

Winner - Category A (Middle School)
"What freedom means to me after interviewing a Veteran" 2007
Student: Hannah Arseneau, Teacher: Prest, Veteran: Carl Carlstad

Immediately, as you walked into the building and especially, the conference room, you saw and felt history. Five, extremely dignified, orange-jacketed men with their pictures and memories sat at various tables as the students walked in. The other students and I were whispering with each other and wondering which veteran we would have the opportunity to interview. After all the introductions, the students' uneasiness was leaving and being replaced with smiles and questions.

Carl Carlstad was a veteran of more than twenty-five years in the military, and probably had seen everything there was to see. At nineteen, Carl enlisted in the Army. It was during the Vietnam War. He was trained to fly helicopters. His introduction to war was flying helicopters to relocate enemy positions in Vietnam. During the "Cold War," he worked with tanks, and in Desert Storm he served the country in the artillery. Through twenty-five years of service, Carl was shot three times, including once shot in the face. Also he suffered through critical times like losing friends in combat.

As he explained his life, with his kind eyes and genuine smile, I was amazed. He had lived through so many events in history. But always in his conversation, he continued to mention the word freedom, and the Americans who have fought to protect and maintain freedom. Quickly, I realized I had an easy life with its freedoms because someone had paid for them, and sometimes I have taken that for granted. Wow! The time with Carl passed so quickly, and the teacher Carl taught me so much. Today freedom has a different and bigger meaning to me. I can proudly say, "I am an American and free," because of Americans like Carl. Americans have fought often for freedom, and many have died. At the very least, those who have died pledged their lives and futures for my freedom.

You see freedom can never be won or completely earned. Freedom is paid for in installments. Just like earlier generations, Americans like Carl have kept up the payments for American freedom in time, in effort, and sometimes even blood.

Americans have something special, and it is not free. Freedom is an expensive thing. It has a value that Americans have always been willing to pay. But America will only remain the land of the free only as long as it continues to remain the home of the brave like Carl.

Now my duty or responsibility is clear. I will try to live a good life and appreciate America's great freedoms. To you, Mr. Carl Carlstad and people like you, I applaud. I have learned a great deal from you. I am amazed and humbled by your unselfish service. You have shown a great love for freedom, and I must retell your story so that freedom is kept alive in the minds of present and future generations.

Yes, Mr. Carl Carlstad, there is a price for freedom, and I promise never to forget it!

2nd Place - Category A (Middle School)
"What freedom means to me after interviewing a Veteran" 2007
Student: Amelia Joyce, Teacher: Prest, Veteran: Leon Higgins

On the way to the Cole Land Transportation Museum, I wasn't nervous, but as I got closer to the museum my curiosity about my veteran made me a little nervous.

When I walked into the museum, I had a few butterflies in my stomach. Next the class was led into a conference room where veterans were sitting. I looked at one man, and I knew he had an extraordinary story to tell. That man's name was Mr. Leon Higgins.

Mr. Higgins was a pilot in World War II. He was 17 when he heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. He wanted more than anything to fight for and protect his country.

So, when he graduated from high school, he joined the service and was sent to Miami Beach. He was trained in the aviation cadet program. After he completed this program, he received his wings. In 1946, he continued to go to school to learn more about flying. Finally, he got the chance to fly a C-46, which, at the time, was the largest and heaviest American plane.

One of the most interesting stories Mr. Higgins told me was the one about Sunshine Island. Mr. Higgins said the island was barely big enough to land a plane. So he had to navigate his plane swiftly and smartly in order to land it there. He told me he had to bring the plane so close to the water that salt water sprayed his windshield. He said he could see the waves all around him, and that it seemed as if he were being tossed at sea on a ship. However, yes, he did land his plane successfully.

This was only one of so many amazing stories he told me. I would not ever be able to write them all down. Now my eyes were wide with surprise and awe at this man who was giving his life for me and my country.

