

# SALUTE *our* HEROES



## SHOWING OUR GRATITUDE

*Local firm offers unique ways to memorialize the hero in your family*

Whether you want to express gratitude to a father who fought in Vietnam, or memorialize a son's or daughter's sacrifice in the war on terror, a wide range of tribute displays offer families a chance to shine the spotlight on the hero in their own home. Jack Johnson, president of Crest-Craft, says options range from a custom-designed plaque at just \$100, to large elaborate bronze-castings that run into the thousands of dollars. Johnson's father founded the Cincinnati-based Crest-Craft in 1946 when, as a decorated paratrooper returning from World War II, he wanted to honor the service of his fellow soldiers.

Today, the company offers a wide range of custom recognition awards and collectibles, and frequently works with the U.S. military. When it comes to honoring individual service, Johnson says, each piece is unique.

"We approach recognition pieces, as well as memorials, as very personal expressions of gratitude for lives devoted to selfless service," he says. "Our job is to work closely with our clients to gather relevant information and render it into a product that is suitable to their aesthetic and budget requirements."

Options range from wall plaques to etched crystal and glass items to framed displays that preserve flags or other mementoes from a veteran's service.

To get started on a display to memorialize the hero in your family, Johnson suggests thinking about the item, and how it will be used: How is this item going to be displayed? Where is it going to be displayed? What is your budget?

Next, spend some time reflecting on the serviceman or servicewoman's life and what made the individual special. What achievements were they most proud of? What service to our country did this person provide?

"Identify in your own heart what you want to honor about this person, and identify what accomplishments in this person's life that you want to memorialize," Johnson says.

Popular artifacts include medals earned, uniform patches, newspaper articles or letters from military leadership regarding the serviceperson, and, of course, photos from his or her time of service.

"Whether it is a large installation or a small plaque or desk item for a home or office, the key elements are information regarding that person's service history, appropriate imagery and a sincere expression of gratitude," Johnson adds.

—Steve Smith

