

The State of South Carolina,
The Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr.
Historical Association and

THE TOWN OF
Batesburg-Leesville

"Blinding of Isaac Woodard, Jr."
Historical Marker Dedication Ceremony

SGT. ISAAC WOODARD, JR.
U.S. ARMY, WWII



"His eyes were blinded for us to see."



Saturday, February 9, 2019

11:00 AM

Southern Occasions

137 N. Oak Street • Batesburg-Leesville, South Carolina 29006

SGT. ISAAC WOODARD, JR. U.S. ARMY, WWII



In 1946, U.S. Army Sergeant Isaac Woodard challenged a Greyhound bus driver while traveling from Georgia to North Carolina after being discharged from service in World War II. Police officers who met him at the next stop brutally attacked him and left him permanently blinded. The attack on Woodard and similar stories of mistreatment of other black servicemen returning from the war led to new national pressures on racial segregation and discrimination and to the integration of the Armed Services in 1948.

Isaac Woodard was born in Fairfield, South Carolina, but grew up in Goldsboro, North Carolina. He enlisted in the U.S. Army on October 14, 1942, at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina, and served in the Pacific as part of a labor battalion. Woodard received an Honorable Discharge at Camp Gordon, Georgia, in early February, 1946. Along with a contingent of other discharged soldiers, black and white, Woodard boarded a Greyhound Bus on February 12th to travel back home to North Carolina. A conflict was triggered when the bus driver belittled the Army veteran for asking to take a bathroom break. At the next stop, Woodard was met by Chief of Police Linwood Shull of Batesburg, South Carolina, who along with his deputies, beat Woodard savagely with their nightsticks. He

was later charged with drunk and disorderly conduct before finally being taken to a veteran's hospital in Columbia, South Carolina.

The NAACP took up Woodard's case in the spring of 1946, pressing military officials to provide assistance to the gravely injured veteran while also calling for legal action against Chief Shull. By September of that year, NAACP officials met with President Harry Truman who expressed outrage over this assault on a veteran. Chief Shull was tried in federal courts but released after the jury deliberated only 30 minutes. As news of this attack circulated in the national media, President Harry Truman created the first President's Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR) which published *To Secure These Rights* in 1947. This groundbreaking report led to the desegregation of the military in 1948 and new federal attention to racial inequality as a matter of both domestic justice and out of concern for Cold War politics.

For many Americans, Isaac Woodard became a sympathetic figure representing the larger conflicts of Jim Crow emerging after World War II. The public response to the vicious attack upon Woodard, as well as that of President Harry Truman, signaled a major shift in public support for civil rights during the 1940s.

Isaac Woodard died in the Bronx, New York, on September 23, 1992.



On June 7, 2018, Robert M. Cook II, Municipal Court Judge for the Town of Batesburg-Leesville, issued an order re-opening the case against Sgt. Woodard and dismissed all charges against him. The order was granted upon receiving the following request from Town Attorney Christian Spradley and Chief of Police Wallace Oswald, with support from Mayor Lancer Shull:

The Town of Batesburg-Leesville, by and through its Chief Prosecuting Officer and its Attorney, moves this court under SCRPC 60(b)(6) to REOPEN the above case and DISMISS the charges against the Defendant.

The basis for the Motion is as follows:

1. On February 13, 1946, the above named Defendant [Isaac Woodard, Jr.] was found guilty of creating a Disturbance on Bus and Public Drunk.
2. While in the Custody of law enforcement, Defendant was gravely injured which led to his total blindness.
3. The injury to the Defendant led to Federal Charges being brought against law enforcement. Federal Judge Julius Waites Warring felt that the exoneration of law enforcement was a serious miscarriage of justice and his views on civil rights issues were changed forever.
4. The Defendant's injuries and the verdicts from the federal prosecution directly led President Harry S. Truman to desegregate the military.
5. Judge Waring went on to hear several other pivotal civil rights cases and his rulings can, at least in part, be attributed to the case at bar and his outrage at the hypocrisy of the government.
6. The Town of Batesburg-Leesville, being the only entity legally related to the Town of Batesburg, feels that it is necessary and proper to clear the Defendant's name of any wrongdoing due to the injuries he received and the fact that this case was arguably the spark that started the shift that led to civil rights reform throughout the Country.
7. Isaac Woodard, Jr. passed away on September 23, 1992, without any direct decedents.
8. Therefore, the Town moves under Rule 60(b)(6) for this matter to be reopened.

