

# Fourth Grade

## Honorable Mention Winner

### James Colton Parker

Inspired by Veterans

I remember knowing that he had served in the Navy, my grandfather. He inspired me in these three ways.

The first way was he got to fly a plane.

The second reason was he was on the highest fighting team, the Armed Forces.

The third reason is he was really athletic.

These are the three reasons I'm inspired by veterans.

Thank you for reading my story.

## Third Place Winner

### Ann Marie Joy Harrison

Why Veterans are Inspiring to Me

I am inspired by veterans in lots of different ways and by lots of different veterans. One veteran that I am inspired by is my grandfather. He was in the army national guard. He was supposed to be a helicopter machine gunner. A helicopter machine gunner is someone who is in a plane and they have a rope tied to them. They shoot a gun out of a plane. He was supposed to be a helicopter machine gunner during Vietnam but they made a mistake on his eye test and he became a county clerk which is still a very important job. I interviewed my grandfather and this is what he said, "I was considered airborne. I rode in a helicopter with a rifle. My feet were hanging out the edge of the helicopter. At the end of the flight we were awarded airborne badges."

Another reason I'm inspired by veterans is, for this fall break me and my family went to New Orleans. We visited the Chalmette Battlefield where the Battle of New Orleans happened. I learned that the Chalmette battle was very important. After the British burned the white house, they went to New Orleans because it was at the bank of the Mississippi River. The people in New Orleans tried to get all the people they could to fight. Even though they did this they only had about three thousand and the British had about seven thousand. The people in New Orleans knew that the British would fight, so they tried to get prepared. One night the people that lived in New Orleans snuck up on the British. The people that lived in New Orleans also created a long wall for the battle. Finally, the battle came and almost all the British got captured, injured, or killed. The people that lived in New Orleans won! If they didn't win that battle all of America would be different.

Another thing that me and my family did in New Orleans was, we went to the Chalmette National Cemetery. That's where all the veterans that died graves are. Lots of Veterans are buried there. There are about **15,000** veterans buried there. From 1812 to Vietnam. There is a road that you can drive through the middle of all the graves. The road is about a mile. If you look right and left you can see so many veterans' graves. It's inspiring because all those veterans died to that we can be free today. Our everyday lives would be so different if those veterans did not stand up for what's right. That's why veterans are inspiring to me.

## **Second Place Winner**

### **Daniel Tims Dowdle**

#### Veterans Inspire Me

Veterans inspire me because of their bravery. They are selfless servants to our country. Through the years veterans served our nation to protect our country and our freedom. I am proud to say that my GrandPa, Richard Tims Dowdle, is an Alabama veteran and lives in Pickens County.

My birthday is September 11, 2014. In third grade, I learned the meaning of that date. I am inspired by veterans who served in this war. From the Alabama Veterans Memorial website I learned that almost 150 veterans from 44 Alabama counties paid the ultimate price and sacrifice for our freedom during that war.

I am inspired to serve by their bravery. I am too young to serve my country as a soldier, but I can serve my community. I am inspired to serve local veterans and show them I am thankful for them and that I care about their commitment and service to our country.

## **First Place Winner**

### **Abigail Grace Rice**

#### I Am Inspired by Veterans

I am inspired by veterans. One reason I am inspired by veterans is they keep our country safe. The veterans take time away from family, like my grandfather did, to go train for battle. Another reason is all the veterans train for different areas of deployment like the Navy, Air Force, Army, and Marines. All the forces have different weapons, like the Navy has bombs and guns. The Air Force has planes and fighter pilots. Army consists of tanks, guns and bombs. Marines have missiles and guns. It takes courage, bravery, and specialized skills to master these different weapons.

I'm also inspired by the veterans that unite and come together from different places to learn together, train together, fight together and save the country. I'm inspired by the veterans who volunteered their lives for our country's safety. I'm inspired by the people who volunteer and sacrifice their lives for me to live freely, go to church, go to school and see my family every day.

I'm also inspired by the veterans who stand up against enemies they don't even know from different places. It takes courage to fight against different methods of fighting and against enemies speaking different languages and using different weapons.

I'm inspired by the people who show up to be in the military and make the military what it is today, and sacrificing time away from their own families.

