VFW PATRIOT'S PEN 2015-2016

Shane Stafford

Nevada

First place $5,000 National Patriot's Pen Winner

What Freedom Means to Me

Robert Green Ingersoll once said, "What light is to the eyes, what air is to the lungs, what love is to the heart, liberty is to the soul of man." Each soul needs a morsel of freedom to fulfill its potential. Just like everyone else, freedom is important to my well-being. My life would be very different without the freedom I have today.

I feel that education runs on freedom. I have lived on three different continents and experienced many different versions of freedom and education. Almost half of the children of the world do not get schooling, and if they do it is at a very high price. In Cyprus, the teachers are allowed to beat the children they teach. I feel very lucky that I am an American citizen and have the chance to learn in such a great school.

Everyone likes to be in control of their lives. Many people, however, are living under harsh laws and restraints. I once had a piano teacher who grew up in a communist state where he was forced from the age of ten to study chemistry and music. Most of us like making our own decisions. In different countries my education, occupation, and recreation choices could be limited.

Many countries today have fleeing citizens; we in America are lucky and have nothing to run from. A very important right is the ability to move about freely, without restrictions. Some countries have very strict curfews, and do not allow their citizens to cross the border. My mom and dad met in Germany while the Berlin wall still divided the city. If they had been on opposite sides of the wall, my mom and dad could not have met each other. I still have good friends from many different countries that I would not have ever met if I did not have the privilege to travel freely.

Freedom affects every part of my life from schooling and careers to friendships. To me freedom is like a huge room. If my freedoms were decreased, my room would shrink until I had no rights. My spirit would not only lose its liberty, I would lose all the air for my lungs to function, and all the light for my eyes to see.