

Veterans Day 2011

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 an armistice was signed between the Allied nations and Germany in “the Great War” (World War I). This commemorated Armistice Day beginning the following year. In 1938 Armistice Day was made a legal holiday. In 1954, after huge lobby efforts by various service organizations, the word “Armistice” was struck from the record and “Veterans” was added and this became the day to celebrate all American Veterans of all wars. Veterans Day 2011 will be celebrated on 11/11/11—and the next time this occurs, we’ll all be 100 years older!

Many Americans confuse Veterans Day and Memorial Day in their significance and definition. Memorial Day is to commemorate those Veterans who gave their life in defense of their country. Veterans Day is to commemorate ALL honorably discharged Veterans whether they were in combat or not.

Facts and Figures:

- Although the number of U.S. Veterans to have ever served is a fleeting statistic, the number of Veterans who have served in any war between 1775—1991 is about 42,000,000. If you add the 1,429,000 Global War on Terror (GWOT) Veterans that makes the total about 43,429,000.
- There were about 23 million Veterans living in the U.S. in 2010 (10% of the adult population or approximately 1 out of 10 adult Americans). Based on this statistic, at any given Bears game there would be about 6,700 Veterans in the stands.
- There are 822,000 Veterans living in Illinois
- About 1.8 million U.S. Veterans are female
- There are 9 million Veterans who are 65 or older—you will notice this number is lower than last year—our WWII Veterans are passing away at the rate of 850 per day.
- There are 1.7 million Veterans younger than 35.
- Thirty-five percent of all living Veterans (7.5 million) served between 1964—1975
- In the 2008 presidential elections, 15.8 million Veterans voted; 71 percent of Veterans cast a ballot compared to 63 percent of non-veterans.
- Approximately 3.3 million Veterans have a service connected disability; 652,000 of them have a rating of 70 percent or higher.
- According to the U.S. Veterans Administration, 107,000 Veterans were homeless last year (only 9% of the general population can claim veteran status but nearly 20% of all homeless are Veterans).

The Forgotten Heroes:

Certainly we have all heard the term “Merchant Marines.” The Merchant Marines technically are individuals who serve on the fleets of government or publicly owned ships that are involved in the transportation of commercial goods at sea. In wartime though, the Merchant Marines can become an auxiliary service to the U.S. Navy and are tasked to carry troops and supplies for the military.

It is extremely hard to pinpoint how many have served in the Merchant Marines over the years, however in World War II they were widely used and some records say as many as 285,000 served in combat areas and 9,521 gave their life. My point here is that the Merchant Marines have NEVER been given Veteran status or benefits. This has been an age old fight that the Merchant Marines have never won. This fight began during the FDR era and although FDR promised the Merchant Marines veteran status, the promise died with Roosevelt.

Historically this whole issue has been dumped on the Secretary of the Air Force and granting Veteran status has come up four times since WWII, and has been shot down four times by the Secretary. Ironically, since the Secretary of the Air Force has taken over these responsibilities there have been approximately 14 out of 34 separate groups that have applied for Veteran status that have successfully gained this status and virtually all of them have been "flight related" (i.e., WASP's--Women's Air-Forces Service Pilots, Male Civilian Ferry Pilots, etc.).

The furthest this cause has progressed was in 1998 with the 105th Congress, but at the last write-up of the bill the words "Honorable Discharge" were changed to "Honorable Certificate". To the best I can tell by my research the Merchant Marines are rightfully very upset as they lost 9,521 people during WWII.

U.S. Presidents who were Veterans:

- George Washington: Revolutionary War (Continental Army)
- James Monroe: Revolutionary War (Continental Army)
- Andrew Jackson: War of 1812 (Army)
- William Henry Harrison: Indian campaigns (Army)
- John Tyler: War of 1812 (Army)
- Franklin Pierce: Mexican War (Army)
- Abraham Lincoln: Black Hawk War (Indian Wars) (Army)
- Ulysses S. Grant: Mexican War and Civil War (Army)
- Rutherford B. Hayes: Civil War (Army)
- James A. Garfield: Civil War (Army)
- Chester A. Arthur: Civil War (Army)
- Benjamin Harrison: Civil War (Army)
- William McKinley: Civil War (Army)
- Theodore Roosevelt: Spanish American War (Army)
- Harry Truman: World War I (Army)
- Dwight Eisenhower: World War I and World War II (Army)
- John F. Kennedy: World War II (Navy)
- Lyndon B. Johnson: World War II (Navy)
- Richard Nixon: World War II (Navy)
- Gerald Ford: World War II (Navy)
- Jimmy Carter: Cold War era (Navy)
- Ronald Reagan: World War II (Air Force)
- George H.W. Bush: World War II (Navy)
- George W. Bush: Vietnam War era (Air Force Reserve)

Famous Athletes Who Were Veterans:

- Yogi Berra (NY Yankees) U.S. Navy, WWII
- Rocky Bleier (Pittsburgh Steelers) U.S. Army, Viet Nam
- Joe DiMaggio (NY Yankees) U.S. Army, WWII
- Art Donovan (Baltimore Colts) U.S. Marines, WWII
- Bob Feller (Cleveland Indians) U.S. Navy, WWII
- Billy Fiske (Bobsled gold medalist) U.S. Army Air Corps, WWII
- Danielle Green (Notre Dame basketball) U.S. Army, Iraq
- Tom Harmon (Michigan Heisman Trophy winner) U.S. Army Air Corps, WWII
- Tim James (Miami Heat) U.S. Army,
- Tom Landry (Dallas Cowboys) U.S. Army Air Corps, WWII
- Joe Louis (Former heavyweight champion) U.S. Army, WWII
- Christy Mathewson (NY Giants baseball) U.S. Army,
- Warren Spahn, (Boston Red Sox/Milwaukee Braves), U.S. Army, WWII
- Roger Staubach (Dallas Cowboys) U.S. Navy, Viet Nam
- Pat Tillman (Arizona Cardinals) U.S. Army,
- Ted Williams (Boston Red Sox) U.S. Marines, WWII

Induction Oath:

Every enlisted service-member who enters Active Duty is sworn with this oath:

"I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."

