

HONOR, COURAGE & SACRIFICE

Editor's note: World War II veteran Robert E. McHaney joined the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in March 1947 and retired in March 1973 as a sergeant. Now 92 years old and residing in Culver, Oregon, he sent us this reflection on his time in the military. "I enjoy the Star News and especially the Retired Deputies section," he added. "I have never written an article for your section, and I don't want to get too old to give it a try."

At 18 years old, I joined the U.S. Army, 75th Infantry, 289th Combat Team. WWII. We fought in Africa, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Awarded the European, African, Middle Eastern Campaign Ribbon with five Battle Stars.

The following is a record of the medals and certificates that I obtained during WWII and afterward:

- Was named a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by the French Republic and made a member of the American Society of the French Legion of Honor
- Shook hands with President Obama, who thanked me for my service to my country in WWII
- Was given a personal letter from Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., who also thanked me for my military service in WWII
- Received a Certificate of Senatorial Recognition from the U.S. Senate
- Received a Certificate of Commendation from U.S. Senator Harry Reid
- Received a Certificate of Recognition from the Office of the Governor of the State of Nevada, Brian Sandoval
- Was given a Certificate of Recognition from the Governor of Idaho, Dirk Kempthorne
- Was presented the Honorable Service Medal from the State of Oregon



Sergeant Robert McHaney during World War II, photographed with a captured German flag in 1945

The remainder of this ode I have carried in my heart since the year of 1942, where we saw Death face to face. When we stood up to our enemy, many terrorizing thoughts raced through the minds of our fighting forces.

"Will I live through just one more battle?"

"Will I be the last to die?"

"Does it hurt to die?"

"I am so tired of killing!"

"During the heat of battle, at times Death would be a welcome visitor. The dead look so calm and peaceful. Fear has left their hearts."

"But I am my own destiny, and my comrades will hold me to the truth."

"I will fight but never surrender!"

Today, these words live in the hearts of those who watched their families march off to war. They never live a day without a loving thought for those who made the greatest sacrifice that a warrior can bestow when defending our country. Every fighting man and woman who fought in their shadows also carries tears of sorrow, as their souls cry out in agony over the loss of a very

close comrade. Memories of long ago will never be forgotten while a mother holds that precious dream close to her grieving heart.

Where have the proud young warriors gone? The answer rests in the souls of the men and women who were witnesses as Death took these young warriors by the hand and led them out of the reach of the roar of cannon, plucked them from a fiery plane or lifted them out of the bloody waters of a distant sea.

These are the military men and women, whose faces have faded with time, whose heroic deeds were only observed by a comrade who watched through his dying eyes, as his beating heart slowed to a whisper, then spoke no more.

As long as the Stars and Stripes wave over this nation, as long as our military come to the front to march with these forgotten ghosts, the boots of tyranny will never, ever tread on the greatest nation on earth.

Beneath the pale moonlight, there lies a lonely piece of hallowed ground, its surface supporting uncounted rows of cold, white markers. Inscribed on the surface of these stones is a name, rank and date. There is never enough room to tell of the courage, sacrifices and gallantry that these warriors endured. For beneath those stone markers lie the forgotten ghosts of men and women who made that great sacrifice so that freedom will live in our lives forever.

There, beneath each and every stone, lies a heroic ghost who fought to the last shell, making the ultimate sacrifice for our country. There are no cowards on the great fields of battle, and when the drums and bugles fall silent, a voice will rise over the clouds of war, proclaiming, "They were intrepid, their cause was great, they gave more than just their lives. They gave the born and unborn a heritage that will live forever, under the undaunted threads of the Stars and Stripes that wave so proudly over the greatest land on earth. Your country salutes you." ☆