

An Ordinary Soldier
Brief Synopsis

An Ordinary Soldier is the story of Charles Gebhardt who was the third of the five children of Harry and Carrie Gebhardt of La Harpe, Illinois. Times were tough in the 1920s in Midwest farm country. Harry was a hard worker and his only goal in life was to make a living for his family and see that his children had a better life than he had. Harry commuted to his job in with the railroad in Peoria every day and rarely got to spend time with his wife and kids. A move to Peoria from the farm to be closer to work proved to be a pivotal event in the life of the young family. Just a few months after the move, Harry was killed in a tragic accident in the rail yard.

Carrie was suddenly a single mother of five young children with no help and very little resources. In October 1929, just weeks after Harry died, the stock market crashed and the Depression was looming. Carrie ultimately decided that the family should return to La Harpe where she had a support system and the good earth to raise food. Although Charles was just a young child, he felt he was the man of the family and that it was his duty to help his mother however he could. He kept his two younger brothers out of trouble, worked the vegetable garden, swept the porch and tried to keep Carrie's spirits up. As he matured, he took on part-time jobs, sometimes two or three a day, to bring more money home.

When the family heard FDR's announcement on the radio that Pearl Harbor had been attacked, Charles knew that he was being called on again. He was only seventeen but told his mother he wanted to volunteer. "What would dad do?" Charles asked his mother. Charles Gebhardt was one of the many thousands of heroes who defended America in World War II. He was cited numerous times for his valor and bravery. Although he considered himself an ordinary person and an ordinary soldier, he was neither – Charles Gebhardt was an *extraordinary* man.