

Hello, my name is Gunner Mann. I am in sixth grade attending Saint Bridget School and my hometown is Richmond, Virginia. The person I would like to talk about is from Fredericksburg, Virginia, and he is my grandfather, Jim Mann. He is from my father's side of my family and just this year died of Alzheimer's disease. He is important to me because I never knew my other grandfather, but I knew this one. I have so many good stories of bravery and kindness that I want everyone to hear, that I probably won't be able to fit them all into one essay, but I'll try.

My grandfather was a helicopter pilot in the Vietnam War, but also a newspaper writer, husband and father of three, one of whom is my father. He loved to make people laugh and I think we should all try to make people laugh.

He went to the University of Iowa and was in the Army ROTC (reserve officer training corps) program there, and when he got out he was sent to Vietnam as a pilot. In Vietnam he was a lieutenant and company platoon leader of the 128th Assault Helicopter Company. There, in just one year he managed to accumulate over 1000 hours of combat flight doing assault missions, aerial resupply missions, and other flights. He flew a Huey, a utility helicopter that was made to do many different missions, and he loved that helicopter dearly.

Now onto the stories. My favorite is the story of a rescue mission he flew. He was almost back to the base after one of his resupply missions when he heard through his radio that another helicopter had recently been shot down. He made a decision to go and rescue those men. He had to fly low so that his gunners could clear the way. They eventually made it to that wounded crew and successfully rescued them. Another story that I really like is when he was flying an assault mission and his helicopter was hit by enemy fire so many times that when he was able to get back to base, the mechanics stopped counting bullet holes. He later earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses for his actions on these two missions.

During his time in Vietnam he started doing something he loved, writing. The newspaper he made for his base was called the "Smoke Signal." He used it to give a humorous distraction to all that was going on during the war. He also was able to send articles back home to the Free-Lance Star newspaper in his hometown to keep the general public informed about what was going on in Vietnam.

I would like anyone reading or listening to this essay just to remember that we should all laugh more and try to make others laugh just like my grandfather did throughout his entire life, and that there are men and women out there who are risking their lives so that we can live in comfort. I also wanted you to hear about my grandfather because I think that his life story is very inspiring.

Bibliography:

Interview of Geoff Mann, Oct 12, 2022

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Jim in Vietnam next to his Huey.

