

## **Century Village**



There is a historical village located in Grove City, Ohio on Orders Road. You can step back in time with the turn-of-the-century historic park. Experience life as it was in the late 1800's with the one-room schoolhouse, log cabin, barn, and blacksmith forge. I have been working with the historical societies in Grove City to open a museum adjacent to the village. I have met many dedicated historians who have helped me to make connections in this community. I will keep you up to date with my efforts to open a permanent location.

## **The Women's Civic Club Celebrates 100 Years!**

The Women's Civic Club of Grove City marked its centennial with a community celebration Sunday, April 3. The event was scheduled from 4 to 7 p.m. at Pinnacle Country Club, 1500 Pinnacle Club Drive. A fashion show spotlighted various styles from the past century and a video presentation offered a history of the civic club, she said. The museum was approached and asked if we could loan them some 1940's uniforms for their fashion show. We supplied a nurse uniform with a blue cape, a WAVE uniform and a woman's Red Cross uniform. The show was a great success.



## **Dayton V.A. Freedom Festival**

On Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 May 2015 the 101<sup>st</sup> AB 502nd Living History and the Central Ohio Military Museum (COMM) set up at the Dayton, Ohio Veterans Administration. Displays included AC patches, airborne patches, D-Day items, Handie Talkie, knives, uniforms of WWII veterans, weapons, T-5 parachute, posters, 30 cal machine gun, bazooka (with rocket), 60mm mortar, ammo crates, grenades and sand table. Bernadette Crumb and Diana Spitler we Red Cross Volunteers with a WWII display. The VA was open from 11:00am to 6:00pm daily. We were located adjacent to the museum. We participated in a formation to honor Gold Star Mothers.

### Grove City Gold Star Monument



A local memorial to families that have lost a service member was unveiled on Memorial Day in downtown Grove City. A veteran who received the nation's highest military honor was the Grand Marshall and guest speaker at the dedication on May 30, 2016.

Cpl. Hershel Woodrow "Woody" Williams, 91, a World War II Congressional Medal of Honor winner, rode in the parade that stopped at the intersection corner of Columbus and Broadway Streets. There were several other guest speakers.

"As an 18-year-old farm boy, I knew nothing about war," Williams said of when he joined the Marines. "I wasn't even allowed to own a BB gun, certainly not a shotgun. I did own a slingshot. "A few times, I shot a bird off a limb. No reason, but I killed that bird, and I got a whipping because I violated the very thing I was told you do not do." As a demolitions man with a flamethrower unit, Williams served with the 21st Marines, 3rd Marine Division, at Iwo Jima. On Feb. 23, 1945, covered by only four riflemen, Williams went forward and knocked out seven pillboxes over the course of four hours while under constant fire. He eliminated one pillbox by inserting his flamethrower into its air vent, and he took out a group of riflemen who charged him with bayonets. "Don't ask me how I did it," he said. "I don't know, and I didn't get touched." By the time Williams' company was rotated from the battle, only 17 out of 279 men had escaped injury or death. "We knew we were going to be shot at," Williams said. "We were prepared for what was going to take place. ... I have very high regard for people who are willing if necessary to sacrifice their life for my freedom." Williams said he also has high regard for those who have lost someone in the service.

"Those people are the families of loved ones who gave their lives in the Armed Forces," he said. "Those families have never been recognized." In 2012, Williams established the Hershel Woody

Williams Medal of Honor Foundation, a charitable not-for-profit organization. One of the goals of the organization is the dedication of Gold Star Families Memorial Monuments throughout the country, to honor the families of fallen members of the Armed Forces. "My whole goal for whatever time I have left in this world is trying to recognize and give tribute to those who have sacrificed a loved one at any point in time at any relationship in the history of our country," Williams said. "It is the goal of our foundation to get something in every state."

Don Ivers (Town Center Museum Curator) and I have worked on a Gold Star theme in the Town Center Museum. Below is our display honoring the men who have died in service to our country that were from the Grove City.