The Town also moves to DISMISS the charges against Sgt. Woodard.

“Blinding of Isaac Woodard, Jr.” Historical Marker Dedication Ceremony



WELCOME Mayor Lancer Shull
Town of Batesburg-Leesville

INVOCATION Reverend Charles Simpkins
Mayor Pro-Tem, Town Council of Batesburg-Leesville

PRESENTATION OF COLORS..... Orange-Wilkinson High School AFJROTC Color Guard

REMARKS Judge Richard M. Gergel
US District Judge, Charleston

Brigadier General Milford H. Beagle
Commanding General, Fort Jackson

Mr. Donald Day
National President of Disabled Veterans

Dr. Andrew Myers
University of South Carolina Upstate

Mr. Don North
The Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. Historical Association

**UNVEILING OF THE ISAAC WOODARD, JR.
HISTORICAL MARKER**..... Dr. Andy Duncan, Associate Professor of English
Frostburg State University

James Gallman
South Carolina NAACP

PRESENTATION OF PROCLAMATIONS..... Mr. Nelson Govan
Representative of SC Governor Henry McMaster

Mr. J.R. Fennell
Museum Director, County of Lexington, SC

Councilwoman Bertha Goins
Vice-Chairman, District 4, Fairfield County, SC

CLOSING REMARKS..... Mayor Lancer Shull
Town of Batesburg-Leesville

CLOSING PRAYER Oliver Smith
Chaplin, SC Veterans of Foreign Wars



MASTER OF CEREMONIES..... Dr. Bobby Donaldson
*Director, Center for Civil Rights History & Research,
University of South Carolina*

SONG: “ISAAC WOODARD’S EYES” Ms. Angela Easterling
Recording artist, Charleston, SC



HENRY McMASTER
GOVERNOR

February 9, 2019

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Batesburg for the commemoration and unveiling of the historical marker honoring Sergeant Isaac Woodard.

On his return home as a veteran of World War II, Sergeant Woodard was not the recipient of a hero's welcome. Instead, he was brutally beaten and permanently blinded by the actions of a callous, intolerant small-town police chief. Today we do not commemorate his tragic experience but, instead, his legacy of courage that became a battle cry for civil rights, gained the attention of President Harry S. Truman, and contributed to the creation of the President's Committee on Civil Rights and his Executive Order desegregating the United States Armed Forces. We do not celebrate his blindness, but that he opened the eyes of America to the terrible injustice and inequality of the world's greatest democracy. Most of all, we recognize Sergeant Isaac Woodard as a hero.

Peggy and I wish you all the best for a memorable ceremony.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry McMaster".

Henry McMaster

HM/kt



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20515

JAMES E. CLYBURN
SIXTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
SOUTH CAROLINA

February 9, 2019

Dear Friends:

Please allow me to add my applause to those in attendance for the significant role you play in honoring the life of an American hero. I deeply regret that congressional business prevents me from attending today's unveiling of the Sergeant Isaac Woodard South Carolina Historical Marker. Sergeant Woodard's service to our nation during World War II and his subsequent role in the desegregation of our armed forces is certainly deserving of this long overdue honor.

This commemoration will provide a place to remember the injustices that befell Sergeant Woodward and serve as a reminder that we all must speak out against injustice and discrimination. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once wrote, "injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere."

I want to commend the leadership of Major Don North and the City Council members of Batesville-Leesville that made this recognition possible. Sergeant Woodard is an American hero and I am encouraged by any effort that seeks to honor his tremendous legacy.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James E. Clyburn".

James E. Clyburn
U.S. House of Representatives



National Headquarters
3725 Alexandria Pike
Cold Spring, KY 41076
Phone (859) 441-7300
Fax (859) 441-1416
Toll Free (877) 426-2838
www.dav.org

February 9, 2019

Dear members of the Sgt. Isaac Woodard Historical Association,

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) is pleased to recognize and support your efforts to dedicate the historical marker in honor of World War II Army veteran Sgt. Isaac Woodard.

Sgt. Woodard served his country faithfully during the war but when he returned home in 1946, he suffered brutality at the hands of some of his fellow citizens. What should have been a joyous homecoming turned into a violent attack that left the honorable soldier blind for the rest of his life.

