

2022 Veterans Day Essay Contest Awards

**Elementary School Winner Azaylea Olson 5th Grade Silver
Mesa Elementary**



BIO

My name is Azaylea Olson, named after my dad's favorite flower. I love to sing, draw, and dance. I take ballet/jazz and tumbling dance classes. I just turned 11 years old and celebrated my birthday in my favorite place the mountains. My favorite colors are teal, pink and purple. I have two brothers and one sister.

I really like learning, I especially enjoy learning about our worlds history in 5th grade. I also love math and reading. My favorite food is fettuccine alfredo with chicken and broccoli. I also love spending time with my veteran. He is my grandfather I call him Poppy. My favorite is playing cribbage with him.

ESSAY

Why I Am Proud of My Veteran

I am proud of my veteran because he served in the Navy. Jim Weakland began serving in the Navy, on August 22, 1962, when he went from Johnstown, Pennsylvania on a train to San Diego, California and arrived on August 25, 1962. He went to boot camp for 16 weeks. He was up at 6 and was in bed by 10. He washed his clothes on cement tables.

He marched 8 hours a day for the first 6 weeks, and then went to put on gas masks to go through burning buildings for 2 weeks. Then he learned about the M1 rifle for a week. The next 3 weeks he marched The Grinder. For week 16 he passed in review to commanding officer and his staff. After graduation, he and 2 other guys stayed in San Diego and went to Radioman "A" School.

After graduation he was assigned to the naval air station in Kodiak, Alaska. While stationed there, there was an earthquake on March 27, 1964, aka good Friday. At 5:36 p.m. a 9.2 earthquake struck!

He climbed a mountain behind his barracks because of a tsunami warning and watched as the tsunami rolled up 40 feet high. The tsunami took 6 planes off the runway into the water. They had to fish the planes out of the water. His job there was as a teletype operator with a "top-secret" crypto clearance.

In June of 1964 he and 3 other guys drove down the Alcan a 3000-mile ride to Seattle Washington. Once in Seattle they drove to the airport to give the car (a 1956 ford) to someone at the airport. Then the 4 of them split up, each flying to their home state for 2 weeks leave.

After the leave was over, he flew from Pittsburgh to Long Beach California where he boarded the USS Kearsarge (CVS 33). He left Long Beach July 27 in route to Vietnam, arriving on August 4, 1964. Their duty station was in the Gulf of Tonkin. They provided air support with soldiers on the ground. His enlistment was supposed to be up August 22, 1966, but there were no flights to the states for 30 days, so they extended his enlistment until September 29, 1966.

Lastly, I am proud of my Poppy, my grandfather, for serving in the military when he didn't have to. He didn't necessarily have a job that put him in much danger, but his job was very important as he was responsible for sending top secret information to our troops, so they had all the information they needed to be safe themselves. He is my veteran and my hero.