### Poultry Festival - Versailles, Ohio

We returned to the Poultry Parade and Festival in Versailles, Ohio on Friday June 10<sup>th</sup>, Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday the 12<sup>th</sup>. Displays included the sand table, a marker panel, the mortar, the camo netting and a 1942 GPW (jeep). In the tent we will have a weapons area, a display of infantry equipment, airborne equipment, uniforms on shirt forms (Army, Navy, Marines and Armor), a display case (with a map and edge weapons) and much more. Diana Spitler was our Red Cross volunteer.

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## Freedom Celebration

On Saturday July 2nd from 11:00 am until 2:30 pm we were at a living history event at the Sightless Children's Club located at 950 Helke Road, Vandalia, Ohio. They introduced some of Dayton Ohio's very own "Greatest Generation". Some of these are veterans were: Jim "Pee Wee" Martin of the 101st AB 506<sup>th</sup> PIR G Company who parachuted on D-Day in Normandy and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. Another 101st Screaming Eagle Bill "BAZOOKA" Cooper, who was part of the glider team that assaulted the enemy behind the front lines and Johnny McCloud who was in the 83<sup>rd</sup> Division, 331<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment. He was one of the first men to hit Omaha beach on June 6, 1944. There will be 3 female singers singing great songs by the ANDREW SISTERS from that era. They are called the BOYER sisters and they put on a great show. These young ladies sang in 3 part harmony and play all of the great hits that their predecessors made so popular in the 40's.



We met a lot of wonderful veterans and a great deal of thanks goes to Ken Serey who put on the event. He introduced the veterans one by one. Most of the honorees were WWII and Korean veterans. All in attendance were treated to lunch. One of the veterans was Marion Adams who was on LST 491. He was a radioman 1<sup>st</sup> class. His niece Diana Spittler told some of his WWII experiences and then introduced him to the crowd. We gave a presentation on the equipment a Gliderman (Ian Fowler) and a Paratrooper (Harry Busse) would have gone into battle with in WWII.

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Front row l to r: Dennis Sullivan, Marion Adams, Doug Drieling, Bill Cooper, Bob Traphagan, John Fowler. Back Row l to r: Harry Busse, Bruce Knight, Diana Spitler and Ian Fowler.



Pictured above is Johnny McCloud.



There were over 18 tables of uniforms, weapons, personal items, paratrooper items and so much more.

**Military Heroes at Huntington Park**

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This May I had the opportunity to submit Luther Crabtree for the Military Heroes that the Columbus Clippers sponsor. They sent me an email that said, "Congratulations once again for having your nominee selected to be in our Military Heroes baseball card set! Your nominee will be in the July 4 set, and will be honored at that evening's game." Below is the program from a few years ago. Luther is a Silver Star winner. He was in the 26<sup>th</sup> Marines 5<sup>th</sup> Division on Iwo Jima. We arrived at Huntington Park at 6:00pm. We picked up our tickets and we took a short tour of the stands. At 6:30pm Lou, his son Ted and I joined the other honorees down on the field. One by one they introduced the veterans. When Lou's name was called we went to the first base line. When the vet's had been all introduced, the crowd erupted in applause. What a thrill.

Dennis Sullivan (the Commanding Officer from the 101<sup>st</sup> AB Living History Team) had already located our seats and was waiting for us. Lou enjoyed a hot dog and pop. He and Ted hadn't been to the new ballpark and they were impressed. We stayed for the entire game and the Clippers beat the Toledo Mud Hen's 3-2! What a great night.



Lou with his son, Ted, on first Baseline.



This is Lou and I at the Town Center Museum in Grove City, Ohio.

## Cpl Luther Carl Crabtree

MCSN# 500560

4<sup>th</sup> Parachute Battalion

26<sup>th</sup> Marines 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Dog Company

Service: 09 December 1942 to 19 January 1946

Awards: Silver Star, Presidential Unit Citation w/one star, Good Conduct, American campaign, Asia Pacific Campaign w/one star, WWII Victory Medal and Occupation Medals.



