

Frank Woodruff Buckles - Honor and Share

The Life of Frank Woodruff Buckles

Frank Buckles: 110 years and 27 days

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Date of Birth: February 01, 1901

Place of Birth Bethany, Missouri

Promoted to Heaven: February 27, 2011 (He lives on in glory.)

Place of Departure: Charles Town, West Virginia, from his 330 acre farmstead



Frank Woodruff Buckles – 110th Birthday, the man with a passion to serve.

Frank Woodruff Buckles is one of Steve Isaacson's Heroes Because of His Passion to Serve

Frank Woodruff Buckles, was the last surviving American veteran of World War I. He enlisted in the United States Army in 1917 and served with a detachment from Fort Riley, driving ambulances and motorcycles near the front lines in Europe.

During World War II, Frank Woodruff Buckles was captured by Japanese

forces while working in the shipping business, and spent three years in the Philippines as a civilian prisoner. After the war, Frank Buckles married in San Francisco and moved to Gap View Farm near Charles Town, West Virginia. A widower at age 98, he worked on his farm until the age of 105.

In his last years, Frank Woodruff Buckles was Honorary Chairman of the World War I Memorial Foundation. As chairman, he advocated the establishment of a World War I memorial similar to other war memorials in Washington, D.C.. Toward this end, Frank Buckles campaigned for the District of Columbia War Memorial to be renamed the National World War I Memorial. Frank Woodruff Buckles testified before Congress in support of this cause, and met with President George W. Bush at the White House.

Frank Woodruff Buckles was awarded the World War I Victory Medal at the conclusion of that conflict, and the Army of Occupation of Germany Medal retroactively following the medal's creation in 1941, as well as the French Legion of Honor in 1999. The funeral for Frank Woodruff Buckles was on March 15, 2011, at Arlington National Cemetery, with President Barack Obama attending and with full military honors.

Frank Woodruff Buckles: Last known surviving American veteran of
World War I – Video

2/1/1901 – 2/27/2011

Charles Town, West Virginia – He didn't seek the spotlight, but when Frank Woodruff Buckles outlived every other American who'd served in WWI. Frank Woodruff Buckles became "the humble patriot" and final torchbearer for the Doughboys of WWI.

Championed the WWI Memorial

Frank Woodruff Buckles enlisted in World War I at 16 after lying about his age. He died Sunday on his farm in Charles Town, nearly a month after his 110th birthday. He had devoted the last years of his life to campaigning for greater recognition for his former comrades.

Politicians for the most part, are disloyal to veterans. For decades after WWI, no WWI memorial had been erected. Frank Buckles pestered politicians to support a national memorial in Washington. and working with friend and family spokesman David DeJonge on a biography.

Tribute to Frank Woodruff Buckles, America's Last World War I Veteran
– Video

"We were always asking ourselves: How can we represent this story to the world?" DeJonge said Monday. "How can we make sure World War I isn't forgotten."

Buckles asked his daughter, Susannah Flanagan, about progress toward a national memorial every week, sometimes daily.

“He was sad it’s not completed,” DeJonge said. “It’s a simple straightforward thing to do, to honor Americans.”

When asked in February 2008 how it felt to be the last survivor, Frank Woodruff Buckles said simply, “I realized that somebody had to be, and it was me.”

Only two known veterans remain, according to the Order of the First World War, a Florida group whose members are descendants of WWI veterans and include Buckles’ daughter. The survivors are Florence Green in Great Britain and Claude Choules in Australia, said Robert Carroon, the group’s senior vice commander.

Green turned 110 on Feb. 19, and Choules turns 110 in March, he said.

Pershing’s Last Patriot: “Left Alone in the Rain” – Video

Born in Missouri in 1901 and raised in Oklahoma, Frank Woodruff Buckles visited a string of military recruiters after the United States in April 1917 entered what was called “the war to end all wars.” He was repeatedly rejected before convincing an Army captain he was 18.

