

**Cole Land Transportation Museum
Essay Contest Winners
November 11, 2004**

Category "A" – Grades 6-8

Third Place Winner - \$100 Saving Bond – Morgan Chasse
Student of Gloria Higgins @ Bangor Christian School
Veteran: Paul Wilbur

Second Place Winner - \$250 Saving Bond – Amanda Gifford
Student of Kim Worster @ Mt. Jefferson Junior High
Veteran: Earl Aucoin

First Place Winner - \$500 Saving Bond – Megan Bethiaume
Student of Trisha Smith @ Holbrook Middle School
Veteran: Fran Zelz

Category "B" – Grades 9-12

No entries

Student Name: Megan Berthiaume

Category: Category A

Name of School: Holbrook Middle School

Teacher's Name: Trisha Smith

Name of Veteran: Francis Zelz (WW II)

What Freedom Means to Me After Interviewing a Veteran

"I'm proud to be an American, for at least I know I'm free." In America that is very true, but every country can't say that. Americans today are free because of the veterans who have and are fighting for our freedom. Thousands of people gave their lives unselfishly, so that we can live freely today. Galen Cole, a World War II veteran, participated and witnessed first hand, soldiers fighting for our country and some, lose their life. He himself almost lost his life when an 88-millimeter shell hit his half-track.

Another Veteran from World War II was Francis Zelz. I was lucky enough to be able to talk to Francis and thank him for everything he has done for our country. Francis taught me about how our country got to be the way it is now, that freedom is not a right, and it truly is a privilege. He and all veterans have helped to make our country the way it is now. Thanks to those brave men and women I am able to live freely.

America is a country that has equal rights for everyone, man or woman, black or white. In the United States most people look beyond someone's gender or color. If you are eighteen or older in America you have the right to vote. In some countries only white men can vote. If you live in a different country you don't always have those rights. In some countries you might not have the right to wear the clothing of your choice or work at certain places if you are "different." In America you can do any of these things, no matter who you are. I, as an American, am very thankful that I have all these rights.

On Friday, September 10, 2004, my 8th grade class from Holbrook Middle School took a field trip to the Cole Museum. On that trip I learned a lot about how America used to be in the olden days. It is amazing how much more technology there is compared to back then. I also learned about World War II, what a difficult time it was for America, and the whole world. It was very interesting to see the equipment and supplies they used during World War II. I am delighted that I was able to have such a great experience and to learn new and fascinating stuff.

Freedom is the power to engage in certain actions without control or interference. My visit to the Cole Museum made me realize that freedom does give you power to do certain things. Before my visit I thought of freedom as just being free. Now freedom means that if you respect the laws of your country you can do whatever you want. I now think of freedom this way because of Francis. Now that I have talked to a veteran I know more about America's history and how we have remained a free country. Francis, and all of America's veterans, taught me things I will never forget for the rest of my life.

"The freedom we have today had a very high price, but one willingly paid by those brave people," Jewell Flint- Stewart. America has not always been entirely free, like the time of slavery. Even though America hasn't always been free, during my life I have always been free. I have never experienced not being able to do as I chose. I am very grateful for that, and I owe my freedom to the brave heroes who have fought for our country.

Amanda Gifford

Category A

Mt. Jefferson Junior High

Ms. Worster

Veteran Earle Aucion

Freedom

Have you ever wondered what it's like to live in a country that doesn't allow women to show anything but their eyes? Can you imagine what it's like not being able to make your own choices? The United States of America is one of the luckiest places on earth. We have the freedom to wear what we feel comfortable wearing. We have the freedom to believe in what we want to believe in. People in other countries aren't as fortunate.

As American citizens we have something that other countries kill for. We don't take the time from day to day to realize it, but it's there. Freedom.....doesn't it just give you goosebumps? Our whole lives are based on whether we have the freedom or not to live the way we want to live.

