

Holly Evans



**Granddaughter of Arthur “Buck” Setchfield, Coxswain
Survivor of the USS Indianapolis CA-35
2016 Recipient of USS Indianapolis/Gwinn “Angel” Scholarship**

The following is an essay in response to the following question: How has being a child/grandchild/great-grandchild of a USS Indianapolis Survivor (or LAS) affected your life? Please include details of your specific Survivor’s experience that you can obtain through a person interview with either him or another relative (his wife, siblings, etc.).

The Legacy

My name is Holly Christine Evans, and my family and I have the blood of a hero coursing through our veins. Our hearts beat because my grandfather was able to survive the worst naval disaster in history while many others didn't. I walk freely on American soil and am able to speak my mind because of men who fought for my right to do so and the men of the USS Indianapolis, who completed their assigned mission just before tragedy hit.

Three hundred and seventeen men survived the torpedoing, sinking and delayed rescue of the USS Indianapolis. They endured icy nights, blistering hot days, burns, salt water ulcers, dehydration, delirium, shark attacks, and witnessing their brothers suffer and die for 5 nights and 4 days.

Arthur “Buck” Setchfield is my maternal grandfather. He survived the sinking of the USS Indianapolis, and the 5 night ordeal in the Pacific, and came home to an end of the war. He fathered three children with his wife, worked hard the rest of his life, and enjoyed his family, friends, traveling, crosswords, wood carving, fishing, bird watching, and drinking a little whiskey now and then. He ended up with five grandchildren and he was kind, relaxed, patient, loving, and generous with us. (Even when I stuck a quarter in his television and he had to take it apart.)

This man had such a story to tell, but he didn't speak of it very often. If someone asked a question, he would certainly answer it, and he did consent to an interview with the St. Louis Globe Democrat in 1985. Regarding the court martial of Captain McVay, he was quoted as saying, "It seems they were all trying to pass the buck for not looking for us. I don't think the captain should have gotten the deal he got. Ships got sunk all the time in the war." When asked if he felt anyone was to blame for the foul up that nearly cost him his life, he stated, "Yeah, but don't know who. I don't talk about that. Nobody holds any grudge at all." He believed that the men who survived were not necessarily physical strong, but that they were mentally strong. He said that the few times he was able to doze, he thought about his mama's house on Morganford and getting a cold drink of water from her icebox. He worried that he would never see his brothers, sister, or parents again.

Speaking about the eventual rescue, he said, "There were airplanes all over the place; that really pepped us up." He and 9 other men (of an original group of 60) were rescued by a destroyer. He said, "I didn't think I was weak, but I was. I stood up, but my knees wouldn't stay straight. They got hold of me and walked me down a ladder. They took us to the mess hall where they gave us broth and cigarettes. I sure liked the cigarettes." Grandpa had difficulty walking because of saltwater ulcers on his legs. He and the other men were taken to Guam by hospital ship. "We did nothing, absolutely nothing. We had beer and all we wanted to eat. We couldn't get over how lucky we were."

Grandpa was one of the older crewmembers on the ship at 27 years old. He was a coxswain, and was considered part of the construction department. He was responsible for the berthing (sleep space), messing (supplying meals), and damage control. Maintenance and repair of canvas were also included in his duties. He was sleeping when the torpedoes struck. He put on a life jacket and ran on deck. He said he didn't have to jump; it was like walking out onto the water from a ramp. The first morning only a few men drifted off, but that every morning thereafter, more and more men had just drifted off or disappeared. He said that his group saw plenty of dorsal fins circling them, but he never witnessed an attack.

Grandpa Buck had a massive heart attack in 1988 and was buried in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery on my 8th birthday. He showed us gentle strength and we are his legacy. We are nurses, electricians, elevator engineers, teachers, therapists, and we have made a difference in this world because he survived. His legacy will continue at least through the 21st Century with his two sons, two grandson, and three great grandsons that share his Setchfield surname, and also through his daughter, granddaughters, and great

grandchildren. We will continue to spread awareness of the USS Indianapolis' mission, the sinking and the survival of 317 men, as well as those men lost at sea.

Being the granddaughter of a military hero has given me a sense of pride and a greater knowledge than others of my generation. Many don't understand the sacrifice our military has made and continues to make today. The USS Indianapolis tragedy is one that should never be forgotten, and I use it as a conversation starter often. I'm honored to be able to share this story with the community, grateful for Chuck Gwinn's eagle eyes, and thankful for this scholarship opportunity.

Holly lives in Saint Peters, MO. She is pursuing her Bachelor of Science Degree at Missouri Baptist University, majoring in Healthcare Management.