

2.3 WORLD WAR II 1941-1945

PART B: EUROPEAN THEATER

Adolph Hitler, half Jewish, won the hearts of the German people and convinced them of his right to rule. Allied troops opposed his plan to have all Europe under one roof. When reports of mass genocide of the disabled, frail, Christian believers, those who politically opposed him, and the Jews became known, the world was horrified.



Early Nazi Germany Naval flag, 1939-41, made of experimental synthetic fabric.

Goodness

“We received a shipment of candy to give away to the locals (chocolate was a rationed commodity in the U.S. for this purpose), but there wasn’t enough for the whole battalion to take part.” Arne continued. “Instead, our CO presented a chocolate bar to each German POW in our care. Even though we felt they were sometimes treated better than our own soldiers, we didn’t wish POW status on anyone... Frankly, there *was* a little grouching about it. Why would he give away chocolate we deserved?”

Angela, age 4, was on Arne’s side. Her father patiently explained the difference. “Hitler was bent on giving certain of his own countrymen a bitter pill—and the rest of the world twisted ideology—to swallow, using up his people in grey-green wrappers to the last man or boy, while we were determined to offer chocolate and kindness to those in our care.”

—The author; her father, Robert C.; and Arne K., father’s good friend, recalling Arne’s WWII service at the dinner table, 1957.



It is said that Mr. Hershey had a benevolent heart and donated tremendous amounts of chocolate bars to the war effort, which may have even caused him to edge toward bankruptcy. Whether that is true or not, due to his Ration D Bars, GIs had a much easier time winning the trust of the nationals. 3 billion Bars went overseas and some of his government-contract profits were used to care for American orphans and build hospitals.

Flandrau State Park

The Civilian Conservation Corps built a MN camp in the 1930s
In a style to reflect the strong ethnic German heritage of the area.
In 1944 Camp New Ulm's repurposed barracks
Suddenly housed 160 German prisoners of war.

"Prisoners of War" are defined to be
"Combatants or noncombatants
From a belligerent power
During or after an armed conflict."

One New Ulm family was fined \$300¹
For removing a prisoner from the camp,
Housing him
And taking him to church.

—[www.http://en.wikipedia.com](http://en.wikipedia.com)

¹\$4,067.97 in 2015 dollars.



The American Way

The simple human decency
Of our people
Left behind an indelible impression
Of the American democratic ideal.

—Cpl. George Anderson, AMVETS National
Service Foundation World War II 50th Year of
Victory Calendar, March, 1995.

Band of Possible Brothers

We might have had a lot in common [with those we were fighting].
We might've liked to fish, you know, he might've liked to hunt.
Of course, they were doing what they were supposed to do,
And I was doing what I was supposed to do.
But under different circumstances, we might have been good friends.



—Darrell “Shifty” Powers, WWII Easy Company of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Infantry, immortalized in HBO mini-series from Band of Brothers by Stephen Ambrose, interview from DVD series.

Licking Stamps

A girl from a town the size of a postage stamp
Wanted to host a class reunion,
But discovering all the classmates were flung
To the four corners of the world,
Wrote to each family asking for APO (Army Post Office) addresses.
She compiled an open letter recounting hometown news
So everyone could belong again
For a moment to *their* little corner.



—Of Elaine F., one-room school teacher, Bruno, MN.

Stamp of Approval

“One thing our small rural high school class was going to flip their wig over was no reunion. 6 years post-graduation, but still smack dab in the middle of the war, everyone’s parents sent me the dope:¹ their son or daughter was stationed here or there or had moved to take a job for the war effort.

I’m an eager beaver. Rather than snap my cap² or pass the buck, in cahoots with their folks I included typed carbon copies of the scoop inside handmade cards I hoped weren’t too cheesy, sent from home to everyone without much lettuce.³ They got a hi-de-ho flung across the globe. We couldn’t be Dicky Shincrackers,⁴ but it was a big relief we were all still alive, and could see how each of us was supporting the war. Many found the time to write “What’s buzzin’, cousin?” to the whole batch. Killer diller.⁵ It was a real gas.”

—From Elaine’s diary.