The service, unity, and commitment of our veterans inspires me everyday. One way they influence me is that I need to have these qualities in the sports I play. I am thankful to veterans who inspire my level of teamwork in the sports and hobbies I participate in.

## **FIFTH GRADE**

### **Honorable Mention Winner**

#### **Smith Elizabeth Lewis**

World War II is very personal to my family. I am going to share why it is personal by telling the story of my great grandfather, Malotha Bowen Price. Or M.B Price for short. I want to share how brave and patriotic he was.

World War II started in September 1939, when Adolf Hitler of Germany went into Poland and took over the country. This made Great Britain and France declare war on Germany. The United States sent weapons and materials for their allies. The U.S.A. did not enter the war until December 8, 1941. This was the day after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. People in the U.S.A. wanted to join the war to help the Allies win. Men were drafted between the ages of 18-45.

My family is not from Alabama. They are from North Carolina but my great grandfather was a patriot just like all Americans. He signed up for the Army. He was just 18 years old when he joined. He left North Carolina and went to New York City by train. He set sail on the Queen Elizabeth ship to Glasgow, Scotland. My great grandfather told his sons he was seasick the whole ride there.

M.B was an ammunition handler for machine guns. He received a Bronze Star for his services. A Bronze Star recognizes acts of bravery during an armed battle. He got it because he helped his fox hole buddy out of the fox hole during a battle in France. His buddy was named Edward Delane. He was so important to my great grandfather he named his first child Edward Delane Price.

He also won a Victory Medal. He was in Company M/200<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the United States army. An interesting fact is my great grandfather was to fight in the Battle of the Bulge. The day he was supposed to fight the Germans raised the white flag. That means they surrendered.

Also we should support our allies for their freedom. Even though it has been over 80 years ago, it is important to always keep in mind the young men that dedicated their lives to America to have freedom in this world.

## **Honorable Mention Winner**

### **Wilson Davis**

In America, Veterans protect us. They have fought wars, defended our country, and have made us all happy and safe. In my family my grandfather Dr. Patrick Davis served in the Navy as a medical officer. First of all, a Veteran is a soldier that fought in any branch of the military and is still alive. Veterans are so brave because they go into a war knowing that they might not come out alive. They do that so they can make better lives for you and me.

Veterans should always be respected because they train for countless hours for our lives. If you see a Veteran you should always say something nice. I don't know how much that means to you but it means SO much to me.

In the armed forces, everyone has to help each other. For example, my grandfather helped hurt or sick veterans. My old babysitter is a dentist in the Navy and she has served in San Diego, Bahren and now Japan. Think about everybody helping each other. Imagine it as a life cycle, the dentist helps everyone and also needs help from other people too.

If we didn't have veterans our country would not be safe. That is why it is important to respect Veterans and everything around us so we can be safe. In the world there are so many people doing bad things, so it is very important that we have Police, Veterans, Firefighters and so many more helpful jobs. Veterans don't only protect our country, they also protect our religions and freedom to move like going out of the country and moving around the country too and our freedom of speech which is being able to say our opinions and ideas without punishment from the government.

How Veterans inspire me is that you train most of your life and you don't know if you will survive. Everyone has one life and Veterans choose to risk it for our safety.

All in all, Veterans are very crucial to our daily lives.

## **Third Place Winner**

### **Hannah Claire Gamble**

#### **Veterans Passage**

Veterans are inspirational. One way that I am inspired by veterans is by their selflessness and strength. My God father, Uncle Josh, served in the military as a fighter pilot for twenty-six years. His call sign was Ghost. A call sign is a nickname that someone in the military gets, it could be from a story or a habit that they have.

I think that veterans are very selfless. Veterans leave their homes and families for us. They fight for us, not to become famous but for our freedom. Think about someone that you love, such as your mom or dad. Imagine them leaving for months, without much contact or communication. It would hurt. My Uncle Josh served multiple deployments. He had to leave his three young kids and wife at home for months at a time. That is one reason why I think that veterans are very selfless.

I also think that veterans are very mentally and emotionally strong. They see terrible things while in battle, like their friends dying, and they can't do anything to bring them back. There are many soldiers who lose arms or legs in battle, and are left to face a completely new life when they return from deployment. This is a reason why I think veterans are very strong.