Luther was born in Columbus, Ohio on 29 April 1924. He lived in a neighborhood called "Oklahoma" with a large family of six brothers and four sisters. His nickname was "Juke" due to his younger sisters not being able to say "Luke" which is what he was called by the rest of the family. He worked at many jobs as did all depression era kids. He had a paper route, sold golf balls he found in a corn field next to Elm Crest Golf course, help with the family acreage, help with the livestock and worked for several produce companies in at the Central market in downtown Columbus. He said when had down time, which was rare, he would hang out with Hobo's under the viaduct at the train tracks by the south High Street viaduct. He said they talked about all their travels and could make meals out of anything.

Luther attended South High School and graduated in 1942. After graduation he and his brother Harold enlisted in the Marines. They took their boot camp on the west coast. On the completion of boot camp the new Marines were told about other units they could join. One unit was the Paramarines. Luther said the \$50.00 per month extra was what made the decision easy. Luther, Harold and ten other Columbus men all joined. They were hoping to stay together. In March of 1943 they began their training in El Cajon, California. They trained for six months in which time they made their five jumps and qualified to wear jump wings.

They were then sent to Camp Elliot. They were trained in field tactics, rifle, pistol and other weapons. During this time the men jumped up and down the coast (up to 20 jumps). They even jumped on San Clemente Island. On this jump Luther shattered his right ankle and was sent to the hospital in San Diego. He spent a month there.

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In January of 1944 the Commandant of the Marines General Vandegrift disbanded the Paramarines and the Raiders. On 29 February 1944 they were officially disbanded. All Marines are equal! These two specially trained marine battalions would comprise the new 5<sup>th</sup> Marines. The 5<sup>th</sup> Marines would be trained especially for the planned invasion of Japan in November of 1945. So, in February of 1944 Luther and his fellow Marines were in the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines.

Luther went to Camp Pendleton to train in demolitions. He was then shipped out to the Hawaiian Islands for training. The entire division had a training landing on the island of Maui. They practiced circling in landing craft, using the cargo nets to get in the LCVP's and beach landings. This was in preparation for their biggest test. In February of 1945 they shipped out to Guam. At 400 hours Luther knew something big was going to happen when they served steak and eggs for breakfast on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February. The Iwo Jima landing was on!

There was an armada of ships. The marines were in landing crafts and circling near the troop ships. Luther's company did not go on the first wave. They circled for hours. Around 1300 hours they began their approach to the beach. Luther saw what awaited them as they neared the beach. It was hard to look at. Landing crafts sunk or heavily damaged. He saw men the dead floating in the water and lying on the beaches. Luther thought how screwed up it was. They landed to the west of Mt. Suribachi. The Japanese had the beach areas zeroed in and were very accurate.

(Meanwhile, the 26th Marines, under Colonel Chester B. Graham, had spent most of the day on board ship in corps reserve. Just before 1000, General Schmidt released the regiment, less the 1st Battalion, to its parent division; the 21st Marines of the 3d Marine Division became the corps reserve. The 26th Marines was ordered to proceed to the line of departure shortly after 1100, but the crowded condition of the beaches and limited space inland precluded a landing until late afternoon. It was 1730 before Colonel Graham's regiment finished coming ashore over Red Beach 1).

As his LCVP approached the beach the Coxswain told them they had to go over the side. It wasn't due to panic, but it was all the further they could go. The water was about four feet deep. Luther waded to the beach with two satchel charges and all his gear.

It was chaotic. The shells were bursting on the left and right. The beach was terrace of black sand that was 8 to 9 feet high. Luther was carrying his equipment as well as two satchel charges. The loose sand made it hard to move and he sunk into it easily. No sooner had he climbed a few feet up the sand, he would slide back down. The 28<sup>th</sup> Marines had cut to the left attempting to take Mt. Suribachi. The whole island assault was to take only 72 hours. It took a week just to take Mt. Suribachi.

(The division landed on Iwo Jima on February 19. They landed on the left northeast of [Mount Suribachi](#) and sustained heavy initial losses so much so that by that afternoon the [26th Marines](#) had to be released as the division reserve.<sup>[2]</sup> The 5th Marine Division would fight on Iwo Jima from February 19 until March 18 where they would sustain 1,098 killed in action and 2,974 wounded in action. This was the highest casualty rate amongst the Marine divisions involved in the invasion).

