

*Addendum to the Pinter Family History Book*

*Lester Ralph Pinter*

by Ken Pinter  
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Lester Ralph Pinter was born to Katie and Gus Pinter on 6 January 1921 in Hall Township, Bureau County, IL. Lester was the last child born to Katie and Gus. When he was born, the family lived in a residence on the southern edge of Ladd, on Cleveland Street, but they were farming an 80-acre tract of land one-half mile to the north of Ladd, IL.

There is limited information about his childhood and early adulthood except to say that he lived on the farm with his brothers and sister and probably participated in the same things they did including school, confirmation in his church, and farm work. He graduated from high school.

Lester had a variety of jobs as a young man, but apparently was not interested in farming and left the farming business as did his brothers. He worked for some time as a bridge painter and he also worked at the Zink plant in DePue, Illinois, where he met his future wife, Lillian Harris.

More information on Lillian Harris is found later in this report.

Lester met Lillian at a dance hall in Marquette, Illinois, around 1940. The village of Marquette does not exist today but in its time, it was a mining community a mile or so east of DePue, IL. Lillian was born in Marquette.

Lester and Lillian dated for about two years and then they married on 25 July 1942. In October of 1942 Lester enlisted and was inducted into the US Army. They had been married only about two months.

Lester was a member of the 503<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Infantry during WWII. He achieved the rank of Technician Fifth Grade. He arrived in the Pacific in October 1943. He saw action in New Guinea, Netherlands East Indies, and in the Philippine Islands on Leyte, Mindoro, and Corregidor.

On 15 February 1945 Lester and his unit parachuted onto the island of Corregidor in the Philippine Islands. He was killed in action on Corregidor on 26 February 1945. Details of this are included later. On 11 May 1945 a letter was received by Katie Pinter, his mother, from the 503<sup>rd</sup> Chaplain indicating his death. This letter indicated that he was given a Christian burial and was buried at Mariveles, Bataan, Philippine Islands in a “well-kept cemetery”.

Around June 1945, his brother Harold received a letter from Richard Peterson of the 503<sup>rd</sup>. In this letter, Richard described that Lester died instantly and without pain and suffering and without really knowing what had happened. He also indicated Lester's grave was on the Bataan Peninsula and that he had personally seen the grave site and that he had also seen Lester shortly after his death and before burial. This man had apparently, according to his letter, helped carry Lester and others out of the kill zone.

Harold began a series of letters to the War Department trying to gain information about Lester with the intent to find him and bring him to the US for burial. In June 1948, he received a letter from the Office of the Quartermaster stating that no remains of Lester had been recovered.

In January 1950, Harold received another letter stating that remains had not yet been found.

In August 1951 he received another, this time longer, letter from the same office. These quotations came from that letter:

“..your brother was killed in action at Monkey Point, Corregidor Island, Philippine Islands, on 26 February 1945 when a huge arsenal contained in the underground room and communicating tunnels of the radio installations was exploded by enemy action”.

Regarding an attempt to find his remains at Monkey Point in 1951, the letter stated that “no information pertaining to the location of his remains could be found”.

Regarding the possibility that he was buried at the American Military Cemetery as an unknown, the letter stated that “identifying data pertaining to your brother were compared with available identifying data of unidentified remains recovered from Corregidor Island and the three other small islands adjacent to it. This comparison also failed to reveal any remains which could be identified as your brother.”

Regarding the apparent conflict between the War Departments accounts and those of Richard Peterson and others, the letter stated that “None (of the people contacted) were able to furnish any definite information”.

And, “...the Department of the Army has been forced to determine that the remains of your brother are not recoverable”. That ended the line of communications.

A reference to Lester Pinter was found in online records of the American Military Cemetery (Manila, Philippines) in 2002.

Finally, details found on this Web explain the circumstances of his death:

[http://corregidor.org/heritage\\_battalion/abbott/navytunnel.html](http://corregidor.org/heritage_battalion/abbott/navytunnel.html)

On the morning of 26 February, as the First Battalion was getting ready to resume their attack to the East, a huge explosion went off in the Navy Intercept Tunnel. The actual cause of that explosion

will, undoubtedly, never be known for certain. What is known is that a very large supply of high explosives was set off. People who were close to the site at the time have two somewhat different theories. One is that the Japanese, occupying the tunnel, chose to commit suicide by setting off the explosion, thereby taking many of the Paratroopers with them. This was not an inconceivable concept considering the Japanese had not hesitated to do the same thing in other locations, but on a much smaller scale. The other version, and the one which seems more likely, is that the explosion was set off accidentally by the tank, sitting on a small mound near the Main Entrance firing into the mouth of the tunnel. The force of the explosion was such that the tank was blown into the air and landed upside down. Whichever version is correct there is no doubt but what the explosion was a catastrophic event. Available records give the number of casualties for 26 February but do not break out those due to this event alone. It appears, however, there were about 30 Paratroopers killed outright and about 125 seriously injured. The real number of injured will never be known since a number of men with cuts and bruises, which would have been considered seriously disabling under other circumstances, did not seek help because they knew others needed help much more than they.

