

Take the Time and Thank a Vet this Veterans Day

By Barbara Fox

With the approaching of Veterans Day, we all should take some time and extend our thanks to these unsung heroes who deserve our gratitude for their service to our country.

When I was a child growing up, Veterans Day seemed to have more meaning than it does nowadays. It was a day when we would fly the United States flag outside our house and I would walk as a child in amazement down the streets of the neighborhood to see all of the flags displayed. I can remember standing along the curb as a youngster and watching in awe as the service members marched by in the annual Veterans Day parade. Scanning the crowd, I could see veterans lined up along the roadside saluting the flag as the troops marched by, hoisting it proudly into the air. After the parade, we would go and place flags on veterans' graves in a nearby cemetery. You see, Veterans Day is much more than another holiday or day off from work. It is a day of honoring our service members for their unselfish duty of serving our nation.

The curious child that I was, I remember asking my mother about her brothers who had served in World War II. Two of my uncles (Francis and Peter) were featured in a *Syracuse Herald-Journal* article entitled "Syracuse Youth Taking Part in Bold U.S. Bomber Raid on Key Port in Tunis, Africa." Uncle Francis was a turret gunner of a B-26 Marauder in the U.S. Army Air Corps, and Uncle Peter was an Air Corps flying ace. I have a photo of him in my scrapbook alongside the *Herald-Journal* article decked out in an aviator scarf, leather bomber jacket and matching leather cap with goggles. I visited with Uncle Peter at his Glendale, Ariz., home numerous times throughout my childhood and later when I was older, watching his eyes gleam with excitement describing his time in the service.

Unfortunately, mother's cousin Peter was listed as missing in action in 1945. I can remember that she never liked to talk about him because he never returned from the war. But I knew she was proud of his service to our country. On the back of an old service photo of him that I inherited, she wrote that he died during the war. I knew she had accepted his fate of never returning. My father was drafted into the Coast Guard and didn't discuss much about his days in the war either. Maybe he just didn't want to recall his visions of combat action and that is to be respected. I remember scouting through the attic in my grandmother's old Victorian house and finding his Coast Guard uniforms tucked away in an old trunk. Today I have his uniforms in my trunk, along with those of my husband and my very own set from my service time in the U.S. Army.

You see, I thought it was only fitting that I carry on the tradition of military service for my generation of the family. My sister, Mary, was in the Women's Army Corps and I later joined the U.S. Army also. After serving my time of duty for our country, I supported my husband with his numerous reenlistments until his retirement from the Army after 26 years of service.

Being busy with work, family and with my childhood thoughts of Veterans Day long faded, I was pleasantly reminded of its significance one blustery day last November. I was approached by an elderly woman in a Frankfort parking lot while on my lunch hour. I had noticed the woman staring at me while I unloaded my groceries into the trunk of the car. She approached me and asked if anyone in my family was in the military because she noticed the retired veteran license plate on my vehicle. When I explained to her that my husband had recently retired, she extended her hand and said to thank him for his service to our country.

So with that thought in mind, take the time this Veterans Day to honor those veterans who have served our country in your own individual way. Some may be your neighbors at home; others may even be working alongside you. I know that I will be flying our U.S. flag high and thinking about my uncles, my dad, my sister and those who have served our country. I think I'll even give my husband a break from his chores around the house – well, just for one day at least. As a veteran, he definitely deserves it!

What Does Veterans Day Mean to You?

Military veterans who work at CHFS were asked to reflect on their military service and provide thoughts on what Veterans Day means to them. While we know all of the Cabinet's veterans did not respond, we thank those who shared their memories of service with their colleagues. We honor all of our veterans at CHFS and throughout the world.

Compiled by Barbara J. Fox, Office of Communications

Martin Anderson, Incident Management Administrator, Department for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addiction Services

I retired from the U.S. Air Force and Kentucky Air National Guard in 1998. I am a retired Chief Master Sergeant (CMS) and served a total of 26 years and six months in the military. I am a Vietnam veteran, serving there from September 1971-72.

Veterans Day is a special time to remember those patriots who gave their lives so that we may enjoy our blessed country and its countless freedoms. Veterans and their families fully understand and appreciate the commitment and many sacrifices it takes to remain free, especially in a world that increasingly devalues individual rights and freedoms. It is impossible to improve upon the veterans' remembrance phrase of "All gave some, but some gave all." Respect your country this Nov. 11, and thank a veteran for the freedoms you enjoy.

Ronald Banks, Family Support Specialist, Carroll County:

Served 23 years in the U.S. Army and retired with the rank of Command Sergeant Major.

Steven Berrier, Radioactive Material Inspector, Radiation Health Branch, Department for Public Health:

Veterans Day is a very personal day for me. I was on active duty with the U.S. Army from 1975 to 1990 serving as a tanker, then later as a chemical warfare specialist. I entered the Kentucky National Guard in 2003 and currently serve as a Platoon Sergeant. I served overseas in Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2005 to 2006.

