



Winter 2-25-2000

Poetry from the Battlefields: IWU Professor Emeritus Authors Poems Recounting World War I, World War II, Vietnam

Bob Aarons
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

Recommended Citation

Aarons, Bob, "Poetry from the Battlefields: IWU Professor Emeritus Authors Poems Recounting World War I, World War II, Vietnam" (2000). *News and Events*. 764.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/764>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

February 25, 2000

CONTACT: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181

Poetry from the Battlefields: IWU Professor Emeritus Authors Poems Recounting World War I, World War II, Vietnam

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.—Battlefields from World War I France to the jungles of Vietnam are recalled in a new volume of poetry written by an Illinois Wesleyan University professor emeritus.

R. Bedford Watkins—a corporal in a World War II artillery battalion in Europe—has drawn dramatic and poetic images of G.I. Joes in "Remembering Armageddon: Reflections on a Century of War."

The collection of more than 20 poems fills a 120-page volume illustrated with striking photos depicting the various faces of war.

"War brutalizes every life it touches," wrote Watkins, who was a faculty member in IWU's School of Music for 32 years, from 1956-88, "ennobling some, anointing others with the seal of sacrifice, sometimes destroying the ones who cannot suffer the savagery.

"Among those who survive," Watkins added, "some share their story with former comrades or understanding friends. Others never speak of it. A few live every day with the horror indelibly etched on the inner eye of memory."

Watkins' poems, according to publisher Little Leaf Press, Inc., reflect the sadness, the pathos, and the often sardonic humor of men in battle. "Remembering Armageddon" riddles the senses with the people, the places, the agony, and the hope of men entrenched in war.

"The poems," Watkins said, "express my rage at the maddening obscenity of war. It is my hope that they may resonate with others who were there."

The titles Watkins has selected for his poems reflect a range of wartime experiences and emotions: "Alone," "The Helmet," "After a fire fight . . .," "The Enemy," "Two Beneath a Tree," and "Grieve the fallen . . ."

Fifty-five years ago, Watkins was shipped off to Europe to serve with the 7th Army in World War II. He found himself confronted by the atrocities of Hitler's troops while he was a gunner in the 515th Field Artillery Battalion.

After the war, he followed his passion, earning a bachelor of music degree from Rhodes College, a master of music degree from the University of Michigan, and a doctorate from the University of Iowa.

He taught at Rhodes College, Winthrop University, and IWU, where he was chairman of the Keyboard Department.

While at IWU, he performed solo recitals on harpsichord and piano at colleges and universities in 25 eastern, southern, and Midwestern states. He has composed and published works for instrumental solo, chamber music, orchestra, band, vocal solo, and choral music.

Watkins' poetry has been published in IRIS, a journal of poetry and art, and Eternity Magazine, as well as by Pilot Rock Press.

Watkins and his wife, Eugenia, live in Eastpoint, Fla.

Editor's Note: Explore excerpts of "Remembering Armageddon: Reflections on a Century of War" and find out more about the author on line at <http://www.maxminn.com/littleleaf>. The book (ISBN1-893389-03-5, \$14.95, plus \$3 shipping) is available from Little Leaf Press, Inc., P.O. Box 187, Milaca, Minn. 56353; Toll Free 877-548-2431.

--30--