



## A Success in St. Louis, 2011

The first reunion of the National Timberwolf Pups Association to proudly honor our 104th Veterans proved to be one for the history books. Friends, old and new, brought their family and boundless energy to continue the annual tradition set forth 66 years ago - and they did so without skipping a step. The city of St. Louis provided a welcoming backdrop beside the mighty Mississippi River, despite temperatures creeping up to 104 degrees and higher - a fitting number for our Veterans' arrival! Nearly three-hundred attendees joined us beneath the St. Louis Arch, Veterans, Pups, Grandpups and even our first Great-Grandpups, bolstering our numbers with every passing day of the reunion.

It seemed each passing day would be impossible to match for enjoyment - until the following day would relentlessly and welcomingly prove us wrong. City excursions featured bus tours throughout the great city of St. Louis, from the Gateway Arch to the mosaic Cathedral of St. Louis and the gardens of a World's Fair. An evening dinner cruise along the banks and beneath the spanning bridges of the Mississippi made way for an impressive General Meeting on Saturday morning. This event included a vivid and informative presentation by Professor John McManus, University of MO, regarding the operations and impact of Timberwolf efforts in WWII. General T.K Moffett and General Kurt Hardin traded congratulatory punches while bestowing their own appreciation, wit and wisdom, and their impressions for our new Association. Finally, Sara Moses, holocaust survivor and story teller extraordinaire, captivated the room with her tale of horror, struggle, and perseverance throughout the war. The beer bust that night was a gathering the likes of which St. Louis has never seen, riddled with raffles, song, and slide-show - and plenty of suds. The following Sunday morning began with the solemn ceremony of remembrance and prayer lead by Fr. Paul McCarty and directed by Robert Huber, both 104th Veterans. Heartfelt accounts were made by Pups, Jennifer Weaver-Neist and Kathy Clark. Before we dared say goodbyes, we gathered for the final night's banquet while the hotel jumped once more to the beats of the 312th Army Band, lead by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Claggert. The Association, one and all, dined, danced, regaled, and told and retold their stories throughout the night.

Sadly, as all great things must end, attendees parted ways and made their way home - but not before ensuring that we would meet again next year for the 2nd Timberwolf Pups Reunion and to continue the traditions of honor and remembrance for our Veterans. All exclaimed without hesitation, we'll see you again in 2012!

Without fail, the Association and all attendees owe a profound debt of thanks to our 104th Veterans; those able to attend and perpetuate this resolute tradition, those unable to attend due to distance or infirmity, and those passed on, whom we are here gathered to honor. There is not finer experience than to share in your brave history, intimately and profoundly, at these annual events. It truly is our honor to honor the Timberwolves. Until we meet again in Colorado, our best, warmest and proudest wishes to you throughout the new year - Timberwolf Up!



## **Saturday, September 3, 2011 - General Meeting**

The weekend began with the much anticipated first General Meeting of the NTPA. Fr. Business began as usual with State of the Association announcements from our President, Andrew Lane, treasurer, JeNeal Granieri, and the upcoming European tour announcement from our coordinator, Mary Jamieson. To continue the special announcements, representatives from both the St. Louis Mayor, Franis G. Slay, and the Missouri Governor, Jeremiah W. Nixon. It was announced that September 3, 2011, would henceforth be known as Timberwolf Day in the city of St. Louis and the entire state of Missouri. The official proclamations can be viewed below.

The Association then heard not one, but two U.S. Generals stress the importance our continued mission and to perpetuate the legacy set forth by our 104th Veterans during their WWII actions. Although General York was not able to join us this year, the customary "sock on the jaw" from General T.K. Moffet sealed the passing of the mantle to the new commanding General of the 104th Training Division, Brigadier General Kurt A. Hardin.

