

Ohio's Veterans:

Our True American Heroes



Written by
The 8th Grade Class
Graham Elementary and Middle School
2018

Graham Elementary and Middle School

Ohio Veteran Project

The 8th graders at GEMS (Graham Elementary and Middle School) began an expedition called *Forces of Change* in the third trimester of the 2017-2018 school year. We started learning about how war has changed the world by engaging in a case study about WWII, with a focus on Pearl Harbor. We studied the various perspectives during this time period and debated about our opinions of those perspectives. We wanted to get a better understanding of how people viewed war and how governments made the decision to enter into war. Then we moved on to our next case study focusing on how a personal story could change the world. We discussed the traditional hero archetype and analyzed historical figures for the traits of the American Hero.

This brought us to our final product, The Ohio Veteran Project. We wanted to interview those people who we thought exemplified the archetype of the American hero. In partnership with The Ohio Department of Veterans Services, we participated in face-to-face interviews with current and past honorees of the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame. We wanted to get a glimpse into the lives of Ohio Veterans. We wanted to hear their stories about their lives in the military and what they did after the military. If you did not know, The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame recognizes the efforts of Ohio's distinguished men and women who have worn the uniform of our nation's armed forces and then continued to contribute to their communities, state and nation through exceptional acts of volunteerism, advocacy, professional distinction, public service and philanthropy.

We are so honored to be able to share these stories with you. We want to thank every Veteran and member of The Ohio Department of Veterans Services that helped us with our project. We hope you enjoy!

Special thanks to: Sandra Puskarcik-McKee (ODVS)
Daniel Eakins (ODVS)



Holly Koester

“No goals, no glory!”

Have you ever heard of Holly Koester? She has an amazing motto: “No goals, no glory!” Holly Koester was born on December 10, 1959 in Buffalo, New York. She has a twin, a younger sister, and two younger brothers. She loved to play sports with her friends, and she enjoyed camping with her family and her Girl Scout group. She and her twin sister wanted to join the military, but their dad steered them towards going to college. She and her sister went to college and while there, she applied to the R.O.T.C. Program. She graduated from college in 1981 at the age of 21. On the exact same day as her college graduation, she was accepted into the R.O.T.C. Program.

Holly Koester didn't just join the military during war time, she joined during 'PeaceTime', but they still had to be prepared to fight so they still trained. Holly trained in Germany, and after she was done training, she joined the Airborne Division, where she learned how to jump and repel out of planes. But it all went down the drain when she was training for desert storm and the truck she was in tipped over because the road wasn't paved right. They told Holly she wouldn't walk ever again and they retired her in 1991.

At first, Holly refused to believe that her injuries were permanent. She thought that she would be able to fight through her injuries.



When she was finally able to accept the fact that the bad news was true, she was introduced to adaptive sports, which allowed her to participate in races in her wheelchair. She also went back to school and got her teaching certificate. She teaches grades K-8 as a substitute teacher in two districts. Holly also has a service dog that she brings to schools with her. Her dog, Glory, is very appreciated by children that don't like reading, who then read to Glory. Holly hoped to show people that they can still participate in the community even if they get hurt. “They just have to find a different way to do it,” Holly said. “Anybody can be a leader!”

“Probably one of the biggest lessons I learned, and I still need to do it, is planning a strategy. You know, if you wanna do something, like you guys

wanna write this book, you need to set a goal, and once you set a goal, then you need to figure out how you're going to go about doing it," Holly said. "You know, being prepared for any situation because a lot of things are gonna change, and you need to be prepared to change your plan." Holly is an inspiration to many people. She was told that she would never walk again, and she kept going. She serves her community in multiple ways and tries to help people realize that even if you get hurt, they can still be a part of their community, too.

- *Written by Totionna and Alison*

Brook N. Harless

“You can always help people.”

Brook N. Harless’ life story is one of bravery and courage. Brook is a strong veteran that was born in Canton, Ohio in 1976. She joined the military when she was 20 years old and served in the Army branch. Although she did not join during wartime, Brook still worked hard to help people during and after her service in the army.

Brook Harless was born on 1976 in Canton, Ohio. She faced homelessness and poverty when she was young, along with her brother who eventually passed away. She was with her mother at this time, who often took drugs. One day, she was left under a bridge and was found by the police. After she had been found, she was taken in and raised by other members of her family with a home. Later in life she wanted to join the military, but her family did not think she would make it past training. At the time, she was known for rolling her eyes a lot. However, she did not let her family’s words discourage her. In fact, they did the opposite. She was motivated to prove them wrong and serve in the army.

Although she did prove her family wrong, her time in the military did not go without a hitch. While training, one of the soldiers did not throw a grenade far enough away from everyone. Unfortunately, Brook was close enough to be caught in a blast that made her deaf in her left ear. Still, she did not give up. Amazingly, Brook graduated at the top of her class in advanced training. She was

stationed at a fort in Germany with hopes to help other people. The time she spent in the army was generally positive, as she got the chance to travel to many different places and work with her husband.

Leaving the military was hard for her. She was married to a soldier, so she was still surrounded by the people she recently worked with. She also missed wearing the uniform, but because



she had a total of 39 surgeries and several injuries, she was unable to work. Despite this, Brook still worked hard to help other people. She does volunteer work to help other veterans get back on their feet and earned a college degree in English and history.

Brook Harless is not only an American hero but she also a stronger person for what she has been through. Despite everything, Brook puts helping other people above everything else. If you are thinking about joining the army, Brook’s advice is “If you want to, do it.”

-Written by Kaylyn and Ivory

John Evans

“Any airplane I would work on, I will fly it.”

John Evans was born on June 13, 1936 in Cleveland, Ohio. he wasn't the brightest child, but that's where it all started. When he was in high school at the age of 17 years old, someone suggested he should join the military. At the time there weren't that many jobs so, it was worth a shot. So he applied and started with basic training in his county which lasted for 2 years.