¹dope: information

²snap my cap: get angry or disappointed

³lettuce: money

⁴Dicky Shincrackers: accomplished dancers at a party

⁵killer diller: good stuff

Letters At Home

Bud is in Germany, about 6 months now
In the 102nd Division in the 7th Army
Guarding a German hospital camp
Near the Czech border.
He thinks he'll be back in the States by Christmas.



My youngest sister, Ruth, and her baby girl,
And I and little Buddy are apartment-living
Until our brave G.I.s come back.
I take care of the two babies
And Ruth works as a bookkeeper in the bank.
As ever, Nora

—Letter from family archives.



**Two local boys in uniform who
received the class update letter.**

“I received a letter from Mrs. S. yesterday telling me you were trying to get the addresses of the Class of ‘38. John has been in the Army since Jan. 1941. He enlisted in the Army Air Force at that time and took his Mechanical training at the Boeing School for Aeronautics in California.

He is now stationed in Italy as a propeller specialist with a Bomber squadron. He works with the B-24s...Harold was a gunner (aerial) in the squadron to which Johnny was attached at that time and he was so glad to see him they had one grand reunion. If I can find the letter with the address Johnny had while in Utah, I will send it to you and you might be able to contact the air command there.

Sincerely, Mrs. John Clark”, from family archives.

“...It's a pretty good idea of yours, Elaine, and I do hope it gets around to everyone in a short while. I noticed that you had Kay P.'s address down on the list. You perhaps don't know then that she joined the Air WACs. She left Fort Des Moines a short time ago. I can give you Harold's APO address to add to the list. He's in the Air Corps in Italy. He's seen quite a bit of action, too. Won't it be fun to have a class reunion: this!”

—Dorothy

Strings Attached

Sweethearts

A war

Promises to write

Perfumed stationery

APO addresses

Red white and blue tissue paper responses

Love letters, read reread memorized

Wrapped with ribbons

Promises to marry

Promises to wait

The Battle of the Bulge;

He never returned

She never forgot

—With thanks to Patricia who found her mother's letters from a pre-war suitor tied with a ribbon after her 99 year-old mother died.



SWOL: Surface War Officer: Loved

SWAK: Sealed/Sent With A Kiss



**WW II sweethearts,
Clayton and Elaine.**



**Clayton modeling a gas
mask for his girlfriend.**

Music to My Ears

“We occupied a frontage on the Rhine,
South of Cologne,
Staying in bombed-out buildings.

One of the things we found
Was an old music box.
It played the same song
I used to sing as a kid in the choir.
I broke down...and then
I prayed for the first time in quite a while.”

—Lt. Thomas Estes, AMVETS National
Service Foundation

Dug In

My uncle lived through Normandy, then was killed
When his shovel hit French dirt and grazed a mine.
He was Grave Officer. His marker went in where he'd stood.

—Pastor Harold Biederman

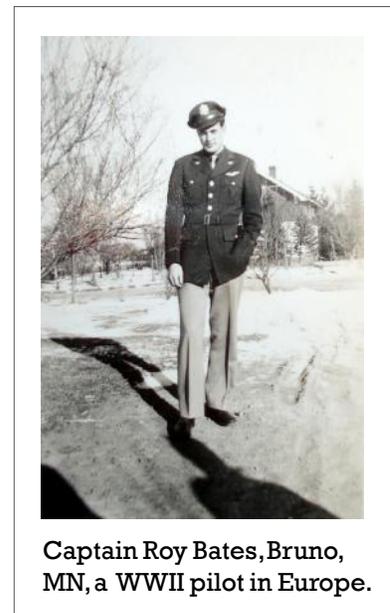
Excerpts from the Prayer of St. Patrick

I arise today
Through the strength of heaven...
I arise today
Through God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's hosts to save me
Afar and anear,
Alone or in a multitude.

Christ shield me today
Against wounding,
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,



Great Aunt Edna's
music box with arctic
swanskin powder puff.



Captain Roy Bates, Bruno,
MN, a WWII pilot in Europe.

Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down...

I arise today
Through the mighty strength
Of the Lord of Creation.

—UMC & UCC Congregational Church, Sandstone, MN, “United News”, April 2014.
Pilots routinely said this prayer before going on a mission.

