



The Kansas City Missouri Police Department

# KCPD-led group helps homeless

Community Interaction Officer Bill Keeney, from the Shoal Creek Patrol Division, had an idea to create a coalition of networks to prevent homelessness and aid those in need, specifically north of the river in Kansas City. The Northland Homeless Assistance Coalition (NHAC) was born with the goal to give the community in need a hand up.

From his days of patrolling south of the river, CIO Keeney knew there were many resources available to the homeless community, but once he started his work north of the river, he quickly realized it was a completely different continuum of care. That created a large disconnect for those in need. He came into contact with the Salvation Army on North Oak, and they began meeting once a month to talk through some of the ways they could not only help the homeless and nearly homeless community, but to come up with ways to prevent it.

The group started very small in March 2018, but quickly gained momentum from many service

providers that wanted to be a part of the meetings. Each provider has a specialty, but cannot always help in every way someone needs, which is why the coalition has become a life-line to the service providers. As CIO Keeney hears of a need, he immediately reaches out to the nearly 170 providers currently in the coalition and asks who can help. Depending on the need, certain providers are able to step-up to best support the individual or family.

The Coalition has three simple goals:

1. Get assistance and resources to the homeless.
2. Connect the resources in the Northland, as well as get information out to volunteers and civic groups who want to assist.
3. Get rid of enabling and encourage self-reliance.

They strive to meet these goals to make the world a better place by



**CIO Bill Keeney spoke with Bryan Moore from Caregivers on the Homefront, who talked to the Northland Homeless Assistance Coalition at their October monthly meeting about veterans with PTSD.**

preventing homelessness and creating a community to call home. The group is building relationships not only with each other, but with the community to change one life at a time.

Kimalee Carroll works at the Salvation Army as a case manager for the Pathway of Hope program and is one of the founding members of the coalition.

“I think the most important thing is connecting the resources,” she said. “The Northland territory is so spread out. Here at this Salvation Army location we serve everything from Richmond and Excelsior Springs all the way over to Parkville and everything down to the river. With such a wide area to cover, it is nice to all be on the same page.”

Homelessness is a growing problem in the Northland. It goes beyond the stereotypical thought of someone living on the streets, under bridges or in camps. In the Northland, more and more homeless people are couch-surfing or living out of cars. In the North Kansas City School District alone, almost 600 families are homeless or nearly homeless, many of whom are living with family or friends, and are in need of services.

“Each of these groups need different resources and are battling different issues,” Carroll said. “In order to assist these

people, we need to meet them where they’re at and help them with their specific needs. With all of us coming together we can efficiently do that.”

Tyler Brockhouse works for the Clay County Children’s Division and is also a founding member of the Coalition. He receives reports of child abuse and neglect, and some include cases of families being homeless.

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# Celebrating 10 years of lives saved

**A** pioneering partnership between the Kansas City Missouri Police Department and domestic violence service providers has gotten thousands of families to safety over the past decade.

The KCPD, Rose Brooks Center and Synergy Services celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lethality Assessment Protocol, or LAP, on Oct. 21. To date, more than 20,000 victims of domestic violence, at highest risk of being murdered, have been connected to violence prevention services because of this program.

“About 200 cities have adopted this since Kansas City has,” Synergy Executive Director Robin Winner said. “We were groundbreakers.”

The Lethality Assessment Protocol is a set of 11 questions based on research from Johns Hopkins University that KCPD patrol officers are required to ask victims when they respond to a domestic violence call. Some of the questions include: “Has your partner ever choked you?” and “Has your partner ever threatened you with a weapon?”

If the victim answers questions a certain way, they are considered at high risk for death. If they screen into this category, the officer immediately places a phone call to a domestic violence advocate at either Synergy (if the victim is north of the Missouri River) or Rose Brooks (if the victim is south of the riv-



**KCPD celebrated 10 years of the Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) with domestic violence service providers Rose Brooks Center and Synergy Services. LAP seeks to connect victims of domestic violence most at risk for death with supportive services. Pictured left to right: Rose Brooks Board of Directors Vice President Major Stacey Graves, Synergy Director Robin Winner, Major Mark Folsom, Chief Richard Smith and Rose Brooks CEO Susan Miller.**

er). They try to convince the victim to speak with the advocate. That happens about 50 percent of the time. When the victim refuses, officers still speak with the advocate and try to help the victim with a safety plan.

