A Selfless Pride
By Jeremy Loutensock

As a child growing up in an age of media and entertainment, I became very familiar with heroic scenes of men dressed in uniforms, ranging from blue overcoats to lightweight camouflage, carrying everything from flintlock muskets to modern fully automatic weapons.

I watched in awe as scenes flashed across movie screens and through documentary photographs: scenes of struggle, scenes of triumph, scenes of longing and scenes of tragedy.

“Why would those men do that?” I wondered as a naive child. “What could possibly be worth enduring such hardship and loss?”

In those days, there was no war. Indeed for the first eight years of my life, I was blessed to live in an era of peace for the United States. At that time, seeing a man or woman dressed in camouflage meant nothing more to me than the realization that “Wow! He gets to shoot guns!”

Answers to my questions did not come until long after 9/11, when a boy that I knew from my church in Sterling enlisted in the Marine Corps. Shortly after graduating high school, he left for boot camp.

The next time I saw my friend, what a sight he was. He came to church decked out in his dress blues, standing tall and erect, but most memorable was the look in his eyes.

There I saw the pride of a boy who had become a man—a man who I have not seen since. He left for Afghanistan that week.

Occasionally I will receive news about my friend. He's married now, has a kid on the way, and he recently received a purple heart after he survived a severe roadside bombing. But still I can picture him as he was standing in the lobby of my small church.

Where could this pride have come from? I believe the source of our military's pride to be the same source from which civilians gain respect for such individuals. A source profound yet discrete. From simple observation one can see that our nation's defenders have much to be proud of.

After all, some of the most intelligent and capable individuals in the country come from our military, whether it be the physical endurance of an infantryman, the sharply honed reflexes of a pilot, or the immense intellectual capacity of a field technician.

Yet this is not why I respect our country's servicemen and women, and I believe the pride I saw in my friend that day came from another source as well.

I believe the true pride of our military is one that cannot be found by simple observation nor obtained by mere repetition. For me, it is the selfless existence that prompts me to thank strangers in camouflage for their service. Those brave individuals sacrifice their time. Many leave wives and children, and throughout American history, millions have given their lives so that each of us can wake up every morning without fear of what the day holds in store. Isn't that something to be proud of? Isn't that worth taking 30 seconds to shake a hand and say, "thank you?"

It amazes me to think that some of the classmates that I have gone to school with for nearly 12 years will soon be entering the armed forces. I don't know what the future holds for them, but I know that they too will become the type of person who can walk with pride, and who will earn a nation's respect and gratitude.

Call it what you will—pride, honor, selflessness or charity. It is clear in my mind that no matter what title the trait is given, our soldiers and veterans have it, and it comes from serving in our nation's military.

Justifiable Self-Respect
By Matt Wilcox

July the fourth, 1776; December the seventh, 1941; September the eleventh, 2001. These are not merely dates in history, these are dates when American history was changed, altered and spun on a dime. On each of these days, the way Americans lived would never be the same.

Around 60 years ago, the United States was engaged in the second World War. Sixty years ago, volunteered and drafted soldiers were defining themselves on a beach in northern France under a hail of bullets and rocket fire. Sixty years ago, if you were to ask, “Is there pride in serving in our military?” you might be curtly told to enlist yourself and find out, or you may get laughed at for asking such a ridiculous question.

While today we may not have posters of Rosie the Riveter or Uncle Sam proclaiming “I Want You,” there is still immense support for our armed forces. So why is a question such as this being asked?

Webster would define pride as “justifiable self-respect,” taking away the aspect of arrogance that grotesque amounts of pride can carry. The question asked is the one that seems to solve itself, and would appear to some people as an irrelevant and even pointless topic. Is there self-respect in joining our military? Of course there is, and it is most definitely justifiable.

The men and women who enlist in the modern military do the exact same duty that their predecessors did, and their successors will do: defend their nation and its ideals of “freedom for all” at any cost. Throughout all of American history, military men and women have spearheaded

the majority of our most important events and dates.

The day of the aforementioned 4th of July, in that steaming hot room in Philadelphia, the fathers of this nation were signing a document that was to smash to pieces the chains of British rule. America became the first nation to win independence from Britain through war, and the pioneering Commander in Chief himself was the great General George Washington.

