



2007 Memorial Service
“E” Company 383rd Infantry Regiment Association
Branson, Missouri



I would like to begin today's memorial service by lighting two candles. The first representing the company veterans lost this past year and the second representing the legacy that these men leave behind to their families and country.

As most of you know, from 1985 until 2004, the memorial services for “E” Company were delivered by Frank Bolton, one of the more active members of the company association. These services included stories about American history, patriotism, and reverent farewells to the veterans of “E” Company who had been lost during the year. There were very few references, however, to themselves, their wives, or their personal accomplishments. They are simply not that way. We all know how modest and humble this generation is. Getting the job done now was always more important than talking about it later. However, today I would like to change course and talk a little bit about them.

In the past we have honored the victories and courage shown by the men of “E” Company during the war and by the women back on the homefront. But, I would like to spend a few moments today stepping back and highlighting just a few of the many sacrifices that the youth of World War II made before the war even began. These observations are based on a huge body of written and oral work on

the difficulties that this generation faced before the first shots of World War II were ever fired. I believe that the children and grandchildren of our association must hear these stories too.

First, many of our parents faced very tough desperate childhoods. They grew up during the Depression and often understood the pangs of hunger and the work days that never seemed to end. Diseases considered almost harmless today often took the lives of the sick before they could receive treatment. Most families had experienced the unfortunate death of at least one child or certainly knew those that had. For those on the farms the simple loss of the family mule or horse could mean total ruin. Without the family mule the fields were not plowed and the crops never planted or harvested. For some, getting any kind of an education was considered a luxury until the state compulsory education laws were passed. Unfortunately, this only meant longer work days and rising earlier each morning because the farming, ranching, and household chores still had to get done. There were just too many mouths that had to be fed. Many saw electric lightbulbs and indoor plumbing with running water for the first time during the 1920's and 30's. However, some were not able to enjoy these advancements until after the war ended. The hardships they experienced during this period were endless and I could go on and on.

Gradually, though, the American economy started to turn around. Businesses began showing profits again, banks started re-opening, and the stock market inched back up. The American people were slowly working their way out of poverty and a collapsed economy. Government programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps or CCC and the National Youth Administration were created to provide additional support to struggling families. My Father earned \$6 a week, during the Depression, running errands for his high school while working for the National Youth Administration. These federal programs helped but, ultimately, it was this generation's hard work and perseverance that lifted the Nation out of these dark times. In one collective pull the country staggered back to it's feet. Some of our parents, now older teenagers or in their early twenties, even left home and found their first jobs as schoolteachers, store employees, or even new small business owners. What a day it was to receive their first paycheck and proudly make that first deposit at the bank. Things had turned around and the future looked bright and promising. Some could now afford to get married and even start families. The worst was surely behind our parents and grandparents. A new day had finally dawned.

But it was not meant to be. Just as their lives were improving another grave challenge was issued to this generation as the Nation sounded it's

call to arms in 1941. This generation, now back on their feet, and ready to embrace the prospects of a brighter future did not complain and they did not retreat. As we all know, they answered this next challenge with the same strength, determination, and personal sacrifice that they used to save our Country from the Depression. Now they would save the Country again.... many with their own lives this time.

Several years ago I was asked by one of our veterans why I still came to the reunions, especially after losing my Father. Frankly, I had no reply. I pondered this question for some time but could not find an answer. At a later reunion, after visiting with the other children, it finally came to me. It is simply your spirit. The spirit, that gave you the strength to beat the Depression and win the war, still shines today. I believe I speak for all the children and grandchildren when I say that we feel better about families, our country, and ourselves after these brief moments with you each June.

As most of you are aware, we lost another one of our bright shining spirits this spring. Bill Faulkner passed away on April 7. We would like to express our condolences again to Millie, Erica, and the rest of Bill's family. I think it is fair to say that Bill was a favorite and beloved member of the "E" Company family. He and Millie, with help from Al Isakson and Joe Mosser, hosted the 1990 "E"

Company Reunion in Bismarck. This reunion had one of the largest turnouts and was praised by many of the veterans as one of the best ever organized. Later, when Ray Williams decided he could no longer continue his duties as the Company Secretary-Treasurer Bill took over. He served as the second Secretary-Treasurer for the Company Association from 1992 - 2004. Bill got at least two newsletters out every year, during his tenure, and kept a close eye on the company budget. I think it was obvious that the Company veterans and their families meant a lot to Bill and Bill meant a lot to us. I would now like to quote several lines written by Bill in his March 1992 Newsletter:

“What we Co. E buddies are doing, I feel, is keeping our association going, not only for ourselves but also for the buddies we lost during Leyte and Okinawa. There is always a great bond between us that nobody else has. For every year that we extend this Reunion, it means our buddies are with us again. “

I would like to close these services by sounding Taps for Bill.