“We were the first major city police department to do this department-wide,” said Major Mark Folsom, who implemented LAP at KCPD, working alongside Rose Brooks and Synergy.

In the 10 years since LAP started in Kansas City, officers have completed 29,731

screens. A total of 21,690 – or 73 percent – screened in at high danger. Just seven of the victims who screened in as high danger have been killed in the last decade, marking just 0.0002 percent of all those screened.

Rose Brooks CEO Susan Miller said of the 9,986 hotline calls their center received in 2018, 2,623 of them were made directly by KCPD officers at the scene. Of those calls, 76% of the victims said they had been choked by their partner.

“We are saving the lives of women and children,” Miller said.

Since its success in Kansas City, Major Folsom and Rose Brooks Chief Operating Officer Lisa Fleming have gone around the country to train other police departments and domestic violence agencies in implementing LAP.

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## **KCPD-LED GROUP HELPS HOMELESS, CONTINUED FROM P. 1**

“The thing I love most about NHAC is that when I have a case with a family that is homeless, I know that I can send a simple email asking for help, and within minutes have responses from the different agencies involved and can get the family help as soon as possible,” Brockhouse said. “Another thing I love is the web site that was created. I can share this with all of my coworkers to provide to families, and the Northland’s services are finally in one place with all of their contact information.”

With CIO Keeney at the helm, the group continues to grow and make a positive change in the Northland. He invites speakers for the monthly NHAC meetings to educate the coalition members on a variety of topics related to preventing homelessness, such as experts

on sex trafficking, veterans fighting post-traumatic stress disorder and police officers providing information about their latest interactions at the homeless camps.

“We are very blessed in the Northland to have such devoted and caring police officers,” Carroll said. “With homeless shelters, Tri-County Mental Health Services and agencies coming to the table we can help each other really make a difference for the client instead of just a Band-Aid.”

For more information on the group, visit their Facebook page [www.facebook.com/NHACHelp](http://www.facebook.com/NHACHelp)

# Medal winner honored after tragic life

The man who was arguably the greatest hero ever to serve at KCPD – and now has a military facility named for him – met a tragic end thanks to a nation and a department that let him down nearly 90 years ago.

General John J. Pershing presented Private First Class (PFC) Charles Denver Barger with the Medal of Honor – the highest award in the U.S. Military – in 1919 for his unbelievable acts of valor in World War I. When Barger left the military, he came to work at KCPD from 1921 to 1931. That’s why several KCPD members attended the building memorialization ceremony for Barger on Oct. 19, 2019. That ceremony officially renamed the Belton II Army Reserve Center to the Barger Army Reserve Center and featured several high-ranking Army officials, as well as Charles Barger’s second cousin. The facility is located at 15303 Andrews Rd., at the far southern end of Kansas City, Mo.

Although Barger is now revered, he left the military with what would now be recognized as a significant case of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He also suffered brain damage from exposure to mustard gas, according to the book, *Quietly Exploding: The Life of Medal of Honor Hero Charles Barger*. Published in 2018, the book was written by Barger’s relatives MSgt. (Ret.) Joseph P. Bowman with Chris Kraft. (The Kansas City Police Historical Society provided several department records to the authors.) The undiagnosed PTSD would go on to affect Charlie Barger’s family life and his career at KCPD.

## A DIFFICULT START

Barger was born in 1892 in rural southwest Missouri to a 14-year-old mother and a father who would later go to jail for murder. His father was part of the notorious Staffebach gang, who were linked to at least 10 murders in southwest Missouri and southeast Kansas. Barger spent his early years in the home his grandmother ran as a brothel. After his father was imprisoned, Barger’s mother divorced and went to work in a store. According to *Quietly Exploding*, family legend had it that she left him at home all day alone at the age of 4 or 5 while she worked. This was reported to the state, which took young Charlie from her and put him in an orphanage.