The 26<sup>th</sup> worked their way to the west under heavy fire or small weapons and artillery. Half of the men were killed in the attempt to take Mt. Suribachi. They were on the west side of Mt. Suribachi under attack with no food and no plans. They remained there for the next 24 hours.



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The next move was on the airfield. The Japanese were dug in. The Marines were to eliminate the Japanese and take the four water holes. It was the only fresh water on the island. This was done in a week. They took the first air field on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February. Dog Company (Luther and Harold's company) was the point assault team for this day's movement. At 1400 hours his squad was called to destroy pillboxes. Dog Company was pinned down. Luther, a bazooka man, a loader and the flame thrower approached the pillbox. Luther was on the left. They fired 2-3 bazooka rounds into the pillbox followed by a 20 second blast by the flame thrower. Luther followed up by putting a satchel charge in the pill box. This effectively took out the pillbox.

On this assault Harold was in the lead with his squad. As Luther approached the pillbox he could see Harold 15 feet away laying face down with a pool of blood around his head. He had been shot in the temple. Luther said he probably didn't know what hit him. After the pillbox was eliminated Luther request to his commanding officer to retrieve Harold's body. That night Luther and several men under cover of smoke and heavy fire did get Harold back. Luther said he doesn't know how none of them were hurt or killed by the weapons fire and explosions all around them. That night Luther stayed with Harold and prayed.

Luther said the Japanese were good soldiers. They were tenacious. He said they had no water, no food and limited ammo, but the 22,000 plus Japanese marines fought the 80,000 US Marines with all they had. Luther said was brutal fighting for ridges and gullies. The only effective tactic due to the terrain was man to man or hand to hand. Tanks could not navigate the terrain.

Luther recalled the rations he had to eat, K-Rations and C-Rations. When he dug his foxhole the volcanic soil was laden with sulfur and if you dug deep it was very hot. He used his poncho in the bottom of the foxhole to insulate against the heat. He said the heat was particularly hard on feet. It did however make it easy to cook a hot meal. He would dig into the side of the foxhole make a small hole below his canned meat and place the heat tablet in the small hole. In fifteen minutes he had a hot meal. The rations came with a four pack of cigarettes. For two months he smoked those cigarettes, but quickly quit. They had served their purpose. He also found out the CB's (Navy Construction Battalion) working on the air field ate really good. When he was off the line he went to their area and told them he was hungry. He made many trips to their hut and he would knock on the door. They would say "Is that you again Crabtree?" He held the CB's in high respect. They faced the snipers and enemy fire while working to get the airstrips repaired.

As the battle progressed and the Marines moved across the island, Luther could remember easing around a ledge so he was not seen. The ground was oozing with blood. He at first couldn't understand why the ground was bleeding. Then he knew why. During the night the Japanese had buried the dead so the Marines wouldn't know the Japanese losses. As he continued he saw a sight that raised his spirits. He saw the ocean beyond the edge of the island. He knew the battle would be drawing to an end. Now there was a chance that he would make it off the island.

(Of the 22,060 Japanese soldiers entrenched on the island, 21,844 died either from fighting or by ritual suicide. Only 216 were captured during the battle. According to The official Navy Department Library website, "The 36-day (Iwo Jima) assault resulted in more than 26,000 American casualties, including 6,800 dead."<sup>[23]</sup> To put that into context, the 82-day Battle for Okinawa lasted from early April until mid-June 1945 and U.S. (5 Army and 2 Marine Corps Divisions) casualties were over 62,000 of whom over 12,000 were killed or missing; while the Battle of the Bulge lasted 40 days (16 Dec 44 – 25 Jan 45) with almost 90,000 U.S. casualties; 19,000 killed, 47,500 wounded, and 23,000 captured or missing.

