

**Cole Land Transportation Museum
Essay Contest Winners
November 11, 2011**

Category "B" – Grades 9-12 (High School)

Third Place Winner - \$300 Savings Bond - Amy Curry

Former Student of Tim Thornton @ Brewer HS
Essay being read by Amy's dad, John Curry
Veteran: Delores Hainer and Carl Carlstad

Second Place Winner - \$400 Savings Bond - Whitney Seymour

Student at Brewer High School
Veteran: Harold Beal

First Place Winner - \$500 Savings Bond - Cora Bishop

Student at Acadia Christian School, Ellsworth
(Second place winner last year in middle school category)
Veterans: Carl Carlstad

Category "A" – Grades 6-8 (Middle School)

Third Place Winner - \$300 Savings Bond - Natasha Olearcek

Student at Acadia Christian School, Ellsworth
Veteran: Paul Wilbur

Second Place Winner - \$400 Savings Bond - Zachary Williams

Student @ Acadia Christian School
Veteran: Richard Giffard

First Place Winner - \$500 Savings Bond - Braedyn Wescott

Student at Acadia Christian School
Veteran: Norm Rossignol

What Freedom Means To Me

Amy Curry
Category B
Brewer High School
Mr. Thornton

Deloras Hainer
Carl Carlstad

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Freedom is not free. No one is handed freedom to walk around with. The price of freedom runs deep within the human race; deeper than their actions, down to their spoken or unheard thoughts. Our country as well as the worlds' freedom builds from feelings, ideas, and voices. When an opinion is spoken there are agreements and disagreement. An argument can escalate into a battle; becoming something so dense that a whole country goes to war with another country. I don't support the fight but some battles are unstoppable.

Some soldiers that go to war see things they never imagine seeing. Without choice, lives can change immediately in a game of chance. There are images, smells, and sounds they forever take from war and have to deal with for the rest of their lives. Whether it's in loving memory of a friend they've seen die right before their eyes, leaving them saying 'It could have been me.' Or they've been shot and blacked out in a ditch, waking up in a hospital bed and wondering what hit them. Or maybe to protect themselves they had to take the life of someone and can't help but feel emotion for the helpless body in front of them. The things we see on television, in video games, and in movies are censored, but some soldiers don't have that option and wish they had.

America is brave and strong. Through war, struggle, and heartache our soldiers have fought for rights that give freedom to our country. These men and women have fought or are fighting despite their lives at home. They've battled for simple things in life today that set us apart from other countries. These things include marriage and having children, religion, clothing dress, opinion, and education. What would our country be without any of these things? Having the ability to decide when I'm older what my life will be like is what I think of as freedom. I wouldn't be able to decide if it wasn't for our country having the courage to stand up for what we believe in. Within a country with courage there will always be many heroes with voice to speak for many people amongst them.

B-007

Whitney Seymour

Category "B"

Brewer High School

Teacher: Mr. Thornton

Veteran: Harold Beal

What Freedom Means to Me

When I woke up on the morning of Tuesday, May 25, 2011, the term "freedom" seemed insignificant to me. It's definition seemed not nearly as meaningful as it did when I left the Cole Transportation Museum later that day. Of course, as a child growing up in America, I was introduced to the word "freedom" at a young age. Occasionally I would be reminded of how lucky I was to possess such freedom, but never was I asked to characterize what freedom meant to me. I guess this is fitting seeing as I'm not positive that I would have had an answer. How could I possibly interpret my own definition of a word when I hardly know it's genuine meaning in the first place? To a young American with little life experience, being asked to define freedom would be similar to being asked to define "normal". You see, freedom is such a crucial part of our every day lives; it has become so common that we rarely think about it existing at all. We are so ignorant and unexposed to the world around us that we often neglect the importance of this said freedom that we've grown so accustomed to.

On that Tuesday I had the opportunity to meet some of the men and women who made it possible for us to grow up sheltered from the harsh world around us, who fought so heroically to protect our rights and freedoms. I had the pleasure and honor of meeting one man, Mr. Harold Beal, who I felt particularly moved by. Mr. Beal signed up for the U.S. Navy in 1942, just as he turned 17. In the June of 1944, his class graduated back home while he was fighting on Omaha Beach in Normandy. In an introduction of himself, Mr. Beal began by telling me that I would have to bear with him. You see, this interview was very hard for him, because he suffers from severe post dramatic stress disorder. For sixty years post-war, he could not talk about his

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experiences with anyone, even those closest to him. I became aware during the interview that he was struggling through details that he had tried so hard, for many years, to erase from his memory. Talking with Mr. Beal made the tragedy of World War II seem real to me for the first time. It was very honorable and courageous of him to share his experiences with a curious young student, and words can not describe the endless gratitude and utmost respect I have for this man.

