

St. Pauli News in Detail



Christmas Eve

Bell Ringing
5:30 pm

Worship Services with Communion
5:00 pm



Greeting and Ushering

Dec. 3	Jim Kotz
Dec. 10	Bruce Mathson
Dec. 17	Barb Nelson (SS Program)
Dec. 24	Stacy Reay (Christmas Eve)
Dec. 25	No worship services
Dec. 31	Jim Rondorf

Altar Preparation: Jan Strandlie

Sunday School Christmas Program

We always look forward to this annual event, which will be held this year on Sunday, December 17, during worship services. Potluck to follow with Lydia Circle serving.

The Greater Middle River Community Choir will perform at St. Pauli on Saturday, December 9th, 5:30 pm. Freewill donation for the Choir.

Our WELCA ladies are serving a soup and sandwich supper following the concert. Bring your friends!



Presented by The Greater Middle River Community Choir

Ceremony of Lessons and Carols

Saturday, December 9
St. Pauli
Lutheran Church
11015 170th Ave. N.E.
Thief River Falls

5:30 pm
Soup & Sandwich Supper
will be served following the cantata.

Directions from TRF:
3.5 miles SE on Hwy. 59,
3 miles South on County Road 20

December Milestones

Birthdays

Dec. 5	Roxane Rondorf
Dec. 12	Heidi Haugen
Dec. 23	Jim Strandlie
Dec. 28	Ella Rondorf
Dec. 29	Neil Bugge
Dec. 30	Richard Geske

Anniversaries

Dec. 1	Jordan and Erin Rondorf
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In Memoriam

Gary A. Rolandson

July 13, 1940 – October 26, 2023

Orville and Belle Rolandson were long-time members of St. Pauli Church and all of their children, Bev, Gary, Dolores and Kenneth, were confirmed at St. Pauli.



Gary A. Rolandson, age 83, of Apple Valley passed away unexpectedly of natural causes on October 26, 2023.

Gary was born on July 13, 1940 to Orville and Belle Rolandson. He grew up in Thief River Falls on the family farm and graduated from Lincoln High School in 1958. After high school, he enlisted in the Army reserve and after his service in the Army moved back to the Erskine area and opened an Auto Body shop. His passion for his business was apparent to his customers that he served for over 30-plus years in the Erskine area.

His family, faith and friends were predominant in his life. He loved hunting on his family farm, and fishing at the family cabin. His enjoyment of the outdoors was always evident in his lifestyle, which included long walks and the love of gardening.

Gary and Mary Ann were united in marriage at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Rosemount, Minnesota. Their faith was central to their lives, attending Shepard of the Valley and St. Joseph faithfully every Sunday. They loved to walk and bicycle the neighborhoods and lakes of Minneapolis and make trips to visit family, the cabin, watch grandkids' activities, and go south to Arizona, Texas or Florida in the winter.

He had a passion for the Vikings, Notre Dame football and the Minnesota Gophers. He loved ice cream. His life was directed in the ways of the Lord...**FAITH, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS.** Gary will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him.

He is preceded in death by his parents; his sister, Dolores Andersen; and brother-in-law, Rollie Larson.

Gary is survived by his wife, Mary Ann; children: Mark (Kimberly) Rolandson, Chad (Holly) Rolandson and Angie (Trevor) Augenstein, and his children's mother, Judy; grandchildren: Garrett, Austin, Brandon, Dylan, Kadie, Joe, Brennan, and Sophia; siblings: Bev Larson and Kenneth (Lynn) Rolandson; also by other loving family and many friends.

Memorial services were held at 11:00 am on Thursday, November 2, 2023 at White Funeral Home, 14560 Pennock Ave, Apple Valley, 55124. Memorial visitation was from 10:00-11:00 am prior to the service.

Burial was at Clearwater Cemetery north of Oklee, Minnesota on Monday, November 6, 2023.



1954 Confirmation Class

Back row: Roger Belange, Gary Rolandson, Corine Torkelson, Elinor Gustafson. Roger Hanson. Lyle Bjorge.

Front row: Carol Rude, Rev. Eldon Person, Carmen Lokken

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In Memoriam

Maynard Theodore Wedul

April 15, 1931 – October 24, 2023



Maynard Theodore Wedul, formerly of Thief River Falls, passed away quietly in his sleep on October 24, 2023.

Maynard was born on April 25, 1931, in Hazel, MN, the second of five boys born to Arnt and Berit (Gimse) Wedul: Otto, Maynard, Kenneth, Arvid and Glenn.

Maynard had a colorful and often eventful life. He grew up in Hazel and the Wedul family were faithful members of St. Paul Church. In 1945, the family moved to Thief River Falls. He graduated from Lincoln High School in 1948.

He attended Moorhead State University from 1948 to 1952. During his summers at MSU, he worked for the U.S. Forestry Service fighting forest fires in Idaho. He often spoke of the Lewis and Clark National Fire in 1951, one of the worst in U.S. history.

In 1952, Maynard received his draft notice during the Korean War. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force where he was trained, and trained others in flying six different planes. He was proud to have served.

Maynard and Rosie met at Ellington Air Force Base in Houston, Texas. He often told the story of how he met Rosie. He went to church and saw this gorgeous woman in the choir. Wanting to meet her, he joined the choir and the rest is Wedul family history, as they married in 1956.