He was adopted by a couple in their 50s, the Bargers, but they only used him for farm labor. They never celebrated holidays or birthdays with him, and he had only a fourth-grade education. They died when he was either 15 or 16, at which point he drifted from farm to farm



PFC Charles Barger upon his return from WWI, Courtesy U.S. Military

looking for labor work, and from the home of one extended relative to another. He eventually settled with the McFeron family, whose matriarch was the cousin of his adoptive mother. There, he was truly accepted and loved. He continued to seek work as a laborer.

## OVER THERE

As the United States became involved in World War I, Charles Barger enlisted in the U.S. Army on April 1, 1918, and arrived in France in June 1918. He soon earned a reputation for being fearless. On Oct. 31, 1918, Barger’s regiment sent several patrols into no man’s land to check out German positions to prepare for the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. His brigade was at the southwest edge of Bois-de-Bantheville, France, for over a week, where the enemy had fired high-explosive shells, many containing mustard gas. The patrols were sent out during daylight, which was unusual, according to the pamphlet from the memorialization ceremony.

Barger’s regiment got pinned down by heavy rifle and machine gunfire. Two men were hit. Another managed to crawl back to the Allies’ trench to report that the two men were trapped, injured in “no man’s land,” according to the Army. Barger and PFC Jesse Funk voluntarily ran 500 yards through heavy gunfire with a stretcher to rescue them. The injured soldier

they came to first insisted they get the other injured soldier instead. They did so, and brought him back to their trench. Then they went back into no man’s land amid heavy gunfire to rescue the first soldier. But on that trip, they found a third wounded soldier about 50 yards from a machine gun nest. So once they deposited the second man back to safety, they went back into rapid gunfire a *third* time to rescue the final soldier.

Two of the three men they rescued survived. The third died after his rescue, when a shell exploded in front of the ambulance that was trying to transport him to medical care. The ambulance crashed to avoid the explosion, and the wounded soldier died in the crash, according to *Quietly Exploding*.

## A HERO’S WELCOME

Barger and Funk both received the Medal of Honor for their actions, among many other honors for valor. General John Pershing personally presented them with the medals of Feb. 9, 1919, at his headquarters in Chaumont, France.

Barger returned home to much fanfare, being the guest of honor at parades and banquets throughout the Midwest. Kansas City Mayor James Cowgill hosted a parade in Barger’s honor, which sparked a friendship between the two. Barger was later honored at the dedication of the National World War I Memorial in Kansas City in 1921.

He returned home to live with the McFeron family in southwest Missouri and farm. He soon grew restless and re-enlisted in the Army, but was honorably discharged after Congress ordered a reduction in forces.

In the meantime, he reconnected with his biological mother, and they became close. She said he appeared edgy, could never quite relax and exhibited respiratory issues.

“Denver, as I always called him, was suffering from the effects of gas,” she told the Independence Examiner in 1936, as quoted in *Quietly Exploding*. There is no record that he sought treatment.

## “THE MAKING OF A GOOD OFFICER”

Barger married Audrey Hurst in 1921, and the two had a volatile relationship from the start. Feeling restless again, the couple relocated to Kansas City in October 1921, where Barger sought the help of his friend Mayor Cowgill in securing a position with the Kansas City Missouri Police Department. He started on

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Nov. 21, 1921, and was assigned to the Westport sub-station. Within his first six months on the Department, Barger was involved in two officer-involved shootings. In one of the shootings, inside a bootlegger's house, Barger was shot five times: in the left wrist, right arm, chest, torso and head. The suspect died, but Charlie survived after being hospitalized for five weeks.

"Already suffering the effects of mustard gas and post-traumatic stress, he now had to deal with that head injury, which caused severe migraines and affected his ability to concentrate," Bowman wrote in *Quietly Exploding*.

Barger returned to work after his injury and was promoted at the conclusion of his probationary period in June 1922 from Class C to Class B patrolman.

"This man has the making of a good officer, is ambitious of good habits, and while at this station has shared several good arrests," Lt. C.E. Christie wrote in recommending him for promotion.

His first child, Charles Denver Barger Jr., was born five days after his promotion. But in September, Barger was involved in two excessive force incidents. One of the incidents reported in *Quietly Exploding* involved a "disreputable gang of society boys" whom Barger called "cake-eaters" during the confrontation. The teenage punk-types had wealthy parents, and Barger was exonerated of wrongdoing in that case. But just a few weeks after that, a jeweler saw Barger beating a man who had apparently done nothing wrong at 31<sup>st</sup> and Indiana. Barger was suspended for three months, until an internal investigation turned out in his favor. He was reinstated as an officer. Despite the troubling signs of physical and mental health trouble, Barger received no assistance or treatment from the government or the department.

