

Third Place – Grace Dummitt

What Service Means

It was 1968 and after a twenty hour flight, my grandpa, James Michael Dummitt, stepped off the military plane into the humid, sweltering heat of Vietnam. It was here that he would serve his fourth and last year as a noncommissioned officer in the United States Air Force, translating enemy messages from China that were sent in morse code. He had spent the last three years in Biloxi, Mississippi, teaching morse code reflex typing but now, he would do exactly what he had taught for eight hours a day. They marched for twenty minutes everyday, often through torrential rain and even monsoons in order to get to their work stations. "...it was a typical, military life without being on the front lines."

My Grandpa may not have served on the front lines, but his job was still important. He had to sacrifice a lot to serve in the military; my grandma was 8667 miles away from him in Cincinnati, Ohio for an entire year. Sending message back and forth was nothing compared to actually spending time with his wife. Sacrifice is one of the most important parts of service. When asked how this service affected his life, my grandpa said that it "made me realize the importance of service, ...being willing to sacrifice, because you sacrifice a lot when you leave your family. Just made me a better person." Hearing my grandpa's words made me realize that any service, but especially military service means giving up parts of your life for others; it means being committed, altruistic, and kind in a way that gives value to other people. To my Grandpa, service "gave me a feeling of patriotism, that I served my country...with honor and integrity."