

Neighborhood Heroes: Life Lessons from Maine's Greatest Generation

Morgan Rielly

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Inspired by the old African proverb: "When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground," high-school student Morgan Reilly sought to preserve as many Maine libraries as he could by interviewing men and women from Maine who served in World War II and preserving their stories. All of these veterans taught him something, too, not just about how to fight a war, but how to live a life. They were never preachy, never full of themselves. Each of them knew they had participated in something great and special, but none of them thought that they, themselves, were great or special. There was Fred Collins, the sixteen-year-old Marine who used his Boy Scout training to clip a wounded soldier's chest together using safety pins from machine gun bandoliers while under withering fire on Iwo Jima. Or Inex Louise Roney, who served as a gunnery instructor for the Marines, hoping she could end the war sooner and bring her brother home. Or Harold Lewis, who held onto hope despite being shot down out of the sky, nearly free-falling to his death, and spending four months behind enemy lines in Italy. Or jean Marc Desjardins, whose near-death experiences defusing German bombs with his buddy Puddinghead, taught Reilly the value of a good friend.



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