

My Uncle on the Battlefield on D-Day

I always thought this person was the toughest man in the world. He was incredibly strong and willing to undertake any mechanical project that needed to be done. During the week he worked as a supervisor at Inland Steel Mill near Gary, Indiana. On the weekends, however, he was busy helping others. There were cars and trucks aplenty in his shop and he was right there fixing them. There were brake jobs going on, a carburetor torn apart, some welding to do, or even a major engine overhaul underway. You see Uncle Don had a large number of teenage nieces and nephews who were just learning to drive and we needed his help.

When we had a special project to do on the farm as well, he would come right over after work or on the weekend to mastermind it. He once redesigned and created larger iron paddles to replace each and every one of the smaller blades on our old shuttle stroke Jamesway barncleaner. I still can see him welding away making paddle after paddle. It was a remarkable improvement to say the least. Now it only took about forty-five minutes to clean each side of the barn instead of ninety minutes or more on each side. Later he designed and engineered some huge tie rods and metal plates attached to the outer walls of our barn and running completely across the width of the haymow that saved the huge building from collapsing. They are still in place today supporting that barn and giving it a firm and stable structure.

My Uncle Don lived in northwest Indiana where my parents were born and raised. I spent the first ten years of my life there as well. Once when I was older and living in Wisconsin by then, I drove down to Chicago with friends to watch a Bulls game. As we were heading home my car mysteriously stalled right there on Madison Street outside the Stadium in a not so nice part of town. I called Uncle Don late that night and sure enough, he hopped up off the couch, grabbed his hat and toolbox and headed an hour and a half up the road to help his needy nephew. He towed me home to his house that night, about sixty or seventy miles in Chicago traffic using a t-bar between our two vehicles. He was able to diagnose the problem, get the part and the next day, I was heading for home after a wonderful home cooked meal by my Aunt Irene.

I had the privilege of taking a trip with this man to the Grand Canyon and back when I was twenty-three, just the two of us. As we drove mile after mile in my five speed Ford Thunderbird, we talked, laughed and snacked on food that my Aunt had sent along. There was a tender side to Uncle Don that very few people ever saw and a guarded side as well. You see he was a survivor of World War II and the horrors of D-Day when American troops invaded France at Normandy Beach on their way to stop Adolf Hitler and the German army. Uncle Don was a medic. It was his job to treat the wounded and rescue the dying from the battlefield. He told me that day that there were twenty-three men in his company when the army rifts hit the shoreline. By the end of the day there were only four left. Nineteen of his buddies and fellow comrades had been shot and killed. The rules of war say that your enemy is not supposed to kill anyone with a giant red cross on their back, but that didn't stop the Germans.

After he told me about that day in 1944, my uncle got very quiet as we drove along, and I saw him crying. I cannot imagine the sacrifice, pain and heartache that so many of our veterans and their families have had to endure to preserve the freedom and liberty we hold so dear here in this country. I am so thankful for our vets and that all gave some and some gave all so that we could

live here in the USA, the greatest country that was ever created. It is my prayer that we will never forget that here in America, we proudly cherish our veterans and we unashamedly put our trust in Almighty God. Psalm 9:10 "Those who know your name trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you."

Thank you to all who served in our great military. We owe you a great debt and thank you Almighty God for establishing this country and helping us to thrive. Turn us back to you, I pray. Until next week, God bless.