

THE COMMERCIAL DISPATCH

COLUMBUS MISSISSIPPI

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Essay Winners Announced

This autumn, *The Commercial Dispatch* asked its readers to help celebrate the 200th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution by writing about their feelings on patriotism.

More than 100 readers responded to the essay contest, with the majority of those being printed in today's special Thanksgiving edition of *The Dispatch*.

The first-place winner of the contest is James V. Kelso III, of Columbus, and the second-place winner is Hank Norwood, also of Columbus.

The Commercial Dispatch thanks its readers for their efforts.

Columbian Recalls 'Spirit Of America'



James V. Kelso III

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following essay is the winner in *The Commercial Dispatch's* patriotic writing contest. Additional essays are included inside today's Thanksgiving edition.

By JAMES V. KELSO III

Columbus

I met him not too long ago, the Spirit of America.

Duke was his name, the father of one of my friends. The warm smile and firm handshake told me Duke was someone special, but in the next few minutes — which seemed like hours — I would learn just how special this new acquaintance really was.

Then I saw it — a plain, meticulous baseball cap with the 82nd Airborne Division's logo and a number of shiny metal badges placed symetrically across the front. Since it was on the table next to Duke, I assumed it was his and, just to make conversation, I

asked him about his military experience. What followed left me with goose bumps running down my back and a deep feeling of patriotism rejuvenated within my soul.

Duke related that he enlisted in the Army in 1940 and saw an incredible amount of action in World War II. He parachuted into combat in Italy, into Holland and finally into occupied France during the darkness prior to dawn on D-Day in June, 1944. He was in the Battle of the Bulge and was part of the American forces that accepted the surrender of Germany's land army as they fled from Soviet troops coming in from the east.

The sight Duke described brought back visions of the British surrender

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at Yorktown when columns of British regulars and Prussian mercenaries marched in long lines to lay down their arms at the close of the American Revolution. Duke loved America and faced death numerous times to defend the freedoms that had been won over and over since the 18th century.

Now it was 1950. The North Koreans swarmed down across the 38th parallel, and Duke once again was called on to serve his country. In Korea for only two weeks, he again came face to face with death, this time in

the form of a mortar shell that exploded directly in front of him. The explosion blew off part of his hand, filled him with shrapnel and only the grace of God allowed him to survive. But that is what the Spirit of America is about, serving without reservation and holding tough in the face of adversity.

Doctors said he might as well forget about walking again, but I can tell you that today Duke walks as smartly as any other man. "Can't do" was not in his vocabulary.

After recovering from his injuries,

Duke went on to train more paratroopers at Fort Benning, Ga., until he retired in the early 1960s. But his desire to pass on the Spirit to others never faded, and Duke became a sixth grade teacher, working with the youth of America. How I wished I could have had Duke for my teacher; he is walking history packaged in the form of a humble, amiable grandfather.

I left that meeting with Duke a different person. He is the Spirit of America, one who has lived to pass the country's heritage on to future generations.

Other "Dukes" have come and gone. Many are only memories today, having given their lives defending our great nation. I had an inkling of this fact a few years ago as I stood atop the huge five-pointed shrine honoring America's fallen outside Bastogne, Belgium — site of the same Battle of the Bulge I had just finished hearing about.

Now I understood why I felt so good as the wind whipped around the rolling hills of Belgium. The Spirit of America was there. Thanks, Duke.

Faith Has Sustained Him Through Career

Dispatch Staff Report

The "Duke" in James V. Kelso III's essay on page one of today's newspaper is Henry D. "Hank" Boswell, of Colorado Springs, Colo.

Now a sixth grade teacher, he was a 1986 winner of the Colorado Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award.

Described by a teaching colleague as "an oasis of humanity and warmth," Boswell in the classroom draws on his vast background as a retired military officer. In his teaching award citation, he was recognized for his efforts at innovation and creativity. He initiated such

projects as the Poets' Corner, a community opinion survey on anti-pollution with followup reports to Sens. Gary Hart and Bill Armstrong.

Other innovative teaching concepts included an "Imagine and Write" project and a creative writing exchange for the school newspaper.

Boswell encourages a free exchange of ideas with students and uses students as teacher assistants in primary grades and kindergarten. He also started a "student of the week" recognition program and sends "good work" notes to parents as positive reinforcement for student efforts.

"Duke" and his wife Maxine are the parents of two sons, Ralph and Jamie. Ralph is a 20-year career military officer, and Jamie is assistant principal of a junior high school.

A native of Wilson, N.C., Boswell says his "faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ, has sustained me on the battlefields of the world and in the battlefield of the classroom. With His help and guidance, I believe that I have contributed something to the freedom of our people and to the minds and spirits of the pupils that I have had the pleasure of teaching."

VOICES FROM

When the largest amphibious landing in history stormed ashore in Colorado Springs-area veterans who were part of the Allied la

By Raymond McCaff

The C-47s roared through the moonlit sky, appearing like huge, angry birds as they flocked together into formation several thousand strong.

Duke Boswell stood in the bowels of one of the giant transport planes, his eyes locked on the red light above the exit door. When the light turned green, Boswell would jump into the abyss. The words to "A Paratrooper's Prayer" flooded his mind.

