

A LETTER TO AN EDITOR  
Please read and remember.

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## A GENERATION OF MEN WILL SOON BE GONE

Dear Editor:

Today, I attended a funeral of an old soldier of the Silver Wings Squadron from World War II, Sergeant Wayne Grant. In a little country church in Texas lay the body of an old soldier. A soldier whose breast was covered with medals and a pair of silver wings. He was surrounded by old, but proud, uniformed men of the Silver Wing Squadron of San Antonio who fought in World War II. As I looked down on that old soldier whose once strong and tireless heart beat in that powerful chest of medals pinned against his breast, but no more will this strong and powerful man be there for the USA.

This old soldier did as many others. He parachuted into France on that cold and stormy morning in Normandy into an invasion, fighting his way throughout France to victory.

As they carried the old warrior's casket down the aisle, there were sobs and tears from family and friends which filled the church all the way out to the front lawn.

As the hearse wound its way slowly down the winding Hill Country road, my thoughts kept running back to that brave and wonderful lad who so willingly offered himself up to his country and his fellow men. But no longer can this old warrior and his generation be there to protect the rights and freedom of every man, woman and child.

As the hearse pulled into that country cemetery, a very humble and sincere crowd stood weeping as this giant of a man was laid to rest.

He fought to keep men free as did other proud men of his generation.

And the valiant effort in battle evidenced by the medals upon his breast. The tired old country preacher with tears in his eyes quoted the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and gently stated that this old warrior had paid his debt and would live again in the

great heaven where we all would meet some precious day. Then as the evening's sunlight cast a glow upon his casket he was lowered into the grave and there was one last salute by all his comrades in uniform and the flag was then folded and handed to his aging widow. "So long, old Buddy" was heard from the Silver Wing Squadron as they turned and walked away hiding their own tears in their manly eyes.

As I stood there with tears in my eyes, I wondered about this generation of men who will soon be gone, if they will then be remembered as the valiant men who saved the world from tyranny and enslavement. Men who walked proudly in their youth into battle after battle with the knowledge in their heart that they were fighting for the world as well as our wonderful nation. Where, I wonder, do such men come from. This old soldier was from a little East Texas farming community. He lied about his age in order to be old enough to enlist into the Army to fight for his country and freedom of all men.

On the long trip driving back alone, I thought as I wept... I wondered if it was because this wonderful warrior was gone or the fact that a whole army of us were going away and never to be here again, to protect our young nation and our wonderful sons and daughters. Will our grandchildren ever believe what was done by these gallant men to guarantee the freedom and rights of every man, woman and child? Will they cherish those rights and be willing to stand as one against any and all tyrants who would threaten this wonderful country and all who aspire for freedom and justice?

Let me say, that as long as this generation of gallant old men remain, there will be guardians like the man in the casket who will stand to the last man to give their life for their honor, glory of God and their country.

Vern Thrower  
1995

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ESSAY OF THE YEAR. In the field of literature, the above writing would fall into the category of an "essay". This particular essay was chosen by your historian, Harold Branton, as the essay of the year, 2006. (Vern THROWER, Company I, 409th Infantry.)