Our speakers then took the stage one after the other, providing two very different view points of the world at large 66 years ago. Professor John McManus, University of MO, provided an in depth and calculated discussion on the actions of the 104th following their baptism of fire and battles through Beligum and Holland. Day to day, and night fight by night fight, Professor McManus discussed each river bravely crossed, town achieved, and overall importance of the fall and winter campaigns of 1944. Immediately following, while the crowd prepared themselves, Sara Moses took the podium and began her tale of persecution and survival in her hometown of Piotrków, Poland, after Nazi invasion and continuing through the two concentration camps of Ravensbrück and Bergen-Belsen. Her discussion held a particular connection with our 104th Veterans with many of their own experiences liberating the Mittel-bau Dora concentration camp in Nordhausen, Germany, in the spring of 1945.

## **Ecumenical/Memorial Services – Sunday, September 4, 2011**

The Ecumenical Service was lead by Fr. Paul McCarty, chaplain. He gave the Invocation, we all sang “America the Beautiful”, and Father continued with the reading of Psalm 46. Father closed with a sermon, honoring and memorializing the Timberwolves who sacrificed their lives during the war.

The Memorial Service opened with “God Bless America.” Our director, Bob Huber, delivered a beautiful tribute and memorial to his deceased comrades. While the Pups lit the candles to begin the ceremony, we all joined in singing “When the Lights Go On Again All Over the World” and “The White Cliffs of Dover.”

Jen Weaver-Neist followed with a moving account of her Great Uncle Ralph Edward “Bud Shank,” 413<sup>th</sup> Inf., who was killed in action. Robert Huber conducted the Candle-Snuffing Ceremony. The veterans extinguished candles which represented the deceased Timberwolves of the given units and attached units that provided support in combat. Retired Major General T. K. Moffett extinguished the candle for General Terry de la Mesa Allen. Psalm 23 was read followed with the singing of “My Buddy.”

Following the playing of “Taps” Kathy Clark delivered a sincere “Thank You” to all of our veterans for serving our country so proudly during the war as well throughout their lives. Father McCarty gave the Benediction, closing the Memorial Service.

## **A Memorial Service Message**

**By Kathy Clark**

**Daughter of Robert R. Clark II, 414th HQ 1st Bn.**

The Interim Pups Committee asked me if I wanted to talk about the *War Stories* book. But I have something else I want to talk to the Timberwolves about—something that's been eating at me since I started work on that book. I am absolutely in awe of what you went through, what you accomplished, how you stood it all. And it made me think way back to something from my college days.

In 1961–62, I was a junior in college, about twenty years old, and having a ball. College was fun. Most of you wouldn't know about that. You went to war instead.

That year, I was studying sociology and hanging around with a group of sociology graduate students. We were all reading and talking about books like *The Organization Man* and *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, popular books of the day that complained about what was wrong with the new breed of working men. They were talking about you!

These men, so the books said, had lost the ability to think for themselves, to act independently. They wanted only to conform. They followed the crowd. They had become like sheep!

We read those books. And we bought that story. We bought it hook, line, and sinker. We would not be sheep like our fathers; we would be individuals. We would do our own thing. *That was the way to be*, we thought.

But you know what? We were wrong! We were *so* wrong! Those men who came back from World War II and were building our great nation... Those men were not sheep. Those men were wolves—Timberwolves!

You, and other veterans like you, had learned lessons on the battlefield that we, your children, cannot even begin to comprehend. You faced death day after day. You watched your buddies die. Many of you were wounded, some severely. At times, you thought there was not a chance in hell you would live to see your next birthday. But through it all, you did your job. You did your job because not to do it would have let your buddies down.

You didn't judge your comrades on race or nationality or religion or political party. You judged them only on how they did their job, because how they did their job might make the difference in whether you lived or died.

The war ended. You were still alive. You asked yourselves, "Why me?" And you promised that, because you had been allowed to live, you would make your life worthwhile—so that those men who died on the field of battle would not have died in vain. And you vowed never to forget them.

When you came home, you had your priorities straight. You went to school, you got jobs, you married and started families. And you didn't think about the war so much any more; you were too busy living your lives. But always...deep down in your souls...the lessons of the battlefield stayed with you.

One of the biggest lessons you learned was the power of cooperation. When you ran this country, people talked to each other. Things got done. You made America better. You made it a good place for your children. And we, your children, we took it all for granted. We thought that was the way things always were.

