

## Wild Bill Guarnere Legacy Award Essay

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I was around eight years old when I first learned about World War II.

It was a mildly interesting, unrealistic subject that I struggled to comprehend and didn't really understand. Why would a man want to kill millions for their religious views? That's something I will always wonder, no matter how many "reasons" I hear. The sacrifices made so that my country and many others could be free went so far above my head, I didn't even bother looking up. It happened, it's done, why bother thinking about it? It wasn't until years later did I finally open my eyes and turn my gaze to the sky. By the time I came across Band of Brothers, I was a bit more learned about the fiercest war this nation has ever faced, yet I still did not fully grasp the depth of the sacrifices thousands of normal American men gave. My initial reasons to watch the HBO show Band of Brothers were superficial: it had many actors I like in a setting that I had limited knowledge on, so I was interested.

It soon became apparent that for me that the show was a lot more than acting about a war that happened nearly 80 years ago. This was a story, this was real people. I remember very few times in my life that I have cried as hard as I did after finishing episode seven and sitting back to reflect on what I had learned and now understood. It was so hard to finally feel the things the American soldiers did for us. The intense depth of what these men gave for our nation affected to what felt like my very soul. After finishing the show, I went about conducting personal research into the men of Easy Company, which brings me to the focus of this essay.

Why are the members of Easy Company still important in the world today? Well, the short answer is because we will never stop needing extraordinary men like them.

We look to the boys that strapped parachutes to their backs and jumped into Europe for a number of things. Among some, Maj. Richard Winters' exemplary leadership and strategic prowess, T-4 George Luz's wonderful sense of hope & fun, and of course Sgt. Bill Guarnere's incredible courage and give-em-hell spirit. These are but a few of the brave soldiers the kids of today should view as role models and true Americans. Their character truly defines them, and their willingness to challenge themselves to be the best of the best is a testament to these men's drive and motivation.

There are so many tragedies and injustices happening in today's world and one can only wonder what it would be like if there were more people alive like those of Easy. I think back to reading about how Sgt.

Guarnere risked his own life to try and drag his friend Joe Toye to safety after he lost his leg- in the middle an artillery barrage at that, and losing his own leg in the process. I know nobody who would have the guts to do that, myself included, which only goes to show what frankly astounding people they became. As my grandparents like to say, they just don't seem to make people like that today, and it's remarkable to know that such incredible people have protected this country. That makes me feel that the marks of a good soldier and honest man make a great leader, like I learned from Maj. Winters. Building off the values these men instilled and defended is so important to help teach a future generation of local and global leaders.

Easy Company is also vital for helping keep the legacy of WWII alive. For a lot of kids like me, history isn't that accessible feeling until it becomes relatable. Knowing that the 506th PIR were just a bunch of average citizens that went on to do so many not-average things allows students to appreciate the breadth of what these soldiers did for America. The real "Band of Brothers" help us to remember America's historic past through their valiance, compassion, and lasting impacts of charity and camaraderie. Generations later, their legacy lives on and firmly proves that the bravery of these men will live on.

In a world of ordinary and standard people, several men chose to become an unprecedented type of revolutionary in the name of freedom, and left their forever mark on history.