Reaching the rank of Captain, Maynard received orders to serve at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska, where he served until 1959. Upon his father's stroke, he decided to retire from the Air Force. Maynard, Rosie and their son, Dean, moved to Thief River Falls to take over his father's business Wedul Trucking. Maynard loved flying, but even more, he loved to drive his trucks. He recorded at least 3 million miles of driving time, all the while listening to country music and talk radio.:

Maynard, Rosie, Dean and infant daughter, Karen, moved from the town to a farm by the Thief River Falls airport. Maynard became a farmer while running his trucking business. In the summer of 1968, he had a near-fatal farming accident and had to have facial reconstruction surgery. He returned to farm life, never deterred by the accident.

In December 1973, the house where the Wedul family lived, burned down. Maynard and Rosie rebuilt, and in February of 1974, their third child, daughter, Kristina Gimse was born.

During Maynard's time in Thief River, he served on the school board for many years. He also ran for Minnesota State Representative in 1976. Maynard trained and became an itinerant preacher for the United Methodist Church. He often preached at church services and led Bible studies. His faith in God was always at the forefront of his life.

In September 2009, Maynard and Rosie sold the farm and "retired to the south" to Lake City. While in Lake City, Rosie suffered a debilitating stroke that left her unable to care for herself. Maynard retired from trucking at age 80 to care for Rosie. He spent 10 years of his life dedicated to her care and often said, "She would have done the same for me."

Maynard was a bit of a showman. He loved to sing and was a self-taught piano player. He would entertain many a family and friend singing his well-loved "Mrs. Johnson, Turn Me Loose," along with other songs and telling Ole and Lena jokes. He was even asked, at 90, to sing and tell jokes at a friend's 100 birthday party. Never to turn an opportunity down, he entertained many friends and family.

He was a proud Norwegian. During his lifetime he had many nicknames. The HAPPY NORWEGIAN was on all of his trucks. M.T. Swede (Rosie's favorite), a name given to him during the Air Force, was a humorously derogatory name since he was Norwegian. He will forever be known as Dad, Grandpa and Pakka by his children and grandchildren.

He is survived by his three children: Dean (Linda) Wedul, Karen Wedul, Kristina Gimse Wedul; and his five grandchildren: Eric (Caroline Page) Wedul, Kristen Wedul, Kate Evans, Hamilton Evans and Sebastian Evans. He was predeceased by his wife, Rosalee Wedul, and his four brothers: Otto, Kenneth, Arvid and Glenn.

Burial will be Friday, December 8, 2023, at 11 a.m. at Fort Snelling, Minneapolis and the memorial will be on Saturday, December 9, 2023, at 2 p.m. at Redeeming Grace Community Church, 213 N. Oak St., Lake City, MN 55041. All are welcome. In lieu of flowers, please consider a monetary gift to Redeeming Grace Community Church.

Minutes of the Women of the ELCA

October 25, 2023

The St. Pauli Women of the ELCA met at the church at 7:00 pm on October 25, 2023 with 7 members present.

President Kathy opened with devotions titled "Slowing Down to See the Good Stuff" based on Psalm 73:1.

Secretary's report: Accepted as read.

Treasurer's report: September 27 to October 25
Expenses: \$588.18. Income: \$2,510. Balance in checking as of October 25 \$3,836.78, Savings as of September 30: \$583.19, CD \$6,258.88

Stewardship: Virginia and Ronnie will deliver the stewardship boxes. Labels are put on the boxes with our church's name and address and a listing of the box's contents.

Communications: We received a card from the Heritage Center thanking us for the gift of \$50.

Council Report: Council did not meet in October, so no report.

Old Business:

No one attended the Fall Gathering. The Leadership Retreat is in Menahga on November 10-11.

Fall Event:

Income: \$2,459. We used \$236 of our \$250 Thrivent card. Net income: \$2,695

Expenses: \$609.92. Groceries \$287.92, Speaker fee \$200 + \$100 mileage. Radiogram: \$22 (paid for with

Thrivent). Printing was donated by Faye. David Lee donated the butter pats.

Profit: \$2,085.08. The event was successful, people had a good time, and we received compliments on the food, particularly the red Jell-O. However, we shouldn't plan for 100 again; there was too much food left over.

New Business:

1. Last Sunday of November, we will have 11:30 services with communion and Pastor Marilyn Grafstrom presiding. Coffee will be served at 10:30. Virginia will make the coffee and bring muffins.
2. Lydia Circle is November 11th at the church with potluck. November meeting for WELCA is the 15th. Program is Thankoffering with potluck snacks.
3. Kathy has communion prep for November.
4. Slate of Officers for 2024:

President: Jan Strandlie

Vice President: Virginia

Second Vice President: Sue

Treasurer: Cindy

Secretary: Faye

Stewardship: Kathy Alberg

Offering was taken, prayer partners exchanged, Lord's Prayer prayed and table grace. Thank you to Wahna for serving.

Faye Auchenpaugh, Secretary

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2023 "Fall Event" Donations

Net donations this year totaled \$2,085.08. WELCA at their November 15th meeting decided to donate a total of \$2,000, as follows:

ELCA Scholarship Fund	\$ 300.00
Salvation Army	500.00
TRF Area Community Fund	200.00
ELCA Good Gifts	500.00
Little Brother/Little Sister	100.00
Heritage Center	200.00
Prowler Pantry	<u>200.00</u>
Total Charitable Donations:	\$2,000.00



AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Kevin Reich spotted this moose cow at his farm and snapped this great photo. Wildlife seems to be the theme; in the photo below, Marisa Benson spotted this bird on her driveway: a juvenile turkey vulture.



High School Christmas Concert

Darcy Reese is retiring at the end of this school year.