Presently my youngest son, SPC Keith Berrier, is serving in the Army with the Third Infantry Division. He has been in Iraq since October 2007. My oldest son, CS3 Dean Berrier, is in the Navy and currently going through training at Fort Dix before he goes to Iraq this month.

So you can see that by being a combat veteran and having two sons who are combat veterans, Veterans Day is a very personal day for my family.

Richard Bedwell, Purchasing Associate, Barren County

I served in the U.S. Navy for six years on the USS Canberra, CAG-2 and the USS Henley, DD-762 in the Second and Sixth Fleets. I participated with the U.S. Second Fleet, Oct. 14-28, 1962, during the Cuban Missile blockade.

Bob Bullock, Disability Adjudicator, Franklin County

I served in the U.S. Army for 21 years.

Sean Combs, Internal Policy Analyst (Contract Specialist), Franklin County Department for Community Based Services Division of Administration and Financial Management, Policy and Program Administration Branch

I have been serving in the Kentucky Army National Guard for the past eight years. My son Chris is also serving in the U.S. Army and is a Patriot Missile Battery Operator/Maintainer.

Scott Curtis Jr., Property Officer Supervisor, Hazelwood Center, Jefferson County

I served for 28 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, and Veterans Day to me means service. When citizens volunteer to serve their country as members of the Armed Forces, it is not because they are looking for an easy, high-paying job. They are simply supporting their country by serving and possibly laying down their life. There is no greater sacrifice that any country can ask of its citizens. It takes a special person to become a member of the Armed Forces -- someone who is willing to put their family second, someone who is willing to put their safety second, and someone who is willing to put their personal comfort second to accomplishing the mission. Veterans Day celebrates this service and allows for recognition of all the sacrifices we have made.

Dennis Daniels, Family Support Specialist, Johnson County

I served in the Kentucky Army National Guard for five years; 1st Lieutenant.

Jim Denninghoff, Information Security Officer, Office of Administrative and Technology Services

Those of us who served in the military, no matter which branch and no matter what the situation, placed our lives on the line for our country. We didn't think about the situation. It was our duty. There is a bond between veterans, no matter when or where they served, that can only be broken upon their death. My father and all of my uncles served in World War II. They received a far better welcome home than those of us who served in Vietnam. Besides myself, I had three cousins who served during Vietnam. Seeing the negative reactions as we returned home was hurtful. I will always support those who serve and their families. I thank all those who served in all of the conflicts that have allowed our country to exist with the freedoms we enjoy.

I have a combined total of 35 years of active and reserve duty. I served in the U.S. Navy from 1961-1996 and on active duty from 1966-1993. I joined the Naval Reserve at age 17 while still in high school and was enlisted for five years. I remember the incidents of the Tonkin Gulf in 1964 and the draft calls in 1965. I was commissioned an Ensign in 1966 and retired from the Naval Reserve as a Captain in 1996. I was a Naval Flight Officer flying in the E2 (AWACS) off of the carrier USS Enterprise from 1971-1973 while deployed to South East Asia (Vietnam area) and

was there at the end of the war when the prisoners of war (POWs) flew out of Hanoi watching them on my radar scope for almost the entire flight from North Vietnam to Clark AFB in the Philippines. We were so happy for them to be returning, but sad thinking about how much torture they suffered and for the long separation from family that many of them endured as POWs. I had several shipmates shot down in 1972-73, some of whom were fortunate enough to return at the end of the war in 1973, and some of whom were not as fortunate.

Kim Dodge, Stores Worker, Western State Hospital, Christian County

I served for four years on active duty in the U.S. Army and spent nine years as a soldier's wife. Veterans Day to me is OUR ANNIVERSARY. Since we were both active duty at the time, the only day we had off to get married was Veterans Day. Ten years ago this year, my husband and I went to the courthouse in downtown Hopkinsville and got married. Soon after, I was on orders for Germany and he left for Fort Drum, N.Y. So here we are, 10 years later, actually settling down in the town we got married in. Veterans Day to us is a day to celebrate and remember our troops who have served and are still serving our country. Then, it's off to dinner for our anniversary!

Vicki Elliott, Human Services Surveyor, Office of Inspector General, Christian County

I have served for 25 years in the U.S. Army Reserve.

David Fuqua, Resource Management Analyst, Planning and Special Projects, Office of Administrative and Technology Services

I was an avionics (aircraft electronics) technician with the Kentucky Army National Guard from 1977 through 1983. Veterans Day for me is a time to remember and reflect on both my personal involvement with military service and a time to recall the sacrifice that so many have made to our country while in uniform. I am proud to have been part of a military unit (Detachment 1 of the 115th Transportation Company) that performed well enough to convince the Army to advance its scheduled deployment of the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter to the National Guard by 11 years. Our company was the first National Guard unit in the nation to receive the Blackhawks. The stories and images of the sacrifices that so many others have made in times of both war and in peace should cause all of us to thank our veterans and their families. I have seen the graves of soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen marked with stones, telling of lives ended too soon, so that you and I could live in peace and freedom. I have listened to the stories from fellow soldiers about the fights that have given them memories that no one should have to have. I have watched and waited with the families of our service personnel as we prayed for the safe return of their loved ones.