He wasn't just a hero in the air force, he was a hero outside of war too. John evans never had an easy life. When the vietnam war was over they called fellow military members baby killers. He had a different idea. He wouldn't treat others how they treated him.

So to this day, at 82 years old, he volunteers at the Cleveland VA Medical Center to show that even though some people treat you badly you should never treat others that way. That's a lesson we can all learn from John Evans.

- *Written by Allie and Ziggy*

John Evans joined the military when he was 19 years old. His role was fixing air planes, which he has a passion for. A thing he would look forward to was going to new places. However he got shipped to Germany and he went through basic training. Over time they let him fix a plane that had been down for 6 months. Slowly he started to get it working again. With only basic training he did astonishing things that others could not within 3 months. “Any airplane I would work on, I will fly it.” His bravery is noticed, as is a hero. With his partner in crime which is his wife and his motivation he leaves his legacy with not just the with U.S military but within this grandchildren.

Howard Friend

A man with a mission!

People say a lot of things about war, Howard Friend had something very distinct to say, “War is hell”. Howard Friend, otherwise known as Howdy, was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on December 27, 1925. He grew up in Pittsburgh but then moved to Youngstown, Ohio. As a child he was very active playing sports like football and basketball. He had two brothers and one sister and was the second oldest.

Howdy was drafted into the military at the age of 18 on June 14 but nevertheless Howdy was excited to serve his country. He said he was, “devoted to my country” and “wanted to do my part.” He had a lot to say about his time in the military. He was even a part of the landing on Normandy. He talked about his training and his time in war and described the rules as very strict but it taught discipline and he did everything his Sergeant told him to do. The hours were from 6 AM to 5 PM but he also said there were no routines in the mornings. And in Howdy’s free time he said that he mainly never went off base and played sports with his fellow soldiers. He was stationed in Florida’s Camp Blanding and served his time in Belgium as a machine gunner due to his athletic body size. Howdy had two distinct stories of war. He said that one of his most interesting experiences was when he was

going to France in a box train. He also had a very frightening experience. He was in his machine gun group and driving down a dirt road in a military Jeep. The current gunner (not Howdy) was suffering from battle fatigue which is when a soldier is too mentally drained from war and has to take a break. So the commanding officer told Howdy to take the machine gun and be look- out on the top of the Jeep. A little while down the road their Jeep was encountered by an explosion which put pieces of shrapnel in Howdy’s knee and right above it. His squad had to leave him in a ditch but after going in and out of consciousness for a while he was finally transported to a military hospital. Howdy was there for 18 months.

Once Howdy was finally discharged, he used his G.I Bill to go to college for 4 years in which he says the civilian population, “treated him royally” and his friends and family also supported his time in the service. He also was a football coach and a principal. He says the military is good for people and it teaches discipline and responsibility.



We enjoyed our interview with Howard Friend and liked learning about his time in Belgium and his injury. We also liked learning about how he used his G.I Bill to start a career and make a nice life. We really think Howdy is a hero because of his dedication to protecting our country and his love for educating and helping people to pass on his legacy and his time when risking his life for our country. We would like to personally thank him for teaching us about the experience of war and how joining the military can help with getting into college and teaching

one responsibility and discipline.
Thanks Howard.

Written by Gavin and Jermain

Debborah Wallace

“I gave my vote to create democracy.”

Did you know that back in the 1900s females in the military got treated horribly? Debborah Wallace was born and raised in Lorain, Ohio near Cleveland. As a child, she always wanted to help people but her mom didn't allow her to do certain things because Debborah was the only child out of four who lived. Her mom didn't want her to join the Army but she was eventually convinced and was proud. While Debborah was gone away from her family, they stayed strong by keeping connections with family bonds and always remembering that people care and using God's prayers.



Debborah's rank in the Army was US Army Staff Sergeant during the post Vietnam War. She went into the war on July 1, 1974.

Something that motivated her to join the Army was that she had no job after college. She had fifty hours of work a week. There was no technology so the military kept her busy but if she did have free time she left and visited other places. Her most interesting experience

was when she won a Fort Knox award for the best Army Sergeant. After all she learned discipline and leadership.

After Debborah came back to the world from the Army she still wanted to help people. She opened her own business called Wallace Insurance Service. Debborah helps people get their kids in college. She helps older people get on Medicare or Medicaid. She also became a township Trustee in BeaverCreek. Debborah wanted to work after she left the Army because she said she would always want to be able to help people.

Debborah Wallace was very helpful including the fact that she succeeded and helped people and made sure kids that couldn't afford it, get into college. As a Trustee she got more privileges in life. Debborah is an American hero because she is strong physically and mentally. She also took big risks and was an amazing leader. We think Debborah has a positive impact and people will always love her.

- *Written by Ariel and Zakaya*

Richard DeChant Jr.

Richard DeChant Jr. was born on December 22, 1956. He grew up in Cleveland, Ohio near Fairview Park. He was 1 of 5 boys and was a fan of little league baseball because he liked to play baseball as a kid. This caused him to want to join a baseball team. But as Richard grew up he decided to join the military and that has been his passion throughout his life.

Richard DeChant was 32 years old when he joined the military. He was motivated by his family and ancestors who had a long history of military service. His military career spanned 20 years from May 1988 to May 2008. Richard joined the military during wartime and he generally felt okay about it but it was scary for him at times. He joined the military as a part of the U.S. Coast Guard. When he retired he had earned the rank O5 Commander. He was stationed in Iraq during wartime, and Cleveland in peacetime. He also did port security for the U.S. Richard and his son both served in the US Coast Guard. His son was born in 1974 and was raised in Cleveland, Ohio. Robert's son is now a police officer for a boat crew in the Lakes. Robert would rather do nothing else than being in the Coast Guard.