PRESENTED BY THE LHS & FMS CHOIRS

MY SONG IN THE NIGHT

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DARCY REESE

ONE NIGHT ONLY
DECEMBER 11TH
LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL
AUDITORIUM

7:00PM
DOOR #8 OPENS AT 6:00PM
\$10 PER SEAT SOLD AT THE DOOR



Minnesota Roundabout

THE TRUE MIRACLE ON ICE

The story behind the most efficient—and intriguing—piece of hardware in all of sports.

by Nick Yetto, *Smithsonian* magazine, November 2023

It's a lumbering presence before it comes to life—but when it does, it's the most beloved piece of maintenance equipment on earth.

The Zamboni was the brainchild of Frank Joseph Zamboni, born in 1901 to Italian immigrant parents in Utah and raised in Idaho. At 15, Frank was pulled from school to help on the farm, kick-starting his career as a machinist. Frank kept the tractors and balers in tune and worked as a mechanic at a local garage. In 1922, he and his brother Lawrence opened an electrical component and servicing business in Southern California. Fatefully, they also got into ice, helping produce 300-pound slabs to refrigerate rail cars. Frank and Lawrence sold their ice-making plant in 1939 but stripped the refrigeration equipment from it so they could open a skating rink across the street.

The skating business was profitable but tricky. Rink ice was only three-quarters of an inch thick and easily damaged. At the rink they built, called Iceland, resurfacing was labor intensive, involving manual tools like planers, hoses and squeegees. So, Frank set out to design a self-propelled resurfacing machine. In 1942, he bought a farm tractor and experimented with modifications, testing them at the rink whenever he had the chance. In 1949, after multiple prototypes, Frank took to the ice with Zamboni Model A and resurfaced his 20,000 square-foot rink in ten minutes. In the world of ice sports, it was a maiden voyage on a par with that of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk.

The basic principles of a Zamboni have remained unchanged. A conditioner, mounted behind the rear wheels, contains a blade that shaves the ice, an auger that collects those shavings, a vacuum that sucks up dirty water, and sprayers that lay down a fresh coat of water, filling the cracks. Behind all that is a squeegee. In a single pass, the machine can complete what was once a five-person process.

In 1954, the Boston Bruins became the first NHL team to purchase a Zamboni, and by 1957, the NCAA had determined that all new rinks would accommodate the machine. In 1960, Zambonis made their first appearance at the Winter Olympics. The company sold its first electric model in 1978.

Though Frank Zamboni went on to invent other things—a milk tank and pasteurizer, an artificial turf roller, a track cleaner for NASCAR—it's his ice refinisher that ensures his immortality. He is enshrined in five sporting halls of fame, including U.S. Hockey, World Figure Skating, and U.S. Speedskating.

Not bad for someone who didn't even like to skate.

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NEEDLES

I
wrote
a poem
in the shape
of a Christmas
tree but then forgot
to water it and only a few

days
later
there

were

words

all

the

over

carpet



Jimmy Stewart Owed His Most Memorable Holiday Performance to World War II

Food for thought as you watch this classic holiday movie.

The war left its mark on the renowned actor and transformed the 1946 film "It's a Wonderful Life."

By Dave Kinky, *Washington Post*, 12/14/2020

IT IS ARGUABLY one of the most emotional and impactful scenes in Hollywood history. Sitting at Martini's bar in the fictional town of Bedford Falls, a forlorn George Bailey has reached his breaking point. Festive music plays in the background as gleeful customers celebrate Christmas Eve. However, the hero of the classic holiday film *It's a Wonderful Life* is immune to the merriment. He sits at the bar, nursing a drink and fondling his life insurance policy, a payout of which could cover the lost \$8,000 from Bailey Building & Loan. A tight close-up shows Bailey with tears in his eyes as he holds his head in his hands and begins to pray:

"God, God, dear Father in Heaven. I'm not a praying man, but if you're up there and you can hear me, show me the way. I'm at the end of my rope. I... show me the way, oh God."

Actor Jimmy Stewart nailed the scene—and then some. He followed the script exactly but then added something extra: the tears. Stewart broke down unexpectedly during the 1946 filming of this memorable moment, about a year after World War II had ended in Europe. Bottled-up feelings poured forth in a rare display of emotion by Stewart, who had already won an Academy Award for Best Actor in 1940's *The Philadelphia Story*.

Director Frank Capra was elated with the performance, but he knew he hadn't captured the scene properly. The cameras were set up for a long shot and Capra wanted to reshoot it with a tight frame on the actor's face as the tears spilled.

Stewart looked at the director and said, "Frank, I can't do that again. Don't ask me." The actor knew the moment had been spontaneous; he had opened a reservoir of buried emotions and was unwilling to revisit that dark place in his soul. Although Stewart himself rarely talked about the source of that despair, those close to him knew it came from his combat service as a bomber pilot in World War II. Many noticed the change in him when he returned home after flying 20 missions in Europe in a B-24 Liberator.



Capra would have to find another way to get the scene he wanted.

SOLDIER'S HEART. Shell shock. Battle fatigue. Flak happy. PTSD. As long as humans have fought wars, soldiers have suffered the psychological impact brought on by the horrors of combat. The ancient Greeks even wrote about it in their plays and histories. At the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC, Herodotus described how Epizelus "spent the rest of his life in blindness" after witnessing the man next to him killed by a large, bearded Persian.

