made a strange request: would he remove the corpse's shoes and socks. When the request had been accomplished, Mrs. Haney looked down at the foot with a short toe. She now knew for sure that it was Dewey they would be laying to rest."

Dewey was laid to rest in the neatly kept Vernon Cemetery, overlooking the beautiful rolling fields and wooded hills of Vernon Twp. He served his country well for almost four years in the U.S. Navy. His voluntary entry into the service, especially in hazardous submarining duty, and the kindness he showed for his parents and four younger brothers, ~~Ruby~~, George, Delmar, and Boyd, makes him a man to be honored and remembered.

As I finish this article, I feel as if I have known Dewey Victor Haney all my life. He reminds me of many of the sailors I served with during 1940-46.

