



**REMARKS OF
JOHN E. POTTER, POSTMASTER GENERAL/CEO
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
DEDICATION OF
WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL POSTAGE STAMP
WASHINGTON, DC
MAY 29, 2004**

Thank you, Mike and Betty. And let me thank all our special guests for being here with us today. But more important, let me thank the Willies, the Joes and the Rosies – who answered our nation’s call and kept the light of freedom shining.

I am truly honored – and humbled – to stand in their presence today. They risked everything in defense of a simple belief – that liberty should triumph over tyranny. Their resolve in the defense of that belief compels us to gather today to honor them – the men and women who fought – and won – World War II.

They served – in Europe, in Africa, in the Pacific, and right here on the homefront.

They sacrificed. They were separated from home, from family, from everything they held familiar. And too many of their mothers displayed a gold star in the front window.

They served in places with names they had never heard. Pearl. Iwo. El Alamein. Normandy. Guadalcanal. Bastogne.

Across a world larger and more dangerous than they had ever imagined, they dreamed of home. And, remarkably, home came to them. Through V-mail. And through Bob Hope. Betty Grable. Glenn Miller. A U-S-O show in a place that wasn’t even on the map.

With the Andrews Sisters as their voice, they made it clear who could – and who could not – sit under the apple tree. And America listened. America could not afford to let them down. Because America knew these brave men and women – rightly called “the greatest generation” – would never let America down.

As their children, we love them. As their friends, we support them. As their countrymen, we salute them. And today, as a nation, we honor them. They, who have given so much, deserve no less.

As Postmaster General, I take pride in knowing that “mail call” was the sound of home – no matter where they served. I am gratified that a simple letter – sealed with a kiss – was a powerful reminder of what they were fighting for on those distant oceans and battlefields.

On July 25, 1944, a young Army sergeant, Bud Rahe, wrote what turned out to be his last letter.

Here’s what he wrote.

“I am a bit homesick. I have been at other times – when I thought of you; when I lost a friend; when I wondered when and how this war would end. But the whole world is homesick.

“I have never written like this before, even though I have been through the ‘valley of the shadows’ many times. But this night, Mother and Dad, you are very close to me, and I long to talk to you. I think of you and of home.

“America has asked much of our generation, but I am glad to give her all I have, because she has given me so much.

“Good night, dear Mother and Dad. God love you. Your loving son, Bud.”

Bud Rahe, you have made America proud. On behalf of a grateful nation, we thank you for the gift of liberty your generation gave so graciously to us, your children.

These memories, these people, are the reasons why I am so pleased that the United States Postal Service is dedicating the National World War II Memorial stamp here today.

This is not the first stamp we have issued that recognizes the people, places and events of that terrible conflict. I am sure it will not be the last – their legacy is too great to ever be forgotten; their gift to us is too precious to ever be ignored. But I believe that this stamp is the most significant of all those stamps.

It represents the joining of an entire nation, on a single day, as we acknowledge that we stand on the shoulders of giants. Like any stamp, it is small. But that is because there is nothing large enough to record all that they have accomplished.

They kept the light of freedom burning across seven continents and seven seas. They kept hope alive for so many millions who saw their light taken away.

This is the least we can do.

I am fortunate to be joined today by one who served – a great friend, a respected colleague, and a World War II veteran – John Walsh, the vice chairman of the Postal Service’s Board of Governors. Governor Walsh served in the 78th infantry division of the U.S. Army. This is the famed Lightning Division – the first infantry division to span the Rhine during World War II. Please welcome Governor John Walsh.

Private First Class Walsh, please join me for the unveiling.

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the United States Postal Service, and the American people, it is my pleasure and my privilege to officially dedicate the World War II Memorial stamp.

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