

Generations

Thank you to all our veterans

According to www.military.com, every day we lose 500 World War II veterans. In just a few short years, most of these amazing heroes will have passed into history. But history doesn't forget and neither should we, especially on Memorial Day when flags are lowered at half-staff and parades celebrate all veterans who served our country.

I especially loved a quote from Ronald Reagan: "Some people live an entire lifetime and wonder if they have ever made a difference in the world. A veteran does not have that problem."

Here's a touching story from the Huffington Post. After stopping in a Dunkin' Donuts, Samantha Brown returned to her car to find an envelope left under her windshield wipers. Inside she found two \$20 bills and a note that read: "I noticed the sticker on the back of your car. Take your hero out to dinner when he comes home. Thank you both for serving. Him deployed and you waiting." — United States Veteran / God Bless.

The sticker on the back of Ford's car read "Half my heart is in Afghanistan" and the heart was in reference to her boyfriend Albert John DeSimone, serving abroad in the Army. Ford, who lives outside of Boston, went home and posted a photo of the anonymous gift on Facebook, as it was too early to call her boyfriend. Above the photo she said, "There are no words to describe how I'm feeling right now. Tears in my eyes. I just wish I could thank whoever did this! God bless our troops and all of those who stand behind them."

The picture instantly went viral, racking up more than 1.2 million likes and 142,000 shares. When Ford was finally able to tell DeSimone the touching story, he said, "It's

people like this who make me proud to be an American soldier."

And from www.theweek.com, a story entitled, "The Homeless Veteran Hero," tells about



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Staff Sgt. Royal who served 10 years in the Army. It was that battlefield training that helped the homeless Seattle veteran save a friend's life one summer night. Royal was just a few blocks away when an argument escalated outside a bar, and an unidentified man shot the homeless man he was fighting with. The victim ran down the street before collapsing.

Royal quickly came to his aid. The bullet had struck the man's femoral artery and Royal knew he had to act fast. He used a belt as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding and the man was transported to a nearby hospital. The man survived thanks to Royal's quick thinking and medical training, but he didn't stick around for any accolades. His only comment was, "I'm just glad I was there."

Also, from www.theweek.com, Ed Bray stormed the beach at Normandy during World War II, earning two purple hearts. However, the toughest thing the 89-year-old said he had to face in his life was his illiteracy. For decades, Bray went to extraordinary efforts to keep his inability to read or write a secret. While on the job at an Air Force base, he had a coworker help him with documents. At home, his wife did the same for 62 years until her death in 2009. Finally, the determination to shed the shame and learn how to read broke through. "I want to read one book," he said. "I don't care if it's about Mickey

Mouse. I want to read one book before I die."

So, in early 2013, Bray found Professor Tobi Thompson at Oklahoma's Northeastern University. Her patient and dedicated attitude helped Bray accomplish what he never thought possible and the first book he read all by himself was a grade-school biography of George Washington. "It just makes me feel good," Bray said.

Arthur Boorman was a paratrooper in the first Gulf War. His service was difficult on his body, and he eventually lost much of the use of his back and knees, forcing him to rely on wheelchairs and canes. Doctors told him he would never walk without crutches again. Depressed and immobile, Boorman gained a lot of weight. Desperate, he contacted yoga instructors for fitness help, but most said it wasn't possible.

However, wrestler-turned-yogi Diamond Dallas Page accepted Boorman's condition as a challenge, and really believed in the 47-year-old veteran. The portly vet struggled to walk and lost count of the number of times he fell flat on his face. But with determination, he shed pounds, gained strength and flexibility, and finally was able to walk without any help. His comment: "Never underestimate what you can accomplish when you believe in yourself."

And what better way to end this column than a quote from John F. Kennedy from a past Memorial Day speech: "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter the words, but to live by them."

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