It is unconscionable that fellow Americans would commit such a senseless act against a service member, especially one who just returned from fighting an enemy, which sought to inflict horrific violence against their fellow man.

We commend you for your hard work in ensuring Sgt. Woodard's honorable legacy will live on and appreciate you including us as part of the project and celebration. The incident that left him blind led to President Harry Truman to order the desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces in 1946. It is a fitting tribute and we thank you for your initiative and thoughtfulness.

On behalf of DAV and all veterans, we thank you for your work and helping us in achieving our mission of fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served.

Sincerely,

DENNIS R. NIXON
National Commander

DRN:jmh



Office of Diversity & Inclusion

February 9, 2019

Today is a proud moment for the entire community of not only Batesburg-Leesville, but for South Carolina. A full and honest understanding of our combined histories is key to reconciliation. The first meaningful step on the road to healing in the case of Sgt. Issac Woodard occurred in June of last year. At that point the town, the police chief, the town attorney, and the mayor moved to reopen the case against Sgt. Woodard, when an all white jury found him guilty of drunk and disorderly conduct. Last year, the case was reopened and overturned.

The placement of this marker in Sgt. Woodard's honor is a vital next step on this road to what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called the "Beloved Community." It is only by looking back can we begin to move forward. We must admit to our wrongs, let our hearts speak to each other and say an honest apology. The next steps come in ongoing dialogue with each other where we listen deeply to learn and begin to understand each other beyond the differences society has placed on us.

Sincerely,

Jennifer H. Gunter, PhD
Director, South Carolina Collaborative for Race and Reconciliation
University of South Carolina

University of South Carolina • Columbia, South Carolina 29208 • 803-777-1108



TOWN HALL-1830

TOWN OF WINNSBORO

207 North Congress Street • P.O. Box 209 • Winnsboro, S.C. 29180
Telephone: (803) 635-4041 • Fax No: (803) 635-3697

As Mayor of Town of Winnsboro, on the behalf of the Town Council and the citizens of Winnsboro I am honored to acknowledge the life of Sergeant Isaac Woodard, Jr.

Sergeant Woodard was born in Winnsboro and lived with his Father, Mother, seven sisters and two brothers on Fairfield and Truman Streets. Their home was close to Bethesda African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Mr. Woodard's family lived in the home until he was fifteen; his family then moved to North Carolina.

Sergeant Woodard served in the Army during WWII from 1942 to 1946. Upon his honorable discharge on the bus trip home, Sergeant Woodard was brutally attacked and maimed in Batesburg, S.C. by the sheriff's department. This attack and the lack of medical attention after the attack left Sergeant Woodard blind. This attack drew national attention and because of the attack and other similar attacks; President Truman opened a federal investigation. The sheriff was acquitted at the trial.

President Truman then issued Executive Orders 9980 and 9981 in 1948, the latter banning racial discrimination in the U.S. Armed Forces and the former to integrate the federal government.

As Mayor and Council, we certainly hope our town, state and country have moved forward to create equality for all citizens of our great country.

It is with great honor that we are proud to see this historical marker be placed in Batesburg to honor and acknowledge the life and service of Sergeant Isaac Woodard.

Hereby this day, February 5th, 2019, the Mayor and Town Council of Winnsboro, South Carolina support the placement and unveiling of this Historical Marker for Sergeant Isaac Woodward.

Mayor Roger Gaddy, MD



Thank you to our sponsors

**SOUTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR HENRY McMASTER
THE TOWN OF BATESBURG-LEESVILLE
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
THE SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY
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LEWIS SAMPSON
ROBERT & JAN ADAMS
JAMES GALLMAN, SOUTH CAROLINA NAACP
THE SGT. ISAAC WOODARD, JR. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
MITCHELL PRINTING & GRAPHICS, INC., BATESBURG-LEESVILLE, SC**

A SPECIAL THANKS TO TED LUCKADOO, SETH DUNCAN, AND ALL OF THE TOWN OF BATESBURG-LEESVILLE STAFF WHO MADE THIS EVENT POSSIBLE.

ALSO A SPECIAL THANKS TO MAYOR LANCER SHULL, CHRIS SPRADLEY AND ROBERT COOK FOR THEIR TIME, WORK AND EFFORT IN GETTING THE CHARGES AGAINST ISAAC WOODARD DISMISSED.

