

Grown Up Christmas List Students Cheering Up WWII Heroes

1. John Gualtier (Vinton, Iowa) Born in 1925, John was a teenage medic on the front lines in Europe during WWII. He made life and death decisions every day. Afterward, his unit liberated a concentration camp and a Jewish prisoner died in his arms. Two middle school girls wrote and illustrated his story.

[Newspaper Link](#)

You can read about John's courageous battle with suicidal thoughts in a free Reader's Theater found at understandingworks.org. Due to the chaos, paperwork during WWII was sometimes lost or non-existent. When John was wounded during the war, he couldn't find the paperwork for many years to prove it but finally, he did. In June of 2020, during the pandemic, 75 years after the end of WWII, John received his Purple Heart. [News Story](#)

A few months ago, John and his wife Jill suffered a great loss when their 13-year-old nephew passed away. Cards and artwork from your students thanking him for his service might make their holiday season a little brighter.

Mail to: VFW Attn: John Gualtier 5999 25th Ave Trail PO Box 187 Vinton IA 52349

2. Charlie Kirkpatrick (Roseville, Illinois) turned 100-years-old in 2019 just before a young author named Jax Monroe interviewed him. Her eyes were wide when he told her he remembered exactly where he was when the radio announced the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. History came alive for Jax that day as Charlie told her about his experiences at Omaha Beach. He also had orders to be part of a unit assigned to guard General Patton. [News Article](#)

Today, Charlie is struggling with some health issues but thanks to his daughters, he is still living in his own home at age 101. Too much isolation is hard for everyone so a card or letter may bring him some joy this season.

Mail to: Charlie Kirkpatrick Box 77 Roseville IL 61473

3. Ray Fairbank (Bettendorf, Iowa) is a brilliant man who served on the ground crew for Colonel Chuck Yeager when he broke the sound barrier. You can learn more about this on an [interactive poster](#) about Ray.

Ray was a real-life cowboy and went to school with Native American children in a one-room schoolhouse in Montana. One day a teacher told him he was the "dumbest kid she had ever met." If Ray had believed this, it could have changed his life. Instead, he set out to prove her wrong. Ray was called to service and after college, he worked as an Engineer for Deere & Company.

Ray lived through the Great Depression and he feels like we are facing another great depression during the pandemic. Financial and emotional. Not being able to go to school or spend time with loved ones is depressing for young and old alike. Ray has a special place in his heart for the college Freshmen who are struggling. He feels they may be thinking about quitting their dream and settling for less. At 96, Ray would love to get a Christmas card or a drawing from children. He realizes he has a success story to share and would like kids to read his book. [Sign up](#) to receive his letter to children (he's writing it now):

Mail to: Ray Fairbank 4211 53rd Ave Bettendorf IA 52722