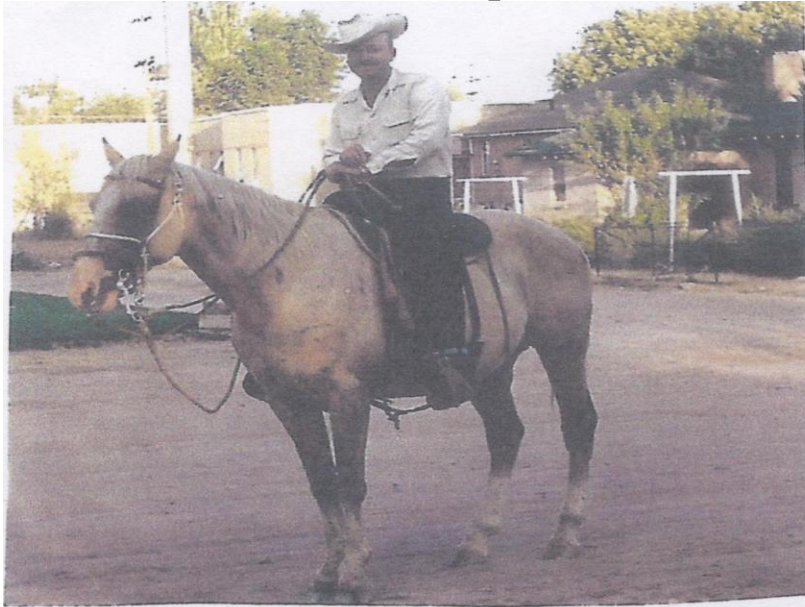


Wallace Ralph Shields 3 Feb 1914



**FROM  
COWBOY**

**TO  
WAR HERO.**



By: Tyler Arrington/ #4 the Beast

Have you ever heard of someone that is tougher than nails, works harder than a plow horse, and yet has a heart soft enough that tears come to his eyes every time he hears the star spangled banner? That is the description of my great grandpa Wallace Ralph Shields. Sadly my grandpa died a few years ago, but I have loved reading about the story of his life. He is a hero, and I am grateful that I am his great grandson.

My grandpa was born February 3rd, 1914. He was a cowboy. He rode horses, plowed fields, worked on the farm, and all in all was one tough cookie. Times were really hard for my

grandpa and his family. They were really poor. Grandpa lived during the Great Depression. There were times when there wasn't enough food or things to go around. One story that Grandpa told that really stood out to me was something that he says changed his life. Times were so bad government was paying farmers \$7.00 to kill their cattle and eat the meat. My Grandpa's dad had borrowed some money from The Federal Land Bank and put up so many heads of cattle as collateral. When the man from the bank came to count the cattle to make sure they covered their collateral. When Grandpa brought the cows up, we were short 3 head. The man from the bank was really nasty and mean about it to Grandpa's dad. He yelled at him in front of my Grandpa. That day my Grandpa vowed that he would never be in debt to anyone. He promised himself that no one would tell him what to do with his property. The amazing thing about my Grandpa is he lived up to this promise. I hear a lot of discussion about the world and our nation in tons of debt. It seems like my Grandpa could have set everyone straight. My Grandpa was also very spiritual. He loved God. He served an LDS mission when none of his friends really thought it was a good idea. He didn't really care what they said- he still decided to go. When he got home, his girlfriend wanted to marry him. Grandpa told her that he loved God and that meant serving his Nation. At the time Hitler was taking one country after another and it seemed that the United States had no choice but enter the war. His dream was to be a pilot for the Air Force, but during this time, they had a policy that you could not marry in the Air Force. The rumor was that all Air force pilots would be killed at war. Grandpa was dating My Great Grandma Geraldine and was falling in love with her, so he decided to enlist in the Navy instead. He was sworn into the Navy on June 16, 1941. His training was intense. It was obvious to him that they were training for war and not playing games. On Dec. 7

1941 he was on his way to church when the word came that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Many people were killed and battleships sunk. The US Navy was very damaged. All Navy Personnel were instructed to return to their stations immediately. My Grandpa was put on war alert and given a hand gun. One thing my Grandpa said, that really stood out to me, is that he had never seen the nation so united as it was at that time. My Grandpa said he had never been so proud of his country, the day he became a full fledge Naval Officer. He said that he couldn't wait to get out and destroy the enemy. I read many stories about my Grandpa, bloody battles, ships sunk, people killed, lands lost, but more than anything were the stories of sacrifice of his time. His dad was hit by a train and lost his leg while my Grandpa served. He couldn't be with him. My Grandma was alone most of the time and had children without him. He makes the joke that he was gone for three years and came home to a wife and two kids. I think the thing that stands out the most is this- He loved God so much that he knew he had had to serve his country and because of that he Sacrificed much. I think he is a hero. At the funeral, my mom told me that there were officers there that shot their guns in the air out of respect for him and his great service. A huge flag was given to my grandma as a symbol of all his years in the Navy. At the end of this, I realized why my Grandpa would cry every time the star spangled banner was sung. He gave so much time, sacrifice and heart for doing what he believed in. When I hear the star spangled banner from now on, I will remember my Great Grandpa and what he stood for. I hope to follow in his footsteps.