Overall, whether they are fighting for us now, or have before, veterans like my Uncle Josh are inspirational, and we should always appreciate and respect them. They are selfless and strong, possibly facing life changes when they return, and almost all of them would go back to fight for us in a heartbeat, if asked. If you see a veteran on the streets in their uniform say, "Hi, thank you for your service."

## **Second Place Winner**

### **Josiah Ying**

We enjoy freedom in our country because of our veterans. They fought for our freedom and for our liberty. We respect our veterans because of their hard work. All veterans share common characteristics such as bravery, the ability to overcome fear, and the desire for liberty and justice. Our veterans continue to fight for our country so we must respect them.

Cecil Hamilton Bolton was one of those people who fought for our liberty. He was born in Crawfordville, Wakulla County, Florida on October 7, 1908. His act of bravery earned him the Medal of Honor. When he died on January 22, 1965, he was buried in Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in Texas. This first lieutenant of the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during WWII should be honored by all of us because of his bravery.

On the night of November 2, 1944, Lieutenant Bolton and his squad were attacked in Mark River, Holland. They tried to defend themselves with mortar fire, but they were unsuccessful. So Lieutenant Bolton and a two-man bazooka team quickly and quietly made their way to the house filled with German soldiers. He then proceeded to throw a hand grenade, killing 2 German soldiers. They quickly took out three machine gunners and pressed on. Under his fire direction, the two soldiers with him knocked out the enemy weapon with rockets. Lieutenant Bolton became wounded, and on the way back to the lines, he was wounded again and collapsed. However, he had successfully led his battalion to reach its objective.

How Lieutenant Bolton led his team to meet their objective successfully inspires me. He showed great bravery and leadership because he was wounded and was still able to lead his team in battle. This inspires me because I want to be brave and be a good leader for my soccer team. Even though he and his team were under enemy's fire, they still pressed on. Like Lieutenant Bolton, I can also overcome fear by not backing down even if I am smaller in size and less skilled than the other team. If my team destroys the other team in a game or even if we get crushed, I can still be a fair player and show good sportsmanship by shaking hands with the other team.

Veterans like Lieutenant Bolton inspire me to be brave, to overcome my fear, and to treat others fairly in everything I do. I am able to enjoy my freedom thanks to veterans.

## **First Place Winner**

### **Graham Fouad Carey**

What exactly is a Veteran?

A veteran is somebody who was in the military and is now retired. Veterans worked hard to represent their country. They did whatever it took to make their country better and protect it. They were brave, strong, and determined. Earl Brake, who sacrificed himself for his platoon around 1944 in the jungles of Philippine, was forced to join the army, yet he still had a strong love for his country. (alabamaveterans.org) Bill Matthew Leonard grew more invested in his country as he served America. (alabamaveterans.org) Our veterans' bravery, strength, and determination inspires me to want to help my community in every way I can.

The bravery of our veterans inspires me because it shows me that I can be brave and do things that might be scary. In Vietnam, the body bags were filling up daily. So even though others wouldn't, Bill Matthew Leonard was brave enough to go to Vietnam and help the newer soldiers in war when things were getting out of hand. (alabamaveterans.org) Also, I've realized that no matter how little bravery you have, you can still protect America. I think it is clear that veterans are very brave and are willing to do a whole lot of scary things for their country.

Another way veterans inspire me is through their strength. Their strength to move on through difficult things and continue fighting for their country is amazing. Mike Barber said, "For years I put the things I saw in Vietnam in the attic of my mind." (alabamaveterans.org). Mike Barber had to have had a lot of strength to go through what he saw in Vietnam and to do the things he did in Vietnam. Sometimes the strength you have comes from your mind. I think a veteran's strength is inspiring because it has protected America for many years.

A third reason I'm inspired by veterans is because of their determination. Veterans are determined to do good things for their country. That makes me feel so grateful for them and makes me want to never give up on anything I put my mind to. Anite Hoel said, "I joined the Air Force in 1977 to make a better life for both my and daughter and myself." (alabamaveterans.org). This shows how determined Anita was to make a better life for her and her daughter. Sometimes it's for family, sometimes it's for us, but no matter what, veterans are determined to protect their country and make life better for their country.

Veterans make our country a better place through their bravery, strength and determination. They make me want to help my community in every way I can.

