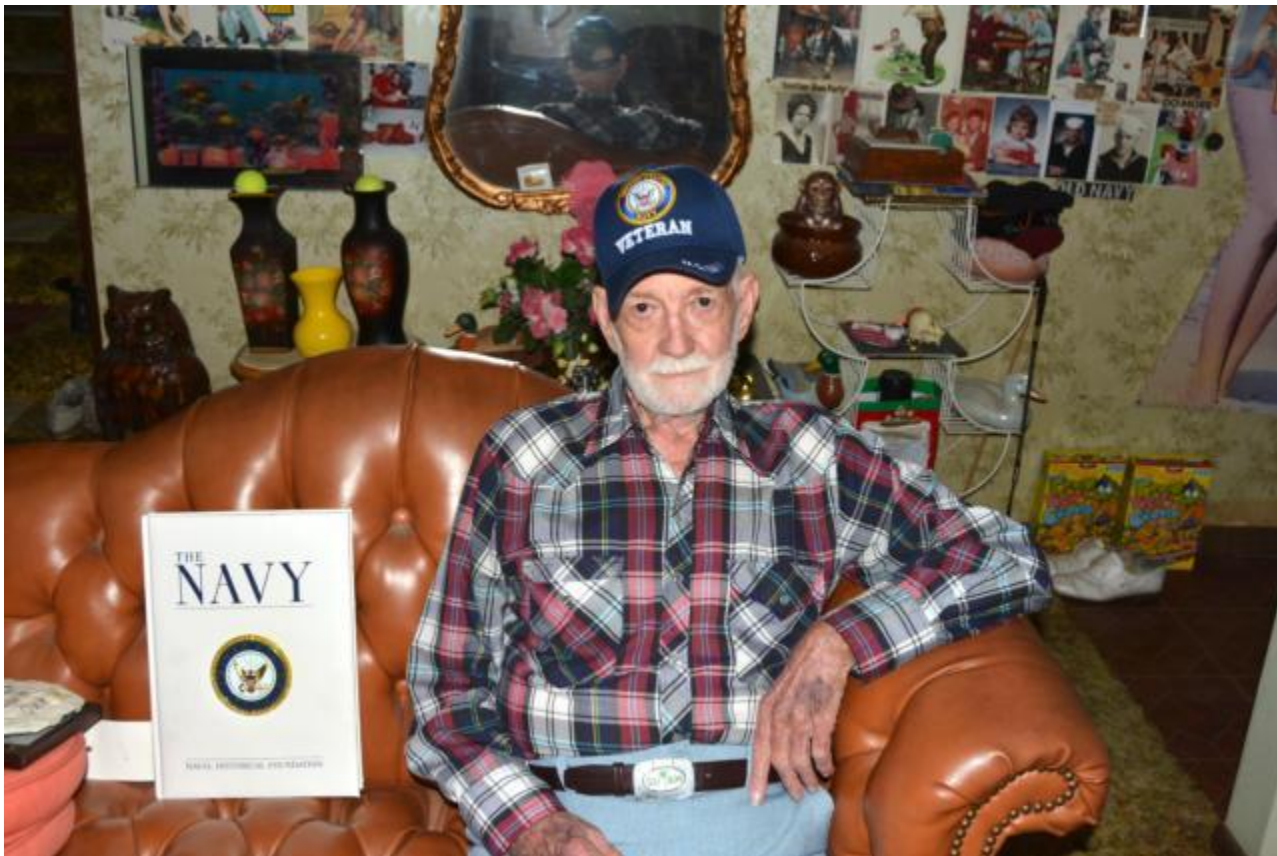


# A Salute To The Late Malcolm Bridges And All Others Who Served and Serve Today To Keep Us Free

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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*It's Veterans Day and I thought it would appropriate to do a salute first, to all those who have served their country and serve today.*

*I had many family members who served, including my dad in the Korean War in the Navy, several cousins, a father-in-law and others in various war situations, and one*

*cousin who lost his life in combat in the Vietnam War. My cousin's name is engraved on the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C. I am extremely proud of what each did for their country. I had a cousin - Carl Portwood - who served in both World II and the Korean War. Can you imagine that and the stories he told? One of my dad's best friends, Perk Tribble, was shot in combat in World War II and had issues with his legs much of his post-war existence, but he continued to forge ahead and had a remarkable life.*

*Today I want to salute a man who I think exemplifies what news person/author Tom Brokaw once called "The Greatest Generation," the World War II-era veterans. The man, who died on Monday, Nov. 9, 2020, was Malcolm R. Bridges, 92, of Godfrey.*

Just prior to Veterans Day on Monday, Nov. 9, 2020, Malcolm R. Bridges, a Naval veteran, of Godfrey, died. Malcolm served right after World War II ended in 1946 with much of his time in war-torn Guam.

I met Malcolm in late January 2019. I don't do all my interviews this way, but because of his age, I went to his house in Godfrey to conduct the interview.

Malcolm sort of epitomized all of that generation. He was a man who returned home post-war and became a husband, father and worked for 31.5 years in the Owens-Illinois Glass Plant in Alton. Most of the men and women in his era put the war in the past and reclaimed their lives. The group of that generation was so proud of what they had done to keep America free.

Malcolm entered the Navy in 1946 right after World War II concluded and spent 18 months after boot camp in San Diego, Calif. After his enlistment in the Navy ended, he joined a Naval Civil Services unit and went back to Guam again. He worked at Owens-Illinois from 1951 until the plant closed with a total of 31.5 years with the company. If the war had continued, Malcolm would have been right in the middle of it.

On the chilly January day in 2019 that I went to his house in Godfrey, Malcolm proudly sported his Navy cap. I will never forget how much Malcolm loved his dog - P-Nut, a chihuahua. Malcolm was 90, but his house was still immaculate even though he lived alone. Malcolm was well-dressed and so courteous, a true gentleman.

"I met a lot of nice people in Guam," he said on the day I was at his house. "They said I needed to get in the Naval Civil Services and come back, so I did. Guam was all shot up and a really bad looking place after the war. I have pictures that show the devastation. I think there were even some Japanese in caves that didn't know the war was over for a lot of years."

Malcolm showed me the photos from Guam and I looked almost in disbelief at the war-ravaged area. What some don't realize is Americans helped rebuild much of the World War II devastation along with fellow countrymen and women.

Malcolm grew up in Kentucky for his first 17 years of his life. He said his sister and brother-in-law came out and liked the Alton area and that was a draw for him here. Malcolm first worked at the flour mill in downtown Alton. He managed the company store at this point and worked in shipping and receiving, he said.

When I left Malcolm that day I told him it was a privilege for me to meet him. He didn't have a computer that functioned, so thanks to Mike Hall, our computer genius at Riverbender.com, I used the print button at the bottom of the story and we printed out multiple copies of the story in color. When I took it over, Malcolm said he thought the story was "perfect." He beamed with pride that we had taken the time to interview him and feature him on Riverbender.com. I was so proud that a man like Malcolm enjoyed my work. Malcolm sent copies of the story to several family members and close friends.

So many have served their country, like Malcolm Bridges, my father, Perry, my cousin who died in Vietnam, Paul, Carl and Perk, and the ones who serve today. All those people are the reason we have a Democracy and the ability to stand in line to vote for a president of the United States and fly our flag free.

I can't even express the pride I have for all who have served and are still serving in the armed forces, so this is a Veterans Day salute to them all, especially Malcolm, who recently died.

I just wish Malcolm could have had one more Veterans Day because it was a day he told me he truly cherished each year. Rest in peace, Malcolm, and all the other veterans who are no longer with us.