Creative Accounting

Hitler knew the reputation of Norwegian engineers.
He liked fine things. Norway tried to stay neutral during the war,
But Nazis were neighbors a little too close for comfort;
Pragmatism and pressure demanded
Ships be built for the German war effort.
My father designed them brilliantly
And had them built to spec,
Charging what Germans expected
To pay for fine workmanship.
What they didn't know:
Norwegians are so frugal they could
Build *two* boats for one price,
The other tucked in a fjord
For the service of the Allies¹.

—R.

¹The Old Testament book of Esther set the precedent for the Norwegian decision to “play both sides”: in 465 B.C. a country legalized the extermination of the Jews and set a date for slaughter. Queen Esther saw the plan for what it was and convinced the King (who could not strike down the law) to supply defensive weapons to the Jews, providing an equalizer to the situation.

It All Adds Up

“We’d known each other a short time taking business school courses together.
When he was drafted, we decided to elope. I met him in New Jersey after Basic

Training, we stood before a judge, and in 2 weeks he shipped out. (He didn't come back to the states again for 4 years, 4 months and 3 days.) When I came home to Winona (MN) as a married woman, my father was furious with me. We barely spoke for 3 years. I rented a bedroom in a widow's house in La Crosse (WI). It was the best time of my life! For the first time women were encouraged to work outside the home, so I had a good job at the OPA [Office of Price Administration, which managed rationing programs] and bought nice things for myself. Felix sent his check home, too. I was always sending back pictures of myself with a new dress I'd sewn. One time I made the mistake of sending him a photo of my new fur coat. He shot back, "I'm risking my LIFE so you can have some dead animal on your shoulders?!" I decided to tone any spending down after that, but truly, things were so prosperous, it didn't seem like there was a war on."

—Lois W.

Rationed Goods in the U.S. During World War II¹

A wide variety of commodities were rationed in the United States. Rationing ended when supplies were no longer directed to the war effort or were again sufficient to meet customer demand.

Rationed Items	Rationing Duration
Tires	January 1942–December 1945
Cars	February 1942–October 1945
Bicycles	July 1942–September 1945
Gasoline	May 1942–August 1945
Fuel Oil & Kerosene	October 1942–August 1945
Solid Fuels	September 1943–August 1945
Stoves	December 1942–August 1945
Rubber Footwear	October 1942–August 1945
Shoes	February 1943–October 1945
Silk, nylon, wool, cotton ²	November 1943–1947
Sugar	May 1942–1947
Coffee	November 1942–July 1943
Processed Foods	March 1943–August 1945
Meats, canned fish, cheese, canned milk, butter, lard, other fats	March 1943–November 1945



Great-grandma Ella (61), chopping firewood and smoking a pipe.



Common items like paper clips were re-designed to use less raw materials.

Penicillin	Mid-1943–March 1945
Typewriters, sewing machines, radios, refrigerators	March 1942–April 1944



¹http://www.ameshistory.org/exhibits/ration_items.htm ; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationing_in_the_United_States; <http://www.lawrencecountymemoirs.com/lcmpages/432/war-rationing-efforts-1941-1945-new-castle-pa> ; <https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/whatischemistry/landmarks/flemingpenicillin.html>; http://www.fashionencyclopedia.com/fashion_costume_culture/Modern-World-1930-1945/Rationing-Fashion-in-the-United-States.html

²“Make It Do—Clothing Restrictions in World War II” by Sarah Sundin, POSTED: Monday, March 28, 2011, blog http://www.sarasundin.com/make_it_do_clothing_restrictions_in



Ration Stamps

“Dear Elaine,
 I hate to ask this but Park Rapids is out of chocolate chips.¹
 Could you check to see if there are any in Bruno?
 Also, I wonder if you could use one of your ration stamps for marshmallows?
 Maybe Bruno has some of those as well.
 Harold wrote he would love his favorite cookies from home,
 But I am having a terrible time coming up with the ingredients. I enclose \$2.²
 Thanks so much for trying.

Love, Jane”, 1943 (Family archives)

¹During WWII, U.S. soldiers from Massachusetts who were stationed overseas shared the cookies they received in care packages from back home with soldiers from other parts of the U.S. Soon, hundreds of soldiers were writing home asking their families to send them some Toll House cookies. Thus began the nationwide craze for the chocolate chip cookie. http://www.wow.com/wiki/Chocolate_chip_cookie?s_chn=28&s_pt=aolsem&v_t=content

²\$13.56 in 2015 dollars.