He was always on edge and he didn't know what he was walking into during most missions. One of his goals during a mission was to bring back everyone and to get the job done. This is what made missions scary at times when facing enemies because you wanted to bring back everyone and it sometimes didn't go that way.

Richard's life after the military included him starting to work at a college in Ohio for veterans. The college can help veterans go through college with benefits that didn't have a chance to go to college before joining the military. So, he basically never quit working for the military. The lesson he learned from his time in the military was preparing for a mission in a good amount of time before the mission so you didn't have any chances of being ambushed.



The missions were rewarding to him because he saved lives and he got multiple missions with a mixture of different things. Iraq was scary for Richard since he was walking into a mission blind basically.

We think Richard DeChant is a hero because he saved lives and he was sent out on different missions without knowing what danger he could have been in. He was able to stop people from getting hurt by enemies or stopping them from doing bad things. That's what makes military veteran Richard DeChant a hero to us.

- *Written by Tristan , Dane
, and Delaney*

Blanche Aviles Casey

“It’s good to be a leader but also a follower.”

Blanche Aviles Casey was born in 1945 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. She grew up in the Bronx, New York. She was very independent, so independent that she would teach herself at the library. She wanted to grow up and travel the world. Her uncle was a Navy veteran of World War II, and she was interested in the stories he would tell her. She recalls she always had a love for airplanes and tried to pursue her dream of being in the Air Force.

Blanche finally made it into the military on July, 7, 1971. She joined during the Vietnam War. During the time she was entering there was discrimination against all women joining because there was only 2% women in the Air Force at the time. Blanche Casey worked her way up to being a full Colonel. Her father believed she was lucky since there were only a few spaces left in Vietnam. During her military service she believed she had many happy and interesting moments. One of these events involved a superior of hers. The general of hers who barely spoke English brought her flowers, for her birthday. Another one of her good memories in the military is meeting her future husband. She said her husband helped keep her going through the tough times.

BOOM Was all she heard while walking into a building for a meeting. At the time she was running late. She explained that this was one of her most frightening moments while being deployed in the Air Force. She had said that the people she was meeting were already in the building and

some were injured by the flying glass. If she had been on time and if she wasn't in the parking lot, she probably would have gotten injured, and her life wouldn't have been the same.

Her life would be very different if she had not been late that day.



After Blanche left the military she decided she would not stop helping her community. She went on to volunteer at many events. She even volunteered for presidential easter egg roll. Among these multitude of events she won the award for governor's distinguished hispanic ohioan award. She won this award for military service of distinction. Not only did she win that award but in the year of 2018 she was inducted into the veterans hall of fame. She is still married today to the husband she met in the military. She now is the mother of 6 children.

In conclusion we think Blanche Casey is an American hero because she always served her community before, during and after the war, because her community always served her. In addition to that she grew up very independent. She really depended on herself to learn new things that she wasn't learning in school, like new languages. She constantly passed on her ideals, "It's good to

be a leader but also a follower” and “You can’t live your life scared.”

- *Written by Joshua and Sabrina*

Frona Liston

“When you learn discipline, you learn respect.”

Frona Liston is a World War II veteran. She was born June 27, 1925 during the Great Depression in Stark County, Ohio. She is almost 93 years old. When she was a kid she was very bored and had one very close friend that she's still close to today. She wanted to join the military but the problem with that was her mom wanted her to work at the hospital. She told her mom that she would try out working at the doctor's office for a few weeks and if she liked it, then she

would stay, but that never happened. So she signed up to join the military and she didn't get called in until 3 weeks after World War II ended.



She joined the military at the age of 22 and she

had to have her mother's consent which she did. What motivated her to join the Army was the bombing of Pearl Harbor. After she joined, the government didn't know what to do with all the people that signed up for the Army because they came in three weeks after World War II ended. They had boot camp that they were sent to. Also the rules were so strict that you had to be up before the crack of dawn and if one person didn't get their job done then the whole camp got punished. Most of the time jobs came in four-hour shifts. She was also stationed in Long Beach at the Naval Hospital. The military food wasn't that great but they were

so hungry that they ate it anyway. In the military the rules were very strict. One rule was that you had to be back at curfew. For free time Frona went to Times Square in New York and did a lot of fun stuff. The most disgusting event Frona saw was an autopsy being done when she joined boot camp in March of 1947. During boot camp she had four very close friends to talk and hang out with but after the war she lost contact with two of them.

After all the nursing and taking care of others, she moved back to North Canton, Ohio for a while. Then she became a member of WAVES National, now known as Military Women Across the Nation. She is also a member of the Northeast Ohio Women Veterans Unit 21. She spends her time helping people, especially with literacy of adults.

Frona Liston grew up during the Great Depression and she served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Frona is a hero because she grew up with tough circumstances but overcame them, especially during the Great Depression and she has spent a lot of time taking care of others. We learned from Frona that, “When you learn discipline, you learn respect.” Frona Liston is a Navy Veteran and a true hero.

- *Written by Charles and Hunter*

William E. DeFries

“There is no greater love for our country, for our heritage, or for our families, than to be willing to lay down our lives defending them.”

William E. DeFries, age 57, had dreamed of being a part of the military ever since he was a child. He had grown up hearing stories from his father who had fought in WWII and knew he wanted to serve his country. William grew up in the Southwest side of Chicago and was born in the 1960s. William had a pretty normal childhood. He grew up with his parents and his 5 brothers and sisters. His father, William DeFries, who he was named after, was a machinist and his mother was a stay-at-home mom who was also a secretary. He never did too well in school so instead he turned to sports and found a passion for baseball. William had his future planned out for himself as he either wanted to be a baseball player or a in the Marine Corps, but little did he know the path to his future wouldn't be that easy.