Surely being a part of that legacy by serving in the modern militia is enough to answer this question, right? To some, perhaps that's reason enough. To others, the history reference can appear as simply a marketing ploy.

On a Sunday morning in 1941, the United States was suddenly snowballed by an onslaught of Axis fire raining down from the skies. Battleship Row crippled, an important air base in flames and over two thousand soldiers dead; but America did not flinch, did not fail.

Rather, she found herself capable of dusting herself off from the attack, engaging the Axis powers in war, and claiming victory in the end. To small children, America's tragic synopsis of World War II may seem fairy tale in nature. But as many fairy tales go, America came out on top.

The question presented to me may be one that some people are perplexed by due to the simplicity of its inquiry. So my response comes as no surprise: yes, there is undeniable, glorious, patriotic pride in serving in our military. There always has been, and there always will be. As long as our young men and women are on the front lines protecting our freedom we will continue to support them in every way we know how.

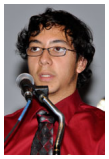
We are free in this land, because the brave calls this their home. They are the guardians of a declaration of independence and freedom to all, the protectors of our way of life, and the defenders of the United States of America.

They are American soldiers.

By Ben Martinez

The time has come for the future of America to acknowledge the sacrifice that many men and women have bestowed for their country ... and for us, for we as united citizens shall not falter under the evil of our own humanity.

By humanity of course I mean the selfishness, brutality, and power-hungry attitudes we use to create war. But on the other end there are those who try to prevent it, the military men and women of our nation. And with those who fight comes pride in what they stand for.



A military might mean different things to different people. For instance, an agent of the secret service who I had the privilege to speak to while I was in Washington, D.C., began only seeing his military service to come, as a job. Change of course overcame his perception.

Work has to come with its pride, whether it is the pride of bringing food to the table or the pride of loving what you do. To have so much pride for one's work that they would die for it boggles my mind.

One might not die as a school teacher but for religion or freedom one might give everything away.

Military as a whole has pride in itself, for it is created as a substantial force of protection, not just for our country in general but for worldwide liberty. With many savage leaders who create war,

there must be a parallel amount of force to undue their savagery. We are proud to go across the lands of the world and fight for what we think is right. Anyone who would not would regret it.

People might ask, “do we need war?” The answer is a subtle yes, not because it is our choice but our obligation to humanity itself. The importance of our race’s liberty is far more important than a single life.

That is what I believe the military men of our nation believe when they fight. So is there pride in that fact? Yes. Protection and the importance of our liberty stands over all.

Of course we have come to see through war, a practice of immorality. Some might believe that the murder, fighting, destruction and an overall slaughter of our own kind should itself correlate to the fact that war is not something to be proud of, but we are talking about more than war.

Our military was not established to create war but prevent it. It is made of people taking the responsibility of defending one’s land and values. They stood in front, protecting the greater good, something that seemed more important to them than their own lives. The greater cause here is that of the men, women and children who want to live free.

They sacrifice their life, leave their family behind, do personally immoral things, but only to accomplish that greater good. That is sacrifice. We must remember the greater reason for a military is for safety and creating peace not to murder sensuously.

Under no circumstances do I as an individual believe killing is good. But, killing has the power to create good. How else would we have defended ourselves from the well seen Afghanistan Taliban, and the Germany and Japan of the 1940s?

Winston Churchill once said, “You may have to fight when there is no hope of victory, because it is better to perish than live as slaves.”

Whoever is not proud of the sacrifices they have made, or if those sacrifices do not deserve pride, then that one person is living in a dark soulless world.

Why? Because their actions condemned them and their moral compass told them what they did was wrong. I know I would never once look back at the land of the free and deem our military actions wrong.

As would Mr. Bernard who once said, “I would not think twice of bombing Japan again,” in our eighth grade social studies class.

No one can look to a soldier and see a demon, but a man with a heart and soul of steel who stood up in front of death itself. It is easy to fight when you are indestructible, and just as easy to cower in terror when death stares you in the face. It is not so easy to look it straight back in the face.