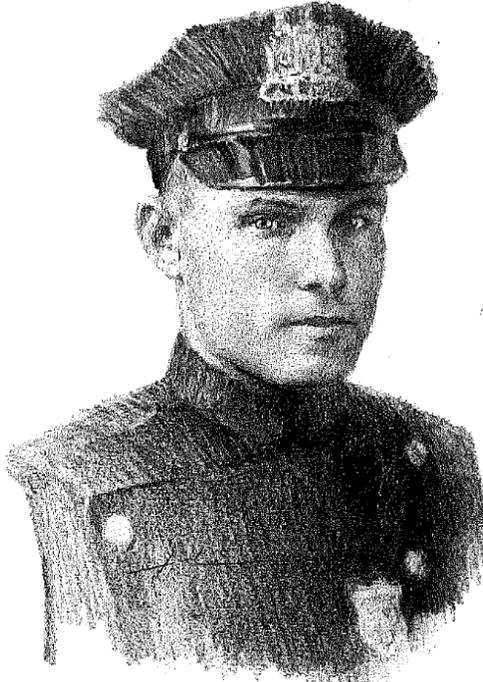
#### **A DOWNWARD SPIRAL**

Barger and his wife Audrey divorced in 1926, with Audrey getting primary custody of their son. The next year, at age 33, Barger married 18-year-old Ruth Burgoon. She had gotten married at 14 to a 40-year-old man, and they'd recently divorced. They had a son together. Charlie adopted him after their marriage. Charlie and Ruth had their own daughter together in April 1928, and he named her after his biological mother.

In June 1928, however, Charlie became embroiled in a custody and child-support battle with his ex-wife, according to *Quietly Exploding*. On June 3, he attempted suicide by shooting himself in the chest with a revolver. The bullet entered just above his heart, but he survived thanks to the staff of Kansas City General Hospital. While he lay in critical condition at

the hospital, his ex-wife arrived screaming and had to be arrested. After nine weeks in the hospital, Barger was released. After some recovery time at home, he returned to his job at KCPD, despite his suicide attempt. Instead of offering any assistance, the department cut his pay in half to \$70 a month, which added fuel to the already volatile fire within Charlie.

In June 1931, Barger was set to take custody of Charlie Jr. for the summer months, according to *Quietly Exploding*. When he went to pick him up at his ex-wife's home in Kansas City, Kan., they got into a bitter argument over child



**A sketch of Charles Barger when he was an officer at KCPD by Mike Theuer, from the book *Quietly Exploding*.**

support, and her brother stepped in. Barger struck his ex-brother-in-law in the head with a meat cleaver, causing a 5-inch gash to his head. KCKPD issued an arrest warrant for Barger for "assault with the intent to kill." When KCK police divulged the incident to KCPD commanders, they suspended Barger immediately. Without waiting for the completion of the investigation, Chief Lewis Siegfried wrote to the Board of Police Commissioners recommending that Barger be terminated.

"This man has been in similar trouble on several previous occasions," Siegfried wrote in records the Kansas City Police Historical Society provided to the authors of *Quietly Exploding*. "He appears to have no self-control. I do not believe Barger is fit to be a member of his Department, and I respectfully recommend that he be dropped for the good of the service."

Before the Board of Police Commissioners could act on the recommendation, Barger resigned on June 29, 1931. He left the department

with no compensation and no pension. He never received disability pay for being shot five times in the line of duty.

#### **DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES**

The same week he resigned, Barger was hospitalized again with appendicitis. Shortly after getting out, he took a job as an armed security guard for the American Royal, which actually paid more than his job at KCPD. But within the first week, in October 1931, his gun fell out of its holster, shooting him in the right leg when it fell. Barger was hospitalized once again, and this time, he sustained permanent damage. He was forced to walk with a cane and could not return to any labor-intensive work. It was the Great Depression, and work was hard to come by. Barger got a job in April 1932 as a caretaker of shelter houses at Swope Park, but that only lasted a few months.