William joined the military at age 19. Before heading off to bootcamp, his mother was diagnosed with cancer. William still had to leave for the military although he didn't want to. He wanted to be with his mom but he had to go to bootcamp and it was too late to back out. When William left, his mom had just started her treatment for cancer. She wanted him back with her so the military sent him to a reserves camp in

North Carolina so he could train and still be near his mother. This only lasted for 90 days and only five weeks after he had to leave for North Carolina his mother passed away. He told us that boot camp was one of the hardest experiences in his life. He learned to shoot and he threw live grenades. The rules were so strict that you couldn't stick one toe out of line. Though bootcamp was tough there were still upsides to the military such as the people he met. William still stays in contact with his military friends to this day because of the bond they formed while fighting together. He also didn't have to give up sports when he joined the military. The Marine Corp has their own football and baseball teams which he played on for a couple years. William moved from different locations many times. He went to advanced training in Fort McClellan Military Police school. Then for two winters he was stationed in Iwakuni, Japan where he was a military police officer. A military police officer is very similar to a civilian police officer seeing as they have the same job to keep everything in order and make sure everyone follows the rules to keep them safe. During his time in the military William said he had one of the most frightening and interesting experiences

of his lifetime. After undergoing a live fire exercise, everyone was returning on a secret transport. A member of personnel had gotten off the transport into the pitch black and William then followed to find and return him to safety. While searching in the dark, he found him in the bottom of a sewer unconscious and with a broken hand. He then safely got him out and back to the transport saving his life.

Looking back on his time in the military William thinks that the military can open so many doors for you and can give you a purpose. He said that many of his friends regret not going into the military because they wished that they had served our country in some way.



After William was discharged from the military he met his wife a week later. He learned

lessons like discipline and having your day planned out and to attack your day. For example, get up and make your bed, plan for your day and accomplish your day. William had opened up his own businesses such as his own restaurant called “Beef O Brady’s” and he also opened up his own car wash. William has fundraisers raising money for

various causes. He is also a mentor for veterans. William is a proud father, husband, and business owner.

William Defries resembles an American hero in many ways; he is a risk taker by joining the military in the first place which is something few people have the guts to do, he is creating a new life for himself after the military instead of just blindly letting others choose his path for him, he has saved people without expecting awards despite the consequences, he went after the man who had gotten lost in the transport stop, he was determined to get him back and was the only one who went after him even though there was little chance of finding him in the first place, and lastly, he inspires others to follow his lead by joining the military and making a difference in our world. Lastly a lesson we have learned from William is that being brave doesn't just mean fighting and that bravery is doing the unexpected and taking chances.

- Written by Alexie and Cleo

David W. Taylor

Being in charge

Have you ever wanted to be in charge? Well, David Taylor was the leader of a platoon at the age of 23. Normally a platoon has 45 men but David only had 25 men. Things were a lot harder then, because 25 men had to do the work of 45 men. But, David did not believe in the words “I give up.” David was in the Army for 49 years but he never gave up. He kept moving forward.



As a child David never really thought about being in the military. He was born in Southern New Jersey. He lived in a home with his four brothers, his mom and dad. Three out of four of David’s brothers went to war, and he was the last one. When David was sixteen, he decided that joining the military was not going to be so bad and wanted to join his brothers, although his mom was not a huge fan of her boys being off in the military. When David was a sophomore in high school he had heart surgery. It was disappointing and David says that

he was grateful for the doctor that gave him his surgery because he was fine afterwards.

David was drafted in the military and he said, “I did not want to go through all that work. I just wanted to get right to training.” When David got drafted he had to go to officer school for 6 months, airborne school and ranger school too. David had to go through basic training in the winter. He said, “It was very cold.” When David was in the the military he received two purple hearts. “It’s the prettiest award but it’s the one no one wants because it means you get hurt.” A purple heart is a military decoration for those wounded or killed in action, established in 1782 and reestablished in 1932. David said that you don’t win a purple heart, you receive a purple heart.

David retired from the military when he was 71 years old and is happily married to his wife.

David Taylor is an American hero. He took big risks because he was in the military and got hurt two times but he kept going. We are proud to have been able to meet with Mr. Taylor and learn about his incredible story.

- Written by Zy’Ahanna & Zion

Donald E. Rospert

“There were two lives of the military; there was the social part and then there was the violent part of war.”

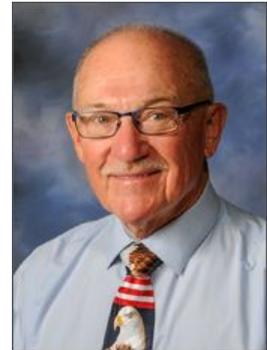
Did you know that very few soldiers have created wounded soldiers funds to help others? Donald E. Rospert created the Wounded Soldiers Fund to help families and injured soldiers. Donald was born in Bellevue, Ohio on February 17, 1942. He has five siblings and his family was very close but split apart. His life as a child was easy but the most difficult time he faced was as a teenager trying to figure out what he wanted to do in his life. Donald Rospert was almost 25 years old when he enlisted into the military during the time of the Vietnam War.

Donald was a United States Marine. The reason why he enlisted into the military was because he felt that he was needed by his fellow soldiers. This is what motivated him to stay positive. Donald claims that there were two lives of the military; there was the social part and then there was the violent part of war. Donald claimed that the social part was like normal life. You talked and joked around with new friends. There was occasional work like guard duty or cleanup or just leading up trucks or planes. When it comes to the war part of the military, he was a bit shocked at what military grade weapons can do. Donald's life was on the front lines where most of the combat happened. The infantry in the front were

normally dubbed as grunts. “Grunts” are the guys that go in first to capture objectives or search and destroy.

Donald didn't really want to be on the front lines, he just wanted to help around. In the end Donald was a survivor of the war but at a cost. He lost two close friends to a mortar strike that exploded near his position. Even to this day he is still haunted by the memory. He feels that he could have saved them.