Traveling through Washington, D.C. not too long ago really opened my idea of America. The monuments, flags and tourists made me feel the American pride everyone should have. I then thought to myself, killing is wrong, and war is wrong, but in an evil world killing one to save a thousand stands overall.

Peace and the good will crawl out of the deep crevices of the darkness that we have created. Our military are those who are creating that crevice for the light to fill the dark, but risking the chance of falling in. They are the few, the proud and the true heroes of our world.

By Trevor Dalton

If someone were to ask General William Westmoreland if there is pride in serving in our military,

he might answer, “When the soldiers came home from Vietnam, there were no parades, no celebrations. So they built the Vietnam Memorial for themselves.”

These Vietnam War soldiers had pride in what they accomplished. My grandfather, Max Bernard, is a war veteran of World War II and every day he is proud to wake up and be able to say he fought and won for this country.

Is there pride in serving in our military? I interviewed my grandfather to see what kind of pride he had for himself and his country. While interviewing my grandfather about his famous war stories that he has told a hundred times, I could see the pride in his face and the pride in his work choice.

On a cold, dreary morning in 1943 Max Bernard decided to volunteer for the Navy draft. His decision was based off his own intuition and pride with no help from his parents. Many young men from Max’s small town had entered the draft, but a few didn’t, known as draft dodgers.

Draft dodgers would do everything in their power to avoid the draft, whether it be faking an illness, lying about a physical disability or quickly applying to work for a nearby farmer.

Draft dodgers had no pride in even attempting to fight for their country, unlike Max and the other men who risked their lives. Shortly after applying, Max was drafted and shipped off to boot camp in Farragut, Idaho. There he learned everything a U.S. soldier learns for the field of battle.

Max later went onto hospital corps school and was drafted into the Marines and became a Marine Corpsman.

So, the stage was set. Easy Company 2nd Battalion 5th Marines was the first Marine division to hit the beaches of Okinawa. Saying constant prayers with butterflies in his stomach and a heart

full of pride, Max Bernard stormed the beach. During the battle, the 1st Marine Division had pushed the Japanese into an area known as Hill 81.

Max, serving as a Marine Corpsman, went around to every injured soldier and patched him up and put him back on his feet. After an intense and grueling battle, all of the soldiers were sitting trying to get their state of mind back to normal when a colleague of Max's said, "Man, that was a close one, Bernard."

With a sigh of relief, Max answered, "Yeah, it was." Then the soldier said, "No, look at your helmet."

As Max took off his helmet and examined it, he found an indentation from a bullet. During the entire fight he never noticed being shot in the helmet, but he had the pride to not let it get the best of him and he was able to finish his time in Okinawa.

On Max's way home, his helmet with the indentation was stolen and was never seen again. While he was overseas, Max was fighting for his country while supporting his family with his steady pay. His parents were able to live off of his pay. Max's pride shines today because he was able to support his family while serving the land of the free and the home of the brave.

After almost losing his life, Max had the pride to finish what he had started. Max had the pride not to let what happened get in his head and take over his actions.

He was also proud to say that he supported his family while serving in our military.

Every month's salary that Max got was sent right to the United States for his family. His family was proud that he was doing everything he possibly could to help them out and serve his country.

Max was later shipped to China and after three and a half years overseas, he was able to come

home and live the rest of his life in the country that he proudly served. Max fought bravely and full of pride for our country.

America is a safer place today because of him and every other soldier and veteran in our country. The statement, “pride is no different today than it was in WWII” is an arguable statement. Americans are proud of current soldiers that risk their lives today and Americans are proud of the veterans that served many years ago.

I never really thought about how proud I was for my grandfather until I interviewed him about his war days. I can visualize the stories that he told me.

My grandfather is one special man to be able to say that he fought and won for his country. Max’s parents may have been the proudest of them all. They didn’t even want him to go into the military in the first place, but when the war was said and done, they were the proudest parents alive.

People today may not understand what soldiers and military families go through each and every day and what veterans went through.

The next time you hear of a soldier that has been killed overseas, think of the pride that soldier had and think of the pride their family members had for them.

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