

William Dodd Geiger from East Orange, NJ



This little pumpkin came to me from the United States. My Instagram community helped me identify him as "**Willie Dodd Geiger**". The location clue: his photo was taken in **New York**. I found two William Dodd Geigers in the records, one from the New Jersey area, the other from Pasadena, California – a father and his son. I suppose this photo is of the father, as the fashion of the boy suggests the Victorian era.



William “Willie” Dodd Geiger was born on April 17th, 1883 in Morristown, New York. His father Frederick C. Geiger was a partner in the New Jersey jewelry manufacturing company Hoyt, Obrig & Geiger (this according to his [obituary](#) from 1937). His mother Priscilla Squier Dodd was New York born. William had an older brother Frederick Jr. (1879-1934), and a younger brother Harold (1884-1927). In 1924, the parents applied for a passport, and the [application](#) includes their photos:



Link: ancestry.de

After the kids had been born in Morristown, the Geigers moved to East Orange in NJ. By [1900 Census](#), they were living at 447 Central Avenue in East Orange. Their residence was located “at the corner of Central Avenue and Clinton Street. It was a palatial home with spacious grounds that they had built in the 1880’s” (Quote from [HERE](#)). What a pity that the palatial home doesn’t exist anymore! In January 1918, William began his military service, as can be read from his [draft card](#). In 1918, William also came to the freshly established Arcadia Balloon School in California. The US Army opened the Arcadia Balloon School in Ross Field in 1918 to train U.S. Army balloon observation troops for World War I. “Troops were trained there in balloon handling, aerial photography, map-making, panoramic perspectives, observations, surveillance of ground fire and in ground tactics.” (Click [HERE](#) for more reading about the School and see photos of the school). I also read on [Wikipedia](#) that William’s brother Harold Geiger commanded the Army Balloon School at Ross Field.

While at Arcadia, William, a Captain by rank, married Priscilla née Morgrage on December 16th, 1918, in Pasadena, California. Priscilla was 14 years younger than William. The couple must have met at the Arcadia where Priscilla worked as a nurse. She had graduated from Finch School for girls in New York. Their wedding was a local society event – the Captain and his bride of “unusual beauty and charm”, quoting their marriage announcement on page 15 of *The Los Angeles Times* of December 17th, 1918, below. *Los Angeles Evening Express* of December 22nd, 1918, called Priscilla “one of the season’s loveliest brides” (read [HERE](#)). *The Arcadia Tribune* which had announced the couple’s engagement in November the same year, referred to Priscilla Morgrage as “one of the most popular of the young women in the Crown City”. Priscilla was also an accomplished horsewoman.

LIEUT. TO WED NURSE
AT BALLOON SCHOOL

The engagement of Miss Priscilla Morgrage of Pasadena, and Capt. William Dodd Geiger of Orange, N. J., now stationed at the balloon school in Arcadia, was announced Saturday and will be of interest to a large circle of friends.

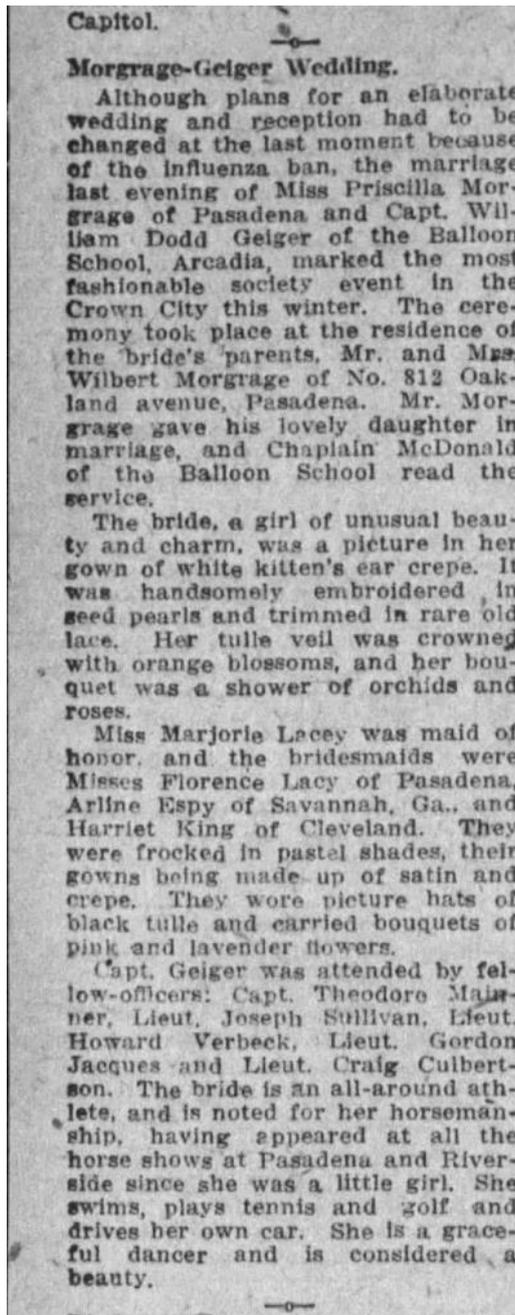
Miss Morgrage is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbert Morgrage of 812 Oakland avenue, Pasadena and one of the most popular of the young women of the Crown City. Miss Morgrage is known as an accomplished horsewoman, her riding of various mounts at horse shows in Pasadena and Los Angeles winning much praise. Miss Morgrage recently has been acting as a nurse at the balloon school, having taken the Red Cross courses. Miss Morgrage is a graduate of the Finch school for girls in New York city.