Initially, when I think of Mr. Higgins and the people who served our country, and the people who are serving now, I think of this verse, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Because of people like Mr. Leon Higgins, I have freedom today. Many Americans like Mr. Higgins have endured costs of America's wars, and they have stood watch when America was at peace. They have made America safer and more secure. I am grateful to Americans who have fought for freedom. Along with preserving freedom in America, they have brought freedom to hundreds of millions in the world.

Freedom always offers the gift of hope- a hope of a better day. God bless those service men and women. They must never be anonymous. Those who serve or have served must be remembered. May their contribution to America's freedom never be forgotten. America has a tradition of respect and recognition.

Honor and duty should stir the very best in every American to stand behind all service men and women while they serve and when they come home.

Thank you- Mr. Leon Higgins. I applaud, cheer, and honor people like you. You command my respect and admiration.

3rd Place - Category A (Middle School)
"What freedom means to me after interviewing a Veteran" 2007
Student: Abby Roy, Teacher: Voss, Veteran: Tommy Newman

A young man crawls up the beach of Normandy. Explosions are going off left and right. All around him, fallen men lay motionless in patches of reddened sand. The sick smell of dead bodies fills his nostrils. The man hopes he will not end up like these men. He thinks about all of the life he has yet to live, all of the things he has yet to accomplish. Suddenly, a bomb explodes to his left. It causes him to roll over, but now he crawls even faster. Realizing he feels nothing on the left side of his face, he draws his hand up to assess the damage. Waves of relief wash over the man when he discovers that all of his face is still there. But he has lost all of the feeling in the left side of his face. Forever.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, a girl comes home from school. She kneels down next to her mother and begins to help her weed their victory garden. With one look at her mother's tearstained face, the girl knows what has happened. But she pretends she hasn't noticed because the girl can't deal with anymore grief right now. She tells her mother how yet another bunch of boys from her senior class enlisted to fight in the war. She tells how this time, the girl's boyfriend has joined them. As she tells her mother this, she tries to suppress a sob. Luckily, her normally jubilant little sister comes into the yard. But today, her little sister is crying, too. "Barbara's daddy died, Mama," she whimpers quietly. "Is my daddy gonna die, too?" Her mother stops what she is doing and looks up at the girls' stricken faces. "Girls, come here. We need to talk."

Over in New Mexico, two girls walk into the PX for Coca-Colas. They sit down at the counter and notice that two boys are sitting at the other end. The boys look at each other and then walk nonchalantly over to where the girls are. Casually, they ask what the girls think all the scientists are doing and why they can't tell anyone outside of the Hill what goes on up there. The girls start to giggle, and then they ask the boys if they know that what the scientists are working on could stop the war. Finally, the boys work up the courage to offer to buy the girls Cokes. The girls nod and giggle again, without a care in the world.

Now fast forward 60 years into the future. An old man sits in front of the TV in his favorite recliner. A news broadcast about the Iraq war comes on, and his muscles tighten. The man's grandson, only 23 years old, is fighting in Iraq. Unconsciously, he brings his hand up to his face and touches his left cheek. He remembers what his war experiences were like, and hopes that his grandson doesn't have to witness what he witnessed. Then, his wife comes in with a platter of freshly made chocolate chip cookies. When she sees what's on the TV, she gently sets down the platter and takes her husband's right hand. The two both know the terrors of war, because the man's wife lost both her father and her high school sweetheart in the war.

Many of us take freedom for granted. We take for granted that we can walk down the street and not jump merely at the sight of our shadow. We take for granted that we can go to the corner store for a Coke with our friends whenever we want to. Each morning, so many students put their hands over their heart monotonously and say the Pledge of Allegiance without even the slightest thought about what it really means to have "Liberty and justice for all." Freedom can be taken away and we should always

remember that. Many veterans, including Tommy Newman, know the huge price of freedom. Mr. Newman was willing to give up everything he had for our country. He put up with the harsh lifestyle of war in order for those he loved to be free. Mr. Newman truly knows about all of the sacrifices that are made in order for us to be free. Do you?