More than 4.7 million people joined the U.S. military from 1917-18. By 2007, only three survived. Frank Woodruff Buckles went to Washington that year to serve as grand marshal of the national Memorial Day parade.

Frank Woodruff Buckles – Last of the Doughboys

Unlike Frank Buckles, the other two survivors were still in basic training in the United States when the war ended, and they did not make it overseas. When they died in late 2007 and 2008, Frank Woodruff Buckles became the last living doughboy.

The Cards and Letters Kept Frank Woodruff Buckles Going

Frank Woodruff Buckles got fan mail almost every day and had enough birthday cards to fill several bushel baskets.

DeJonge had visited Frank Woodruff Buckles late last week and was driving back to Michigan with about 5,000 letters to organize and answer. That is when he got the call telling him his friend had died.

What a Way to Live!

Each night, Frank Woodruff Buckle's daughter, Susannah, would go in and sit at his bedside and read fresh cards and letters to him. "That kept him going." Frank Buckles had been battling colds and other minor ailments during his last winter, but he was not ill at the time of his death. The day before he died was warm. Frank Buckles spent three hours sitting in the sunshine on the porch of his farmhouse, getting some more natural vitamin D and talking with his daughter.

She worked diligently to keep Frank Woodruff Buckles in his own home, even though it exhausted his life savings. Home health nurses and other medical care cost about \$120,000 a year.

Sen. Joe Manchin said, "He lived a long and rich life as a true American patriot." The donations the family received were made to the National World War One Legacy Project. The project is managed by the nonprofit Survivor Quest and will educate students about Buckles and WWI through a documentary and traveling educational exhibition. (see FrankBuckles.org)

Our Loss is Heaven's Gain

"We have lost a living link to an important era in our nation's history," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki. "But we have also lost a man of quiet dignity, who dedicated his final years to ensuring the sacrifices of his fellow 'Doughboys' are appropriately commemorated."

Frank Woodruff Buckles Had a Passion to Serve



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and wealth, should be the only reason to run for any office.

Frank Buckles went through a trouble he went through to get into the United States Army. Frank Buckles said, "I went to the state fair up in Wichita, Kansas, and while there, went to the recruiting station for the Marine Corps. The nice Marine sergeant said I was too young when I gave my age as 18, said I had to be 21." Patriot that Frank Buckles was, he returned a week later and reported he was age 21! Frank Buckles said, "I went back to the recruiting sergeant, and this time I was 21," he said with a grin. "I passed the inspection ... but he told me I just wasn't heavy enough."

Then he tried the Navy, whose recruiter told Buckles he was flat-footed. But Frank Buckles wouldn't quit. In Oklahoma City, an Army captain demanded a birth certificate. Frank Buckles said as he laughed, "I told him birth certificates were not made in Missouri when I was born, that the record was in a family Bible. I said, 'You don't want me to bring the family Bible down, do you?' The recruiter said, "OK, we'll take you." That is why one of Steve Isaacson's favorite heroes is Frank Woodruff Buckles.

Frank Buckles served in England and France, working mainly as a driver and a warehouse clerk. Frank Buckles was eager student of culture and language, and used his off-duty hours to learn German, visit cathedrals, museums and tombs, and bicycle in the French countryside. After Armistice Day, Buckles helped return prisoners of war to Germany. He returned to the United States in January 1920.

After the war, he returned to Oklahoma, then moved to Canada, where he worked a series of jobs before heading for New York City. There, he landed jobs in banking and advertising. However, it was the shipping industry that suited him best, and he worked around the world for the White Star Line Steamship Co. and W.R. Grace & Co.

Frank Woodruff Buckles was Captured by the Japanese in WWII

In 1941, while on business in the Philippines, Buckles was captured by the Japanese. Although not a soldier at the time, Frank Woodruff spent more than three years in prison camps. "I was never actually looking for adventure," he once said. "It just came to me."