Talking with Mr. Beal that day really put a lot of pride and admiration in my heart for all American veterans. Seeing his face cringe while recalling explicit images of his time at war gave new light to my thoughts on our precious freedom and what it costs to us. Young men and women willingly abandon their own lives and freedoms to protect ours. And the ones that make it back suffer the consequences for the rest of their lives thereafter. The toll that war has taken on our veterans, both physically and mentally, to secure our freedom is enormous. If there is one thing I learned at the Cole Transportation museum that day, it was that freedom is most definitely *not* free.

Freedom, at a glance, means independence, or being able to make decisions for oneself. It might mean being free from restrictions; free from burdens to some. In my opinion, freedom simply cannot be defined. Even the Merriam-Webster definitions seem to have little meaning. No words can describe the meaning of this seemingly simple, seven letter word after seeing it's significance so beautifully illustrated in the face of a true American patriot. Freedom, to me, is everything that makes this country so great. Most of us are not nearly as grateful for it as we should be. Sometimes we overuse our freedom by saying and doing things even though we know they aren't morally correct, just because we can. We need to realize that in other places

of the world, people don't have the choice to act as hasty and arrogantly as we sometimes do. This is why we need to appreciate our freedom, and respect those that protect it for us, by using it wisely and responsibly. Freedom is wonderful, and freedom is everything. It can't simply be defined, but it can be felt in the heart of all Americans. After talking with the veterans at the Cole Transportation Museum, I discovered feelings about what freedom meant to me that I had never come across before. I would encourage anyone who hasn't yet to do the same.

A

Cora Bishop

Category "B"

Acadia Christian School

William Prest

Mr. Carl Carlstad

Remembering

Last spring, a solemn ceremony took place at the Statehouse in Augusta. There dog tags bearing the names of servicemen from Maine who died in Iraq and Afghanistan were added to the Battlefield Cross Memorial.

Many were residents of Maine's small towns where tragedy affects everyone because everyone knows everyone. On those days small-town politics go away, and the town deals with more important matters like America and freedom.

Like others before them, these warriors answered a call-to-arms. Their contributions have been immense, and their courage is well documented. America will be forever indebted to them. Their commitment, sacrifice, and courage to freedom keeps America safe and strong.

As one mother said, "My son made up his mind on September 11, 2001, when the terrorists struck."

That day was a "blur" in my life. It went so quickly, and I have so many questions about America and its freedom. On a rainy day in October, I found my "freedom teacher" at the Cole Land Transportation Museum. Please meet my teacher, Mr. Carl Carlstad. Carl is one of the millions of Americans who have risked their lives and sacrificed so I can have freedom.

Carl talks with clarity and passion about America's freedom. He always speaks his mind. There are no questions as to why he believes what he believes.

Carl joined the military when he was nineteen-years-old, and he was in the service for more than twenty-five years. During the Vietnam War, he was trained to fly helicopters. His job was to locate enemy positions in Vietnam. After that, he worked with tanks and artillery. While he was in the service, he was shot three times - once in the face.

Carl knows much about world history because he has lived through many important events. When he speaks, the word freedom is always part of his conversation. Often he would say, "You don't realize how important your freedoms are until they are taken away." Carl believes in freedom, and you can see intensity in his brown eyes when he talks about the subject. Sometimes in conversation sadness comes over his face and tears come to his eyes when he talks about friends who died in combat - fighting for freedom.

Carl, thank you for preserving my freedom, which is part of my precious heritage. America is always battling against evil forces that are trying to take away freedom. Also, the world looks at America desiring the freedom that Americans have. So Americans must continue to cherish and protect their freedom.

Unfortunately, sometimes I forget about our freedom. Thank goodness, Carl and others, have never forgotten. They have always known the worth of the prize called freedom, and they are willing to pay for it in time, effort, and blood.

America's great treasure of freedom would be ashes if it were not for America's Veterans who have defended it. Freedom has an expensive price, and America's heroes have always answered with, "Whatever price freedom costs," so America is forever "the land of the free."

Really, is there anything greater than freedom? It is the source of America's character, dreams, and achievements.

Today, my job is to help it survive. I must never take it for granted. I must accept freedom's responsibility to help it survive, and that might require sacrifice.

Thank you, Mr. Carl Carlstad. You are a patriot and a hero. I must never forget the selfless service and sacrifice of Veterans.

