



Soldier's views on Veterans Day

By CAPT. JERRY MOON

Editor's note: Capt. Jerry Moon of Kewanee is serving in Iraq. He e-mailed his thoughts on this Veterans Day to the Star Courier.

As I spend my third consecutive Veterans Day deployed, engaged in combat operations in support of the US Global War On Terrorism (GWOT), I feel it is imperative that the U.S. public not forget the men and women, the sons and daughters, husbands and wives, moms and dads and brothers and sisters who are out here, away from the land and people they love and miss so dearly.

Many attempts have been made to describe the American Soldier. Most have fallen short of an accurate, all-encompassing descriptor for this timeless, instantly recognizable individual. Now, I too shall toss my hat in the ring and, appropriately so, will fail to accurately impart upon you this most intricate and simply indefinable of human beings.

The American soldier I serve with has remained largely unchanged from the Revolutionary War to the present day. He reflects who we are as a nation -- our character, our strength and of course our resolve. He is immediately recognized anywhere, on any ground he treads. He steps off into the night and faces the world as the champion of freedom and democracy.

The soldier is an easy-going, good-natured, kind-hearted young man who is prepared to lay down his life for an ideal that our national goals are ultimately more important than his own individual existence.

While the improvements and technological advances to his uniform equipment continually move forward and evolve, what remain constant are the foreign soils on which he bleeds. But, all of this is merely a part of the backdrop or stage upon which he is often cast as the main character. The soldier still views himself as that same awkward teenaged kid from a small town in mid-central Illinois. A town which even though fraught with its own little "bruises and blemishes," is still the home from

which he hails and speaks of on an all but daily basis to his current comrade in arms, his closest friend; his "battle buddy."

What the citizens of America sometime forget is that to the oppressed peoples of the world, our soldiers are a symbol of freedom, a bright beacon of hope wielding a shining powerful beam of light into a dimly lit, obscure corner of the world. And while soldiers don't make policies, and certainly do not declare the wars in which they fight, they do bleed and die in the bouts decided by men of a very different breed -- politicians.

Many marvel at the mindset of an individual, who is willing to give his life for anything, which does not directly affect him personally, but not the American Soldier. To the American Soldier it is personal; in fact it is extremely personal. He is fighting for that which he believes down deep in his heart to be true- that all of mankind deserves to live free. And, when death is close, as close as the last fading moments and shortening, hesitant breathes, it is the man sharing the foxhole or battle position with them, that reassures them that they will have not died in vain.

General George Washington once decreed, ... "When we assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen". How insightful he was in his profound observation. For many former soldiers have now returned home and are the citizens you live next door to, the worker standing at the tool and die machine next to you, and the mechanic who services your car at the local Ford Dealership. He is the same individual who was stripped of the sheen and innocence of small town America, having volunteered to don the camouflage battle dress uniform, and do the not so glamorous bidding of our Nation; her war fighting.

Now, he stands beside you, shoulder to shoulder, as both a warrior of the past and an ombudsman of his peers who are still today, dying in a war some at home do not understand. As I write, today seven great Americans have paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving their fellow man in Iraq. Soon, as dawn breaks over the horizon back home in the US, you may be setting down to your first cup of coffee, preparing yourself mentally for the tasks before you today.

Unfortunately, at the same time someone, a soldier's family, is being notified that from this day and all the days after, their coffee shall have a different taste; one which shall forever be irreversibly intertwined and etched in their minds as an event during which their entire life was turned upside down. Forever more, their morning coffee shall be a solace event, a time spent punctuated by one question alone; why my soldier?

So, on this most "common" of days, during your routine duties and tasks, please take a moment to reflect on the reasons we are free, and the "common" men and women to whom we all owe much gratitude. May you seek out and thank all veterans, from all wars, and remember these veterans are so much more than an average citizen; they are, in their own little way, your own personal saviors.

May we never forget that freedom is not free.

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