Winner - Category B (High School)
"What freedom means to me after interviewing a Veteran" 2007
Student: John J. Wilson, Teacher: Hurd, Veteran: Al Gibson

It's Saturday morning, and we all pile into the car, heading out to the Northport Diner for a late breakfast. The owners of the diner are good friends of ours, so we always take our accustomed place at the counter. We know most of the "regulars," and the conversation flows along with the coffee. The talk turns to the weather, the economy, the national news, and the local election. No one fears to state an opinion. No one hesitates to speak out on a controversial issue. We are free to think what we want and say what we choose. Dad picks up the weekend paper and distributes the sections among us. News. Editorials. Comics - political and otherwise. We think nothing about the varieties of perspectives and views represented in the pages we so casually peruse. We take these freedoms for granted - and why shouldn't we? We have been free all of our lives. We have never experienced the confines of a dictatorship or the injustices of a regime which would limit our freedoms based upon our religion, race, ethnicity, income, or political standing.

All generations are shaped by the worlds in which they grew up. So, too, is ours. The events of September 11, 2001 will be forever engraved upon our memories, and we are constantly aware of the threat that terrorism poses. However, our generation has never had to face the wrath of enormous armies backed by hostile super-powers, coalitions of international forces waging world-scale conflict. We know of these conflicts, of course. Whole chapters are devoted to them in our history books.

For me, history has always been more than an academic exercise. I have always found it fascinating, and it would be impossible to read history without developing the deepest respect for the freedom fighters who define its highest moments.

To me, when I read about the exploits of John Paul Jones, defying the might of Britain's Royal Navy, it would be hard not to admire his bravery. I have read a great deal about Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Maine's college professor - turned soldier and his heroic defense of Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg. Both men hated slavery and believed in a free and united America. More recently, our nation fought not only for its own freedom but for the freedom of others crushed beneath the heel of a ruthless tyrant bent on world conquest, whose vicious vision of racial purity encompassed the destruction of millions of lives. There was a time when all Europe suffered in his grasp, but on June 6, 1944, the despot's days were numbered, as an enormous allied expeditionary force set out across the English Channel under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower. D-Day was a great victory, but the beaches of Normandy were purchased at a high price, and the leader who had planned Operation Overlord had by no means been assured of its success. I remember reading in one of my history books that on that fateful day, General Eisenhower had carried a note in his pocket stating that the responsibility for the invasion strategy was his. The intent of the note was clear. In the

event of the general's demise, he did not want the blame for Overlord's failure to fall on anyone else. That's courage.

Until two weeks ago, I had never really encountered anyone who had served during the great wars of the last century. An old friend of my mother's family was a decorated veteran of World War I. He had gone off to fight when he was about my age, been wounded several times, and survived a mustard gas attack, though he was to suffer from its effects throughout his life. I am named after him, but he died before I was born. My grandfather served in World War II and was part of the army sent out to occupied Japan, but he died when I was three, so I was never able to speak to him about his experiences.

Then, during a school trip to the Cole Transportation Museum, I met a veteran who told me about his service in the Korean War. After two years of college, the young man had left school to enlist. In Korea, he served with a unit whose job was to identify and scout enemy positions in order to call in air strikes. Suddenly Korea became real for me. It was no longer just a name on a page from a textbook. It was a real war in which real people fought and died.

History is about people. I know that. However, history usually focuses on the leaders. While their roles are certainly invaluable, sometimes we forget that the leaders are only part of the story. We read about Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's exploits at Gettysburg, but we forget about those who made his accomplishments possible: the fishermen and fanners and Maine woodsmen who stood beside him on that lonely Pennsylvania hillside. It's impossible to lead if no one will follow.

Why shouldn't we take our freedom for granted? Perhaps it's because, as the cliché goes, freedom is not free. Our freedom has been paid for by John Paul Jones and Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Dwight David Eisenhower. It has also been paid for by the nameless clerk from Bangor who gave up his secure post and left his family to become a volunteer in the 20th Maine, and by the college student who postponed his education almost a century later to become a scout in Korea. This is a lesson I will not soon forget - now that history has a face.