Our veteran, Donald E. Rospert, is an American hero because he fought for our freedom and continues to fight for others through his work after the military. He is a founding member of the Wounded Soldiers



Fund which helps families impacted by war. He is also an American hero because he gives back to his community. We learned a lot from Mr. Rospert and respect him so much.

- Written by Brittney and Yahana

Chip D. Tansill

“Always prepare yourself for the next step in life.”

A man once said, “Always prepare yourself for the next step in life.” This man is Chip Tansill, an accomplished veteran. Tansill was born on May 1, 1965, in Cumberland, Maryland. He later moved to Ridgeley, West Virginia. When he was growing up, he lived with his mother, his father, and his older brother. At age 17, Tansill made the decision to join the Army.

Tansill joined the Army to follow in his grandfather’s footsteps. Eventually, he became a Colonel. He participated in Desert Storm. For Tansill, life in the Army wasn’t as hard as most would imagine. “They’re very strict all of the time about everything... but I like that structure, my parents were very strict, so when I went into the Army it made an easy transition to me,” Tansill said. The schedule in the Army was a busy 3 in the morning to 10 at night, and training was constant. In his free time, he wrote letters back home and listened to music.

As a man in the Army, Tansill didn’t always have good experiences. One of his most frightening ones was being lost in the desert. He had brought his entire unit with him. “We struggled to find our way back to headquarters,” he described. “It was scary because I was in charge of one hundred men and I got them lost.”

Tansill retired in 2015 due to him only being able to be a Colonel for 30 years. For 6 months afterwards, he worked with veterans

in Franklin County. Then, he became the Director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services. Tansill describes his role as Director as fantastic, as he’s connecting veterans across the state and helping them transition.

Tansill also learned three important lessons from his time in the Army: Learn as much as you can about your job, trust the people around you, and always prepare yourself for the next step in life.



Chip Tansill is a true hero. As a child, he was told that he wouldn’t amount to anything. However, in the Army, he overcame the challenges of training and being in the desert. Tansill’s rank as Colonel makes him a leader, as well as his role as director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services. His bravery and his strength through his time in the military make him a hero that should be remembered throughout time.

- *Written by Paige and Micha’el*

Angela Beltz

“Everyone should serve their country; everyone should give back.”

In Pierre, South Dakota, an ornery child by the name Angela Beltz was born. As a child, she was “rotten” as she puts it. “I would borrow my older sister’s clothes without asking” she says. But as a result of her discipline-lacking childhood, when she got older, she realized how much self discipline she was lacking and that she needed to find some way of paying for college. So she began to look into serving her country through military service.

Eventually, she informed her family of her decision. Her father was proud of her, and encouraged her. Her mother was somewhat proud, yet worried. “She cried,” says Beltz. Whereas, her sister was happy, because it meant she could keep her clothes to herself for once. Her family tradition was to join the military which was part of the reason why she joined, which also made the rest of her family very proud.

As she entered the military, she learned to adapt to military life, which included strict orders and shouting commanders and having to eat food that didn’t always taste so good. She was 17 years old at the time, and she recalls that she was frightened, yet excited. Although this wasn’t during wartime, she did have some daunting tasks. She and some

other soldiers had to deliver water to dehydrated soldiers while dodging bullets. Usually, there would be dangerous chemical gases in the atmosphere, which meant they had to wear bulky, uncomfortable protective full body suits most of the time. But that was all part of being the hero she was.

They didn’t really have that many rules except the basics; like staying on the base during drill time, and not behaving in a way that gives the military a bad name, of course. She describes the food as “horrible”, and on her free time, she and her fellow soldiers would play card games, eat at restaurants, or listen to music. Sometimes she would have to work in the food truck.

Her favorite experience, she recalls, was when they would help provide for the victims of hurricane

Katrina. When she was discharged, the main things she remembers are getting used to working with usual civilians and shifting back into her normal lifestyle. At the time of



the interview, Angela worked for the Department of Defense.

- *Written by Jordan and Tiranne*

Angela believes that, “everyone should serve their country; everyone should give back.” So, the lesson for us is to always try to find a way to serve your country whether it’s picking up trash around your community, or something else.

In conclusion, Angela Beltz is good samaritan who fought for her country and thinks everybody should do the same because our country is the most influential, and she believes we should all fight for that. Overall, she doesn't want to pressure us young adolescents just to join the armed forces because we feel like it is our duty, but to actually recognize what we're fighting for. So If the opportunity shows itself, go for it.

Robert Doremus

“Lead when you’re in front and follow when you’re behind.”

Did you know that if you’re in the military, there is still the danger of going to jail? Robert Doremus was in jail for 7 years during the Vietnam War. Robert was born on April 28, 1932 in Montclair, New Jersey. He had a typical American childhood, but growing up he always dreamed of flying. He wanted to be a pilot and fly airplanes.



Robert Doremus came of age during the Vietnam War and was facing the prospect of being drafted

into the military. In order to control his future and achieve his goal of being an airplane pilot, on February 22, 1955, at the age of 22, Robert decided to go ahead and enlist before he could be drafted. He joined the Navy because he had friends in that branch, and was trained as a Navy Flight Officer. The most exciting thing about the Navy was traveling. He said, “you join the Navy to see the world.”

Robert described the differences in life on the ship compared to when he was shore based. On the ship they were expected to work round the clock. Robert also explained how the jobs on the ship were divided. Different people in different colored shirts had various responsibilities. The shirts helped keep everything organized because everyone knew what job to do. While the technology in his airplane was advanced for the time, it was nothing like what we have now. He said, “I have a better GPS and navigation system in my phone, than I had in my airplane.” Robert enjoyed flying the airplanes. He said, “a lot of it was fun and some of it was sheer terror.”