# Sixth Grade

## Honorable Mention Winner

### Jack McCain Abbott

I remember being scared of people coming to get me at night, but all that changed in fifth grade. We did the Veterans Day musical. I was holding the Alabama flag. The one song that we sang that really stood out to me was "We Proudly Call you Heroes" because it was about all the veterans, their bravery and courage to go fight for our country. To serve even if they didn't want to. I really think of veterans as heroes. You're like a real life Captain America. The sacrifices the veterans made and how many people they saved are uncountable.

The veteran that I heard of was Desmond Doss. He was born in Virginia and served in WW2. He saved around 75 wounded soldiers in one night and he did not have a gun. He chose to not kill anybody. His courage earned him one of the highest medals in the Army and he didn't even have a gun. His courage and bravery was so exquisite he is a real life superhero.

Another real life superhero veteran is Earl Brake. He grew up in Alabama. He served in World War two in the Philippines. He was so strong inside and out. He was shot more than a 100 times and he died. But with his courage in the Jungles of the Philippines he sacrificed himself by climbing up the hill to attract the Japanese. His buddies made it our because he sacrificed himself for others, he is a real life hero.

Last but not least is William Matthew Leonard borned in Birmingham he served in the Vietnam and Korean war. In the Korean war he was in the battle fields with his fellow Army friends when he had bullets flying everywhere he was fighting. He had so much courage and when he made it out he was a drill sergeant and trained the young recruits. In Vietnam in the battle fields he was fighting even when he was shot, protecting his friends. He is a true hero. He sadly died. He in on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Learning about the Veterans who fought in wars or any type of combat is so cool. During the day I used to get worried about war or when my parents turned on the news about the Ukraine conflict. But I'm safe because of the strong hero's from the United States of America. Their courage and perseverance is so inspired and grateful for all the veterans we PROUDLY CALL YOU HEROS.

## Honorable Mention Winner

### Camille McCelland Baxley

#### How I Look Up To You

Ever since the first Veterans Day program at my school in kindergarten, I've looked up to all the amazing men and women who have fought and served for our country. All of the bravery and all of the perseverance they had is just so inspiring to me. Even if it meant they had to go right into the danger, they wouldn't hesitate. Everything they have done for this country is just unbelievable.

I've always especially looked up to my Uncle Randy. He is so brave and courageous. He served in the Navy as a Navy Seal. He always tells me the coolest and bravest stories. One of the best stories he has ever told me is when he stayed underwater in a submarine for over twenty five days, without coming up! He has really shown me how to overcome challenges, and be brave. Even when he is gone, I will still remember all the amazing things he has done.

The thing that his service and other servicemen have done for me has really taught me that I can push through even when I am scared or nervous.

I hope that all the veterans and soldiers will always know that I look up to them and are very thankful for them. God Bless America.

### **Third Place Winner**

#### **Penelope Seifert**

##### **Why I am Inspired by my Veteran**

When I heard I could write an essay on a veteran that has inspired me, I immediately thought of my grandpa, Peter Luchiani Senior. He is a veteran of the Vietnam War and served for four years in the Navy as a cook. He had always wanted to join the Navy since he was born because it was his passion to help other people.

When he was 22 he went to sign up to serve in the Navy. They test you to see what you are good at. When my grandpa took it he found he was an excellent cook and was put on the kitchen staff. Soon he cooked for hundreds of people a day, including his bosses and his peers. They ate in a big mess hall and one of the many meals he cooked was pasta with marinara sauce. The more he cooked the food, the more he realized he had found his passion.

My grandpa also faced many setbacks. While he was serving, my grandpa disliked his captain because he was an extremely strict rule follower, and if you bent the rules, or the captain thought you didn't follow them correctly, then he would punish you. Once my grandpa was trying to get to his ship but his plane had engine trouble. It took a while to fix so he did not get to his boat in the time allotted. Since his captain was very strict my grandpa had to deal with demotion. Soon he decided to leave the military and was honorably discharged. For a while he helped with his dad's painting business. Soon, a family friend called his dad. He was the executive chef at a local restaurant, and he was about to retire. He wanted to know if my grandfather would take his place. However, he declined the offer because he never got training for business. He decided to go to a cooking school and went on to become a chef at many restaurants. Later in life my grandfather had a Subarachnoid Hemorrhage but pushed through and survived even though he had to have a difficult surgery.

