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Editorial: All gave some; some gave all: Meet Ed Hess and William Chandler

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Army Capt. William R. Chandler just hours before he was killed in action in Vietnam.

The old saying is, “all gave some; some gave all.”

It has become the mantra of the holiday we just celebrated.

Meet Ed Hess and William Chandler.

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day in honor of the tradition of decorating the graves of those who fell in battle, honors those who made the ultimate sacrifice defending the ideals, freedom and liberty we just enjoyed over a glorious three days.

But make no mistake. It is not free.

For men like Chandler, it cost him his life in the fields of Vietnam.

For men like Hess, it meant serving in World War II, and a lifetime honoring that service, defending the ideals that propelled the Greatest Generation to save the world from fascism.

Chandler and Hess.

They are a contrast in generations, united in their desire to serve.

Chandler, a Springfield native, was three months shy of his 25th birthday when he was killed in combat on Aug. 11, 1972, while serving as an intelligence adviser to Army of the Republic of Vietnam Regional Forces. It was his second tour of duty.

He left behind a wife and two daughters.

Hess has been a lifelong resident of Delaware County. Like many young men who came of age during the Great Depression, he quit Chester High School in 10th grade to help his family make ends meet. It wasn't until later in life that he got his GED.

He was drafted into the U.S. Army at age 24., assigned to the 34th Infantry Division that sailed from North Africa to Naples, Italy, to protect supply lines and help fence in the Germans.

In January 1944, the 34th drove into the Gustav Line, taking Mount Trocchio. Eventually, Hess and his mates in the 34th took aim at Monastery Hill. Hess said more than 400 soldiers went up that hill. Only seven of them came back.

Hess was one of them. On June 3, he will celebrate his 100th birthday.

Hess was on hand Monday, feted at the annual Memorial Day parade and celebration in Media.

Chandler's loved ones were joined by members of Springfield American Legion Post 227, honored nearly 47 years after his death.

It is part of the vagaries of war.

“Today is Capt. Chandler’s day, but it’s about all our fallen, too,” reminded U.S. Army Col. Richard Debany in his remarks inside the Springfield Township building. “We don’t just remember those killed on the battlefield on this day. We also honor their survivors; those that had to find the resilience to continue. They had to live on, first in pain and grief, then in loss and sadness.”

It’s a sentiment Hess knows all too well.

“In one seven-week period, I lost every friend I had in the world,” Hess said. “I don’t like to talk about it much. I am proud that I served my country. I love this country, but I don’t have any good memories of the war.”

To honor men like Hess and Chandler, maybe we should do more than set aside one day a year for them. More than just another parade on Veterans Day.

Chandler laid down his life; Hess survived, but carries the weight of seeing so many friends fall beside him.

Ed Hess and William Chandler.

Different generations, different outcomes, but a single mission, unbowed in the face of the enemy.

Ensuring that America will always be the home of the free.

All gave some; Some gave all.

And all of us owe a huge debt of gratitude to men like Ed Hess and William Chandler.

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