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First Place National Patriot's Pen Winner

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“Why America’s Veterans Should be Honored”

We should honor American veterans because of the great sacrifices that they have made for our country and our freedom. A personal example of these sacrifices is my grandfathers who both served in World War II.

My paternal grandfather served in the European Theatre under General George Patton. He served in the Army as First Lieutenant and a tank commander in the 14th Armored Division. My grandfather was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. He lost most of his hearing in battle during his time of service for our country.

My maternal grandfather served in the Navy on the USS Houston CA30, and his ship was sunk by a Japanese fleet during the battle of Sunda Strait. He was injured but survived in the water for 14 hours before being captured and taken prisoner by the Japanese. He was held captive for three and a half years. My grandfather was held prisoner in several notorious prison camps including the Bicycle Camp in Java, Indonesia, the Hintok camp in Thailand, and the Changi camp in Singapore. The POWs in these camps suffered from many deadly tropical diseases including malaria, beri-beri, and tropical ulcers. They were given no medical care. The POWs were forced to work in the impenetrable jungles of Thailand and what was then known as Burma. They had to build what is referred to as the death railway because so many POWs and natives died while being forced to work on this project. After the war ended and my grandfather returned to the United States at the age of 24, he weighed 95 pounds which was almost half the weight he was when he enlisted in the Navy. He received a purple heart.

Military men and women serving today in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world are also making huge sacrifices. We need to honor and remember both past and present veterans for their bravery and love for this country. Each one of them has made a change in their lives, a sacrifice, so that we can have all the rights that we take for granted. No matter where they serve, or how they serve, they have made a sacrifice that will in some way change their lives forever; for that, we should be eternally grateful, and they should always be remembered. Our freedom has never been, and never will be, free.