

## **Eulogy by Dick Rosene for Cliff Reeder's Celebration of Life**

**June 30, 2017**

Thirty-four years ago I had the honor of speaking here to express my thoughts on the passing of my father-in-law, Fred Heis, someone who many of you may have known. For almost 55 years I've been married to his daughter, Judy, having exchanged our vows in this very church. So being up here means a lot. Cliff and Fred were very close friends and brothers together in the Mt Washington Masonic Lodge.

We're here today to celebrate the life of Clifford Reeder, a wonderful and remarkable man. He's dearly loved and respected by everyone he has ever met. When he moved from his home in Mt Washington to a retirement community called Pinebrook, north of Milford, he quickly became a favorite resident for all of the nurses and aides. The director, also a veteran, called Cliff his hero and always saluted him.

The group of men, the Joyful Noise Boys, who sang "Amazing Grace" earlier in this service, would come to Pinebrook and other retirement communities to share their talents with residents. Cliff was so appreciative whenever they were able to come.

Cliff meant so much to our family and to everyone. My wife has known Cliff for over 70 years. I've known him for over 55 years. We always have considered him as part of our family and will feel a deep void at his passing for a very long time. In case you haven't heard, Cliff waited until the day of his 96th birthday to go and be with the Lord. I wonder how many other people have done the same. A number of Cliff's friends really think he held on until his special day arrived. Thank you to all who sent him cards, even if he wasn't able to see them all.

One could pretty well sum up Cliff's life by the things that meant the most to him; carving, fishing, the Masonic order, the Marines and this church, that he has faithfully served as long as he lived in Cincinnati-more than 70 years. His wife, Jane's family were charter members of this church. What an extraordinarily talented person he was, and his talents were often directed in very unselfish ways. His carving skills made him the go-to person for exquisite gavels. He made over 110 gavels for Masters in the Masonic lodge, lodge members, Eastern Star, Demolay, Job's Daughters, and Rainbow Girls.

As a lifelong carver, Cliff was active in four carving groups. The one that meant the most to him was a group who call themselves the "Splinter Group," which came together to carve every Tuesday night. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the men in the group for making the effort to drive some distance every Tuesday evening to meet with Cliff at Pinebrook. I know that Cliff appreciated that very much. In fact Cliff was actively carving with the group just last week.

"I have been carving wood ever since I was a child," he told me, "having been inspired by looking at my grandfather's cane and wanting to make one like it. That was the beginning of my carving canes."

A carving club in Oklahoma started a project making eagle head canes to present to disabled veterans. The idea took off, and soon clubs all over the country were joining in. Whereas many

carvers would carve one or two canes, Cliff kept at it and carved more than forty canes. Cliff told me that most of the eagle head canes he made have been for veterans in military hospitals in a number of states. These wounded warriors had served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Once he carved a cane for a wounded veteran who had a service dog, and she ended up with two canes, her own plus a little one with a dog's head for her canine companion. He also made 15 canes for veterans that he knew personally.

Cliff grew up during the Great Depression, as one of four brothers. Life was not easy for his family. The boys often went out hunting or fishing to find what could be prepared for a meal. His first job was working for a blacksmith for ten cents a day...that's for a day, not an hour. Cliff dropped out of high school to enlist in the Marines in 1942. He was sent to radio school and served with the Marine Corps in the South Pacific until he mustered out in 1946, with the rank of Master Sergeant. He married Jane Milligan in December, 1945 and made Mt Washington his permanent home. He worked for Cincinnati Bell for his entire career.

He was very proud of the Marine Corps and gladly shared stories of his time on active duty. Judy's sister, Jan, was able to find a dress blue uniform online, and from then on he wore his uniform on many occasions. You may have seen him in his dress blues in church here as recently as last month on Memorial Day weekend.

There was always a Marine blanket on his bed and a large Marine flag in his apartment. He attended a number of the annual USO fund raisers here in town. His close friend and fellow veteran, Paul Wiley, took Cliff on many trips to Ft Campbell and other military bases. Often, well-wishers would see him wearing a Marine cap and would say to him, "Were you a Marine?," to which he would quickly say, "I am a Marine." There's a saying, "Once a Marine, always a Marine," which has even become the official motto of the Marine Corps League. There are no ex-Marines or former-Marines. Those who served their country during World War II are deservedly called the "greatest generation any society has ever produced."

Cliff had a passion for fishing and started going on annual fishing trips to an island in Georgian Bay in Canada with the senior John Croxton and two other men. He made those fishing trips for 27 straight years. Indicative of Cliff's sense of humor, there were two pillows in his room, one that read, "Early to Bed, Early to Rise, Fish all day, Make up Lies." The other merely said, "I'm hooked on Fishing." I can't begin to tell you how many rods, reels, and lures, many of which Cliff carved, that he left for his nephew.

Cliff was a very generous man. When Children's Hospital let carving clubs know that they wished to give out little wooden snowmen to their young patients, Cliff gladly got to work making a generous number of those snowmen. He did the same for Shriner's Hospital over the years. You may have heard about the wooden crosses Cliff made for the teens in the confirmation class. He has given out more than 900 crosses over the years! We're so glad he was still able to present the crosses last month in person to this year's confirmands. He was conscientious about reading from his Bible every night before going to bed. In addition to wooden crosses, Cliff was also a prolific maker of small copper crosses, hundreds of which were sent by Judy's sister and her husband to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cliff would tell you he doesn't do this for the recognition, but just for the satisfaction of helping others. I'm

quite sure that many of you have a cross stamped with Cliff's initials. The crosses are in addition to the hundreds of Santas he carved and gave away, many of which also went to the troops abroad.

Steve Long, one of your members here, is very skilled when it comes to knowing how to share photos and information online that helps to get Cliff's story to anyone around the globe. You only need to log on to his website, <http://cliffreeder.longmemories.info/> . Steve includes a very informative interview with Cliff that will be permanently part of the Veteran's History Project through the Library of Congress. The intent of the project is to preserve the firsthand remembrances of U.S. wartime veterans. Its mandate ensures that future generations may hear directly from those who served to better understand the realities of war. Steve wanted to be here so much, but he is in Canada presently.

A common greeting between Marines is their motto, Semper Fi, meaning Always Faithful or Always Loyal. Cliff was certainly one of the most loyal and patriotic Marines you'll ever find. He spent many hours speaking at schools and sharing his experiences with the local Young Marines club. The flag in front of his Mt Washington home still flies day and night, lighted by night, even though he moved to Pinebrook over a year and a half ago.

I realize that I've but scratched the surface of Cliff's rich life. The challenge is to pick and choose from the many recollections Cliff has shared. I'll think I've heard it all, only to be spellbound by something he had never told me before.

We realize so well what it means to have a friendship that stands the test of time. We will always be grateful to Cliff for sharing unselfishly of his time and talents, the kind of sharing that really made a difference in so many ways. During two different years, even in his late 80s, he enthusiastically joined a group of Presbyterian volunteers from Cincinnati headed to the Gulf Coast. They spent many days rebuilding homes that had been damaged by a hurricane.

Cliff, you will be sorely missed by all who have crossed your path in one way or another. You were all that one could have asked a man to be. Rest in peace. We hope to be together again some day when we also leave our temporal place here on earth.