

# NSP OPINIONS

## 17-year-old World War II victim finds rest at St. Ann's

When I say we here at *The NSP* love telling your stories, I really mean it. One of the things I like about this job is that you never know when you're going to happen along one of those stories.

Case in point: this week's story on Pvt. Fay Gene Teter.

Last Friday morning, our ad rep, Theresa Blackledge texted me in the morning. She said Jim Kuhl with the Eldridge VFW had stopped in and told her the VFW was going to be doing a military funeral at St. Ann's. He didn't have a lot of details, but he thought it might be something interesting, and if we had time, maybe someone could stop out at 10 a.m.



**Inside Story**  
NSP Editor  
Erin Gentz

Mark was out of the office for the day, and it was a gorgeous morning for a drive, so I thought, "Why

not?"

I pulled up by the cemetery and walked over, without any real expectations of what might come out of it. I stood close enough that I could hear Father Joseph Wolf, but far enough away that I didn't seem like a weird interloper, snapped a few photos, and mostly watched the VFW guys.

There's really something moving about a military funeral. I think they have a quiet dignity, and the rifle salute followed by the mournful sound of taps can send shivers down your back.

Afterwards, as the VFW members were collecting their brass to present to the family, I stopped over to say, "hi." As the family were thanking the VFW, I started to overhear something about World War II and DNA identification, and I quickly realized this wasn't just any military funeral.

It turned out to be one of the most improbable things I'd ever heard.

Pvt. Teter's family members were incredibly gracious and forthcoming with the story, but they were also



clearly so truly grateful to have him back. For nearly 80 years, he was all but gone. And now they have him, tangible and near, buried next to his mother.

Back at the office, I fired up Google, and VFW quartermaster Brad Striegel texted me a few other links about Teter. There was actually quite a bit of data to sort through, but there are also some very dedicated people out there, committed to ensuring that missing veterans don't go unremembered. So, in addition to learning Teter's story, I also got to learn about organizations such as History Flight and the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency that are doing amazing work recovering missing veterans from all over the world.

Also, I had to brush up on some World War II history. Although I'd heard of battles in the South Pacific like Guadalcanal, I'd honestly never heard of Tarawa.

One of the links Brad Striegel sent me was about a film the Marines made called "With the Marines at Tarawa." I watched it on YouTube; it's about 20 minutes long and it's on the U.S. National Archives channel with a bunch of other military films. The Marine that filmed it, Norman Hatch,

literally had a gun in one hand and a 35 mm camera in the other, and he was as close as 15 feet away from the enemy at times.

It's about as grim and raw as you'd imagine. It's certainly nothing an audience in the 1940s would have seen before.

As I watched, I was struck at the contrast between the battlefield and that Friday morning in the Long Grove countryside. It occurred to me how loud and terrifying Pvt. Teter's last moments had to have been. How the last sounds he heard, far away from home, just 17 years old and alone, were almost certainly violent and jarring.

For nearly 80 years, he remained there, lost. For many of those years, the atoll was abandoned, and he was thought to be unrecoverable.

But then some people came along, determined to find him and reunite his remains with his loved ones.

And he got to come home, and it was quiet and peaceful. Just birds chirping and one or two cars breezing down St. Ann's Road, unaware something completely remarkable had just happened.

Three rifle volleys and then a bugler's

call.

Taps has been used as a bugle call since the Civil War. Officially, it's a military signal for lights out.

Unofficially though, it has lyrics. And while there are some variations, there is one particularly popular set of lyrics:

*Day is done, gone the sun,  
From the hills, from the lake, from the  
skies.  
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.  
Go to sleep, peaceful sleep, may the  
soldier  
or sailor, God keep. On the land or the  
deep, Safe in sleep.  
Love, good night, must thou go,  
when the day, and the night need thee  
so?  
All is well. Spedeth all To their rest.  
Fades the light;  
And afar Goeth day,  
And the stars Shineth bright,  
Fare thee well;  
Day has gone, night is on.  
Thanks and praise, for our days,  
'Neath the sun, 'Neath the stars, 'Neath  
the sky,  
As we go, this we know, God is nigh.*

Safely rest, Pvt. Teter.

## Veterans deserve more than America is giving

### VFW honors Eldridge teen for veterans essay

I believe veterans are overlooked as part of our modern society. Our veterans are living examples of the American spirit. They display courage, determination, and the rugged individualism we all strive to achieve in our lives.

Without our veterans, we would not be living in this great nation that we have the right to call our home. Our veterans are pillars of the community who represent the grit and dedication to this great nation and the freedoms it gives us.

**Salute to veterans**  
by Jack Striegel

when it comes to keeping our country safe. During the 245 total years the United States has existed, the American people have always answered the call to defend our country, showing fearlessness and compassion for its people as they risked their lives to keep us all safe and free.

However, despite all veterans

have done for us, they're highly unappreciated in the modern era.

Roughly 11 percent of all homeless people are veterans who are often forgotten by society. Many of these veterans have mental illnesses, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, or disabilities that they suffered from during their service in both war and peace.

Along with this, veteran suicides are also a major issue, especially in the modern day. Veterans aren't receiving the support they need after a traumatic experience that occurred during or outside of deployment, and are unfortunately taking their life at a rate twice as high as that of civilians. Sadly, the amount of suicides have not yet shown a substantial dip—especially in recent times where the suicide numbers have been steadily increasing.

In light of this, the number of homeless veterans has been drastically reduced throughout the last decade as more money gets put toward their safety and well-being. As more and more people hopefully begin to recognize the dedication that veterans have put forth to our country, we can aim to see a better future for the veterans which have put their life on the line for our safety.

Veterans are the ones who have kept this great country alive since its creation. Ever since the Revolutionary

War all the way to current overseas operations, our veterans have been there to uphold our democratic values. Without those brave men from 1776, who were willing to risk their lives to establish the United States of America, we would not exist. Without our veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice during the world wars, the very existence of some of our greatest allies— and maybe even our own country— may have crumbled to nothing. Without our soldiers who took up arms to fight in the War on Terror, the lives of American citizens that were lost to terrorist attacks would have gone unavenged. More importantly, there would have been a high risk of more terrorist attacks on U.S. soil and its citizens if our military was not called on to protect our homeland. Fortunately, we can all thank our veterans, who risked their lives in the field of combat, for the ability to call this country home.

Our veterans are the soul embodiment of the American spirit. Defined in words such as courage, determination, optimism, and compassion, our veterans display each and every one of these—whether it be during their time of service or after they left the military—they still maintain their pro-American composure. This never-ending display of the American spirit continues to act

as the foundation of America as we build off of this spirit, creating a better country for everyone to live in.

The importance of the veteran should be self-explanatory, but fewer and fewer of our educational institutions are teaching patriotism for our country, let alone respect for veterans. In simple terms, there would be no America without them. However, there's much more to them than just that. Our veterans show extreme dedication to our country; even sacrificing their lives to assure our sovereignty as a nation. Unfortunately, these efforts are often unappreciated by many people who don't understand what these veterans have gone through to assure our safety and freedom. In addition to this, veterans have been the foundation of the American spirit for hundreds of years, being used as inspiration for the American people and the foundation of America itself. Even though the meaning of veterans for some may be minuscule, their importance does not go unnoticed by us all, because without you veterans, we are nothing.

*Jack Striegel, of Eldridge is a senior at North Scott High School. He wrote this in October for VFW Eldridge VFW Post 6174 Voice of Democracy Essay contest. Find this story online at northscottpress.com for a link to a recording of Jack reading his essay.*