Suggestions for Your Own Soldier in 2017:

- **Fill the void of loneliness with a care package.**
- **Write letters of gratitude and casual conversation to Service Personnel.**

“Hey, [name]—as you prepare for your deployment to [place], I want to tell you a few things before you go. To start, I’m grateful. The price of freedom is not free, but some bear more of the cost than others. The share you’ve accepted is enormous, but I’m sure you think it is worth it...”

“Dear [Soldier], We are so proud of you and thank you for your great service to our nation and to the world. We think of you daily in our prayers and hope that your work will be complete soon so that you might return to be with those you love. We want you to feel the support and encouragement we hope you find as we reach out today. Thank you for your effort and dedication. You are missed, remembered, and honored at home...”

“Dear ____, Wanted to let you know you’re not forgotten just because you can’t be here at work. We appreciate what you’re doing, and...”

— <http://goliath.ecnext.com/com2/g: 0199-6087934/letter-to-a-soldier.html>

Easter Surprise

“Easter Sunday Mr. and Mrs. Hans Lunde (Danish-Americans) received authentic information that their son, Pvt. Werner J. Lunde, is a prisoner of war somewhere in Germany. Previously Pvt. Lunde was officially reported missing in action... He is a paratrooper and for a long time was together with Svend Christensen and Eldon Abrahamsen who are also paratroopers.

The official notice signed by Pvt. Lunde, was mailed in Germany sometime in January but did not reach Askov, MN, before Sunday, April 1. The information that Pvt. Lunde was a prisoner of war was picked up by many short-wave radio receiving sets at various points in the East last week and the listeners hastened to convey the good news to Mr. and Mrs. Lunde.”

—“Askov American”, Thursday, April 5, 1945 (family archives).

The Homecoming

The answering of a family's prayers:
A son returned from war, safe and sound.
For those reappearing home
It was time to come to terms with the horrors of war
And try with the help of loved ones and God
To assimilate into the lives they'd left behind.

—AMVETS National Service Foundation WW II 50th Year
of Victory Calendar, 7/1995.



“Brylcreem Boys”, Clayton and Kenneth Cahoon in sheepskin bombardier suits. Pilots were so named because of their liberal use of the popular patent hair pomade.

Dead Men Do Tell Tales

In a 1950 Marine recovery unit to find WWII MIAs,¹
A Mortuary Science Degree from Wheaton College was a plus:
There had to be a signature on every certificate for cause of death, so I got the job.
What an opportunity! Learning anthropology, physics,
And diplomacy from the assignment.
Using the new science of forensics, we verified race, age,
Identified injuries and personal artifacts, never relying on guesswork:
There must be 3 evidential supports to positively ID a body.

Sometimes guys would trade dog tags with a favorite WAC;²
Even *that* turned out to be good verifiable evidence.
There were 40,000 unaccounted for by 1946, so the job was huge.
Some were found alive, GI's who'd melted into French Society.
The death penalty was never exercised for AWOLs.³
They'd experienced enough already.
We found 8-9 of our dead per month, which gave a lot of closure to families.
It was my job to contact the next of kin. Every month I'd write those letters
And sometimes I'd get a grateful response back.

We tried to find guys whose chutes didn't open,
Those who'd landed in the trees behind enemy lines.
We traced old planes to people's barns, used for parts;
There were aircraft crashed into cemeteries:
Complicated.

We looked mostly for pilots pummeled into the earth;
Even found MIAs from WWI
And two recognizable Roman Centurions⁴ in the strata searched!



Aviator glasses.

We'd unearth soldiers that had been fighting the same war, but for other countries,
And in a quiet spirit, negotiated with their state departments to deliver their dead.
The Russians were very helpful;
They wanted to understand our forensic methods
To identify their own heroes.
In fact, Europeans and former Soviets are still finding equipment and remains.
The search goes on;
Everyone deserves to have an accounting.⁵

It was common for a U.S. pilot to get his wings and 2 weeks' furlough
Before getting shipped out.
But because replacement pilots came to be needed so badly at the front,
They never got that visit back home.

