
The Gold Star Boys

By Arnoldo Cardenas

The Webster's dictionary defines sacrifice with mere words yet, in real life, sacrifice is defined by actions. The actions that define sacrifice are almost always composed of three elements; courage, humility, and selflessness. Courage, humility, and selflessness were very much present in the lives of each Gold Star Boy. The Gold Star Boys sacrificed their futures, and lives for the benefit of our country. Each Gold Star Boy courageously responded to the call of duty, humbly fought side by side with brothers in arms and selflessly gave his life so those at home could live safely and peacefully, whether they were a friend, family member, or stranger.

The Gold Star Boys sacrificed their own lives for freedom which was something they believed was greater than themselves. The Gold Star Boys have helped me realize the true meaning of valor and honor. After reading about the heroic and amazing lives of these true heroes, I have learned that sacrifice is accomplished by putting others first and myself second. I feel that the Gold Star Boys joined the military not only because their country called upon them, but because they knew it was right. This sense of righteousness is demonstrated by the story of Gold Star Boy Donald L. Johnson. Don was a Marine who fought in various battles throughout the Pacific including battles in the Solomon Islands and Iwo Jima. While fighting in the Solomon Islands, Donald rescued a fellow soldier who was under fire. Don received a Purple Heart for wounds from the battle; yet it was his humility which led him to refuse being awarded the Silver Star medal for rescuing his fellow soldier. Don was quoted in a newspaper saying, "Anybody would have done it if he had seen his own buddy fall." Such a heroic story showed me the true meaning of sacrifice.

The courage of the Gold Star Boys reminds East that through its halls once walked men of honor and in its classrooms sat war heroes. Their sacrifice ensures that East High could continue to produce great students who would eventually become heroes to both our city and the nation. East still holds that capacity today. The boys' traits of courage, dedication and loyalty were instilled by their

families, nurtured by the East High community and should be recognized by the world. The Gold Star Boys sacrificed themselves for their country and for their fellow E-Rabs. It is through the humility of these outstanding men that East's legacy lives on.

Finally, the Gold Star Boys remind the United States that its victories and freedoms did not come free and were hard won with sacrifices. The bravery of the Gold Star Boys allows the United States to call itself the "land of the free and the home of the brave." The Gold Star Boys are more than just fallen E Rabs; they are golden heroes, to East High School, Rockford, Illinois and to this great nation.