Capt. Geiger is the son of a well known business man of Orange, N. J., and a brother of Col. Harold Geiger, now serving with the colors in France. Col. Geiger's bride also was a California girl, Miss Frances Bridges of San Diego.

The wedding of Capt. Geiger and Miss Morgrage will take place during the Christmas holidays and among the bridal attendants will be Miss Erline Esty of Savannah, Ga.; Miss Harriet King of Cleveland, O., and Miss Marjory Lacy of Pasadena. Captain Walter Roman of the Balloon School is to be the best man. The wedding will be a military church ceremony.

Link: newspapers.com

Reading their marriage announcement below, I had a bit of a deja-vu moment: the young couple apparently had to change their original wedding plans due to the influenza ban (Hello, most 2020 & 2021 weddings!).



Link: newspapers.com

William was released from service in 1919 and the couple must have moved to New York soon after. Their son **William "Bill" Dodd Geiger Jr.** was born on September 29th, 1919, in New York. According to the [1920 Census](#), the couple lived in the Riverside Drive in Manhattan, NYC. William was now in auto business.

Unfortunately, by 1922 the marriage had fallen apart and the couple got divorced. Son Bill Jr. grew up with his mother and her new husband John Frost, a noted artist, and step-siblings in Pasadena. William is to be found in the [1930 Census](#) living as a lodger in Mount Kisco, Westchester, New York. By [1940 Census](#), William had moved to East Orange, Essex, New Jersey, and was working as a salesman.

William Dodd Geiger passed away on December 6th, 1971, at the age of 88, in Sarasota, Florida. He was buried at the [Arlington National Cemetery](#) of veterans, next to his brother Harold. We learn from his obituary that he was a retired Army intelligence officer, WWI as well as WWII veteran. He was also a Freemason. He must have re-married later in life, as the obituary mentions his wife Caroline J.

GEIGER, WILLIAM D., 88,
of Venice, Monday (Dec. 6,
1971). Born in Morristown,

N.J. In Venice since 1956 from Cape Cod, Mass. Retired Army intelligence officer, veteran of World War I and World War II. Member of the Universal Masonic Lodge of Orleans, Mass., and the Retired Officers' Club. St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Venice. Survived by his wife Caroline J.; a son, William D. Jr. of Pasadena, Calif. and three grandchildren. Services were held Tuesday at Rawles Funeral Home, Venice. Cremation followed.

Link: newspapers.com

I don't, of course, know how good the relations were between William Sr. and Bill Jr. Bill remained in Pasadena on the West Coast while father William resided in New Jersey on the East Coast. I'd like to believe that they had contact and William was proud of his son. Junior had definitely inherited the flying bug of the men in his family. Just like his father and uncle, Major Harold Geiger, he became a pilot. I read in his [obituary](#) published from 2006 that as WWII broke out in Europe, "Bill put aside his goal of making the Olympic fencing team and instead joined the newly formed Eagle Squadron, a group of American pilots enlisting to fly for England's Royal Air Force" in September 1940. He flew on more than 40 missions. Apparently, his spitfire plane was shot down over the English Channel in September 1941 and he fell into German captivity as a prisoner of war. Fortunately, and much to the relief of his parents, he was released in 1945 and could safely return home after the war ended. He had spent four years in a Nazi prison camp and was one of the 110,000 Allied prisoners released from the prison at Moosburg near Munich in 1945 (Read more [HERE](#)).

	<h3>Pasadena Flyer Held by Nazis</h3>
<p>PRISONER — William Dodd Geiger of Pasadena, R.A.F. flyer, captive of Germans.</p>	<p>William Geiger's Mother Gets Report He Is Prisoner of War</p>
<h3>Italy Banks Close as Result of Raids</h3>	<p>Twelve Americans — one of them a Pasadenan — are in a group of prisoners held in a German camp known as Stalag Luft 3, the War Prisoners' Aid Committee of the World Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association announced yesterday.</p>
<p>Population of Milan Draws Out Money</p>	<p>The Southland man is Pilot Officer William Dodd Geiger, 23, whose mother, Mrs. John Frost, widow of the noted artist, lives at 534 Palmetto Drive, Pasadena.</p>
<p>ALONG THE ITALIAN FRONTIER, Nov. 26. (AP)—Many Milan banks closed two days ago because of a heavy run by thousands of civilians fleeing R.A.F. bombings of Northern Italy, it was reported today.</p>	<p>WITH EAGLE SQUADRON Geiger enlisted in the Eagle Squadron of the R.A.F. following flight instruction subsequent to his graduation from Pasadena Junior College last year.</p>
<p>A semi-official explanation was that the closing was only temporary and that the banks would reopen for business as soon as more currency could be brought</p>	<p>Geiger was convoying bombers home from a raid on the French coast when he saw seven Messerschmitts attack another R.A.F. pilot. He sent three of the Nazi planes down in flames, but his own ship was disabled and he parachuted into the sea. He was picked up by a patrol boat.</p>
	<p>FIRST DEFINITE WORD The news of his imprisonment was the first definite word on his whereabouts in Germany that his mother has had. Stalag Luft 3 is a prison camp for R.A.F. officers and enlisted men.</p>
	<p>Geiger's half-brother, John Frost, 19, enlisted in the Navy's aviation cadet training program last July.</p>

Link: newspapers.com

In 1947, he married Betty Josephine Hunter in Montecito, California, and the couple had three children: William Dodd III, Devon Elizabeth and Debra Priscilla. I wonder if they knew their grandpa William too?



Photos Without Families, originally shared on www.photoswithoutfamilies.blog