

A Farewell to Jacob Johler



Jacob Johler (left) and Lt. Carl Weeks
[\(read about their friendship\)](#)

Sir Edwin Landseer is one of the great artists of British History and there is an inn in Scotland where the chief claim to fame is a mural by Sir Edwin, which is painted on one of the walls. On the night that the mural was dedicated, a bottle of soda exploded upon the mural causing some of the paint to run. Efforts to undo the damage failed, in the end result was this huge black stain right in the middle of the mural. Most considered it destroyed and ruined.

After the last guest left the party, Sir Edwin locked the door. He then went to the closet, gathered his painting materials, and proceeded to go to work on the stain. Using all the colors of this pallet of paint, he made the stain into a rock, upon the rock he painted a mountain stag, and then he made other changes in the mural. The end result was a painting that was far more beautiful and breathtaking than the original. Sir Edwin took a stain that could have destroyed and ruined a magnificent mural and made it into something that added to the mural's magnificence.

Jacob Johler had a deep stain appear on the fabric of his life. He was a prisoner of war at Mukden, Manchuria. He suffered from malnutrition and malaria. He endured beatings from his Japanese guards. He faced unbelievable misery. He sustained unbelievable cruelty. When finally liberated from that most horrible of experiences, he had every right to be selfish. But it turned out that just the opposite occurred. He came out of the experience a more beautiful man, a more caring man. Taking a lesson from Sir Edwin Landseer, he took the stain of a horrible experience and made it into something that enriched and enhanced his life.

If Jake were here to talk to you today, he would want you to do the same. You all have black stains on your heart due to the death of this wonderful man. He would like

nothing more for you to make something of the stain, to not allow it to ruin or destroy your life. He's left a whole pallet of paint behind for you to use.

One of the colors of that pallet is courage. Jacob Johler received the Silver Star Presidential Citation and the purple heart, all for heroic action in WWII. He faced the difficulties of his illness, the difficulties of his prisoner of war status without uttering a word of complaint. Someone writing in his diary called him a "man of guts", and indeed he had a lot of "guts." One of his favorite expressions was "keep your chin up". He courageously kept his chin up in the faces of all kinds of adversity, in the case of all kinds of misery.

Another color on the pallet is generosity. The last time I saw Jake was a few days ago when I anointed him to ready him for his death. The time before that, I saw him in a parking lot on Hertel Avenue. I was leaving a local Nightspot when I encountered Georjean in dismay because she had locked the keys to her van inside the van. AAA had been called and she was awaiting their arrival. Right alongside her was Jake, in essence her bodyguard until the tow truck came. He stayed with her until the door was finally opened, and then he made it a point to tip the driver (against the objection of Georjean who wanted him to use her money). Jake was always there for people and always generous toward others. He was always giving to worthwhile causes no matter how big a dent it made in his pocketbook.

Besides his financial generosity, he was also generous with his talents. He painted the statue of the Blessed Mother at Camp Tekawitha. He painted the outdoor altar and statue here at St. Christophers. He was always the first to volunteer whenever help was needed. He did things for others that no one ever knew about.

Another color on the pallet of paint that Jake left behind is unselfishness. The needs of others always preceded his own needs. This was brought out dramatically on May 6, 1942. Corregidor was about to fall to the Japanese and Jake was wounded. Instead of attending to his own wounds, he helped care for and evacuate others whose wounds were more serious than his. He would make many personal sacrifices; he would perform many unselfish deeds with the direct intention of assuring the happiness and well being of others.

And one can't forget the unconditional love which was yet another trademark of Jake's life. He loved his children Dorothy, Dolores, Jacob and Marie. Not to mention the dear late wife Marie E. He adored his grandchildren Bobby, Ed, and Chuck. He never placed any conditions on his love. His love was total, full, and definite.

Jake's death has left a dark stain on all your hearts, but there's a pallet of paint which you can use to make that stain something that will enhance and enrich your life. Courage, generosity, unselfishness and love are just a few of the colors of paint which lie on that pallet.

Pay Jake Johler a wonderful tribute. Build for him a tremendous memorial. Go out from this church and live more beautiful, more caring, more generous, and more outrageous lives. It would mean that you've used the pallet of paint he's left behind. It would mean that you've made something of the stain which rests upon your heart. It would mean besides living on in the resurrected life, Jake would also be living on in you.

So, we thank you Lord for a beautiful man and a great inspiration. We know that a day will come when we will see him again and once more enjoy his love. *Written by Father Richard Zajac for Jacob Johler's funeral mass*