Whatever it is called, Jimmy Stewart most likely suffered from it. "His wife talked about the symptoms of PTSD he had long after the war," said Robert Matzen, author of the 2016 book *Mission: Jimmy Stewart and the Fight for Europe*. "The nightmares, the sweats, the shakes. He did have to stand down from some rotations because the pressure got to him. In his command position and with the pressure he put on himself as a perfectionist, he just couldn't stand up to it."

Fellow actors on the set of *It's a Wonderful Life* were concerned by Stewart's darker side, according to Ben Mankiewicz, a host on Turner Classic Movies and a film critic. "Donna Reed noticed it," he noted. "She said people were tense. There was definite discussion about playing someone who was that depressed and considering suicide, knowing obviously that was happening across America at the time. Jimmy Stewart was clearly affected by what he went through, and it was a change we didn't understand."

It is well-documented that Stewart suffered nightmares, nervousness, anxiety, and fits of rage after the war. In his book, Matzen evokes the actor's postwar terrors:

"[T]he nightmares came every night. There he was on oxygen at 20,000 feet with 190s [German fighter planes] zipping past, spraying lead and firing rockets, flak bursting about the cockpit. B-24s hit, burning, spinning out of formation. Bail out! Bail out! Do you see any chutes? How many chutes? Whose ship was it? Oh no, not him! Not them! Bodies, pieces of bodies smacking off the windshield. And the most frequent dream, an explosion under him and the plane lifted by it and the feeling that this was the end. There he was, straddling a hole at his feet big enough to fall through, feeling the thin air at 30 below biting at his skin and swirling as he choked on the stench of gunpowder, looking four miles straight down at Germany."

After the war, Stewart talked about his service in mostly positive terms and avoided dwelling on the negative. "I saw too much suffering," he once said. "It's certainly not something to talk about." Like so many men of that generation, Stewart would deal with psychological issues that followed him after living through the terror of combat in his own way. "He learned that the anger he had inside of him could be channeled into these dark performances, dark character moments," Matzen said. "You are looking at the effects of war in some of the scenes in that movie and many other pictures after that. His wife and daughter both said,

'That's him in real life.' He would go from zero to 100 in two seconds. He would fly into a very rare blind rage. That was the war."

STEWART'S MILITARY CAREER is remarkable, considering how improbable it was. He was 33 when America entered World War II—old by the day's standards, when most combat pilots were 21 or 22.

He had had a love of airplanes long before he stepped in front of the footlights. He was a licensed pilot and was determined to use those skills with the U.S. Army Air Corps. But his 6-foot-4, rail-thin frame earned him a six-month deferment when he was evaluated for service in the fall of 1940: he was too underweight for his height. He was persistent, though. While trying to get his status changed, Stewart set about getting his transport license as a commercial pilot, figuring that would help offset his age problem: at just shy of 33, he was already over the maximum age for air cadet training. He was at last inducted into the army on March 22, 1941, and assigned to the Air Corps—soon to be the U.S. Army Air Forces. Stewart completed his training in 1942, earned his wings, and piloted B-17 Flying Fortresses as an instructor.



Stewart pushed for a combat assignment and finally got his wish when he was transferred in November 1943 to the 445th Bombardment Group (Heavy). Based at the Royal Air Force airfield Tibenham in Norfolk, England, the unit was part of the VIII Bomber Command, later Eighth Army Air Force, which had been established the year before to conduct daylight bombing raids on strategic targets in Germany. This squadron flew Liberators, so Stewart was checked out on the B-24 after joining the unit.

"Stewart's commander knew how badly he wanted to get into the war," said Michael S. Simpson, unit historian for the 445th. "He knew of a B-24 outfit that was in their initial stage of training and needed an operations officer for one of the squadrons. Stewart's CO asked if they could use an experienced officer, and he got the job." It wasn't long before Stewart's leadership abilities were noticed, and he was made commanding officer of the 703rd Bombardment Squadron. He led by example, and his men loved him. Stewart used the laid-back style that he displayed onscreen to get his crews to trust him and follow his orders no matter what.

"His soft drawl was calming to the airmen," Simpson said. "I talked with several members of the 703rd who said he was a dynamic leader who didn't need to crack the whip. Once, an enlisted man stole a keg of beer from the officer's club. They stashed it in their Quonset hut and wrapped it up in blankets. Stewart came in and noticed the pile of blankets. Instead of throwing a fit, he took a canteen cup and poured himself a beer. As he sipped on it, he mentioned that a keg of beer had disappeared, and he knew that none of his men would have taken it. He then finished the beer and walked out of the hut. They couldn't wait to return the keg!"



Stewart led 11 of the 41 missions the 703rd Bomb Squadron flew against German targets—each of them pressure-filled and dangerous. In 1943 the Eighth Air Force had no long-range fighter protection, so the B-24s were at the mercy of German Me 109s and Focke-Wulf Fw 190s as they attacked the formations in deadly waves. Once past the enemy fighters, the Liberators—"widow makers," as the crews dubbed them—would be pounded mercilessly by exploding flak as they made their bombing runs.