Now you have grown old. You think about the war every day. And you wonder, *Did I do the best I could? Should I have done something different?*

I say to you, Timberwolves, rest easy. You did your job well. You kept your promises. And you never forgot your buddies.

You will be leaving us way too soon now. We will miss you, Timberwolves, like we miss those of you who have gone before. We miss your firm guidance. We miss your ability to cooperate with one another.

I believe I speak the feelings of every Pup and Grandpup in the new National Timberwolf Pup Association—as well as those of many Pups and Grandpups here today—when I say we will never, never forget you. And we are going to do our damndest to make sure nobody else ever forgets you either.

Thank you. God bless.

## **2011 NTPA Reunion in St. Louis**

### **Memorial Service Remarks**

**By Jen Weaver-Neist, Pup**

It is fitting and perhaps bittersweet that the word “tomorrow” is in the last line of the song we just sang [“White Cliffs of Dover”], for even now, we still have our eyes set on that day—the future—of both the Timberwolf legacy as well as a peaceful world.

But before I say anything further, I’d like to wholeheartedly thank the members of what was the National Timberwolf Pups Association’s Interim Committee for inviting me to be a part of this memorial service. It is a great honor and privilege that matches my ongoing relationship with the 104th since I first learned of it in 1999. That’s when the American Legion directed me to the National Timberwolf Association as a resource for a book of letters I was working on in honor of my great-uncle, Timberwolf Ralph “Bud” Shank of the 413th, Company K. And I feel the book’s dedication is equally appropriate for why we’re gathered together today: “for my Uncle Bud and the many others who served in World War II, their stories told and untold, and lives forever changed.”

The journey that led me to speak today is one that began very innocently in a Pennsylvania attic twelve years ago, but it is one that I have come to believe is part of my life’s purpose—if such a plan exists. And I say this very selfishly, because as much as this journey has served the memory of my Uncle Bud, it has taught me *far* more about myself. It has given me context for the lives and loves and hopes that came before me—the branches of my family tree that ultimately made *me*, a member of the generations since, an honorary Timberwolf Pup. I am certain that Uncle Bud would have been a kindred spirit if he and I had ever met in person.

Just in case you haven’t heard or read it already, the core of the National Timberwolf Pups Association’s mission is this: *to ensure that future generations have an organization that is dedicated to keeping this important history alive and to honor its fallen.* And if I may be so bold, I would add “for the betterment of all.”

Back in the fall of 1999, at the beginning of my Timberwolf journey, my Uncle Bud’s three surviving siblings (one of which is my paternal grandmother) were downsizing their living arrangements, and I was assigned to clean out my Great-Aunt Peg’s storage space. There were Christmas decorations, books and records, miscellaneous items of passing necessity—the kinds

of things you'd expect to find in an attic. But then I came upon a dusty box with an old plastic bag on top that partially hid my great-grandmother's writing: "Letters from the Boys."

In World War II, all three of the Shank sons served, but Bud was not among them when they returned home. He died in Holland on November 4th, 1944, killed by a mine explosion while out on a volunteer mission as a stretcher-bearer.

Growing up, I'd heard and known about Bud, but I didn't grasp his story beyond two-dimensional photographs and a weathered headstone. He was a tragic mark on our family tree, and what more could I do beyond acknowledging the wound he left on all who knew him? I respected the sacrifice he'd made.

That day, however, with growing awareness and interest, I stood among my family as we circled the box from the attic and carefully unfolded the years. We lifted out the bag of letters and commented on the reaction of Bud's mother, Irene, in the months following his death—about how she didn't know peace until she had a grave to care for nearby. "If only he were here," she was known to say. Then color seeped further into the edges of Bud's story as we emptied a plain manila envelope and I held his personal effects in my hands. A dog tag, a wallet...possessions that still bore the seal of water from Holland's battlefields because my great-grandparents were too devastated to do anything more than stow them out of sight and memory. And when we forced open the leather of Bud's wallet and discovered a lock of his fiancée's hair in the coin pocket, my great-uncle bloomed fully to life before me.

