

Testimony of Lou Tousignant

Clifford Tousignant was a highly decorated Korean War veteran. He received 3 purple hearts and faithfully served his country for over 22 years. He fought in many difficult battles over the years that he was in Korea. The only thing he loved more than his country was his family.

He was a father of 6 - Paul, Marshall, Susan, Calvin, Jane and myself. He was a grandfather to 15 children and great grandfather to 14 children. He could often be seen, as in the photos shown, with them crawling all over him. He loved every minute of it and loved being in photos with them as well.

He was a man that was damaged by war and early on it affected his family. But like most things in his life he overcame it and became one of the most generous men many have known. The night of his death I sat and spoke with my brother-in-law here today, Dan Herrick. He shared a story with me. When he and my sister were first married, like many Americans, times were tight. My dad would make up reasons for him to come over and fix things that were never even broken; like a car starter, breaks, etc... He would then give him some money for his efforts as a way to help them get by. He helped out many of us over the years; including his own parents when he joined the army as a teenager. As long as he had a few dollars in his pocket, he was willing to help others as best he could.

The salmonella poison got to him in late December 2008 and he suffered for weeks until he died on January 12, 2009. He had just entered a full care facility in Brainerd, Minnesota a month earlier. He had few goals left in life; except one. He wanted to make to 80 years old he was 78. One year and half too early.

Many of our family members have a difficult time going on with our daily lives. We can no longer pick up the phone and ask him what game he is watching. My nieces and nephews will not longer get to crawl over grandpa when they go home or to visit. I

was speaking with my brother Marshall last week and asked him how this was affecting himself and his wife, Ann. He started to cry and said he fortunate to have spent the last 3 and half years with him every day and there is a big hole in their lives not seeing him. My brother Paul, here with today, called him daily. He now has trouble sleeping at night. Not just because we lost our father, but with the senseless way it happened.

How can we live in the United States of America where a man that literally gave his blood, sweat, and tears for his country and was proud that he had. How can we live in a county that in the end let him down?

What happened to our father, the other 7 families that lost a loved ones, and the nearly 600 people that became ill is not new. Over the years, there have hundreds of similar outbreaks with other heartbreaking stories. Why has this been allowed to happen? For years the number FDA inspections has steadily declined. Two years ago the Peter Pan outbreak affected more than 600 people in 47 states. Two years later here we are again asking for change.

I submit to you ladies and gentleman how can we truly be leaders of the free world if we can't keep our own citizens safe from the food that we eat every day. Do not let the death of my father and the seven others like him be in vane.

Please do your job. Do not let us be back here next year or the year after experiencing the same thing. Companies like PCA who make our food should have rules that they live by. Companies should be inspected more than once every five years. Companies should not be allowed to shop around for lab results. Companies like King Nut should not be allowed to slap a label on a product they received from a factory that they no nothing about, never visited, nor never inspected. The FDA should also have the right to recall contaminated food themselves and not wait for the companies to do so.

My father was a good man. He fought for his country. He died because he ate peanut butter.