I am inspired by my grandfather because he motivates me to follow my dreams and persevere even when things are tough, just like he did. He had difficult times in the military and later in life, and he pushed through all of them. It would have been easy for him to quit on his dream of cooking after demotion in the military and after having to decline a job offer, but he ended up being a cook anyway because of his hard work. In his later years, he was strong through his medical problems. This teaches me that even though I may face disappointment or even pain, I should keep pushing because there can be good results, as my grandfather's life has proven.

## **Second Place Winner**

### **Micah Ying**

In the United States, veterans protect our freedom. We would not be able to do what we do without veterans who fight for us to have our own rights. Veterans also fight and protect the weak and those who cannot protect themselves. These veterans voluntarily risk everything to serve their country and protect people whom they might not even know personally. Veterans exhibit great traits like bravery, perseverance, and selflessness.

One such legendary veteran who exhibited inspiring characteristics is Sergeant Paul Luther Bolden. This amazing veteran grew up in Hobbs Island, Madison County, Alabama. Sergeant Bolden fought in World War II and was placed in the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. In one instance, his platoon was pressured by heavy mortar, tank shells, and automatic fire coming from a house 200 yards ahead. Knowing his division was not going to hold out much longer, he sacrificed himself and charged up the hill into the house, taking out 20 of the enemies. Despite being shot in the chest, shoulder, and stomach, he persevered and selflessly charged back into the house and took out the remaining 15 enemies. Due to his brave actions, Sergeant Bolden was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Sergeant Bolden has greatly inspired me to believe that if I persevere and put in great efforts, I will be able to achieve my goals. I have a soccer game next week against the number one team in our division. Sergeant Bolden taught me to persevere and play my hardest even if my team may lose. I can apply this principle to my life by never giving up and giving it my all when something tough comes my way.

I am also inspired by his bravery and selflessness. I have a classmate who is not so kind at times, who would randomly hurt me. I have been ignoring his behavior but I think I will start to speak up for myself and be brave like Sergeant Bolden. By doing so, I can help prevent others from being bullied by the same classmate.

Veterans have fought and continue to serve our country. I am thankful for these noble veterans whose courage, perseverance, and selfless behavior protect us. Without them, I would not be able to enjoy the freedom that I have and they inspire me to be better.

## **First Place Winner**

### **Aurora Somers**

#### **Against All Odds**

Veterans inspire me as a whole, but one woman stands out from the rest, Senator Tammy Duckworth. Her accomplishments speak for themselves, telling a story that motivates others to serve. She followed in the footsteps of her ancestors dating back to the Revolutionary War and joined the army. She studied hard and served well.

In 2004, she was deployed in Iraq to fight for our country. She was a helicopter pilot in combat. Tragically, she lost both her legs due to her helicopter being hit by enemy fire. Once recovered, she continued to fight, but for her fellow soldier's rights. She served the Illinois Department of Veteran's Affairs, and started a program to help veterans with brain injuries and post-traumatic

stress disorder. She advanced to serve the United States Department of Veteran's Affairs in 2009. In this time, she worked on the problem of veteran homelessness, and helping female and Native American Veterans. She made it easier for young veterans to get help by creating the Office of Online Communications.

In 2012, Duckworth was elected to the House of Representatives, where she served her home state of Illinois. Her election brought a lot of new records, because she was the first representative to be a disabled female veteran, and the first to be born in Thailand. She never forgot about her fellow government workers, some of whom had been furloughed from their salary. She returned part of her salary to show support. She went on to run for the United States Senate, and was elected in 2016. She was re-elected in 2022 and continues to represent Illinois as a Senator. She has continued to fight for people who have struggled like her. She saved the Americans with Disabilities act, and has been recognized for her motivation to help these groups.

Her daughter became the first baby on the Senate floor during a vote. She helped change the senate rules so that a child under one year may be present during a vote. In addition to being a good mother, she is a tough lady that stands up for the rights of others. In spite of her disabilities and challenges, she is very successful in her efforts make a better world.

Senator Tammy Duckworth makes me feel hopeful for the future. If we have many generations doing what she does, our world would be more compassionate and fair. She also shows us an example of how we should fight for what we believe in no matter what happens. This motivates me to be helpful and kind to others, and focus on changing things for the better.