Now, 8 years later, one of our MIA casualties was being particularly evasive:
He'd radioed his position when he was hit, so we knew we were in the right area.
Germans kept meticulous records,
And we could trade their comrade's bones for information,
But they had nothing listing him as captured.
Then a farmer was expanding his vineyard
And found the tail tip of a burned plane, buried vertically.
It was a P-47 Thunderbolt, a murderous maneuverable fighter.
We had a backhoe, and there he was,
Having been killed on impact, the fuselage his shroud.

Folded in to his remarkably preserved clothes
Was a GI-issue Gideon New Testament.
He'd signed the page that said, "I've asked Jesus into my heart,"
Dated just 14 days before he died.
There was a place to write his favorite verse, and he'd chosen:
"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice,
And open the door, I will come in to him,
And will sup with him, and he with me." —Revelation 3:20

He had a shopping list for a stateside grocery store run
Still in his pocket for his Christmas 1944 furlough,
And a receipt with the date from Fort Smith
For items to make his parents a dinner
Before he deployed for Europe.
However, he never cooked that food. Called up and shipped out,
He was lost in his first raid in heavy artillery fire:
The Battle of the Bulge, December 16.

Still in the civilian clothes
He'd worn on his way to the American grocery store,
He'd been whisked to England.
They'd handed him a standard-issue overcoat,
Ushered him to a plane and he flew into the fricassee.
That's how urgently they needed pilots,
How rapidly they were deployed,
How quickly they were eaten up.

I wanted his mother to see what pains he had taken
Making preparations for them,
How much he'd hoped to give them a happy Christmas memory,
How he'd taken scripture to heart.
We made a policy not to send anything shameful or embarrassing to family,
But with joy, I sent those few items to his mother.

She not only understood the significance of the artifacts,
But wrote back from Arkansas how grateful she was for them, for him, for us.

—With thanks to Retired Master Sergeant Jack Albinson

¹Missing in Action.

²Women's Air Corps

³AWOLs: soldiers Absent WithOut Leave.

⁴Perfectly preserved because there was virtually no acid in the soil at the dig. Once they were exposed to air, they quickly decomposed, but many tests were efficiently done, and the uniforms were easily identifiable.

⁵"In the Pacific, however, even only 5 years after the war, it was very difficult to find any remains because the jungle eats everything up. Even metal." —Jack A.



Flight jumpsuit.

"The tomb of a hero is in the hearts of the living."

—Plaque at St. Joan of Arc Chapel, Marquette
University, Milwaukee, WI, 2016.



German stamps: Adolf Hitler, Führer of Nazi Germany from 1934 to 1945.

Making Two Germanys¹

“During the transition we heard some of our soldiers were pretty rough with the locals. I suppose it depended on what those GIs had seen liberating concentration camps and whether the civilians had been in the Nazi party. I can’t say. But my own German upbringing in America endeared me to the people and my flawless German helped smooth the way between our GIs and the people they were called to observe while things were being sorted out.”

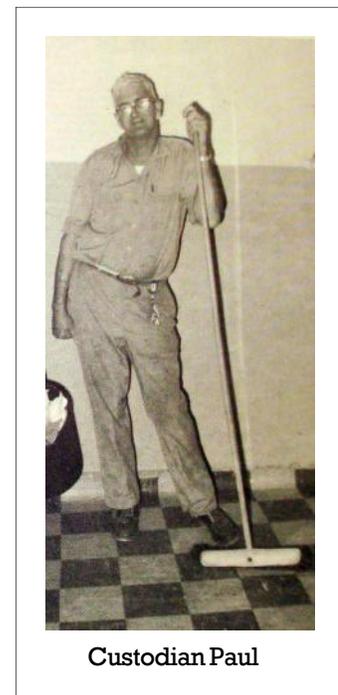
—Firmus Opitz

¹As a condition of peace, Germany was divided into East (occupied by Russia) and West (occupied by Allied peacekeepers), with an impenetrable wall that divided the city of Berlin, located inside East Germany. Anyone trying to enter West Germany was shot; a very few freely crossed the checkpoint into East Germany, and no one was allowed to return.

