



## 2014-15 VFW Patriot's Pen First Place National Winner

### Why I Appreciate America's Veterans

Pennsylvania

*By Ethan E. Schroeder*

Senator John Hoeven tells us, "From the world wars of Europe to the jungles of the Far East, from the deserts of the Middle East to the African continent, and even here in our own hemisphere, our veterans have made the world a better place and America the great country we are today." The Senator's words reveal two important reasons why veterans should be appreciated...those who serve in the Armed forces are always needed, and they truly do make a difference.

We should appreciate our veterans because our military is always needed and has been from the time of our country's birth. Our veterans have braved combat and defended our freedom from the Revolutionary War through current international conflicts. They haven't just served during major wars, but have also aided other nations in need of protection during smaller, no less deadly struggles. Especially when these battles are little known and unsung, the brave troops who have risked their lives should be remembered and esteemed. Even beyond the battlefield, however, the armed forces have been needed for life-saving work, such as building bridges, clearing forests, and providing the means of survival for citizens both locally and abroad. They've responded to natural disasters and brought hope to victims of hurricanes, earthquakes and floods. We need to appreciate our veterans because no matter the circumstances of the time, whether in peace or in war, brave soldiers in uniform are always needed.

Veterans should be honored not just because we need them, but also because they make a difference. They motivate us to be less selfish and more considerate. Their sacrifice of time away from loved ones and their willingness to risk their lives inspires gratitude and awe. Even after serving, they demonstrate generosity. They don't expect special rewards and continue to serve as parents, businessmen, construction workers, and professors. They are role models of caring, both in how they treat their living neighbors and how they respect their honored dead. Who can possibly be unmoved when a uniformed color guard presents a flag to a soldier's widow, or fires a 21-gun salute at a comrade's graveside?

I appreciate America's veterans because every generation needs them, and they enrich our lives. I thank the servicemen I meet in grocery stores and airports. They smile back, pleasantly surprised. They never expect gratitude, and perhaps that's the very reason they deserve it most.