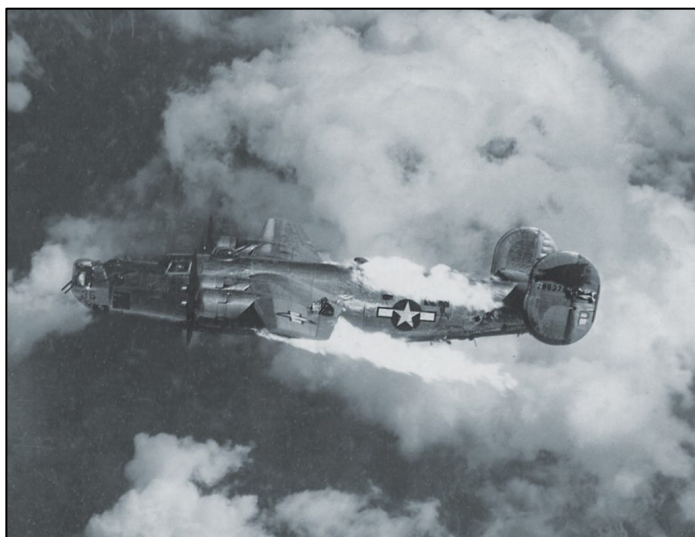


For the Americans, daylight bombing was a meat grinder. Losses were appalling, especially early in the campaign before defensive tactics were perfected and fighters could escort the bombers to their targets. All told, the Eighth Air Force lost more than 10,500 airplanes, with 26,000 men killed and another 28,000 taken prisoner. By contrast, the U.S. Marines had a total of 23,160 men killed during its bloody island-hopping campaign across the Pacific. The 703rd Bomb

Squadron suffered comparable losses under Stewart's command. The unit lost 10 aircraft in combat, with 71 men killed in action and 25 taken prisoner. Stewart took each one of those losses personally, compounding the stress he felt in organizing and leading the assaults against Nazi Germany.

Stewart was a perfectionist in many ways, trying to control outcomes with unrealistic expectations. His father, Alex, had been a demanding alcoholic who insisted his son get it right all the time. The pressure Stewart placed on himself to perform was immense. "I prayed I wouldn't make a mistake," he later recalled. "When you go up, you're responsible."

A few missions, in particular, left a mark on Stewart's psyche. One was during "Big Week" in February 1944, the attempt by the Allies to knock the Luftwaffe out of the war by bombing airplane factories and luring German fighters to their doom in a costly battle of attrition. The 445th Bomb Group lost 13 of 25 airplanes and 122 airmen. Stewart's B-24, in which he was copilot and group commander, took a direct hit from an 88 shell, which left a two-foot hole in the fuselage just below the actor's seat. The damage was so extensive that the Liberator suffered a structural failure when it landed back in England.



While the experience was unsettling, it's not what Stewart feared the most. His deepest dread was making mistakes that would result in men under his command getting killed—a situation that is almost impossible to avoid in the fog of war. For those who didn't return, Stewart was often the one who had to write to the families and tell them their loved ones wouldn't be coming home.

"He felt responsible for these men," Matzen said. "These were either men in his squadron or that he had trained or were in his formation. Stewart took that so seriously."

Flak was also a problem on Stewart's last mission with the 703rd Bomb Squadron. The unit planned to bomb an aircraft engine factory in Basdorf, Germany, but due to weather it was diverted to Berlin, its secondary target. The planes took a beating from antiaircraft fire over the German capital. Michael Simpson's father, Lieutenant Leland Simpson, was lead bombardier with Stewart that day.

"The strain was really starting to show then," the historian said. "His commanding officer was concerned Stewart was flying too many missions. When the 453rd Bomb Group lost

its group operations officer, it was decided to transfer Stewart, by then a major, to that role. This didn't mean Stewart would stop flying, just that he would be farther up in the rotation and wouldn't fly as much." He went on to fly nine missions as operations officer for the 453rd. Nearly a month later, Stewart's final mission—his 20th—was a near-disaster. The 453rd Bomb Group almost collided with another, causing several formations to veer away and miss their target: an airfield full of Me 262 jetfighters. Instead, bombs rained down on farm fields and forest.

Quietly, Stewart was told to stand down. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, commanding general of the U.S. Army Air Forces, let the actor know his services were more important to the Eighth Air Force as an operations officer.

"It wasn't ever official, but I just told him I didn't want him to fly any more combat," Arnold recalled. "He didn't argue about it."

THE WAR IN EUROPE ended two months later. "He loved to fly, but he came home after the war vowing to never fly again," Matzen said. "That's the toll 20 missions took on him." Stewart eventually found himself back in Hollywood looking to resume his acting career. The pickings were slim at first, especially for a 38-year-old former star who had been away from moviemaking for five years.

Also working against him was his appearance. Stewart had aged remarkably during the war. Comparing photos of him from when he entered the service and when he left shows a much older, wearied individual—someone weighed down by the ravages of command in combat. Back in Hollywood, Stewart was so anxious that he couldn't keep weight on.

His stomach was in knots, and all he could keep down was ice cream and peanut butter. Capra, who had spent the war in the U.S. Army Signal Corps producing a series of films aimed at American troops, approached Stewart with the script for *It's a Wonderful Life*. At first Stewart wasn't interested, but he eventually changed his mind and embraced the project. He had previously worked with Capra on such classics as *You Can't Take It with You* (1938) and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939).

Throughout *It's a Wonderful Life*, there are glimpses of Stewart revealing the emotions he had tamped down during the war, including the scene in the living room where he explodes while the family is preparing for Christmas. Stewart yells at the children and knocks over gifts and furniture in a fit of rage. Even the aftermath, when he apologizes for his behavior, is uncomfortable to watch.

"Only great actors can tap into those feelings," Mankiewicz said. "It's not enough to experience it; you have to have that ability to communicate that to a movie camera. You have to turn it on and capture it. Jimmy Stewart was not a method



actor, but he knew intuitively that he was able to find it within himself and translate it for the audience.”

