

Florida Veteran "Honored" by School Children

Talking to youngsters about his "war experiences" was the right thing to do for W. R. Penninger, a Florida resident who was a Japanese prisoner of war during WWII.

In 1995, a class of seventh graders were looking for a hero when they found Penninger, who was quick to say he wasn't a hero . . . he was a survivor.

The children were captivated by his story, and in a gesture of appreciation they presented him with the tattered Flag that had flown over their school. What sparked that action was Penninger's feelings for the American Flag, "after having to bow to a Japanese flag every day for three years, seven months, 13 days and 12 hours," he said. The sight of an American flag, he told them, "still breaks me up."

To the seventh graders, that flag presentation was probably the most symbolic thing that they could do to thank him for what he had done for them and our country. Interestingly, the students talked about the flag as being similar to Penninger, like him it was tattered and old, but a symbol of freedom.