

LEST OTHERS FORGET

# Students preserve words of war

■ Park Tudor student project preserves memories, letters spanning Civil War through Gulf War in hardcover book.

By Lisa Renzo-Rhodes  
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**T**he photo showed a stern 79-year-old Glenn Snyder staring at the unseen photographer.

Almost 60 years after the picture was taken, Snyder remembers the boys who were standing alongside him.

"That guy there," Snyder said pointing to the soldier on his right, "was cut in half by a shell. It just blew the backbone right out of him."

## PARK TUDOR

"And that guy," he said of the other, "was decapitated."

Snyder's experiences in World War II as a Navy medic assigned to the 5th Marine Division had been hidden away for decades. Today, motivated by painfully personal memories, the 78-year-old grandfather of three readily recalls his days on Iwo Jima.

"I hate to see anybody die in vain."

The decorated veteran's story — and those of dozens of others — are captured in a new book compiled and organized by 22 Park Tudor students and their teacher, Kathryn Lerch.

"Words of War — Wartime Memories From the Civil War Through the Gulf War" is the result of a reading, writing, interviewing and editing project sponsored by the school's Legacy Initiative. The high school-age students at the private school in Indianapolis did the project on their own time.

Designed to develop critical thinking and actively engage students in history, it is the first in what Lerch hopes will be a series of anthologies.

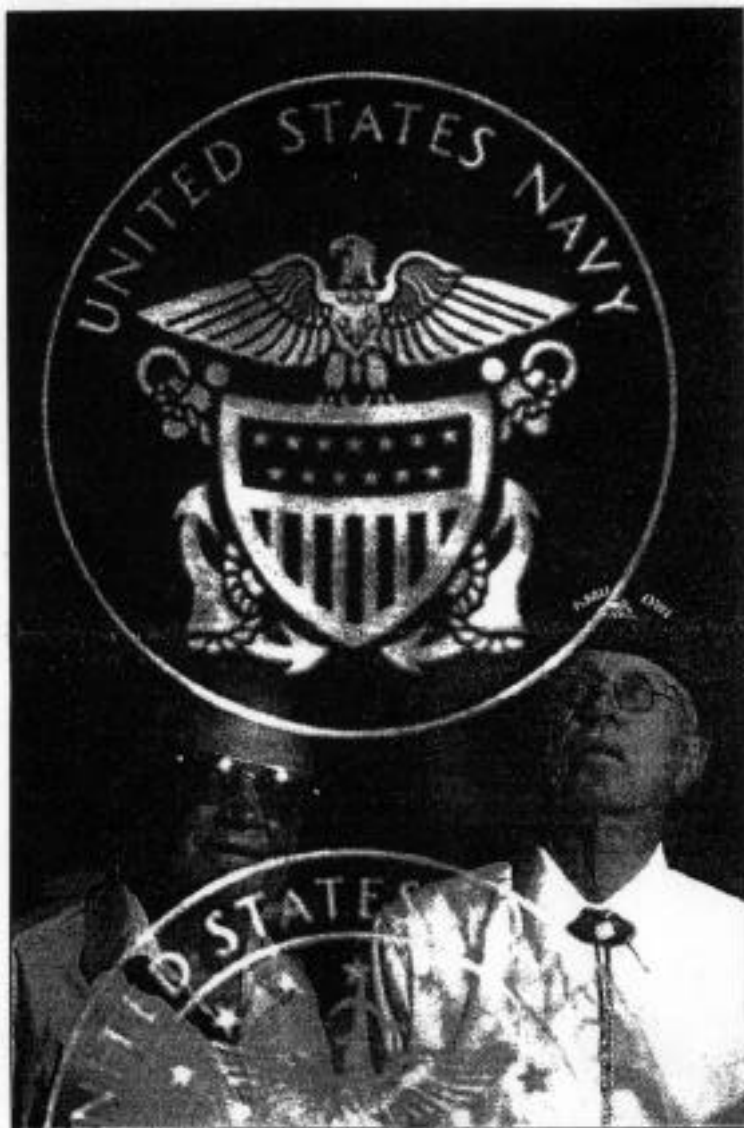
"This preserves letters that would have been left in closets, under beds, in attics, or worse, just thrown away," she said.

Experts say this type of work is an invaluable resource for future generations.

David Anderson, professor of history and dean of arts and sciences at the University of Indianapolis, said "reminiscences really personalize history."

"It reminds young people that history really is the story of people," Anderson

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**Remembering:** The faces of John Hendrickson (left) and Glenn Snyder are reflected in the polished granite of a veterans memorial at Crown Hill Cemetery. Wartime stories from the former Navy aircraft maintenance manager and Navy medic have been preserved.

■ Many veterans now feel compelled to share past.

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said.

And combining written documents from the time period with oral histories from those who lived the moments offer a kaleidoscopic view of the past.

"The only way we have, as historians or people in the present to discover the history of the masses, is this kind of record," Anderson said.

Material was collected through students' family connections and collections donated to the project. Letters, diaries and transcripts covering more than 130 years of American involvement in armed conflict were included.

John Hendrickson said that when his granddaughter Liss Moran urged him to talk about his time as an aircraft maintenance manager with the U.S. Navy, it was the first time anyone had asked him about his tour overseas.

"After the war, all my friends and I never discussed it again. When I took the uniform off, World War II was history. It was all history," Hendrickson said.

But the lessons he learned, even those he said that "weren't pretty," are experiences he now feels compelled to share.

"Fewer and fewer people of that age know what went on back there," Hendrickson said.

Over the yearlong timeline of the project, Park Tudor students have developed a keen awareness of the sacrifice, the loss and the courage.

"You do ask, 'If I were asked to defend my country and go to war, would I be able to stand across the line and kill someone?'" said Andrew Scales, 16.

He believes his answer is yes. But he's glad he's never had to put that instinct to the test. His work with the Legacy project helped define the "why" that comes with war.

"You can feel their anger and their ambivalence," he said of war veterans — and then marveled at their strength and devotion.

"Some recent books (about war) have been romanticized, and they've cleaned things up," he said. "This is the nitty-gritty stuff."

■ Call Lisa Renzo-Rhodes at 1-317-616-4445.



**Preserving the past:** A book of wartime memories compiled by Park Tudor students may be the first in a series.

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