For the scene in Martini’s bar, Capra had planned a long shot to show the action surrounding Stewart. Neither the director nor the actor was prepared for what happened next, as tears poured forth as if from an inner fount.

“As I said those words,” Stewart told *Guideposts* magazine in 1987, “I felt the loneliness, the hopelessness of people who had nowhere to turn, and my eyes filled with tears. I broke down sobbing. This was not planned at all.”



Afterward, Capra tried to figure out what to do to make Stewart’s grief the key visual for the scene. Since a reshoot was out of the question, he did something that had never been tried before. At great expense, the director had film technicians painstakingly enlarge each frame of the scene one by one—thousands of images in all—until Stewart’s face and his tears filled the screen.

“He created a new process where he simulated the move he wanted to make but couldn’t make,” Matzen said. “Luckily, this is film with a very high quality to start out with. Today, directors can go into [an editing system] and do an optical zoom on computers. That wasn’t possible back then. Capra created a process for simulating the zoom he couldn’t do.”

It’s a Wonderful Life premiered on December 20, 1946. It received mixed reviews and failed to recoup its budget—all the larger because of the special process Capra invented. While the *Hollywood Reporter* called the film “wonderful entertainment,” *New York Times* reviewer Bosley Crowther found it overly sentimental, although he noted that its star “has grown in spiritual stature as well as in talent during the years he was in the war.”

THE FILM SAT ON A DUSTY SHELF at the studio for decades until, thanks to a lapsed copyright in 1974, it resurfaced to introduce itself to new generations and become a holiday staple on television. It has since been ranked high up on the list of many critics’ favorite films.

“It’s the damndest thing I’ve ever seen,” Frank Capra told the *Wall Street Journal* in 1984. “The film has a life of its own now, and I can look at it like I had nothing to do with it. I’m like a parent whose kid grows up to be President. I’m proud...but it’s the kid who did the work.”

Despite his pronouncement about never flying again, Stewart did—and with the military, too. After the war, he joined the Air Force Reserve and was promoted to brigadier general in 1959, becoming the highest-ranking actor in U.S. military history. In 1966, Stewart flew a B-52 mission over North Vietnam as an observer. He retired from the Reserve in 1968.

Of course, Jimmy Stewart also became one of Hollywood’s most endearing and enduring stars. He appeared in 80 movies and was nominated five times for a Best Actor Oscar. He died in 1997 at the age of 89. Two years later, the American Film Institute ranked him third on their list of greatest American actors.

Later in life, Stewart admitted that *It’s a Wonderful Life* was his favorite movie. The role of George Bailey and that moment in Martini’s bar inexorably changed the arc of his journey and set the stage for even greater things. Says Ben Mankiewicz: “That scene was the beginning of the second act of Stewart’s very lengthy Hollywood career.”



U.S. and German soldiers shared Christmas Eve dinner at height of WWII

By Dave Kindy, *Washington Post*, December 24, 2022

On Christmas Eve 1944, heavy snow blanketed the Hürtgen Forest in Germany, near the Belgian border. Inside a tiny cabin deep in the woods, 12-year-old Fritz Vincken and his mother, Elisabeth, listened to warplanes and artillery shells as the Battle of the Bulge neared its climax.

As they tried to make the most of an inauspicious holiday, they couldn't anticipate that a true Christmas miracle would soon come to their modest home.

Months earlier, the mother and son had moved to the isolated cottage when their home in nearby Aachen had been destroyed by Allied bombing. For Fritz, who first recounted his story in a 1973 article for *Reader's Digest*, the remote cabin offered a reprieve from the death and destruction of World War II.

They were alone because Fritz's father, Hubert, who baked bread for the German army, had recently been called into service as Allied armies pressed closer to Germany. Fritz and Elisabeth held little hope that Hubert would be able to join them for Christmas Eve dinner.

Less than two weeks earlier, the tranquility of the Hürtgen Forest had been shattered when Field Marshall Gerd von Rundstedt unleashed 30 divisions hidden in the nearby Ardennes Forest of Belgium for the last major German offensive of World War II. Vicious fighting erupted across the Western Front, including around the Vincken cabin, as Allied armies desperately tried to repel the surprise attack amid blizzard conditions.



Part of a U.S. Army convoy to the front line stops for rest in a snow-covered valley in Belgium on Dec. 22, 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge. The men are reinforcements for units in the front lines holding back the German counterthrust. (U.S. Army Signal Corps)

As mother and son prepared Christmas Eve dinner, they were startled by a knock on the door. The closest neighbors were miles away. With Fritz by her side, Elisabeth opened the door and saw three young soldiers, all armed. Two were standing; the third lay in the snow with grievous wounds. The men

spoke a language unknown to the Vinckens. Fritz realized they were Americans.

"I was almost paralyzed with fear, for though I was a child, I knew that harsh law of war: Anyone giving aid and comfort to the enemy would be shot," Fritz later remembered.

Elisabeth also knew the penalty for harboring Americans. But the soldier bleeding in the snow was young enough to be her son. She motioned for all three to enter the tiny cabin. Fritz and his mother helped the severely injured man into a bed and tended to his wounds.

None of the Americans spoke German, but Elisabeth and one of the men communicated in French. Elisabeth, seeking to stretch their meager meal to accommodate the guests, told Fritz, "Go get Hermann." Hermann was a rooster being fattened in case Hubert made it home for dinner. He was named for Hermann Göring, a Nazi leader for whom Elisabeth had little regard.

Suddenly, there was another knock on the door. Fritz opened it, expecting to see more Americans lost in the forest. Instead, he was alarmed to find four German soldiers. The young men had become separated from their unit and were looking for shelter from the cold.

