



MY MICHIGAN HERO

Ryker Gill

*West Iron County Middle School
Iron River*

Who is my Michigan hero? Well, first of all, I want to be more specific. Who is my Upper Peninsula hero? That would be my grandfather, Larry Pifke.

He has been a role model for not only me, but my family, community, and country. He started out in life working hard on his family farm, learning about hard work and responsibility. His father (my great grandfather) passed away when he was just nineteen, leaving him the head of the household for his mom and siblings. He took on that role with great pride and honor. Once his youngest brother was graduating high school, he signed up for the military and served his country. leaving behind his new bride and first born son to insure our country was safe.

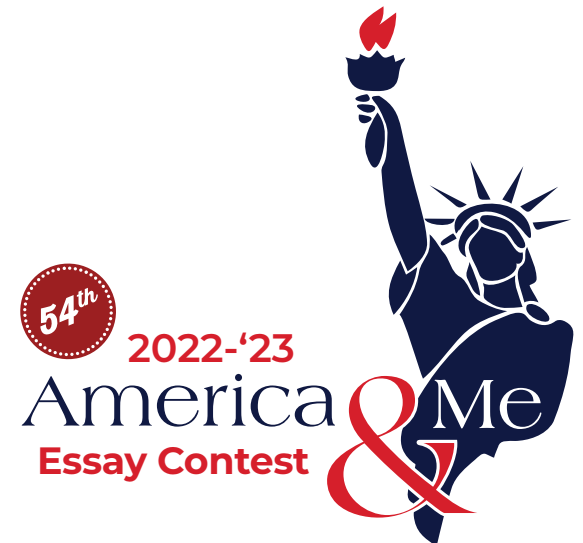
After his return, with just a high school diploma, he began working two and three jobs to make ends meet while providing the means to remodel a 100-year-old farm house that they still own to this day. He grew up in this community, so it made sense to plant his roots here as well.

Jump forward to three children and in his mid forties, he took what he knew about logging and opened up his own shop to help other loggers fix and maintain their equipment at an affordable price. This business blossomed over the next few years. This high school graduate just became an entrepreneur.

My grandfather loves this community and has always been involved. He has been on the board of the Wildlife Unlimited for the last 25 years. One of his favorite parts is passing his hunting and fishing skills onto the youth. The mentor programs involve everything from hunter safety to guiding youth on their first hunts. One of my favorite memories is sitting in the deer blind with my grandpa (he always had snacks in his jacket pocket). He also is part of the disabled hunters. They have established a fully equipped trailer for children that have physical disabilities to still enjoy the outdoors. He has always donated his time and land to make sure all children can get out and learn the

sport. I used to sit on his lap and drive the big blue tractor, and by six he had me in the skid steer loader. My mom still likes to remind me that I would always tear up the driveway and make big ruts. My grandfather would just laugh and say she will "get over it". He is always there for everyone including an old farmer friend that he now is taking care of.

My grandfather is so important to me, my family and my community that I would be lucky to even walk in his shadow. To me he is a hero. He has lived his life to the fullest and with honor, and he is loved for it. That is what I am inspired to become.



Sponsored by