Natasha Olearcek

Category "A"

Acadia Christian School

William Prest

Mr. Paul Wilbur

Freedom's Love

As I walked to the Cole Land Transportation Museum, I was a little nervous. I had never interviewed a stranger before - let alone a Veteran. Inside the museum, you quickly see and feel history. Next you are led into a conference room where orange-jacketed gentlemen with pictures and memories are seated at tables. Now I wondered which Veteran I would have the opportunity of interviewing. One man gestured for me to sit down. All my nervousness melted away, and I just knew that he had a unique story to tell. That man's name is Paul Wilbur.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Paul Wilbur was in high school, but like his father who fought in World War I, he knew he had to do his part for America. Paul signed up like so many other young men for the service and America.

Paul was off to the Marines. After basic training, he headed to the West Coast and then to the island of New Caledonia in the Coral Sea. Here there already had been fighting in the battle of the Coral Sea.

In New Caledonia, America was building its forces to stop the Japanese. Paul's job was in communication and to raise barrage balloons with cables to stop enemy planes, and it was a success.

Paul's next stop was Guadalcanal. The battle of Guadalcanal was an important victory for the Americans. Again Paul set up communication lines, and he had a job as driver with a few close calls.

Paul's next stop was Bougainville, and life was to become hotter. On November 1, 1943, the command was given, "over the side." Paul started climbing down the side of the troop carrier with a rifle and a back-pack. The minute he hit the beach the Japanese planes attacked. Paul crawled from the beach to the jungle. For twelve days, the Battle of Bougainville continued. Finally, Americans took control. Now Paul was back at his job of setting up communication lines.

With the Americal Division taking over Bougainville, Paul's unit was sent back to Hawaii to train for the invasion of Japan. However, America dropped atomic bombs on Japan. There would be no invasion. The Japanese surrendered.

Back in the United States, Paul completed his high school education like many Veterans, and later he started his own business. For Paul, life has been good. He has no complaints.

Paul Wilbur is very proud of America and its freedoms, and yet like most Veterans very humble about his accomplishments. He does not glorify war in any way like television shows or movies. A true measure of a person's greatness is the humility he shows in a world where very ordinary people cannot stop bragging about unimportant successes.

Veterans do not spend their days talking. They step forward and fight for freedom. They give of themselves - including their lives - for something greater than themselves - America's freedom.

They report to duty, and they realize that America has something special to fight for - freedom. They keep watch. They walk through enemy fire. They stuff fear deep inside. Veterans do all the dirty,

dangerous jobs people have to do to teach a lesson - freedom is worth fighting for. Along with protecting America's freedom, they have brought freedom to hundreds of millions in the world.

Freedom is priceless. Men and women all over the world desire freedom. Freedom gives people hope that life can be better. America guards this precious treasure - freedom.

Mr. Paul Wilbur, I must remember the lessons you taught me by your example and never forget them. Freedom is very special and expensive, and Veterans have always been willing to pay its price.

Americans, we owe our Veterans a great debt. Thank you, for a job well done. You did your duty. You completed your mission.

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Zackary Williams

Category "A"

Acadia Christian School

William Prest

Mr. Richard Giffard

More Than a Soldier

Once again, the residents of a small village gathered just as they did months earlier. Their hands were clasped in front of them, women dabbed their eyes, and men stared straight ahead. Most of the town filled the wooden bleachers and rows of fold-out chairs in the school's gymnasium to pay respects to the village's fallen soldier. The sobs of the widow and the click of the honor guard's heels echoed in the gymnasium.

Every resident in the village knew him. There was a video by his sisters - the baby brother they fussed over, the toddler in the cowboy boots, the brother growing up hunting and fishing, and the kid with a big smile and his old pickup truck. That day I felt despair, fear, hope, joy, and heroism.

But why do these people go - and especially so young? They go because they are good soldiers, and they are a friend to freedom. They do not want to let others down. They keep the faith like Mr. Richard Giffard did.

Richard Giffard came from Brewer. He was an exceptional ballplayer at Brewer High School - football, basketball, and baseball. With high school completed, he was drafted into the military. After training, he became an "M -1" rifle instructor.

Next stop was the Demilitarized Zone in Korea. The war was over in Korea, but there were occasional firefights with the North Koreans.

In Vietnam, he spent two tours. In his first tour, he built and manned tactical operation centers that were needed in battles. In June 1969, Richard was wounded in a mortar attack. He did not know he was wounded until his men were evacuated. Even though he was wounded, Richard continued his job of setting up radio antennas and reestablishing communications. Richard's second tour of Vietnam was at the end of the war when America was leaving South Vietnam.