Elisabeth went outside to speak with the new arrivals, telling them they were welcome to spend the night but had to leave their weapons outside. When the young Wehrmacht corporal started to object, Elisabeth looked at him sternly and said, "It is the Holy Night and there will be no shooting here."

While the Germans placed their weapons next to the woodpile, Elisabeth went back into the cabin and returned with the Americans' guns. When they were all gathered inside, the enemies stared at each other in stony silence, wondering how long this temporary truce would last.

Elisabeth took command of the scene, Fritz wrote in *Reader's Digest*, and had the combatants mingle close together. She realized that a meal of Hermann wasn't going to satisfy such a large group, so she told her son to get additional ingredients for the chicken soup she was preparing.

"Quick, get more potatoes and some oats," he remembered her saying. "These boys are hungry, and a starving man is an angry one."

When the wounded American started moaning, one of the Wehrmacht soldiers examined him. He had been a medical student before the war and realized the injured man had lost a lot of blood. "What he needs is rest and nourishment," the German said.

Eventually, everyone began to relax. Both groups of soldiers searched their backpacks for food to share. The Wehrmacht corporal contributed a bottle of red wine and loaf of rye bread.

Soon the soup was served. Elisabeth bowed her head and said grace. Fritz remembered seeing tears in his mother's eyes and noticed that some of the soldiers wept, too, perhaps thinking of their families far away or feeling grateful that they wouldn't have to fight on Christmas Eve.

The next morning, the soldiers prepared to go back to war. A stretcher was crafted from a pair of poles and Elisabeth's tablecloth to transport the wounded American. As the U.S. soldiers checked a map, the German corporal showed them how to get back to their own lines. They then shook hands and headed off in opposite directions.

"Be careful, boys," Elisabeth called after them. "I want you to get home someday where you belong. God bless you all!"



Troops of the 82nd Airborne Division travel a snow-covered fire break in the woods as they move forward in the Ardennes region in Belgium on Jan. 28, 1945. (AP)

Not long afterward, the war ended and the Vinckens were reunited. Fritz immigrated to the United States in 1959 and later opened a bakery in Honolulu. Hubert died in 1963, and Elisabeth followed in 1966.

Fritz always hoped to meet the soldiers again, though he knew his chances of seeing the Germans were not good, given their staggering casualty rate at the end of the war. He thought publicity might help, starting with his 1973 *Reader's Digest* article, which President Ronald Reagan mentioned in a 1986 speech. In 1995, Fritz appeared on national television, telling his story on "Unsolved Mysteries" to host Robert Stack.

A nursing home chaplain in Frederick, Md., saw the episode and remembered a resident telling a similar story. He contacted the TV producers about Ralph Blank, a World War II veteran who had been a sergeant with the 8th Infantry Division in 1944.

In 1996, Fritz flew to Maryland to meet with Blank, who was 76 and in poor health. They recognized each other immediately and reminisced about their shared evening of peace during a hellish war.

The reunion was filmed and shown on "Unsolved Mysteries" later that year. At one point during the episode, Ralph turned to Fritz and said, "Your mother saved my life." For the former

German boy who was now an American citizen, that moment was the high point of his life.

"Now I can die in peace," he told the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. "My mother's courage won't be forgotten, and it shows what goodwill will do."

Neither man lived to see the 2002 TV premiere of "Silent Night," a retelling of their 1944 encounter. Ralph died in 1999 at age 79, and Fritz died in 2001 at 69. (The families of both men could not be reached for comment.)

In a 1997 interview, Fritz spoke of the lessons he learned from the Christmas miracle.

"The inner strength of a single woman, who, by her wits and intuition, prevented potential bloodshed, taught me the practical meaning of the words 'good will toward mankind,'" he said, adding, "I remember mother and those seven young soldiers, who met as enemies and parted as friends, right in the middle of the Battle of the Bulge."

New Christmas Tradition

Beginning December 1st read one chapter of the book of Luke in the Bible each evening.

There are 24 chapters.

On Christmas Eve you will have read an entire account of Jesus's Life and wake up Christmas morning knowing WHO and WHY we celebrate!!



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- Mouthwash
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Please call VIP at 218-681-5557 to arrange a time to drop off your donations.

The Accidental Invention of Play-Doh

The much-loved children's toy was a desperate spinoff of a putty used to clean soot off of wallpaper.

by David Kindy, *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 12, 2019

Play-Doh has sold more than 3 billion cans since its debut as a child's toy in 1956. Courtesy of The Strong, Rochester, New York

The handwriting was on the wallpaper for Kutol. Founded in 1912 in Cincinnati, the company's primary product—a soft, pliable compound used for wiping soot from wallpaper—was no longer in demand and the firm's future looked bleak. Fortunately, the sister-in-law of one of its principals had an idea: let kids play with it.

Kutol Products had become the largest wallpaper cleaner manufacturer in the world in the early 20th century. Fortunes began to change in the 1950s, though. With the transition from heating with dirtier coal to cleaner oil, gas and electricity, sooty buildup on wallpaper was no longer an issue in many households.

Joseph McVicker was trying to turn around the struggling company when his sister-in-law read an article about how

wallpaper cleaner could be used for modeling projects. Sister-in-law Kay Zufall, a nursery school teacher, tested the nontoxic material with children, who loved molding it into all kinds of shapes. She told McVicker of her discovery and even suggested a new name: Play-Doh.