"Almighty God, Our Heavenly Father; who art above us and beneath us, within and around us; Drive from our minds any fear of the space in which Thou art ever present . . ."

Boswell could see the outline of the vast armada below — more than 6,000 ships churning across the English Channel toward France.

Tossing about in a landing craft, Robert Hoskins waited to charge one of the beaches ahead. William Reilly, a member of the U.S. Army Rangers, sat in another vessel. In a few hours, he would become a hero.

Harold Magill manned the anti-aircraft gun of a patrol boat shepherding 90 landing craft across the channel. There was only way back home, he thought, and that was through Europe.

"Wouldn't miss it for the world," Magill wrote in his diary. "Fellows on board want to get at it."

Duke Boswell smelled the thick stench of vomit permeating the transport plane. No one was scared, of course. No, no — it was the weather, it was the turbulence, it was the . . .

"Give us confidence in the strength of Thine Everlasting arms to uphold us. Endue us with clear minds and pure heart that we may participate worthily in the victory which this nation must achieve in Thy name and through Thy will . . ."

M THE FRONT

Normandy, the cause of freedom hung in the balance. But for the
ding, D-Day changed more than history. It changed their lives.

ay/Gazette Telegraph

Back in England, George Goldberg prepared to board a glider that would ultimately be released from another transport plane. He had drawn straws with two other intelligence officers for the assignment. Only one would be alive by day's end.

Throughout this day, thousands of paratroopers would fall through the sky. Charles Schafer felt a whack against his helmet, then a warm ooze dripping down his face as he plummeted through darkness. Why am I sweating? he thought.

From above, Duke Boswell could see the flare of guns on the ground. His destination was down there: He and the other members of the 82nd Airborne Division were to take the town of Ste. Mere-Eglise.

"Make us hardy soldiers of our country as well as of Thy Son Our Savior

..."

The transport plane disappeared into a cloud bank.

"Jesus Christ, Amen."

Boswell stood by the door, a 20-year-old kid weighed down by almost 150 pounds of equipment: an M-1 rifle, a .45-caliber pistol, five grenades, a landmine, a 30-pound radio pack and a form letter from Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

"You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months," Eisenhower had written. "The eyes of the world are upon you."

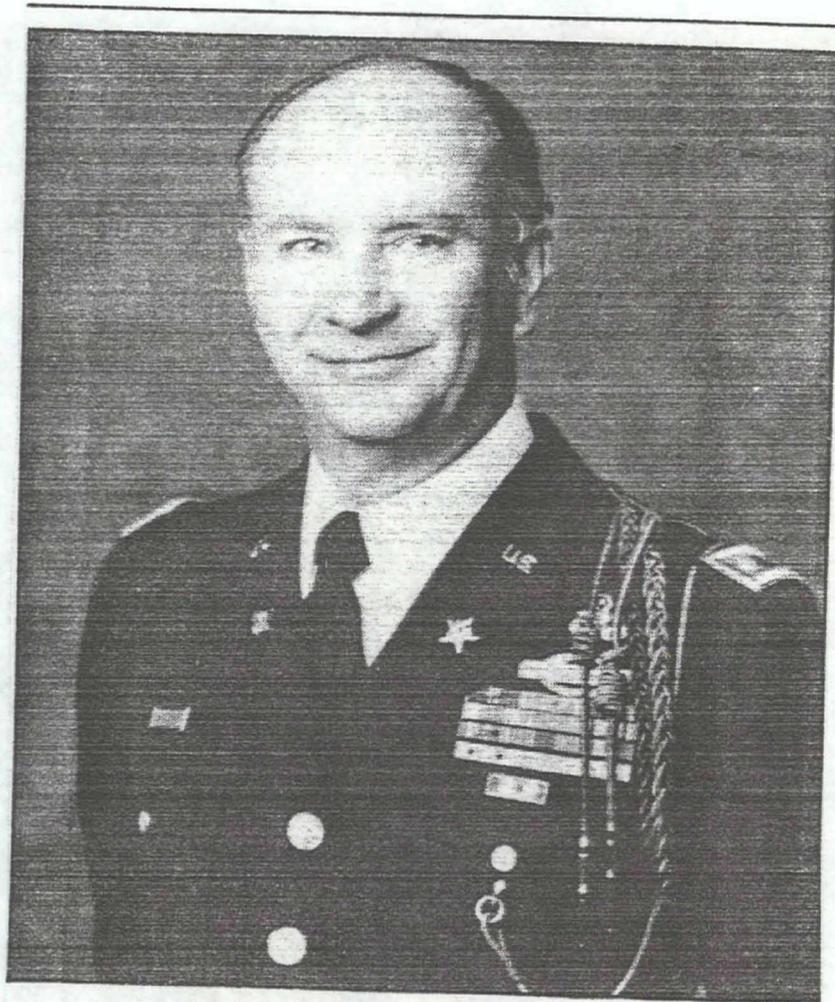
Green light: Boswell leaped out the door and into the midst of the largest amphibious invasion of all time.

D-Day had begun.



Duke Boswell was just a 20-year-old kid when he embarked on the "Great Crusade" and parachuted in behind enemy lines on D-Day.

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"Duke" — Henry "Hank" Boswell