Military Humor:

If you know any Veteran, I think one of the things you might notice if you're around them for any length of time is that for the most part, they have a distinct, and perhaps, very different style of humor than their civilian counterparts. Normally when people are faced with situations ranging from boredom, to chaos, to pure terror, humor seems to be an appropriate response mechanism...

I can tell you beyond a shadow of a doubt that I've edited these immensely and omitted many. The purpose of presenting you with this humor is to give you just a little insight into U.S. Veterans from all branches of service. As a Veteran myself, I can assure you that none of this is intended to make light of our Veterans, or their service to their country. Further, if it weren't for Veterans we probably wouldn't have these tidbits...

- Friendly fire – isn't.
- Any external or internal bleeding is nature's way of telling you to slow down.

- If it's stupid but it works, it isn't stupid.
- Try to look unimportant—the enemy may be low on ammo and not want to waste a bullet on you. (Infantry Journal)
- Never share a foxhole or cockpit with anyone braver than yourself.
- Never forget that your weapon was made by the lowest bidder.
- If your attack is going really well, it's probably an ambush.
- The enemy invariably attacks on two occasions: When they are ready (and) When you are not.
- There is no such thing as an atheist in a foxhole.
- Teamwork is essential—it gives the enemy other people to shoot at.
- Never draw fire—it irritates those around you. (Your buddies)
- When you have secured your area, make sure your enemy knows it too.
- Incoming fire has the right of way.
- If the enemy is within range, so are you. (Infantry Journal)
- Professional soldiers are predictable; the world is full of dangerous amateurs.
- It's not the one with your name on it that you're worried about, it's the one marked "To whom it may concern" you want to worry about.
- Never stand when you can sit, never sit when you can lie down, never stay awake when you can sleep.
- The most dangerous thing in the world is a Second Lieutenant with a map and a compass.
- The worse the weather, the more you are required to be out in it.
- Field experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.
- A Purple Heart just proves that you were smart enough to have a plan, stupid enough to try it, and lucky enough to survive it.
- Every command which can be misunderstood inevitably will be.
- If your ambush is perfectly set, the enemy will not walk into it.
- Odd objects attract fire—never lurk behind one.
- As soon as you are served hot chow in the field—it will rain.
- If only one solution can be found for a problem, then it is usually a stupid solution.
- The military has three sizes: Too big, too small and on order.
- When the pin is pulled, Mr. Hand-Grenade is not your friend. (Marine Corps)
- Aim towards enemy! (Actual instructions on rocket launcher).
- Whoever said the pen is mightier than the sword has never encountered automatic weapons. (General Douglas MacArthur)
- Bravery is being the only one who knows you are scared to death.
- Any ship can be a minesweeper—once.
- If you see a bomb technician running—follow him.
- The only time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire. (Helicopter Pilot)
- There are more airplanes in the ocean than there are submarines in the sky. (Navy Truism)
- When one engine fails on a twin engine aircraft you always have enough power left to make it to the crash scene.
- Without ammunition the U.S. Air Force would be just another expensive flying club.
- Never trade luck for skill.

- Weather forecasts are horoscopes with numbers.
- Airspeed, altitude and brains—two are always needed to complete the flight.
- Mankind has a perfect record in aviation; we've never left one up there. (Air Force)
- Flashlights are tubular metal containers in a flight bag used for the purpose of storing dead batteries.
- Flying the airplane is much more important than radioing your plight to the person on the ground incapable of understanding or doing anything about it.
- If something hasn't broken on your helicopter, it is about to.

Quotable Quotes:

The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him." ~ G.K. Chesterton~

"Courage is not the absence of fear but rather the judgment that something is more important than fear." ~ author unknown ~

"Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go." ~ T.S. Eliot~

And finally...

FREEDOM...

It is the soldier, not the reporter,
who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the soldier, not the poet,
who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the soldier, not the campus organizer,
who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.

It is the soldier, not the lawyer,
who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the soldier,
who salutes the flag,
who serves under the flag,
and whose coffin is draped by the flag,
who allows the protester to burn the flag. ~ Father Dennis Edward O'Brien, USMC~

Freedom isn't free! ~anonymous~

This information has been collected from a variety of sources, some of which I am not privy to any longer, but in the spirit of journalism, none of it is my original creation and I have attempted to not plagiarize in any way.

Sources:

- U.S. Veterans Administration Website—<http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/>
- Merchant Marines—<http://www.usmm.org/>
- Military Quotes—collected over the years from friends, personal recollection, etc., and augmented by—<http://www.military-quotes.com/>
- Oath of Enlistment—<http://www.history.army.mil/html/faq/oaths.html>
- Presidents Who Were Veterans—<http://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/20110221a.asp>
- Athletes—<http://sports.espn.go.com>