2nd Place - Category B (High School)

"What freedom means to me after interviewing a Veteran" 2007

Student: Leann Williams, Teacher: Jordan, Veteran: Ray Perkins & Frank Yager

Starting at young ages, children are surrounded with constant pressure from the media of the "definition" of true heroes, and because it is presented in such subtle ways to minds that haven't yet had a chance to fully develop they know nothing more than the falsehoods that are being preached to them. Their imaginations begin to soar, and they start to create images of heroes in their minds; strong, tall, brave, fast... the list never ends, but does every hero have to possess a fictional power to be a recipient of such an honor?

May 30, 2007, was a great turning point in my life. Before this date, I considered myself to be a patriotic person. I had gone to all the parades since I was a kid; and I have great respect for all the men and women who have fought for my freedom, but what I was ignorant in believing was that my patriotism was only shown on the holidays in remembrance for our veterans. I did not purposely try to ignore it every other day, but it

just wasn't a matter that I thought should concern me. It was not until speaking with Ray Perkins and Frank Yager at the Cole Land Transportation Museum, that I realized how wrong I was.

While talking with Ray Perkins, my concentration never left his voice. When he was speaking to me about his days in the service it was as if something hit me. I could see something in his eyes that I knew came straight from his heart when he told me that the only way he was able to keep on fighting through the years was by telling himself that it was all for that little girl back home. He knew one day soon he would be back in the arms of the woman he loved. He also wanted me to know that he couldn't have fought in that war without the help of God watching over him at all times. Even the times when he was alone, he always knew someone was with him.

I also had the privilege of talking with US Merchant Marine Frank Yager. His meek and relaxed tone when speaking immediately told me how much he truly honored and respected the great country we live in today. When questioned on his idea of what freedom meant to him, he boldly stated, "it means being able to say whatever you want to whomever you please". He then asked me a question that really grabbed at my attention. He asked whether or not I understood, and really appreciated the freedoms I have today. The first answer that came to mind was one in which everyone would like to be able to say, "yes!" But was that the truth? Did I really understand how lucky I was to simply be able to walk down the street without a single fear in my mind of being shot at, or having my homeland totally and utterly destroyed?

I do not think that we give enough credit to our veterans who fought to make this land one in which we all can feel safe and secure. Do we ever stop to think about what they went through to make sure each and every person living in America receives the freedoms we all rightly deserve? There is no way we could ever understand. We were not out on the battle field knowing that every step we took could have very well been our last, realizing that the final "I love you" that was said just months before may never be spoken again, and we did not feel the pride in the realization that every gunshot that was fired was just another price paid for living in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Instead, we are home; ignorant to the brutal reality that they went through, but yet we are the ones to receive the great reward, freedom!

I now have a new appreciation of the definition of freedom. It is a gift that was given to me from the very moment I was born. I did not pay to receive this gift, but men and women whom I have never met, were willing to give everything, even to the extent of their very lives. A true hero to me is not one that is publicized through television, but is someone who strongly believes that the title "hero" should never be seen beside their name. They might look tough and scarred on the outside, but in their eyes you can see the true colors of their hearts. They fought for us to live, and I will never be able to understand it. I was not there at the time of war to smell the aroma of bullets being fired in the sky, I was not there to see my new best friend who I had met just days before get shot right before my very eyes and have to clean up the pieces of his body, I was not there to hear the screams of men around me falling down left and right. I was not there, so how could I possibly claim that I know? The only thing I know is that I thank each and every one of them for the gift they allowed me to receive. I only wish I had the opportunity to thank the ones who gave the greatest gift of all for me to continue to live mine in peace.