All of the men and women who gave their lives fighting for the U.S. are the ones that truly understand freedom and justice. They fought for us to live the way we do today. Without them, we wouldn't have the choices that we have. Without them, our government would not be a democracy, it would be a dictatorship. Without them we would not be able to voice our individual opinions in public. We do not understand how awesome we have it. People live their lives taking the freedom we have for granted. In fact, what people in the U.S., don't take freedom for granted, other than our soldiers?

Now that I have gotten a chance to actually interview a real live veteran, my whole out look on our privileges are different. I didn't realize how hard our veterans worked to make the United States what it is today. I'll tell you the truth, I went into the Cole Museum thinking this was going to be a waste of time, but boy, when I came out of there it got me thinking how lucky I was. My head was telling me, wow, they did all of that just for the future generations. They gave their lives so their family and people in the future could have it the way they felt we deserved it. But, we aren't the ones that should get the credit, the men and women who gave their lives are the ones that deserve it. Think about it for a moment, when you see a veteran are you running right up and shaking their hand, thanking them for what they have done? No, we aren't, the best that we do is a quick hello. Next time your out and about and you see a veteran, make sure you give him some kind of thanks. That would make them the happiest person in the world.

If you have been taking life for granted, stop and think about it for a second, think about the privileges and rights that you have. No other country in the world is the same as ours because we have so many opportunities. Freedom is our biggest one. Remember that and life will take you on incredible journeys. Thank- you Earle Aucion, veteran of World War II, you have opened my eyes completely. I would also like to thank the men and women who gave their lives for our country. God bless America!

Morgan Chasse

Category A

Bangor Christian Schools

Teacher - Gloria Higgins

Veteran – Paul Wilbur

WHAT FREEDOM MEANS TO ME AFTER INTERVIEWING A VETERAN

The sound of machine guns rang in my ears as I scrambled up the sandy beach towards the dense, green forests ahead. The young man running beside me fell down onto the rough sand. I grabbed him and pulled him up in one swift motion and kept on running up the beach. We reached the forest with our hearts racing and beads of sweat dripping down our faces. We both looked at each other with fear in the depths of our hearts and then back to the beach where our lives could have been taken away at any second.

Paul Wilbur, the young man in the story, joined the United States Marine Corps when he was only sixteen years of age. When he got the news of the war, then he wanted to serve in the United States Marine Corps. He knew that something had to be done and that he needed to contribute. Paul spent four years in the United States Marine Corps and had over ten incidents of near death! Many of Paul's medals that he received have to do with the incidents that happened throughout the four years. One of the medals that Paul received was for being a survivor of a kamikaze raid. This medal was given to Paul when he shot a plane down in the midst of a kamikaze attack on his ship. The kamikaze plane was coming right towards the ship with bombs so that when it hit the ship, the bombs would explode and sink the ship. Paul shot the plane down, and it landed six hundred feet away from the ship. This is just one of the many obstacles that got in Paul's way on his journey to protect his country. Paul Wilbur went through rough and dangerous lengths to save the United States - from the kamikaze raid to just standing steadfast on his watch.

Paul Wilbur said that one thing that everyone in his generation should learn from his experience is the value of freedom. Many people in the United States do not take the meaning and value of freedom seriously enough. People do not realize that the freedom of the United States could be taken away from everyone in a split second.

He also said that responsibility is something that changes you over the time you spend in the service. He explained that you grow up awfully quick when learning responsibility and gaining friendships.

I am very grateful to have so many choices and opportunities in my everyday life. I am also fortunate to live in a country that is abundant with the sweet taste of freedom. Many people all over the world have never had the experience of freedom. So many people live in places where they have to worship idols and can not talk unless told to do so.

When veteran Paul Wilbur was in the Marine Corps, he did not have the choice of whether to serve his country or not. He did not have the choice of what food he ate or what job he had in the service, but there was one freedom that he did have. And that was to follow his own religion and serve his own God.

Freedom is something that you have to hold onto and value as much as possible. Otherwise, it will slip out of your grasp and be washed away like the sand on a deserted beach.