Perhaps the most interesting part of Richard's military career is a story from the 1950s. Richard and his wife wanted to adopt children. But problems in adopting occurred in the United States. However, in Germany, Richard's new station, they were able to adopt Gary. But wouldn't the family be complete with a daughter? That occurred in Alabama a few years later. Now Gary had a sister Shari.

America was founded by people like Richard, who were willing to do what they knew was right. Some people pledged their lives, their futures, and their honor to America. Through America's years, America's freedoms have been preserved by Veterans who are willing to have the same beliefs in freedom.

The soldier's battle is never won, for victory is only at lease on freedom, not a deed to it. Veterans pay installments on a great debt that will never be erased as long as there is tyranny in this world against freedom. Veterans always step forward in this imperfect world and do their duty to fight for American freedom.

Now my duty is clear in honoring Veterans. I will try to live a good life and appreciate the great things about America's freedom. But most importantly, I will not forget the selfless sacrifice of America's Veterans. Americans have something special, and it isn't free. For Veterans know all too well that freedom is an expensive thing, and it is a price that they have always been willing to pay in time, effort, and blood.

Thank you, Mr. Richard Giffard. I applaud, cheer, and honor all Veterans. You command my respect and admiration. You have demonstrated "no greater love" for America.

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Braedyn Wescott

Category "A"

Acadia Christian School

William Prest

Mr. Norman Rossignol

Let Freedom Ring

Freedom is used as a word all the time, and rarely do we think about it. It is an automatic benefit at birth for every American. But freedom does have a cost. Freedom does have a price.

Americans have always paid that price. They have paid it for over 200 years. They have paid for it on land and water and in the air. They paid for it in enemy prisons. They still pay for it in hospitals, and for many a cemetery marker shows they paid the ultimate price.

American freedom depends on a constant vigilance, and a will to fight anyone, anywhere who tries to take away America's freedom. America's Veterans have met all threats to America's freedom with strength and the will to never, ever give up freedom.

Veterans are servants in a very special way. They risk their lives to protect American freedom without a promise of a thank you, and they are often forgotten.

May America's Norman Rossignols never be forgotten.

Norman Rossignal grew up on the Bradley Road. As a young man, his first job was milking cows. The money helped the family because in those days people were poor. He started high school, and then he joined the Army.

Basic training went by quickly - two weeks. Infantry forces were needed as quickly as possible in Europe. Norman crossed the Atlantic Ocean in style - the Queen Mary.

His 94th Infantry landed on Utah Beach on September 8, 1944, not long after D-Day, and Norman was quickly into action. Once on patrol a mine went off and killed people in his patrol. Norman was injured too. However, after regaining consciousness, he took command of this difficult situation. He would not let the medics treat his injuries until all other injured men were treated. For these actions, Norman received the Bronze Star for heroism.

Although he was injured, Norman continued with the 94th to the Ardennes Forest and the Battle of the Bulge. The battle saw heavy losses on both sides, from the fighting and cold. After this victory, the 94th fought to the Rhine River. At the end of the war, Norman's unit met the Russians at Czechoslovakia.

After the war, he trained to be a radio operator and was sent to Christmas Island in the South Pacific. Here in the 1960s the United States was conducting nuclear tests. Norman said the power of these bombs was scary and amazing. Luckily, he has had no physical problems from radiation.

Norman spent twenty years in the service. As Norman says, "It was the best thing I did in my life."

I am amazed and humbled by the unselfish service of Mr. Norman Rossignol and others like him. These people have sacrificed and struggled for America's freedom. Actually, people all over the world

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want freedom. However, there have been too many reminders in this world of leaders who have tried to stop freedom.

But America has freedom, and it has been preserved by Veterans who have always believed in freedom. It would have been nice to have one war a long time ago to settle freedom for everybody. However, freedom can never be completely won, and each generation of Americans must protect and sometimes fight for freedom. Like earlier Americans, we must keep up the "payments" for freedom.

Today, it is easy for average Americans as they read about the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the withdrawal of forces, and predictions after American forces leave, to forget that each "Troop" is somebody special.

Each is an individual with a family, good friends, a hometown, a unique personality, and a dream for the future. He or she is not just a soldier.

Because war is what it is, some of them do not get to return to their families. This sacrifice merits by utmost respect and gratitude.

Thank you, Mr. Norman Rossignol. Because of you and others, I have a great enjoyment in saying, "I am an American. I am free."

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