"It's a tale of technological obsolescence with a happy ending," says Christopher Bensch, vice president of collections at the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York. "Fortunately, the sister-in-law realized it would make a better toy than a cleaning product. That turned the company's fortunes around."

Of course, today Play-Doh Modeling Compound is a playtime phenomenon. Now owned by Hasbro, this accidental invention has grown into a worldwide franchise that is as much a rite of passage for kids as it is an opportunity to be creative and have fun. According to *Fortune* magazine, Play-Doh has sold more than 3 billion cans since its debut as a child's toy in 1956—eclipsing its previous existence as a wallpaper cleaner by light years. That's more than 700 million pounds of the salty stuff.

"Urban legend has it that if you took all of the Play-Doh compound created since 1956 and put it through the Play-Doh Fun Factory playset, you could make a snake that would wrap around the world 300 times," writes Hasbro on the Play-Doh site. The dough was inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame at the Strong in 1998.

In addition to the soft, pliable compound we all know and love, the product line has grown to include Play-Doh Touch, Play-Doh Kitchen Creations, Play-Doh Shape & Learn, DohVinci, an arts-and-crafts toy system for making artistic creations, and many more. There are also co-branding extensions that feature My Little Pony, Disney Princesses, Star Wars and Disney Frozen characters and play sets. And let's not forget about the new compounds that have recently hit the market—Play-Doh Putty, Foam, Slime, Cloud and Krackle!

"Looking at key consumer insights over the past couple of years, we have seen a growing desire for new ways for children to express their creativity, and cultural trends, like the viral sensation Slime has become amongst today's kids and tweens, helped inspire the launch for this year," Adam Kleinman, Hasbro's vice president of global brand marketing, told the *HuffPost* in September 2019.

Originally available in white only in 1956, Play-Doh soon expanded to include the basic colors of red, blue and yellow. It is now sold in a panoply of hues, including Rose Red, Purple Paradise, Garden Green, and Blue Lagoon. The Putty line includes metallic and glittery tints.

The recipe has gone through minor modifications over time. At one point, the amount of salt was reduced so the product would not dry out so quickly. But, for the most part, the mixture has remained the same.

"I can make anything with Play-Doh."

Jeff Strasser
Westchester, Ohio

"This looks like an elephant, but it's really a dog who grew a long nose because he told so many lies. He will change into a funny clown when I make a

Play-Doh® princess and she kisses him on the nose. And I can make him into anything because he's Play-Doh.® Play-Doh® lets me make anything I think."

While your child is still a genius, keep him supplied with Play-Doh®. As he squeezes and molds any fantasy his mind dreams up you'll see why Play-Doh® is the most important plaything you can provide. Play-Doh® Modeling Compound.

Play Doh advertisement from 1975
Courtesy of The Strong, Rochester, New York

THE BACK PAGE

Marilyn Hagerty wrote this column more than 40 years ago. Each Christmas Eve the GF Herald shares the piece.

Excuse me, please. But it's Christmas Eve, and I must go home.

If only for five minutes and only in my thoughts, I have to go back on Christmas Eve. I haven't been there in person for many years. Still, I have never really been away.

Every Christmas, there's a string of events that takes me home. It starts with the children in programs at church. Then, it is the carols, the Christmas tree, the tinsel, the packages.

And in my mind, I snatch a few minutes to travel down Highway 14 once more. Around the curves and down that last long hill above the Missouri River.

I go in the back door.

I walk through the kitchen. The linoleum floor is cracked along the edges, but it's freshly scrubbed and Glo-coated for this night. As I put my things on the dining room table, I see the glow of lights from the tree in the front room.

I take my place there — close to the tree.

I see my brothers and sisters as children again. And in the big leather rocking chair I see my dad. It's the moment I've been waiting for.

It always seemed on Christmas Eve everyone ate too slowly. It took too long to do the dishes. It was forever until they finished milking the cow and came back to the house. Then the boys always had to make one last shopping trip downtown.

Eventually, we open our presents. Daddy sits there holding some handkerchiefs and neckties in his big, rough hands. He has a shaving brush — made in Japan. In his Danish accent he says, "We have too much. It is too much."

As I tear white tissue paper from a Shirley Temple doll and greedily scan the bottom of the tree looking for more presents, I think, "It is not too much for me."

Helen and Shirley fondle new sweaters and sniff their bubble bath. My brother Harley sits on the floor where the draft comes in under the front door. Walter sits beside him.



Most of the year, I consider Walter my personal enemy. I give him a pinch every time I have a chance. He slugs me back.

On Christmas Eve, with his hair combed and slicked down with oil, Walter looks almost like an angel. On Christmas Eve, nothing is too expensive for Walter's little sisters. He is generous with the money he has earned delivering the Capital Journal.

We put on our coats and buckle up our overshoes before we start out for church. As we walk down the back road and up the hill, this night seems different than all others.

Maybe it's because we girls are allowed to go without our long underwear on Christmas Eve. Maybe it's because we think we see the same star that guided the Wise Men.

It's cold and clear in Pierre, S.D., on Christmas Eve. Because we are early, we stand over the big heat register at the front of the church. Warm air blows up under our skirts. Later, some boys lucky to be chosen as shepherds have blankets draped around them. They come in the back door of the little Lutheran church and go out the little door up front beside the pulpit.

Five minutes is all I can take.

It's time to come back to reality. The children at my house are long grown and gone, but I go back in my mind and see them on Christmas Eve.

May your **Home** be warm,
your **Holidays** grand,
& may your **Heart** be
held gently in the Lord's hands.

