



Several years ago, I asked one of Sarah's relatives, a genealogist, to put together a family history of both my mom and dad's sides of the family. Eventually, came hundreds of pages filled with all these charts and dates and pictures of tombstones and more. It can still be rather overwhelming trying to sift through all the names and boxes filled with numerical and geographical detailed information. But when it gets to the lines of military service, that's when it takes on a unique sobering dose of humility. All these names of family I really don't know; never will, other than through a piece of paper. All these people who made a pivotal decision to put their lives on the line in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War and both World Wars in our ancestral history (granted, perhaps, some didn't have the choice at all). However, I wish there was more than their names, their dates of birth and death, their unit of service. What drove them to risk it all? How did they feel when they wondered if they may not make it back home alive? Based on the dates given in the genealogy report, it doesn't appear any of them died in battle, but they obviously didn't know their respective future when thrust into the front lines of war.

That phrase has been used rather frequently during these COVID-19 times, by the way: "front lines." Not gonna lie, it still makes me feel uneasy, and I'm not so sure it should. After all, it's one of those phrases I have always been convinced belongs to military soldiers alone, along with the word *trenches* and the favorite sports go-to tag-line of "blood, sweat and tears." Then again, I'm not in the hospital trying to save lives or in research labs figuring out a vaccine or in statehouses with decisions to make affecting who knows how many people going forward. Regardless, when I hear or read *front lines*, I'm automatically drawn to human beings whose bravery I cannot put into words, and, obviously, cannot be limited to name, rank and dates on a tombstone.

The most interesting *glimpse* of a story I see in our family history, when it comes to this annual surreal Memorial Day recognition, is one of Adam Lugar (1738-1837), who would be my maternal great X 5 grandfather. He was born in Prussia and served in the Revolutionary War, but at first, he served as a mercenary for the British with the Hessian Army, before joining the Continental Army in 1779 (I'm sure there's much more to the story than that). A year later, he married a young woman at Brick Church in Guilford County, North Carolina (which still stands in some renovated form to this day, evidently), before moving to Virginia, where they raised ten children. Adam Lugar would die just over a week after turning 99, and was buried in Fairview Cemetery in Craig County, Virginia. And yet...I wish there were more details.

I cannot help but think of such stories when reading through the passage from 1 Peter. Did my ancestors find comfort in such words, relating to some kind of uncontrollable "fiery ordeal," even if it wasn't quite the same as the first century persecution against Jesus-followers? Did they find their own words of meaning, instead? Did they cling to letters from loved ones or jokes from fellow soldiers for the desperately needed distraction? There's a part of me that wishes I knew those *details* just as much (perhaps, more?) as dates or places of residence. Maybe if I knew more of those stories, it would serve its own surreal level of comforting blessed reassurance for any struggles that come into this life.

Of course, we already have rather Great News material to work with: “Cast all your anxiety on [God], because [God] cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). It isn’t because God sees it as burdened necessity. Instead, God truly cares about those soldiers, those people who work in hospitals now, those medical researchers, and all of us, who have our fair share of anxiety now, to say the least. That isn’t to say that once we make the spiritual and mental decision to actually “cast all [our] anxiety on [God],” that God is going to automatically send an extra dose of holy whatever into our hearts and make us feel better instantaneously. I like to think God doesn’t wait around for us to whole-heartedly conclude that we need the help anyway. God already knows we do. And that help can come in a variety of ways, through a variety of people.

On days like today, it could be reading through a family history, knowing that someone in your ancestral backdrop made a decision to serve not just for patriotic pride, but for loved ones generations later whom they would never meet. It could be a respiratory therapist in an ICU, helping save the life of someone, who may end up pulling someone you care about, out of a overwhelmingly desperate situation. It could be a child who decorates their window with hearts and smiles, because they want to do something good for others, too. Yes, we are thankful for the sacrifice of countless many, who were willing to risk their own life that we may enjoy so much about our own life we often take for granted. We give thanks for their families, who endured far too many long and fear-filled nights. We give thanks for the stories that remain, and the new stories that must be told over and over again, not forgetting of the One who made the ultimate sacrifice, taking on the anxiety over sin and death, and came out with life everlasting for the whole world to enjoy. Thanks be to God, indeed! Amen!