

Remembering Those Who Served on Veteran's Day



Unidentified World War II veterans return from the October 17th Never Forgotten Honor Flight, with the envelopes containing letters written to them by area students. The vets were treated to a surprise "Mail Call" on the return flight where each received about 15 letters.

Editor's Note: Mosinee area students were asked to write letters to the World War II veterans who were part of the recent October 17th *Never Forgotten Honor Flight* to Washington D.C. The Honor Flight staff brought the following two letters to the attention of *The Mosinee Times* because of their exceptional content. They are reproduced here, with the permission of the authors, as a tribute to all veterans on this Veteran's Day.

Dear Veteran of WWII,

All too often, your duties, efforts, and the service you've executed for your country go unnoticed or unacknowledged by the public that you fight so hard to protect.

How awful that must be.

Of all groups, you are the most important, the most celebrated, the most worthy of honor – you are part of the heroic number that has defended America's shores, fought on foreign ones, and experienced unspeakable horrors that we can only imagine. You are what kept – and is keeping – America the greatest country in the world. And yet, perhaps the appalling ignorance of the people causes just as much torment.

I had the privilege of singing at Pearl Harbor with my choir, Cantabile, at Mosinee High School. I admit, when I entered the sisterhood that is our girls' choir, I was much like the rest of my generation. I was young, ignorant, and generally unthinking of

war veterans, the knowledge shoved to the back of my mind. However, the year-and-a-half journey to Pearl Harbor had brought about an incredible change in us 50 teenage girls. It was a journey that, by the end, had instilled in each and every one of us an enduring, firm, immense appreciation for both veterans and current servicemen and women. America has come a great distance from its humble birth, and it would have crumbled to the ground had it not been for you and those before you.

Now, I make it a point to go up and shake the hand of each veteran that I see in the streets, to thank them for what they've done. Because it's important. It's a sign of respect and gratefulness.

Because it's right.

And now I thank you – though I know it's not enough.

That a single thank-you isn't enough to count for countless turned heads, covered ears, and years of unappreciated war, hurt, fear, and horror...

That it's not enough to cover the neglect and unappreciation of the public, to take away the ignorance...

That it's not enough to take back the way you were forgotten by so many when you came home.

But know that there are people who care. I'm one of them. There are people, even in my generation, who recognize you and love

you and respect you in the deepest way. You are a hero, and I know that you may still be fighting with the memories... but you're not alone. There are people, more than you know, who support you and honor you – people in which the flame of patriotism and love for our soldiers has not died out. You may not see us every day...

but we are there.

Thank you. For everything.
Hanna Raczek

Dear World War Veteran,

Wow, time really does fly, doesn't it? Though to me, World War II seems like a lifetime ago, I'm sure you remember it like it was yesterday. Being only sixteen, I can't really imagine, at the moment, what it feels like to remember something like it was yesterday, unless it really was yesterday.

I think that the one memory that really sticks in my mind was September 11, 2001. I was in first grade in the computer lab, when the announcement came on. It seems like most people I've met who went through World War II remember almost all of it.

I would like to personally thank you for your bravery and your dedication to our country.

I am part of the Mosinee High School Women's Cantabile Choir, and this past summer we flew to Oahu, Hawaii to perform at Pearl Harbor for the 70th anniversary of its bombing. It was one of the most amazing things I have ever seen. To be able to stand on the very ground that was, at one time, attacked by Japanese planes was very humbling. I can assure you that every one of the forty-six girls performing had trouble making it through the performance without crying.

After the concert, we took the ferry to the Arizona memorial. I didn't realize until I read the wall with all the names of the men

lost how much I had taken my country for granted.

To the kids in my school, freedom of speech loosely translates to, "Did you see what that one chick was wearing?!", and "Airport security isn't an assurance of safety, it's a hassle." I wish more people realized that we are able to live how we do because of you. Because of the sacrifices you and your troops made, we are able to live.

Last year, Cantabile was given the privilege of performing for the Honor Flight dinners and conversing with the men and women there. It was an amazing experience and it was hard for me not to cry. I really hope that I will be able to do something like that in the near future.

A distant relative of mine is a WWII veteran, I haven't met him yet, but I can't wait to talk to him. Most people think that teenagers are a bunch of selfish hooligans who don't care about their country. I really hope that you know that many of us do care about what has happened in the past, and I for one, am so grateful.

Thank you, again, so much, for your bravery and service.

Sincerely,
Sydney Haessly



Editor's Note: Hanna Raczek and Sydney Haessly are both juniors at Mosinee High School.