3rd Place - Category B (High School)
"What freedom means to me after interviewing a Veteran" 2007
Student:Carolynn Tuck, Teacher: Cyr, Veteran: Carroll Frye & William Horr

What is freedom? Is freedom really free? It is obvious that the price of freedom is not free, but rather the real price of freedom is the great sacrifices of our soldiers, sailors, and pilots. We have fought to obtain the freedoms we so greatly hold dear to our hearts. The men and women that are around the world, protecting all that we have obtained in freedoms, are still fighting to keep our country safe and secure. Take a moment and look back and ask yourself was it worth it? Were the lives given for our freedom overpriced? Was the sacrifice of the courageous men and women's lives worth what we have? Do we take for granted the freedoms that we have today? The freedoms of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and the Four Freedoms espoused by President Franklin Roosevelt. The freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, the freedom from want and the freedom from fear are all important to our everyday lives, and can easily be taken for granted. They are just as true today as they were more than 200 years ago. That is why we appreciate every day, without even thinking about it.

I had the great opportunity to interview one of these veterans who ensured my freedom by risking his life, day and night. In 1942, Carroll Frye left his family and home in Old Town and joined the Air Force, which was then a part of the Army. Frye joined as a waste gunner and crew chief, of a Boeing B - 17G aka "the Flying Fortress". He flew mostly night bombing missions from England to Germany and back again. He flew 25 missions straight over enemy territory without a break. On one of these very missions his plane suffered terminal shots by enemy fire to the belly of the aircraft. His plane was unable to release the landing gear, and worst of all, his best friend was stuck in the belly gunner position. After circling the landing base for as long as they could stay up, and doing all that they could do to try and save their fellow soldier, fellow American, fellow friend, they were forced to land the airplane with his friend in the belly gunner. Frye survived that fateful crash landing, but lost his best friend. Frye's friend gave the ultimate sacrifice of his life for his country and our freedoms. Always remember and be proud of the men and women who have died like, so we can remain free, Frye's best friend.

In the United States' history, there have been many wars, many, many battles and many, many, many brave men and women that have sacrificed so much, even their lives for our country's freedom. Men and women who risks their lives like Frye and other veterans entered enemy territory willingly knowing the enemy would have no mercy. Just imagine the fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers and other family members that have been lost over the years who fought for our outstanding freedoms we hold so dear. Or do we? Do we hold these freedoms close to our hearts and feel thankful for them every day, or do we fall into step in society and forget the true reasons why our lives are so full of opportunity.

What does freedom mean to me? This is open to a multitude of different responses. Yet, after interviewing Carroll Frye, I have come up with my own interpretation. Freedom is the ability to wake up in the morning and take as long a shower as I want. To put on the clothes I want to wear, eat the breakfast I desire, and walk out the

door. Freedom is the ability I have to conduct my life as I please, as long as the way I conduct myself does not affect other's freedoms. I have the ability and freedom to make choices and to be independent. I have the ability to get in my car or just keeping on walking to my destination. I have the freedom in life to pursue happiness. Freedom to do, own, wear, and be what we want to be has it's limits. If you were to take away the limits you would be limiting your freedoms.

You and I as Americans also have the power to decide to assume as much or as little responsibility as we want to. When you enter a job in America, we similarly have the freedom to equality between all races, ethnic groups and genders. No one is supposed to be denied a job or be affected because of inequality. We have the right to our rights and privileges. In other countries these can be easily taken away and even in the United States if we as a country do not stand as one nation for the freedoms that our soldiers have paid the price for, we too could lose such things.

The man that I sat across from was a war veteran, but really he was so much more. He is what freedom truly means. He and all the men and women like him are what freedom truly means. The veterans and soldiers alike are the ones who have risked or given their lives in service to our country to insure our safety, so I don't have to live my life being afraid. Veterans have done so much for me and my fellow citizens. A person, place, or thing not under the control or power of another defines freedom. I think that the distinction in the definition of freedom is left to each individual to decide for themselves what it means to them. As a free person you have that freedom to decide.

Freedom now I know is one idea which I understand greatly. This freedom is only yours and mine because of our determination and willingness to go to battle and die for what we believe in. I am proud to call myself an American and proud to say that Carroll Frye and other veterans and current soldiers fought and continue to fight valiantly for all Americans. As long as we fight, sacrifice and withstand, against our enemies and never let them take away our freedoms we will remain free.