With my profession, I have interviewed several veterans and was offered a moment to see history through their eyes.
I have sat with a sailor who broke down in tears as he shared with me his tour of the Pacific in World War II. Proud and determined, he wept as he remembered the day commanders said his battleship wasn't "sea worthy" anymore.
"We kept telling them to let her fight," he cried, looking over the naval map of his tour. "She wasn't done yet."
I recently left one interview with a smile as I reflected over the jokes of a Korean War veteran. He was told he might not walk again, but the Purple Heart recipient stood before me with a contagious smile and zesty spirit. Holding tight to his walking brace, he stood proudly by the American flag in his front yard as I took a photograph.
I have often thought about the lost expression and far off gaze I looked into during an interview with a Vietnam veteran. He didn't say much, but what he did share with me left a permanent impression. It showed me that there are some people who are still in the war – even at home.
I was proud to shake the hand of a veteran from the War on Terrorism after one quick interview. His firm shake yet boy-like innocence in his smile reminded me that fighters are born everyday.
Regardless of age, the war they served in or the intensity of combat they experienced, veterans are heroes. And they should be honored everyday.
I once spoke with a World War II veteran about his services in Europe. He quickly opened up to me, sharing a few stories that had us both roaring with laughter. Then there were a few that left us in silence and remorse.
Years later, it dawned on me just how young the man was when he went into combat. In his 20s, he was country boy who decided it would be better to hold a rifle rather than a hoe.
He wanted to see the world. He wanted to leave the cotton fields behind and see some places he had only seen in pictures.
After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he was ready to be placed in the middle of battle. He said he was scared to death, but he felt it was the necessary thing to do to ensure his country would be safe.
"I fought so that you wouldn't have to," he told me, packing tobacco in his pipe. "You might not can understand it, but I wanted to fight because I knew our cause was just."
That man was my grandfather. James Howard Jackson probably has made the biggest impact on my life up to this point.

He taught me the Star Spangled Banner. He would correct my posture during the Pledge of Allegiance. He pounded in my head the importance of loving your country almost as much as your family.

And most importantly, he taught me how to stand up for what I believed in. Regardless if it's a losing battle, keep your wits keen and fight for what you believe in until the very end.

I see pieces of my Paw Paw in every veteran who I have interviewed in my short career. They are men and women with a sense of pride, love for their country. From generation to generation, the values remain the same.

They fought because it was the just thing to do. They fought so that future generations can continue to live happy, free lives.

Watching a WWII documentary on television with my mother one day, she asked me a question that came back to me as I prepared for the veterans series at the newspaper.

"Do you think people like that still exist," she asked.

I answered that yes, I believe the heroes we see in photographs and videos of yesterday still exist. That passion, drive, courage and love surrounds us everyday.

The men and women who have put away their uniforms or the ones who continue to shine their buttons are proof that heroes do still exist. And that "people like that" are still amongst us.

As you read over the stories of sacrifice in The Herald over the next few issues, take the time to thank the veterans in our community for their service.

But take it beyond that to show them the respect and love they deserve everyday of the year.

Better than honor and glory, and history's iron pen, was the thought of duty done and the love of his fellow-men.