

Intro: Hello, I am Claire Manthei, an 8th grade student at Central Middle School. And, I want to first thank the local VFW for the opportunity to write my response to the Patriot's Pen Essay prompt: My pledge to our veterans . This allowed me to learn more about my grandpa's story as a veteran and share it with others.

My grandpa was in the Vietnam War, or how he says it, "Viet Nam". For the longest time, Grandpa didn't want to talk about the war and his experiences there. In 1992, Grandpa finally started to talk about his experiences in the Vietnam War when my Aunt wrote a paper about it. Then, about four to five years ago, he shared his photos and slides with my family. Now, he proudly wears his veteran's hat, and people thank him for his service wherever he goes. My pledge to veterans is to help and respect them, no matter what part they played in the war.

There are many ways to help and show respect to veterans. First, you can always take the opportunity to thank a veteran for their service. I know this brings my grandpa joy. Second, if you see a veteran in need, you can offer help. Third, you can ask a veteran about their service and experiences if they are willing to share so that we can learn from them. Lastly, veterans have been through a lot and deserve respect. They fought because they love

this country or because they were drafted, like my grandpa. Doing these things shows that you respect them.

My grandpa was drafted into the Vietnam War. He was assigned to be a medical corpsman. He was trained at Fort Lewis Washington. Before grandpa finished his training, he received his orders for Vietnam and left for southeast Asia in November 1969. He was given orders that he would be joining the 11th Armored Cavalry. My grandpa was assigned to the 1st Platoon in H-Co, a tank company of M-48 tanks. They were located in the jungle off the Cambodian border. As a medic, he witnessed a lot of fighting, deaths and injuries while there. It took my grandpa several decades to share about his time in the war because of his experiences. Sharing his experiences and the fact that he fought in the war wasn't appreciated by many Americans because of the political views about the war. Many soldiers were spit on and yelled at and discriminated against for their service.

In conclusion, veterans deserve to be respected. They have lived through and experienced things we cannot even begin to imagine. Many people didn't have a choice because they were drafted. Showing kindness and compassion and helping veterans are great ways to show respect.