He and his family faced eviction and repossession of their furniture. His wife was hospitalized for a lengthy stay with spinal meningitis, and his adopted son Joe suffered a fractured skull. Medical bills were mounting. He started raising rabbits to eat and planted a garden. *The Kansas City Star* ran an article about Barger's fall from all-American hero to destitution, citing how the government had failed to care for the men who were harmed in service to their nation. The story was picked up and run nationwide. Barger applied to the Department of Veterans Affairs for service-related disability benefits due to mustard gas exposure and "shell shock" but was denied.

In March 1933, he snapped and severely beat his wife, Ruth, threatening to shoot her and himself. The KCPD officers who responded did not arrest him but instead took him to General Hospital for psychiatric treatment. He would remain there for two years. His wife, Ruth, visited him regularly and did not think he was ready to be released when he was discharged, according to *Quietly Exploding*.

#### **A VIOLENT END**

Barger was eventually able to find work through President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps in June 1935. He and his family moved to St. Louis, then back near Oak Grove by the farm owned by his wife's parents. In October 1936, his hand was injured at work, requiring further hospitalization. Ruth said this made him grow more irritable. On Nov. 20, 1936, he beat Ruth again, as well as their son Joe, who was now 11. She and the children fled to the safety of her parents' home. He warned her that he would kill her if she called police.

On Nov. 23, she went back to speak with

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# Officially Speaking

## Awards

### **Meritorious Service Award**

Sergeant Jason Cramblit  
Aux. Service Volunteer Dr. Ronal Mac Gregor  
Forensic Specialist Marisa Smith

### **Certificate of Commendation**

Officers Jeremy Chick and Elizabeth Garza

### **Distinguished Service Medal**

Officer John King

## Retirements

Officer Michael Flynn  
Sergeant Kristina Goodin  
Officer Krista Maggio  
Officer Kathryn Mahurin  
Sergeant Bradford Stott

## Obituaries

Retired Civilian James Colclasure  
Retired Sergeant Gary McCready  
Retired Sergeant Richard Steffan

# Upcoming Events

December 30  
South Patrol Blood Drive

January 14  
Board of Police Commissioners Meeting

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[www.kcpd.org](http://www.kcpd.org)

# Police notifications help schools care for kids

A pilot program between police, a mental health agency and Northland schools is helping children who have faced tough situations.

The program, Handle with Care, notifies schools if police have been to the home of a student the previous day.

"When we get dispatched, we tell the school we were there, but we can't tell them why we were there," said Officer Bill Keeney, a Community Interaction Officer at Shoal Creek Patrol Division who spear-headed the effort on the Department.

Tri-County Mental Health received a grant to fund the program. Program Development Specialist Laura Bruce oversees Handle with Care for Tri-County.

"All the schools are trained on what to do with Handle with Care alerts," Bruce said. "It doesn't mean saying, 'I heard the cops were at your house last night.' Their behavior toward the students doesn't change, but it's a lens to see them through. So maybe if a kid is sleeping in class, you send them to the nurse instead of the principal."

Bruce said schools provide a place of safety and stability for children who may lack that at home.

"But schools don't know what happened last night," she said. "This doesn't have to be that someone died. Maybe they just witnessed a dog bite. Sometimes even just (police) presence can evoke some unrest in a kid."

Stephanie Amaya, the Director of Educational Programs for the Park Hill School District, said Handle with Care provides another way to have collaboration between police and the school district in a way that helps them provide ongoing supports for students so they can be academically successful.

"We are able to provide students with interventions or supports much quicker and in a more preventative way," Amaya said.

Shoal Creek and North patrol divisions are currently working with the

Park Hill, North Kansas City and Liberty school districts. Since the program is funded by Tri-County Mental Health, which serves Platte, Clay and Ray counties, it remains in the Northland for now. Officer Keeney said he hopes to see it expand city-wide, but the number of school districts in Kansas City could present a challenge.

Officer Keeney said Bruce and the staff at Tri-County worked very hard to make the Handle with Care program as easy as possible for police. They provided training to all Northland officers. When officers write reports at the end of their shifts, they simply enter into an online database the address of any homes they responded to at which school-age children were present. That

confidential database is shared with staff in the school districts' central offices, who send the alerts out to the staff of the schools the students attend. Keeney reiterated that schools are not notified of the nature of contact that students had with police.

