

November 21, 2003

By Laurel A. Olmsted

Today I overheard a young man exclaim, "Veterans, who do they think they are?" Was he a protester carrying a sign? No. Was he someone who had been wronged by a Veteran? No. He simply had discovered that his mail might not be delivered on Veterans Day.

I don't know who I am more upset with, the mother who didn't say anything to her son, or myself, for not telling this guy just who Veterans think they are. So I decided to write something that I can hand to someone should the question ever arise again. This is just a partial list of all that our military has done, and is doing for us.

**"Veterans, Who Do They Think They Are?"**

They are the men and women who live every day in pain. Physical pain from their wounds, lost limbs, or maybe it's the shrapnel they still carry. Emotional pain from being separated from their families for long periods of time. For missing the birth of their child, or death of a parent. Mental pain for what they have seen and what they had to do. Pain from knowing that they would have died for you and you are not wise enough to know you should care.

They are the ones who make life-long friends. They know how precious life is and they never forget the ones who didn't make it back. Never. That is why you will see Veteran's at the cemetery on Memorial Day walking around and silently thanking the ones who are buried there. They don't have to know them personally to know the sacrifice each one made.

- They are the ones who are loud and boisterous. They are the ones who are quiet.
- They are the ones who shivered in the foxhole, trying to keep the enemy at bay.
- They are the ones who crawled through sand when the temperature was 126 degrees.
- They are the ones who carried their buddy to safety.
- They are the ones who sometimes drink too much, trying to keep the memories from haunting them.
- They are the ones who carry the flag with the honor and respect it deserves.
- They are the ones who wear their military uniform with pride and still have it in their closet 30 some years later.
- They are the ones who don't ask you to go out of your way for them.
- They are the ones who have gone out of their way for you.
- They are the ones who spent many nights awake on guard duty so you didn't have to.
- They are the ones who helped keep our shores safe while you played video games.
- They are the ones who missed their birthdays, anniversaries, and other important dates.
- They are the ones who got shot and got sent home, but felt guilty because their buddies were still there.
- They are the ones who followed orders even when they didn't want to.
- They are the ones who had enough love and pride in their country to do a job many others couldn't do.
- They are the ones who stepped up when the call went out.
- They are the ones who ate MRE's till they were sick of them.
- They are the ones who cried "Medic" at the top of their lungs though they couldn't even hear their own voice.
- They are the ones who cried when they were alone in their tent.
- They are the ones who flew planes, drove tanks, worked a ship, and armed the missiles.
- They are the ones who had moms at homes praying for them every minute of every day.
- They are the ones who made it safe for you so you could go to school or work.
- They are the ones who missed ordering pizza, the movies, the shopping trips, and all that you take for granted.
- They are the ones who asked to take a friend's deployment because that friend had a family.
- They are the ones who gave their girlfriends a lock of their hair to keep as a promise of their return.
- They are the ones who wanted to come home
- They are the ones who didn't return.
- They are the ones who waited months for a letter.

How can you not wait one day?

God Bless Our Veterans,

Laurel A. Olmsted

Wife Of A Veteran

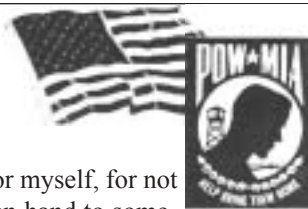
Proud Mother of two Veterans



**Estimated Living US Veterans**

<b>World War I (1917-1918)</b>	
Living Veterans	Less than 200
<b>World War II (1941 -1945)</b>	
Living Veterans	4,370,000
<b>Korean War (1950-1953)</b>	
Living Veterans	3,580,000
<b>Vietnam War (1964-1975)</b>	
Living Veterans	8,211,000
<b>Desert Shield/Desert Storm (1990-1991)</b>	
Living Veterans	1,889,000
<b>America's Wars Total</b>	
U.S. Military Service During War	42,348,460
Battle Deaths	651,013
Other Deaths (In Theater)	13,855
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	524,545
Non-mortal Woundings	1,431,290
Living War Veterans	16,897,000
<b>Living Veterans</b>	
<b>(War &amp; Peacetime Periods)</b>	<b>25,179,000</b>

Estimates for living U.S. veterans are based on the 2000 Census, except for WWI, which is based on the 1990 Census, the last census to include WWI figures.



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**Some Veterans Day Facts**

Regardless of the day of the week, Veterans Day is observed on November 11.

The date was chosen to commemorate World War I, which ended on November 11, 1918.

Veterans Day was established by Congress on June 4, 1926.

The purpose of Veterans Day and Memorial Day are often confused. Memorial Day is for honoring military personnel who died in service to their country. Veterans Day is for thanking ALL men and women who have served honorably in the military during times of war and peace.

**Some Facts About Veterans**

There are currently about 25 million living veterans. Over 48 million Americans have served in the military during war and peace since 1776.

Every year, about 80,000 veterans are buried in one of the cemeteries of the National Cemetery system.