Robert was shot down over Vietnam early in the war. He spent 7 years in a Vietnam Prisoner of War camp, which he affectionately referred to as the “Hanoi Hilton.” Typically the food was rice and soup. Because the water wasn’t boiled before they drank it, the prisoners often got sick. Every time somebody caught a disease, everyone else would catch it too because they all were so close together. In the camp they didn’t have any heat or air conditioning. When it was hot, they would be sweaty and when it was cold they would be freezing. While he was in the camp, he sent letters

back and forth with his family but many didn't come. Eventually, when he got home, he got 28 letters that hadn't made it to the camp. He came home from prison when the war ended. It was part of the agreement after the war that they would free all the prisoners.

After the coming home he retired from the military, and started volunteering at schools and with the Veteran's Hall of Fame Foundation and did some work for the Mayor of Columbus. Robert took many lessons away from his time in the military. He says, "Lead when you're in front and follow when you're behind." Through his time in the Navy he learned discipline and how to get to know people. Of his time in the service Robert says, "It's like any job. It's a lot of excitement, but it's also trudge." Robert still talks to many of the friends he made in the military over Skype and sometimes they have in person reunions.

Robert Doremus is a true American hero. He is brave and fought fearlessly for our country.

- *Written by Chrishawn and Joanna*

Richard H. Finan

“Everyone should spend at least one year in the military, it’s good discipline.”

Richard H. Finan never thought he’d be in the military when he was younger. He was born on August 16, 1934. He lived with his father, mother, and younger sister and had a good childhood. He’d say his father was very supportive of him and his mother was a naysayer. He never really thought of the military that much when he was younger and always wanted to be a lawyer, but little did he know he had a bigger job to take care of and things didn't really go as planned.



Richard H. Finan joined the military in 1954. His motivation of joining the military was to get the G.I. Bill so he could go to college, since he could not afford it on his own.

Richard H. Finan was determined to become a lawyer since he was in the 6th grade and nothing was going to stop him. He was 15 when he graduated and he went to a Latin School where he took 6th and 7th grade in the same year. And he did not quit there. He joined the Military during the Cold War Era and he was Private First Class. He was apart of

the United States Army and left as a Corporal. When he finished his training, he spent most of his military time in Fort Sam Houston, Texas where he was chosen to do top security clearances. He worked from 8am to 3:30pm and sometimes later. With his spare time he liked to play baseball with his fellow buddies in the military. His main support through this time was his fiancée.

Richard H. Finan left the military in 1956 and is currently 83 years old. He has four children and thirteen grandchildren. He used his G.I. Bill to become a lawyer and a politician. He ended up becoming an Ohio Senator and the Mayor of Evendale, Ohio. Richard H. Finan is a true vision of a leader who pushed himself to become a successful person and made his mark in the world.

In conclusion, Richard H. Finan is a natural born hero. He is an amazing leader that pushed himself to make his life better. He is a man that made his life the way *he* wanted it to be and he could not be happier. Richard H. Finan is an inspiration to us and inspires us to push to make a great future for ourselves.

- Written by Paris and Omar

Cloyd S. McNaull

“One of the biggest lessons that I learned and still use today is being a patriotic citizen.”

Cloyd S. McNaull was born November 12, 1931. He grew up on a small farm in Ashland County, Ohio. Growing up on a farm made him realize that he had lots of responsibilities. McNaull got his license at the age of 13 and he joined the United States Air Force at the age of 19.

Cloyd S. McNaull decided to join the Air Force because his 2 brother in-laws and cousin served in the military, so he felt like it was his duty to join and serve his country. “When my family found out that I'm joining the force they weren't surprised because they knew it was going to happen someday, but they were in tears.” One of the biggest things that Cloyd noticed at camp base is that there was no racial tension, which meant everyone at camp didn't have any problems with each other. “We all got along well.” Part of the reason everyone got along was because they all had the same expectations and they followed them the way they were supposed to.

They all had jobs to do and Cloyd's job was to fix anything that could fly. The first 3-6 months of basic training was not that hard for Cloyd. It was like having another job. He would start working from sunrise to sunset. During his free time from training, Cloyd would write home to his wife, brother in-laws, and the rest of his family.

After McNaull left the military he did feel a little strange at first coming back to an

everyday life citizen. “We had a little house on the farm. I had a job and then I got very active in the community by being a leader for a 4H group. It was good for the boys and it was good for me.” He feels proud and glad that he served in the Air Force. Whenever the National Anthem plays McNaull gets goosebumps.



Cloyd S. McNaull is a hero because he exhibits the American hero trait of taking big risks. We say this because he took big risks by going to Korea from 1951 to 1955 and trying to let the people of Korea know how important freedom was. The most important lesson that we learned from McNaull was living as a patriotic person is the best way to live. Being patriotic means lots of things like being active in your community and voting. Cloyd S. McNaull is a true hero.

- Written by Sadatu and Alyshia

Todd Alan Briggs

“Don’t go backwards; go forward.”

Todd Alan Briggs didn’t have an average childhood. He was always on the move. He was born in 1960 and grew up in Salina, Kansas, but that’s not where he stayed. His dad was in the military, so they moved all around and never really got comfortable in one place. Then they moved to Labrador, Canada, close to where his dad was stationed, and where he spent most of his teenage years, and afterward moved to Ohio where he hoped to find work. He spent most of his adolescence in Alabama, where segregation existed. Although he was never affected by this, it didn’t make life any easier.

Mr. Briggs was 24 when he enlisted in the military. His original interest was photography, after his dad who was a photojournalist and amateur photographer. They always spent time together in “dark rooms” they made, developing film. In addition, his degree is in applied photography, the degree necessary to run a photography studio. However, he couldn’t find a good paying photography job. He attempted to run his own studio right here in Columbus, but ultimately decided to enlist in the Air Force as a still photographer. He was accepted and guaranteed a job, but what he didn’t know was that wasn’t an option, since he wore glasses. Since

qualifications for vision was tighter in photography, he was offered a job as a pilot, which he accepted. He was an Air Force pilot, or E6, for 10 years. E6s are often flight chiefs, whose job was to fly the jets into battles that needed them. But these jets had bad range, so they often had to get very close to the battle. And during the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein had weapons called “scud missiles”. There was no way to avoid them, and they were deadly if they hit your jet. Though he was never hit by one, he recalls it as his most frightening



military experience. But that wasn’t his only job. He was the only one in his squadron qualified to fix the jets they flew. He could only go home once they were all fixed, and

those times could vary.

