

The poem, *I Am a Veteran*, was written by Andrea Brett in 2002, three years after The Brett Family began performing in Branson, Missouri. As part of the patriotic tribute in The Bretts Show, Andrea wanted to create something original that would give honor to the military veterans who attended. Each day at intermission and after the show, Andrea visited with veterans and heard their stories and felt the love they have for their country and the pride they have in their service. She was moved and inspired by their sacrifice. She was always surprised by how such average looking people had such amazing and often heroic stories to tell. Over time, as she pondered these conversations, their stories began to take the shape of a poem. Each line of the poem represents a person Andrea personally met or was told about. The words in the poem are symbolic of the experiences of all veterans who have their own story to tell. Since the writing of *I Am a Veteran*, Andrea has recited it thousands of times to veterans all across the country. She continues to be inspired by these men and women and loves hearing their stories.

I AM A VETERAN

by Andrea Christensen Brett

You may not know me the first time we meet; I'm just another you see on the street
But I am the reason you walk and breathe free; I am the reason for your liberty

I AM A VETERAN

I work in the local factory all day; I own the restaurant just down the way
I sell you insurance, I start your IV; I've got the best-looking grandkids you'll ever see
I'm your grocer, your banker; Your child's schoolteacher
I'm your plumber, your barber; Your family's preacher
But there's part of me you don't know very well; Just listen a moment, I've a story to tell

I AM A VETERAN

I joined the service while still in my teens; I traded a prom dress for camouflage greens
I'm the first in my family to do something like this; I followed my father, like he followed his
Defying my fears and hiding my doubt; I married my sweetheart before I shipped out
I missed Christmas, then Easter; The birth of my son
But I knew I was doing what had to be done
I served on the battlefield, I served on the base
I bound up the wounded; And begged for God's grace
I gave orders to fire, I followed commands; I marched into conflict in far distant lands
In the jungle, the desert, on mountains and shores; In bunkers, in tents, on dank earthen floors
While I fought on the ground, in the air, on the sea; My family and friends were home praying for me
For the land of the free and the home of the brave; I faced my demons in foxholes and caves
Then one dreaded day, without drummer of fife; I lost an arm, my buddy lost his life
I came home and moved on; But forever was changed
The perils of war in my memory remained; I don't really say much, I don't feel like I can
But I left home a child, and came home a man
There are thousands like me; Thousands more who are gone
But their legacy lives as time marches on
White crosses in rows; And names carved in queue
Remind us of what these brave souls had to do
I'm part of a fellowship, a strong mighty band; Of each man and each woman
Who has served this great land
And when Old Glory waves; I stand proud, I stand tall
I helped keep her flying over you, over all

I AM A VETERAN

Church of Christ Veterans

Passed

1. Ralph Foltz	US Army	World War II
2. Horner Beebe	US Army Air Corp	World War II
3. Larry Dayton	US Army	World War II
4. Harold Gray	US Army	World War II
5. Cecil Higgins	US Army	World War II
6. Stanly Warren	US Army	World War II
7. Bill Stucker	US Navy	World War II
8. Charles Fleener	US Army	
9. Joe Singer	US Marines	Korean War
10. Richard Timmons	US Army	Korean War
11. Gary Frazier	US Army	Served in Korea
12. Charles Eddy	US Army	Vietnam
13. Robert "Bob" Bell	US Marines	Embassy in Ethiopia
14. Buddy Wayne Griffin	US Navy	Newport Rhode Island
15. Richard "Dick" Buss	US Army	27 years
16. Ron Singer	US Marines	
17. Jerry Beebe	US Air Force	Vietnam, Persian Gulf

Living Veterans

1. Rodney "Rod" Forbess	US Air Force	Vietnam
2. Rodney "RJ" Mouton	US Navy	
3. Janet Winebrenner	US Army	
4. Dale Kirby	US Army	
5. Ray Blakely	US Navy	Vietnam, Cold War
6. Bill Cole	US Army	Vietnam
7. William Hulett	US Army	Served in Germany. Berlin Wall was built while there Newport Rhode Island
8. Helen Griffin	US Navy	
9. Matthew Callen	US Army Guard	
10. Don Beebe	US Army Guard	
11. David Beebe	US Air Force	Persian Gulf
12. Jason Beebe	US Air Force	Persian Gulf
13. Caroline Beebe	US Air Force	
14. Hannah Eckert McDonald	US Army	
15. Michael Brooks	US Army	
16. Nathan Brooks	US Army	
17. Ben Brooks	US Navy	
18. Kaitlyn Hightower Stimpson	US Air Force	
19. Virgil Smith	US Army	
20. Phil Griffith	US Navy	
21. Mike Pyrtle	US Army	
22. Raymond Harding	US Army	
23. Josh Smith	US Air Force	
24. Terry Frazier	US Air Force	