Lester Ralph Pinter received the Bronze Star, Silver Star (for “gallantry in action on Feb. 24, 1945”), and the Purple Heart.

### **Lester Pinter**

An interview was held with Lillian in June of 2013. She revealed some details about Lester:

Lester was somewhat of a daredevil. This personality trait might explain his occupation of painting bridges and his ultimate decision to become a paratrooper in WWII. The mission in which he was killed was a volunteer mission, again fitting with his daredevil personality.

In his youth, he had wavy hair and was apparently quite attractive to members of the opposite sex. Everyone liked Lester.

He had “beautiful” penmanship but could not swim and almost drowned at least once. He was particularly close to his brother Gilbert.

## Lillian Harris

The Lillian Harris family has proven to be difficult to track before 1884. Here is what is known so far. Some of this data was extracted from US Census data and some was found in online family trees which sometimes contain errors.

John Giles Harris (Lillian Harris' greatgrandfather) was born in Illinois on 8 April 1839. His father, Thompson Harris was born in 1800 in Kentucky (or Tennessee...there is a conflict of information here). His mother was possibly Jane Tinley, born in 1804 in Tennessee.

By 1850, John Harris had relocated to Macoupin County, IL, near to St. Louis, and in 1880 he was living in Bureau Co, IL. In 1900 he was found in Ladd, IL, and sometime between 1910 and 1920, he had moved to Iowa. He died in Howard Co, IA, on 18 January 1925.

John Harris married Amanda Ennis (or Enos) Bonnell on 2 December 1858 in Princeton IL. He was about 19, she was about 16. Amanda was born in Bedford County, PA, on 20 April 1842. Her mother was Mary Ennis (or Enos), born on 14 August 1818, also in Bedford Co, PA. Her father was John Bonnell, born on 25 April 1783 in Unknown place, possibly also PA.

Mary Ennis died on 12 December 1908 in Spring Valley, IL. John Bonnell died on 26 June 1872.

In the 1870 census, John was listed as a farmer in Hall Township. Their post office was Ottville. In 1880 he was listed as a laborer in Hall, and in 1900 he was again listed as a farmer in Hall Township. The 1890 census was destroyed in a fire in 1921.

John and Amanda had a total of 10 children. Seven grew to adulthood, while 3 died early in their life and before 1900.

Here is a table of the John Harris family. Only 9 children can be identified:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age in 1900</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Born in</b>
John Harris	61	4/8/1839	IL
Amanda	58	4/20/1842	PA
Mary		~1860	IL
Alice		~1862	IL
William		~1864	IL
Laura		~1869	IL
Simon		~1871	IL
Franklin		~1873	IL
Louis	25	6/1874	IL
David	22	4/1878	IL
<b>Walter</b>	16	3/1884	IL
Unknown			

It is thought that the above table is accurate and that the above family members are ancestors of Lillian Harris, but the linkage is not solid at this time. The link occurs with Walter Harris, born 1884.

Walter Harris (Lillian Harris' grandfather) was born probably in Hall Township in March 1884, it is thought, to John G. and Amanda Ennis Bonnell Harris. Sometime before 1904, he married Ellen Rogers. Nothing is known so far about Ellen.

Walter and Ellen had an unknown number of children. One, also named Walter, was born in Illinois, reportedly in Oglesby, Illinois, on 17 April 1904. Sometime about 1921 or 1922, he married Louise Leonard. Louise was born in Pontiac, IL, on 6 June 1902 to Lawrence and Catherine Rolando Leonard. It is thought that Lawrence and Catherine were born in Italy.

Walter and Louise had two children: Lillian and Virginia.

Here is the Harris family in 1930:

<b>1930</b>				
<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Born in</b>	
Walter Harris	25	4/17/1904	Oglesby, IL	
Louise	26	6/6/1902		
Lillian	7	11/20/1922	DePue, IL	
Virginia	6	12/12/1923	DePue, IL	

Walter was employed at the Zinc plant in DePue and in 1930 he was a foreman.

Walter was killed in an automobile accident on 5 September 1934 at the age of 30. Louise lost a battle with Tuberculosis on 14 August 1935.

Lillian and Virginia subsequently went to live with and were raised by their grandmother Catherine Rolando Leonard. Here is the family in 1940:

<b>1940</b>				
<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Born in</b>	
Catherine Leonard	68	~1872	IT	
Lillian Harris	17			
Virginia Harris	16			

As we have already noted, Lillian Harris married Lester Pinter in 1942.

## Lester Pinter Photo Album



Lester's Unit on parade



Lester, Leo, and Harold,  
ca 1943



Lillian and Lester,  
date unknown



Lester, ca 1943



Lester Pinter  
High school graduation,  
ca 1939



Lester Pinter,  
Date unknown



Catherine, Lillian, Lester,  
and Katie, date unknown



Lillian and Lester with doll,  
ca 1942



Lester Pinter,  
date unknown



Lester's unit



Lester Pinter, ca 1923-24



Lillian and Lester Pinter wedding





Explosion at Monkey Point,  
Corregidor, Philippines



Lester Pinter memorial  
at Church on the Hill, 2013