When he was discharged in 1994, he wanted to use his degree for something else. To teach. Though he never was a teacher, he often subbed at schools. He buys spare parts for the Navy if they can’t, and still is an inspiration today, by

sharing his story and inspiring future generations.

In conclusion, Todd Alan Briggs fits the archetype of an American hero with his personal stories and extraordinary bravery. He is toughened up by life experiences because he was on the front lines in battles that determined who won and lost and came face-to-face with deadly weapons. He will also inspire future generations with his story and his legendary bravery. Todd Alan Briggs is an example of an American hero and someone who should be looked up to.

- *Written by TJ and Joshua*

David Dilly

“I did what I had to do.”

David Dilly was born in 1945. He was born in Dry Creek, West Virginia, but grew up in Pennsylvania with his four brothers, mom and dad. He was motivated to go to the military because his four brothers were in the Korean War, although his mom did not want him to go.

David Dilly was a weapons mechanic during the Vietnam War. Life for him was relatively normal, they rarely had to fight.

When David was admitted to training, it was easy for him. “You wake up, wash up, eat, and train.” He

traveled all over the place for his duty and went to a lot of camps. One time, he had to hide in a plane with 50 pounds of bombs which scared him a lot. But he hid anyway and survived. After that he resumed his war mechanic work even though people disagreed with him for it, we respect him.



When he left the Military, he got a job as a mechanic, although that did not last. David also volunteered to advocate for mineworkers health. He was a recipient of the Buckeye State Sheriff's Department of Labor Mine Safety & Health Administration awards. After the Military, David learned discipline and how to read people by their actions. He also improved on his bravery because he wasn't as confident going into the Military as he was coming out.

David Dilly had to face leaving his family at 19 to serve his country. He stayed in the Military from 1965 to 1968. He travelled around the world to places where people don't speak English. David was very brave throughout his life in the Military. David Dilly is a hero in our eyes because he served our country and not a lot of people do that and make it to the Veterans Hall of Fame.

- *Written by Terrell and Julian*

Peter Wilkinson

“Every problem is just an opportunity in disguise.”

Did you know that 30% of war veterans from Vietnam suffer from PTSD, (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?) PTSD is when a veteran’s mind puts him or her in false war-like situations. Peter Wilkinson is a veteran who helps other veterans with PTSD. He is a smart, and kind man, who feels as if he was very lucky. He was not always like this, however. When he was a young boy, he was a, “lousy student,” because he thought he was dumb, and so he never tried in school. It wasn't until he experienced success that he realized that he was not as dumb as he had originally thought. His father and his brothers had been in the military, and so, from the time he was twelve, he was inspired to be a pilot, and did everything he could to be able to go to college and learn to fly a plane. Later on, his father decided to have him put in a private school, and he had to pay for half of it. After that he went to college and learned to fly a plane.



Peter recalls the first time he flew solo. It was very snowy that day, and he couldn't find the runway. He had no idea

what to do. Then he saw the school chapel, got his bearings, and landed the plane, only to find his instructor in a panic. After that, he signed up for the Air Force, which he remembers as being, “unified,” partially because at that time it was completely integrated. He comments that this, “...was great!” In the Air Force, he flew a C-130 Hercules and would fly over enemy territory searching for trucks that would be carrying supplies. He would often be shot at. When asked if he was afraid, Peter gave a very simple answer, “Being scared wasn't going to do a damn thing for me. I was either going to make it, or I wasn't.”

After he came back from the war, he was not welcomed at all. The American citizens that were not fighting felt that the war should just to be over, and that we had no part in it. He had worked at a base for a while, and they told him not to wear his uniform outside of the base because of this. His family were the only people who were happy that he had come back. After the war, he went back to his old hobbies, such as playing and coaching sports, and he had some interesting careers, such as working at a space program(s), and of course, helping veterans who suffer from PTSD.

Peter Wilkinson was not just pilot during the war, he was lucky for he did not get PTSD and because he was so lucky, he feels that he should help other veterans who are suffering from this disorder. Peter Wilkinson is a true American hero because he fought in Vietnam and continued to help his fellow soldiers after the war was over. What we learned from Mr. Wilkinson is that whenever something does not go right, make an alternate solution because, "Every problem is just an opportunity in disguise."

- *Written by Alex and Jeremiah*

Ronald J. Pusateri

“You’re going to get a great education not just in textbook but in life. You’ve made a good decision.”

Ronald J. Pusateri was born April 28, 1946 in Youngstown, Ohio. He has one sibling, a sister, and they got all of the attention from their family. He had a very fun childhood! He spent his childhood meeting people, playing in the park, learning to ice skate and hanging out with his sister. He also spent a lot of his time in his father's grocery store. From the age of 5 to 21, he worked in the store. His father and his 5 uncles were all in the military and this inspired him, in high school, to enlist.

He enlisted in the **ROTC**, the ROTC, **Reserve Officer Training Corps**, is a federal program sponsored by the United States Armed Forces in high schools. Sustained that for four years and got commissioned in quartermaster. Eventually, he became a Medical Legistary Officer. He served in Vietnam and Desert Storm. As a Medical Legistary Officer, Ronald had to manage the military logistics for the hospitals. He also helped with things like MASH. MASH is a tent that has medical equipment in it that allows doctors to take care of the wounded in the field. Ronald was a part of the system that provided the supplies. He had to work

very hard to keep the hospital running smoothly.