This marks the second year of Handle with Care. Tri-County leaders heard about it at a conference in West Virginia, where it had helped significantly reduce youth suicide rates.

Officer Keeney shared one of Kansas City's Handle with Care success stories. A child was present during a domestic violence situation, and the responding officers recorded that in the Handle with Care system. The child failed to show up at school for the next three days. Knowing there had been a Handle with Care alert on the child, school staff checked back in with police to see if she was OK. The Shoal Creek Patrol's social worker made contact with the family and found that they were staying at a domestic violence shelter outside the city, and the child had no way to get to school from there.

"The kiddo was reconnected, rides were provided, and she was able to go back to school," Officer Keeney said.



someone from the Veterans Administration who worked with Barger when he was in the psychiatric ward. He advised Ruth that the best way to get Charlie back into treatment was to have him arrested for the domestic assault and transported for psychiatric care, according to *Quietly Exploding*.

Deputies showed up at Barger's job to arrest him that day. He asked if he could change out of his work clothes first. Instead, he snuck out a back door. He showed up at his wife's parents' house, where she was hiding out with their children. He demanded to see her and threatened her father with a hunting knife.

"I'll get her yet!" he yelled, according to her statement to Oak Grove police, which was cited in *Quietly Exploding*. "You see this knife? I'm going home and cut my throat and set the house on fire."

Unfortunately, that's just what he did. When Jackson County deputies encountered Barger at his home, he and his house were on fire, and he had a laceration on his neck. But he still presented a threat. He ran toward one of the deputies with the knife, so another shot Barger, striking him in the leg. They were finally able to disarm him. Barger – who had never been

shot in battle in World War I – had now been shot for the 8<sup>th</sup> time since returning home. He was once again transported by ambulance to General Hospital in Kansas City, where he succumbed to his injuries and died Nov. 25, 1936,

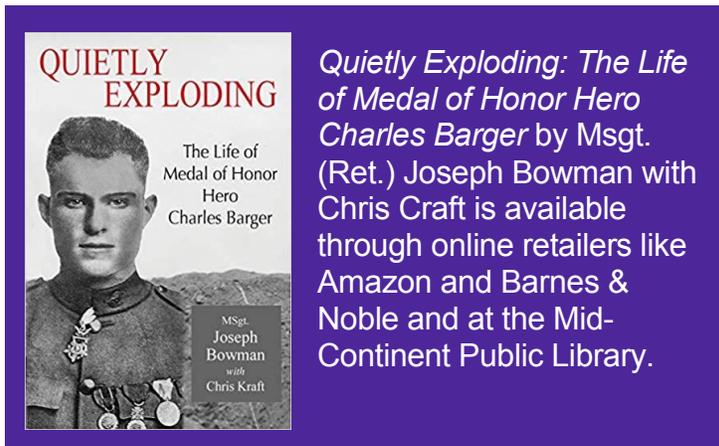
would deny. Yet through the years every effort made by the veterans' organizations to persuade the government that sent him to war to admit responsibility for his mental health condition ended in failure."

None of the politicians who had so excitedly welcomed Medal-of-Honor-Winner Charles Barger home from war attended his funeral, but many KCPD members did, according to *Quietly Exploding*. KCPD motorcycle officers also escorted the funeral procession while it was in their city. Barger was buried with full military honors.

Thanks to the activism of Star reporter Robert Reed, a trust fund was established to help provide for Barger's wife and children, and Congress finally approved a bill in

1940 providing a pension for Medal of Honor Winners and their survivors.

The U.S. Army Reserve Center in Kansas City is the first facility or memorial ever to be named for Charles Barger, the only military Medal of Honor winner ever known to have served at the Kansas City Missouri Police Department.



at age 44. The official cause of death was burns to his face and arms. The media labeled it suicide.

The Kansas City Star reporter who had earlier written about Barger, Robert Reed, was a fellow veteran and Barger's friend. Upon Barger's demise, Reed wrote another article, stating, "That the breakdown was due to his war experience, no comrade of Charles Barger