Custodial Care

The town made good on its promise
 To take care of its own.
 The gregarious guy gaggled around
 Got a hero’s welcome home from the VA Hospital.
 Josefa still wanted him, steel skull plate and all.
 The fits of anger were a problem,
 Frustration boiling up from trouble with words,
 His bright future dimmed
 To a bare bulb in a janitor’s closet
 At the little school, a short labored walk from the house.
 Still, it was a job, their belief in him that mattered.

The noise in the halls! The turmoil of lunch!
 Sometimes he bellered, “Quiet!!” A toil just
 To hear himself think.
 The food that was wasted! The leftover milk!
 He didn’t waffle: “Go back. Eat that.”
 Urging with those 4 moiled words
 To educate about the suffering he’d seen,



Custodian Paul

The pangs he'd felt himself on the Front;
But what *they* soaked in was a gravy of gruffness
Embroidered on institutional trays.
So pigs got fat.¹

—In memory and appreciation of Paul Koenings

¹School lunch leftovers were given to a local hog farm.

Unpacking the Baggage

I was 2 years old before my father saw me.
In 16 more, how hard it was for him
As I went to Europe for college,
Trying to retrace his steps,
Slip into his too-large boots.
I asked him to come with me. I'd pay his way
Because he'd already paid mine.

He turned me down
And I never brought it up again.
Now I realize
He imagined it would be just
As war-ugly as he remembered it, while
I, on my quixotic journey,
Saw only my daddy on a bronze stallion.

—Donna



Paratrooper's jump boots
and parachute bag.

First and Second Wave Normandy, Then Bastogne

Uncle, tell me about the war;
I'm a history teacher;
I need to know.

No!
Let your books tell you
When I'm dead.

—With thanks to Daniel O'Brien

Swinging from a Thread

It's been said returning combat vets seek out

The most dangerous civilian occupations:

Pilots become civilian pilots with brutal schedules stateside.

"I've already gone to hell and back. What could be worse than that?"

They are explosives experts trying to find bombs that haven't said their "boom".

"My preservation then demands payment now."

They contract as consultants to stay near the gladiator's arena.

"Just doing my part." "I want to be where the action is." "Money's great!"

Fighter pilots become racecar drivers:

"I am invincible," but also a little "I am suicidal," or

"It's not right I survived," or

"What I did demands payment with my life."

They are bridge painters, high-rise builders:

"The stimulation will keep my full attention on other things besides
what haunts me."

"This is what I *have* to do to assuage survivor guilt."

"There's this yearning for adrenaline."

They sometimes admit:

"We enjoy the quick thinking of violence, the romance of going off to war,
the adventure, the element of risk."

That's why wars are fought by 18 year-olds.

Nations know this

And use the young to perpetrate violence they don't yet understand.

Nations shall be judged for this.

It's hard to tell what will haunt 40 years from now,

What acts of justification or contrition will play out.

If you think about it, what's most amazing

Is people CAN come back and live good lives

Even with all that baggage. It's possible.

After WWII, guys came back shell-shocked, too.

And yet there was a deliberate and thoughtful evaluation:

"We have won this time. We own it. How will we invest it?"

—Retired Staff Sergeant James Albinson, invested as a racecar driver,
author, film-maker, mortician, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes speaker.

Out-foxed?

They say there are no atheists inside foxholes,
But maybe some are made once they venture out.
Perhaps it depends to which hell they were sent.
One soldier had been in the second wave over Omaha Beach
And had survived 60 more years.

An earnest funeral director
Officiating at a Fort Snelling graveside,
Wanting to do it right for a fellow soldier,
Whispered to the family, offering to lead the Lord's Prayer
To avoid a clumsy silence before triggers saluted.

The deceased's daughter responded,
"If anyone prayed now,
Dad would be terribly offended."
Understanding battle drives some to alcohol,
Others to God, and still others away,

Out of respect
For what that soldier had endured
(Familiar with that Beach himself,
Familiar with that particular hell,)

He realized
The questions
That man had probably *already* asked God,
And respectfully held his tongue.

—James A.

"The Greatest Generation"?

Has labeling eras
Made us tell ourselves
 The Greatest Generation has already come and gone,
 So America *must* be in decline?
 Is there therefore nothing left for the young to accomplish?
Instead, perhaps, the greatest generation is still to come.

—Gary, age 64.