When Ronald arrived in his base for the first time it was after a twenty-one hour flight. His base was in Vietnam and it had just come under attack. He had to run fast and low to the briefing room. They could hear incoming bombs and the fighting going on outside. “It’s terrifying going into your base for the first time and you already hear bombs. It’s the not knowing what might happen that's the scariest part.”

Serving in the military is already terrifying but, it’s especially terrifying when you’re about to get married. Ronald was in Germany when he was planning to get married but, he got his orders changed. He was worried that he wasn’t going to get married. Luckily, they got married anyway. Sadly, 30 days after getting married he was shipped back off.

When Ronald got shipped off to war shortly after he got married, he missed his wife



substantially. After six months of war, he got to see his wife. Getting to see his wife for the first time in so long was astonishing. She was put through a damaging situation. He was put on a plane, not knowing where he was going to go, what he was going to do, or what was going to happen next, while she was left at home by herself, wondering what would happen to her husband.

After 28 years of service Ronald got off active duty in 1996. He wanted to participate in a decision. The leadership at the time would say “do this”, “do that”. That wasn’t acceptable to him because of how he was raised. He got off active duty and went into the Reserves. He continued his work in health care at Riverside Hospital. Retired from all his work in 2011, that's when his interest and support for Veterans began. He was asked to be on the Honor Flight Committee. The Honor Flight Network is a non-profit organization created solely to honor America’s veterans for all their sacrifices. They transport our heroes to Washington, D.C. to visit and reflect at their memorials. They focus on our senior veterans. 40,000 Veterans are taken and Ohio sponsors over 7 flights a year! From there Ronald got into a rotary organization called “Westerville Sunrise Rotary”. This organization gets involved with an event called Field of Heroes. Field of Heroes is a unique opportunity for community members to honor their personal heroes. It can be a family member, a friend, a veteran, a member of the

armed services, a favorite teacher, a police officer, a firefighter or any other person who has made an impact on your life. The field gets 3,000 American flags set up so you can go and appreciate your hero. Currently, Ronald is on the board for Veterans Affairs for Ohio, Indiana and Michigan.

While Ronald was in the military he learned, “When you come out of service you'll be *much* more appreciative.” Ronald emphasised that it made him volunteer and really help veterans and appreciate them. He thanks a vet every time he sees one. Ronald’s advice to young men and women going into the military, “You’re going to get a great education not just in textbooks but in life. You’ve made a good decision.” Ronald is supportive of his fellow veterans, aware on how important volunteering is, and very determined to raise awareness! He is a true hero!

- *Written by Jasmine and CJ*

Warren Earl Motts

“Whenever I decided to do something, I did it because I feel you’re only on the Earth for a short period of time.”

Warren Earl Motts was born on November 10, 1940 in Bryce, Ohio. Growing up as a child he was always collecting items as he found interest in discovering new things. He built his interest in adventure from his father who was always on an adventure and always exploring something new and different and as he got older, his interest grew. During the summertime while in high school, Warren had a friend who was a military photographer who would allow Warren to help him out. He soon became interested in photography. He started to help with the photography for his school yearbook. Then after high school, at the age of 17, he joined the Ohio National Guard.

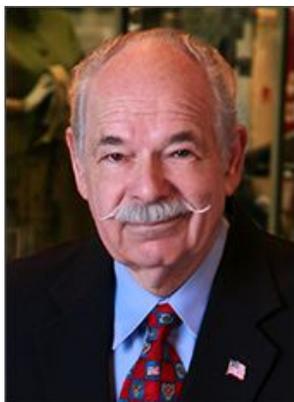
Warren joined the Army because his parents didn't have the money for college and he felt that the Army was only other option for him. Warren was first sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky for his basic training then to Fort Mott, New Jersey to begin his training as a combat photographer. Warren said that training was hard but brought along discipline. While at Fort Mott he was also enrolled in a photography school. Warren was ranked Staff Sergeant in the 37th Infantry Division, he had also decided to become a commercial photographer and

soon had become the President of the International Photographers Association and was teaching other photographers.

Warren stated that one of the most vivid memories he has had while in the military, taking military pictures, was when they sent him to photograph a riot going on in Dayton, Ohio. In the car there's him, his driver, and a Dayton police officer that was there for his protection. He was told that there were two radios in the car and when something happens you go and photograph it. The radio goes off and he said all he heard was, “there's a bunch of people tearing up a store, knocking out the windows and their firing shots.” He said they rushed there and the car stopped, the driver and police officer got out and ran. Warren was standing there holding a camera. He hid behind the building, shots were flying everywhere, and he said thought to himself, “Well I don't think I'm doing this again.”

Warren stopped working for the Army because he was constantly being activated to go and photograph things and so he wasn't always able to fulfill his job as President of the International Photographers Association. And back then there was no rule stating that your

boss could not fire you because the reason you were leaving was for the Army. And his boss gave the decision of either working for the Army or for him, so Warren decided to retire from the military, he was of the age of 49. That same year of 1989 Warren started his museum, The Motts Military Museum. A while after, Warren was selected to be a photographer along the Freedom Train for two years. The Freedom Train is a train that carries a bunch of valuable, historical monuments, artifacts, pictures and original documents written by great historical figures. This gave his museum great credibility as he had lots of photos of the things he had seen. While in the military Warren had married, he



expressed that it was his wife that supported every decision he made and stood by his side.

Warren is an exact example of what a great leader is. A man that stands to his word, a man of courage and pride. Warren had stated that being in the Army made him proud of where he comes from as people step out into that battlefield and are never seen again. His museum was for him, a calling. He wanted for all the soldiers' stories to be heard and for it to make a difference, for

our country's history to be recognized, and to encourage the younger generations. I believe one of Warren's greatest quotes was, "Whenever I decided to do something, I did it because I feel you're only on the Earth for a short period of time." Warren stood by and supported that quote throughout his life, and reasons like that make him a leader and true American hero.

- *Written by Marie and Alayna*

