

“I Never Felt Like a Hero”

My “Nano’s” Story

Monique Ritter

Each year, on Veterans’ Day, our nation recognizes the men and women who have fought for our country’s freedom. Millions of people have lost their lives for us and millions have survived. My grandfather, Rocco Anthony DiGloria, is one of those brave men who put his life at risk for this

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country and lived to tell his story. He is one of the few people I can look at and say I’m proud that I am related to and know this man. It was an amazing honor to get the opportunity to interview my grandfather, who I affectionately call my “Nano.”

My Nano, who is now 85 years old, fought for his country in World War II. He enlisted and went to war at the age of nineteen. He was in the service for three years from 1943 to 1946. When I asked him how he felt after being in the war, my grandfather said, “I never felt proud or like a hero. A lot of men died saving me.”

When my Nano was in the war, he first started as a private and worked his way up through the ranks. His highest rank was a staff sergeant, or sometimes known as a squad leader. A squad leader is someone who is in charge of a certain group, and he has to make life and death decisions on the spot. I couldn’t imagine being in charge of someone else’s life. In my eyes, it takes a strong and brave man to do that. My Nano just happens to be that man.

When I asked him if he had any medals, he dug in his shirt pocket for his form papers. My grandfather received twelve medals: A Purple Heart,

a Combat Badge, a Bronze Star, and four Battle Bronze Stars because he fought in four different countries.

He also received a World War II Victory Medal, a German Army Occupation Medal, an Africa Middle Eastern Medal, a Good Conduct Medal, and the Belgium Fourragere. Many years after, my Nano was presented with the “Thank You Diploma” by President John F. Kennedy.

My grandfather has to be one of the most respectful and wonderful men I know. He has the utmost respect for his country. Whenever the Pledge of Allegiance is said or National Anthem is played, he rises proudly to his feet, takes his hat off, and places his right hand over his heart. At that moment, when you look in his eyes, you can see a beautiful human being who is so proud to be an American.

If you were to meet my grandfather, you would never suspect that he lived through a tragic war. He is very lively, and he has an amazing sense of humor. Words cannot describe what this man has done for this country. So on Veterans’ Day, every year, I will always think of the millions of men and women who have fought for my freedom. I will be eternally grateful for their courage and bravery, and I can only hope that I will be able to obtain a fragment of their courage in my lifetime.



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