Many people consider Veterans Day to be a "minor" holiday and that is their right. Perhaps the greatest compliment that can be paid to our veterans is that they have done their job so well that everyone else takes the certainty of our security and freedom for granted. But our veterans and their families know that the certainty of that security and freedom were and are earned by a level of commitment, effort and sacrifice that other people have absolutely no knowledge of.

Gary L. Kupchinsky, Assistant Director, Division of Prevention and Quality Improvement, Department for Public Health

I served on active duty for 20 years in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps.

Len Lobaito, Information System Supervisor, Office of Administrative and Technology Services

I served in the U.S. Army with the 44th Medical Battalion - 25th Infantry Division, 40th Medical Detachment in Vietnam as a combat medic in 1967-1969. Veterans Day is a time of remembrance of all the men and women who died and shed their blood for your freedom. Not something to be taken lightly or for granted. I was one of the ones drafted and suddenly, in three days, taken away from the life that I had known, to give my life for this country. We could not vote or buy a glass of beer, but we could fight and die for others.

On Veterans Day, when you go to your air-conditioned home, have a glass of water, eat some snacks, have lunch, flush the toilet or take a shower, remember that we did not have that. We were in the steaming hot jungles of Vietnam. Yet we laid our lives on the line for you. Remember the children without fathers, the mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers with an empty chair at the table and families that were never started so that you could enjoy the lifestyle that you now have.

Remember the long lines of white crosses and think of what war truly is and the respect we owe the Armed Forces and fly our flag proudly.

Fidela Patrick, Family Support Specialist, Knott County

I served in the U.S. Air Force for a total of one year and nine months. Veterans Day reminds me of all the special people who lost their lives for this country. I pray that the war will be over soon and that all our troops will come home to their families and loved ones.

Margo Riggs, CDC Career Epidemiology Field Officer, Department for Public Health

Veterans Day is very special for me coming from a military family, and I am honored to have worn the uniform. My father and grandfather are U.S. Army veterans, my sister currently serves at Fort Meade, Md., and my brother-in-law served in Operation Iraqi Freedom. I was active duty with the U.S. Army during the first Gulf War serving as a veterinary technician in Berlin, Germany, and at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. My role was to provide care for military police dogs and to assist with research that led to improvements in medical care for those who are injured. I appreciate the sacrifice that all who serve make after they have sworn to defend our Constitution. To many, Veterans Day may be just a day off from work, but to really get it, talk to a veteran about their time in the service or to a family who has lost their loved one. I respect, admire and am humbled by the dignity, loyalty and courage veterans and family members display in the face of adversity when called upon for duty to this country. To say "I am an American soldier and I serve the people of the United States" defines the spirit of what it means to be a veteran. But since not everyone can put on the uniform, it's important that each one of us gives something back for all of the gifts we've been afforded by being Americans. One only need visit the hospitals at Walter Reed or Fort Sam Houston or veterans' cemeteries such as Arlington to better understand the price some have paid for the freedom we as Americans value so dearly. Let's honor them in a small way by taking some time to remember the sacrifice so many have made and continue to make. Many thanks to all the veterans, as well as those currently serving who sacrifice so much to protect our freedom.

Phillip Rosell, Client Manager, Office of Administrative and Technology Services, Public Health Protection and Safety, Department for Public Health

I served in the U.S. Air Force for 15 years. Veterans Day is an opportunity to reflect on the many blessings that we have been endowed with, such as freedom, and to know these sacred privileges are earned with a price. That price includes the ultimate sacrifice from those veterans who gave all they had and died to ensure these privileges continue for all of us. It reminds me of one of my favorite verses from the Bible, “Greater love has no one than this that a man lay down his life for a friend.” This kind of sacrifice should inspire us every day to seize upon the opportunities to serve one another and be willing to die a little each day to serve a much greater cause.

John Smith, Network Analyst, Office of Administrative and Technology Services, Franklin County

I served in the U.S. Army for 21 years.

Rick Watson, Management Review Officer, Office of the Ombudsman, McCreary County

I served in the U.S. Air Force for four years. Veterans Day to me is a celebration and a chance to remember all of the veterans who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. These men and women have not only fought, but have also served during peacetime to protect the freedom that our nation was founded upon, especially the freedom to worship God and to serve him without fear of persecution. Unfortunately, this freedom that has been bravely fought to protect is in danger of censorship and extinction not from other countries, but from within — from the very ones our men and women have so bravely fought and died to ensure these very rights remain strong to ensure our great nation remains “One nation under God.”

Tim Wiard, Procurement Specialist, Office of Contract Oversight

I have combined service time of nine years, having served three years on active duty with the U.S. Army (1985-88) and five years with the Kentucky National Guard (1988-1994).