

## INTRODUCTION

We all look to the past. Whether we drift away in moments of happiness or long for different times during those sad or difficult days it matters not, for we all, in some fashion, look to the past. Our recollections can be as minor as simply dropping into a lost memory of youthful ignorance, or the recollection might also be a serious and devoted effort to address and acknowledge past details which come back to haunt when life casts its dark shadows across one's path.

But for some, the recollections are akin to returning home. My wife and I joke that we were born a generation too late. When I really think about it, I was born at least two generations too late. The term "the greatest generation" describes that generation of Americans who defined ideals which many still hold so dear.

That generation, whether it was through government sponsored propaganda, true devotion to American idealism or a combination thereof, seems to have lived its generational life with a purpose. Not to say that each and every American, each and every day dragged their head from the pillow with the sole purpose of furthering the theme of America, but the more I think on the early twentieth century, the more it seems that our society was driven by American Nationalism.

I dream of that time of America with such fervent desire, that I may have simply turned America during this early timeframe into Utopia. One might point to history books galore to prove that I have simply ignored true historical facts and that in reality, the world was not the simple, pragmatic, every boy has a baseball glove and a dog-named-Skip, God-obeying, Huck Finn, aww-shucks world that I imagine.

Allow me the indulgence to recount the stories of my grandfather. For it is through these stories that I have developed my longing for historical rebirth. During his telling of these stories, he traveled back to his younger years, and every time he took me with him. It is in these stories that I have created my Utopia. The life my grandfather lived, the ideals he developed and the stark realities he faced were evidenced in the stories of his childhood.

He told his stories around the campfire. As altruistically unrealistic as that may sound, it is truth. As young as I can remember the entire family sat around the campfire at the Tapply Camp and begged my grandfather to tell his “Bus Stories.”

Describing the Tapply Camp without seeing it and living it is a difficult task. My Grandfather and Grandmother developed a place which embraced every conceivable comfort of home, without bringing in what they felt was a distraction from experiencing nature – electricity. Camp consisted of two A-Frame cabins with full beds, wood stoves for warmth, windows to take in the cool air off the water and wide-open doors to allow the lull of rolling waves whist one off to sleep. From the entry way of the cabins, one looked out on to a covered cooking area complete with cooking fireplace, kitchen counter, cupboards and refrigerator (ice chest in the ground). Then, the main attraction, Newfound Lake. Camp sat directly on the water, a veritable playground for the family.

Each day at Camp was filled with archery, tomahawk throws, horseshoe competitions, honing our skills with a .22 caliber rifle, riding bikes, and hours upon hours in the water. But, each night, after a dinner of delicacies miraculously born from the campfire, we sat around the cracking flame, and listened to stories. Not a night passed without the Grandchildren begging for a “Bus Story.”

Thus, it is within this context of the early formative years of the greatest generation that the stories of my Grandfather developed. Further, it is the telling of these stories around the campfire at the Tapply Camp that one must envision when reading each tale.

The following are his words, the tales of his life. The recording from which they came was created when he was in his late eighties. A word here or there may have been forgotten. Only where necessary have I added a word or a brief phrase, but only to complete his thought. Any additions have been developed in the same manner and style of his stories. Where memory has gifted me clear thought, I have included the exact words he has used so many times before, but may have temporarily forgotten.