As luck would have it, at the time, I was in search of a final project for some graduate work I was doing in the Publishing Certificate Program at Emerson College in Boston, and Bud's letters fit the bill. I created the first version of the book in six short but intense months, calling it *Give My Love to Everybody* because Bud signed many of his letters this way.

Over the next nine years, I continued to meet with Bud's siblings to re-create the man, learning about his early passion for math and science—chemistry in particular; about his self-directed home experiments and the unique way he ate baked potatoes; about Jane, his beloved fiancée. And with the help of the National Timberwolf Association, I reunited my family with two of Bud's army mates whose wartime letters confirmed his fate and were a welcome source of comfort to my great-grandparents. Then, in 2006, I had the humbling experience of being the first family member to visit Henri Chapelle Cemetery in Belgium when I went overseas with

some of the veterans and Pups in this room. The final pieces for a worthy tribute came together on foreign soil, and I published the book in 2009.

But my connection to the Timberwolves didn't end with Bud. In doing my research for the book, I found out that another great-uncle, Pfc. Warren Fredrickson, was also a Timberwolf—a member of the 414th, Company G—and he died in Holland as a POW after being reported MIA during the first days of combat. The fateful catch is that Warren is from my *mother's* side of the family—a group of Minnesota Swedes that had no known association with Bud's family in Pennsylvania until my parents married in the 1970s. Add in my unexpected 2002 move to Oregon, the birthplace of the 104th, and you could say I was destined to tell these stories.

So, what does this snapshot of my personal journey mean to *you* and the tradition of this annual memorial service?

Bud's story is one of *many* who served in World War II, and there is far more to his life than his death. Because of the National Timberwolf Association and now the Pups, and because of families like mine who chose *not* to forget, I have arrived at this memorial service via my Uncle Bud's footsteps. Through a mixed bag of genetics, history, loss, and repair, I have arrived to discover that *I* was the one I was meant to find in that dusty box of letters. Beyond the battlefields, the politics, and the years in-between, Uncle Bud and I *are the same*. Our hopes, our fears, our humanity...all the same. And with each day that I live past his all-too-brief twenty years, I can vow to do my imperfect best to remember him and what *he* would have done had he survived: to live a lifetime in the finite, however long that ends up being, and to work for the peace he died to obtain. *That* is the ultimate legacy, and legacy is what we've gathered to commemorate.

In Bud's book, there are several poems, some from his sister Peg, and others from his roommate in the ASTP, Bob Schwarz, who was nicknamed "Bob the Poet" and later served as a combat medic for the 104th. I'd like to conclude with a poem I wrote in 2009 in a similar poetic style as I wrapped up my work on *Give My Love to Everybody*. (And for context, you'll want to note that "Jackie" is the family dog from Bud's childhood.)

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today, and a most sincere note of gratitude to the Timberwolf veterans who joined us this weekend in body, thought, and spirit. This poem is



as much for all of you as it is for us Pups, who will now carry *you* on our backs for generations to come.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **To Bud, In Conclusion**

The farm is sold, the seasons went...  
Irene wrapped up the things you sent—  
away for us one fall to find...  
A journey and an end combined.

We sifted past the dust and old  
and watched a story far from cold  
evolve through more than sixty years,  
by one hair lock and newfound tears.

The Bud behind the story grew  
from son to “he” and finally, *you*...  
A person living far from war,  
with Jane and school—a future, *more*.

A young man at the source of things,  
drew conclusions 'round the rings  
connecting science, truth, and life  
to farms and plastics—such insight!

Your loved ones nobly lived without  
but to your memory were devout.  
“If our Bud could be here today,  
he’d muse on it and find a way...”

For Jane to stay close by his side  
and ne'er their happy path divide  
by tragedy, a lover gone—  
a perm'nent fate. "You must move on..."  
To one day in an attic dark  
and to the next—a tribute sparked—  
and further past old graves and mud...  
My spirit soldier, Uncle Bud.

Who brought us back: tables and talk...  
canvas canoe, a midday walk...  
down to the creek or one-room school,  
and back where Jackie waits—the rule...

Like fall and winter on the farm  
and gath'ring in its kitchen warm,  
I found a chance among the few  
to love someone I never knew.

© 2009 Jennifer Weaver-Neist