

HONORING A LIBERATOR

Dana Keeton wrote a remarkable story of remembrance and gratitude arising from a World War II battle. The article was published in *The Democrat-Union* newspaper of Lawrenceburg, Tennessee.

According to that account, the sun had just risen on a hot August day in 1944 in the small village of Plelo in German-occupied France.

A 15-year-old boy did not know why he and the other citizens of Plelo had been lined up before a firing squad in the middle of the town square. Perhaps they were being punished for harboring a unit of Marquisards, the French underground freedom fighters. Maybe they were merely to satisfy the bloodlust of the German commanding officer who, the evening before, had routed the small group of Marquisard scouts. All the boy knew was that he was about to die.

As he stood before the firing squad, he remembered the carefree days of his early childhood, before the war, spent roaming the green of the French countryside. He thought about all he would miss by never growing up.

Most of all, however, he was terrified of dying. "How will the bullets feel ripping through my body?" he wondered.

He hoped no one could hear the whimperings coming from deep in his throat every time he exhaled.

Suddenly, the boy heard the sound of exploding mortar shells beyond the limits of his little village.

The Germans were forced to abandon the firing squad and face a small unit of U.S. tanks with 20 GIs led by Bob Hamsley, a corporal in Patton's Third Army. A Marquisard captain had asked Hamsley for help.

After three hours, 50 Nazis were dead, and the other 50 were taken prisoner.

In 1990, the town of Plelo honored Hamsley on the very spot where dozens of the town's citizens would have died if not for him.

The man who initiated the search for Hamsley – after all those years – and planning the ceremony honoring him was the mayor of Plelo, that same 15-year-old boy. He had determined to find the man who saved his life and honor him.

(more)

It's hard to forget someone who saves your life – or had a significant impact on your growth and maturation as a person or professional.

As I visit in Life Care's skilled nursing facilities and Century Park's assisted and independent living centers, it is a joy for me to see how the services we provide positively impact people who were role models for me, or who made important contributions to my life through church, school, in businesses or in the neighborhoods where we have lived.



In large measure, I am the product of their love, their concern and their contributions to my well-being.

And I know that I am not alone in this way. Through the talents and compassion you bring to Life Care and Century Park every day, you have the opportunity to repay those who helped you along life's way, as well as others who come under your care.

You honor them for their investment in you and others like you.

Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed (Proverbs 13:7 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter