

November 2019

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THE COST OF CARELESSNESS*

by DAVID BUTLER, JR.

Joe Bologna was angry. This was the third time in one week the foreman had complained of his carelessness. "Well, thought Joe, "they can't find any men to hire, so they can't fire me anyway."

With that he dismissed the foreman from his mind, and turned back to the lathe where he was making breech bolts for Garand rifles.

As he turned, his elbow hit the tool rest, causing the tool to bite in deeply. Quickly he turned off the power, but the damage was done. . . . The bolt was deeply scored. "Now", thought Joe, "if I tell the foreman of this he will be very mad, so I'll just finish it and hope it won't be seen". He finished it, and the hurrying inspectors did not notice the cut. Soon it was put into a rifle that was boxed and sent to an Army camp.

Months later Private Bill Drecher got that rifle. He trained with it, was sent to The Solomons, and at last found himself sitting in a foxhole waiting for a long expected Jap charge. His commander yelled "All right boys, fire as soon as you see any of them." Bill detected a movement in the underbrush 150 yards away. He raised his

rifle and started shooting. He soon emptied his magazine and put in another clip.

Just then the Japs charged. Bill put his rifle to his shoulder and fired rapidly, emptying his clip in twenty seconds. He pushed in another and resumed shooting. His gun got hot then from fast firing and he burned himself putting in the new clip. He fired three shots, but when he pulled the trigger for the fourth it just snapped. He brought the gun down and noticed that the bolt was back. Quick! the Japs were



almost there! Bill banged it against the side of the dugout. There was a click as the spring forced its way forward, and then he noticed that the bolt had snapped in half along the scored groove. Grounding his useless rifle he turned to fix his bayonet. A Jap leaped up on the dirt mound in front of the foxhole . . . paused a second . . . and lunged with the long bayonet on his rifle gleaming in the sun.

Three days later, when the Americans pushed the Japs back again, they found Bill curled up in the bottom of his foxhole, his hand still on the half drawn bayonet, and the broken rifle that had cost him his life, beside him.

**This timely story which teaches a tragic lesson, won first prize in the Mamaroneck High School Short Story contest. David is fifteen years old.*

Those of us who grew up in the 40's and 50's probably remember the *Classics Illustrated* comic books we read as kids. In addition to the main story, each issue contained short pieces on the final pages. While perusing an old collection of those comics, I made an interesting discovery in one of them. The last page contained the winning entry in a high school short story contest. The year was 1943, and the author was a fifteen-year-old named David Butler, Jr. But the real surprise came when I read that the short story contest had been sponsored by our own Mamaroneck High School.

David's story describes how the attitude and the actions of a careless worker in an arms factory cause the death of an American soldier. It's clear that David's story is meant to remind Americans on the home front that they must take their work as seriously as those who were fighting overseas. Perhaps David had already learned of MHS students who were casualties by 1943. Little did he know how many more there would be. In any case, David felt the need to do something to help the war effort.

Hearing a teenager convey such an important message to adults was impressive. It reminded me how much we can learn by listening to what young people have to say about serious topics. Once again, this year's Kemper Memorial Park Preservation Fund Contest gave us the chance to do that.

As in past years, students used a variety of formats to address the topic and, as always, the results were impressive. Designating the three winners was indeed a difficult task for our judges.

This year, students were asked to respond to the following question:

WHY DO WAR MEMORIALS CONTINUE TO BE IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITIES TODAY?

From over fifty impressive entries, the three winning prizes were awarded to:



Emma Strudwick

Jackson Owen

Kiernan Gallaher

Although today's young people live in a world dominated by visual images,

Emma Strudwick's entry relies solely on the power of the spoken word. Her five-minute audio presentation contains excerpts of letters written by soldiers in World War I and World War II. The end result is a moving reminder of the courage and sacrifice that must never be forgotten.

In his poem titled *Remembered Numbers*, **Jackson Owen** uses numbers to tally the terrible cost of war and emphasizes that monuments serve as reminders and warnings because:

Nothing can replace the tangible reminder of a monument
Nothing can warn us quite like the personifications of the numbers we learn in school
Nothing can deter us quite like a column of names

Kiernan Gallaher's essay focuses on Revolutionary War statuary in Washington, DC, the Gettysburg Memorial in Gettysburg, PA and Kemper Memorial Park. He explains that all of them remind us of the blood that has been spilled to grow the tree of liberty. He also points out that, although the Kemper Memorial may be the smallest of all of them, it is equally important and has particular significance for those who live in our community.

All of this year's winning entries can be viewed in their entirety at:

<http://kempermorialpark.org/>



Honor and Respect

Honor and respect were the overall themes of this year's MHS Memorial Day ceremonies. In her opening speech, KMPPF President Jan Northrup recalled being a high school sophomore on the Marine Corps Base at Camp Lejeune. She remembers how it became a ghost town when the Marines were deployed during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the surge of respect she felt for those Marines who were ready to go anywhere at any time for any reason.

Later in the ceremony, Hommocks science teacher and Iraq War veteran Dean Kasperek reminded us that on Veterans Day we honor those who served and on Memorial Day we honor those who died because they served. Referencing Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, he suggested that the best way to honor those who gave *"the last full measure of devotion"* is to live a life worthy of such sacrifice. It was an important message, especially for the large number of students in the audience.

Concluding remarks made by Richard Cantor were particularly meaningful for those who have supported Kemper Memorial Park throughout the years. Adolph Kemper created the Park to honor his son as well as all of the Larchmont and Mamaroneck residents who gave their lives for our country and we have strived to maintain the Park for the same reason. So, it was rewarding to hear Richard say: "Today the Kemper Memorial is once again inspirational, and my grandfather, Adolph Kemper, would have been very proud of all of you for being here to help make it so. It fulfills everything he had hoped for."

May 30, 2019 was truly a perfect day in Kemper Memorial Park. The grounds looked beautiful, attendance was great and the commitment to honor and respect was perfectly clear.



KEMPER MEMORIAL PARK PRESERVATION FUND
Preserve Our Memorial *Preserve Our Community*

80 North Chatsworth Avenue

<http://kempermorialpark.org/>

2019 Veterans Day Ceremonies

THANK YOU TO ALL
VETERANS!



American Legion Post 90

Monday, November 11 – 11 a.m.

Veterans Memorial
Prospect Avenue

American Legion Post 347

Monday, November 11 – 5 p.m.

American Legion Post 347 Hall
Flint Park – Village of Larchmont

Mamaroneck High School

Ceremony in recognition of
Veterans Day on

Thursday, November 7 - 3 p.m.

at the Vietnam showcase -
main concourse of
Mamaroneck High School .

Rain date – Friday, November 8

After the ceremony, all veterans are invited to
join a "Meet & Greet" with students from the
Hommocks in Richard Kemper Park