Iwo Jima was also the only U.S. Marine battle where the American casualties exceeded the Japanese, <sup>[5]</sup> although Japanese combat deaths numbered three times as many American deaths. 2 US Marines were captured as POWs during the battle, though neither of them survived their captivity. USS *Bismarck Sea* had also been lost, as the last U.S. aircraft carrier sunk in World War II. <sup>[2]</sup> Because all the civilians had been evacuated, there were no civilian casualties at Iwo Jima, unlike at Saipan and Okinawa.)<sup>[24]</sup>

On 26 March 1945 Luther went to the 5<sup>th</sup> Division cemetery to see his brother. Of the 250 men they started with only 16 were left alive. It was a day of mixed emotions. On one hand he was out of combat and returning to the ship alive. On the other hand he was leaving his brother and friends in that grave yard. It was a tough day. In 1948 they brought Harold home.

He has always wondered why he was not wounded or killed while so many of his buddies and his brother were. He could feel the shrapnel and bullets whiz by without being hit. There is just no way to explain it.

I asked Luther about the corpsman. He talked of their bravery and the horror they faced. He said the marines were dead or dying, badly wounded and there was nothing he could do. He said he wanted to stop and comfort them, but there was no time. He could remember being with them on leave and the good times they had...now they were dead. But, the corpsman faced enemy fire, gave aid and did their best to tend to the wounded. He said they deserved all the accolades they received.

Luther spent time in the occupation of Japan helping to dispose of arms, weapons and ordnance. Being a demolition man they needed his special talents. Luther said the Japanese had caves up and down the coast filled with weapons and ordnance. They were very well prepared to protect their island from an invasion. The men, women and children were prepared to fight. Luther said that if we had not dropped the A-Bombs on the two cities and forced an unconditional surrender, the loss of American lives would have been tremendous.

He returned to the states on 1 January 1946. His ship was anchored in the bay at San Diego on 31 December 1946, but a decision was made not to dock and let the Marines enter San Diego on New Year's Eve (Luther said it was probably a good decision). When the men were disembarking the ship Luther saw the Red Cross was there with coffee and donuts. He went up and requested a cup of black coffee and a couple of donuts. They said he would have to pay. He said "You can keep them!" He couldn't believe after all the time in the service and combat that he would have to pay. He has not supported the Red Cross since.

He traveled to Great Lakes in Chicago, Illinois to be mustered out. An ensign asked if he wanted to stay in the service. Luther asked him if the ensign could see the gate out the window. He replied yes. Luther said you better give my papers before his butt was through that gate.

He arrived at the Union Station in Columbus at 10:00pm. There was no one around. He had shipped his sea bag home (it never reached home. It was a common practice for thieves to cut open the bags and steal souvenirs) but he carried a samurai sword and a Jap rifle all the way from Chicago. Try that today! Finally a cabby offered him a ride home. At 10:30pm he arrived at his girlfriends house (now his wife) at 41 Reeb Avenue. She was in bed so he left the rifle and sword and left. His future mother-in-law believed the two souvenirs carried diseases and didn't want them in the house. He picked them up the next day.

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Luther went to college from 1946 until 1949 and got a teaching degree. He taught school at Northwestern High School in Union County and lived in Maryville, Ohio. When he asked for a raise they refused, so he went back to Columbus. He thought he would find a teaching position. Instead he worked for the Kroger Company from 1953 until 1968. He was a store manager. He was given tough assignments because he was known for "not taking any sh\_\_!" His years in the Marine Corp had benefited him. The Blue Law went away and Kroger opened on Sundays. Luther had told them he did not work Sundays or on his day off, Wednesday. When they told he had to work Sundays and rotate his day off he decided to go back to teaching.

He was offered a job with the Columbus Public Schools at Linden McKinley High School as a Special Education teacher. He coached baseball as well and in 1986 he decided to retire. Luther has been married for 66 years (married in 1946) to Wilma (Mercer). He has 2 children and 4 grand children. Luther said he has been blessed with a good life and that he was lucky.

I believe Luther deserved a good life and everything it had to offer. These men who went off to war, sacrificed their youth, saw the ravages of war, lost friends and survived are due our gratitude. I asked Luther if his faith was shaken on the day his brother died and he said it was strong and carried through the rest of the war. He said he was lucky and God watched over him. I say God bless him!

Bob Traphagan