

The Courage of Our Veterans

The Battle of Okinawa was the last and biggest of the Pacific island battles of World War II. It involved the U.S. Army against the Japanese Army. At stake were air bases in between the Allied forces and the projected final invasion of Japan to bring an end to the war.

The 82-day-long battle lasted from April 1 to June 22, 1945.

One early morning, Eric Grant strapped 30 pounds of ammunition and explosives to his already-overloaded back, hopped on a resupply truck and headed toward a rendezvous point. There were 12 soldiers in each truck of a convoy of six vehicles.



The front end of the truck was packed with hospital beds. At the time, they were empty, but within hours, they would be full.

The first several miles were rather smooth. Grant could close his eyes and almost see the front-porch swing at his home. Then suddenly, he was jolted back to Okinawa by the sound of an explosion and gunfire. The front of the truck started smoldering and filling with smoke.

Grant picked up his rifle and jumped over the tailgate, off the truck and onto his feet. He could hear bullets whizzing by his head. He thought they sounded kind of like the buzz of bumble bees. Standing there, he remembered that he had 30 pounds of ammunition and explosives strapped to his back.

He fell to the ground and began to crawl toward safety and the tree line at the edge of the road. About halfway to cover, he looked back and could see that the truck was on fire. He knew that besides the hospital beds, there were also two cases of grenades – and 11 other men.

Grant was faced with a choice – keep crawling and save himself or go back and risk death. It only took a second for him to drop the backpack of ammunition and start crawling back toward the truck. He remembers grabbing limp bodies and the two cases of grenades (which, if exploded, would have killed them all), and throwing them over the side of the truck.

Later, Eric Grant received recognition from the Army for his bravery that day. He was able to save the lives of three of the 11 men by pulling them from the burning truck. He was the only thing that stood between those three men and certain death.

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That brand of loyalty, unity and love is hard to find.

Stories of heroism under fire, like this one, however, abound in the history of our Armed Forces. Men and women who put on the uniform of the United States of America do so because of their love for this country and a compelling desire to preserve the freedoms we hold so dear.

Today, we honor veterans – those living and dead. They deserve the tributes of a grateful nation.

– Beecher Hunter