

The Bell

I am Bell, the 589th Engineer Battalion's memorial bell. My purpose is to ring out in remembrance of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our great Country.

Like each of this nation's veterans, I have a story to tell. My story is not one of direct military service, but proud service to the people of this nation just the same. I was born in the year of our Lord, 1889, in a small foundry known as the C. S. Bell Company in Hillsboro, Ohio. I had a number of siblings born that same year, ranging in size from small to very large bells – we left the foundry in horse-drawn wagons bound for locations all over the world. Depending on our size and shape, some of us went to work in churches; others went to farms, factories, taverns and schoolhouses. I was originally a schoolhouse bell – and proud of it. I rang-out the beginning of classes, tolled for the noon-hour, and announced the end of class each day. As if that wasn't important enough, I was always ready to ring-out an alarm when danger or emergencies presented themselves.

When I ring-out, you will notice I have a special tone. My unique tone is derived from my size, shape, weight, and the secret mix of metals used by the C. S. Bell Company to manufacture me. My quality tone and ability to “speak out” resulted in thousands of my sibling bells used by the US Navy during and since World War II. Our sizes vary from 6-inch baby bells designed for all types of landing craft, to 36-inch, 400 pound battleship watch bells. I am proud to report that during World War II alone, the US Navy purchased over 26,000 of my younger sibling bells for use aboard naval craft of all descriptions, for civilian defense, and for maritime applications.

I am proud to declare I am from a military family. Many of my brothers and sisters have given their lives in service to our country, from the naval battles of World War I to the horrific battles of World War II. Several of my siblings went down during the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941; I lost many more on the beaches of Normandy during D-Day 1945, as the enemy destroyed the landing craft on which they served. Other Bells were lost while serving in the Pacific, and still others paid the ultimate price in Southeast Asia during the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam War.

I, and others like me, have always been committed to the service of others. But, like many “old soldiers”, I am of the age I need to slow down...that's to say nothing of the fact that schools simply don't need bells like me any longer. Just because I am nearly 125-years old doesn't mean I have lost my ability and desire to serve. I have always kept myself shined up and free from rust – I think I still look good-as-

new. I can still ring-out with the best of them, actually better than most – and my tone remains rich, smooth, and original. Moreover, I can be loud when you want me to be loud.

But more important, I want to be part of something bigger than ringing at a school; bigger than ringing at a factory; even bigger than ringing from a church tower. I want to help celebrate the lives and memories of our Nation's war casualties. I am ready to spend the rest of my days giving back to those that have given up so much for us. I know that is what I have spent my life preparing for...honoring others in a way more meaningful than I would have been able to imagine during my early years hanging in a school bell tower.

When I ring-out, I will be speaking on your behalf to those who have gone before us. My message is one that cannot be communicated by the human voice; the symbolism of my lonely tone is far too meaningful. I intend my ringing to draw us closer in our praise and appreciation for those we are honoring, each of those who have earned a special place in our hearts and minds. My ring and rich tone are intended to draw-out the emotions of the moment, to bring additional meaning to this service. As I ring-out, you will feel the connection to those we honor, a connection that can only be made by the lonely ringing of a bell.

As we begin our Memorial Service, I want to thank each of you for your service to our country.
God Bless You.

Bell

The 589th Engineer Battalion – Vietnam memorial bell