

REMEMBERING -- OUR VETERANS

AS WAS LAST SUNDAY, THIS DAY, TOO, IS A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE. IT IS THE SUNDAY CLOSEST TO THE OFFICIAL OBSERVANCE OF VETERANS DAY. FOLLOWING WORLD WAR I CONGRESS CALLED FOR A DAY TO BE SET ASIDE TO REMEMBER THE SACRAFICE OF ALL THOSE WHO SERVED AND GAVE THEIR SERVICE AND LIVES TO THE WAR THAT WAS TO END ALL WARS. THIS DAY WAS CALLED ARMISTICE DAY AND WAS OBSERVED CONTINUOUSLY UNTIL IN 1954, WHEN PRESIDENT EISENHOWER BROADENED THE OBSERVANCE TO REMEMBER THOSE WHO FOUGHT IN ALL WARS, TO CELEBRATE ALL VETERANS, AND THE PROMOTION OF AN ENDURING PEACE. WE THOUGHT, TOO ,THAT THE SECOND WORLD WAR, AS BRUTAL AS IT WAS, WOULD BE A LESSON TO THE WORLD OF THE FUTILITY OF WAR AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SETTling DIFFERENCES AMONG NATIONS. THERE ARE NO VETERANS LEFT FROM WORLD WAR I AND THOSE WHO SERVED IN WORLD WAR II ARE IN THEIR 80's AND ARE A RAPIDLY VANISHING GENERATION. THE KOREAN WAR

2. SEEMS SO LONG AGO, BUT IT TOOK A TREMENDOUS TOLL OF LIVES AND SACRAFICE. BUT LET WE FORGET, THERE ARE CURRENTLY TWENTY THREE MILLION LIVING AMERICANS WHO HAVE EARNED THE TITLE OF VETERAN. OF THOSE OVER ONE MILLION ARE WOMEN. NEARLY SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND ACTIVE DUTY PERSONNEL HAVE SERVED IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, MANY OF THEM CITIZEN SOLDIERS FROM THE RESERVES AND NATIONAL GUARD. OVER THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND HAVE SERVED MORE THAN ONE TOUR. MORE THAN FORTY THOUSAND HAVE BEEN WOUNDED. SWORDS RATTLE TODAY IN PLACES LIKE IRAN. WE MUST ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT THOSE WHO SERVE TODAY ARE VOLUNTEERS

HAVING SERVED THE PORT DEPOSIT CHARGE, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE PERRY POINT HOSPITAL QUITE OFTEN. AND THERE WERE VETERANS IN MY CONGREGATIONS WHO ALSO DEPENDED ON THE HOSPITAL FOR THEIR CONTINUED WELL-BEING. ONE PARTICULAR GENTLEMEN WHO WAS STILL SUFFERING SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF WORLD WAR II, SORT OF

3. ADOPTED ME TO TAKE HIM ON HIS ERRANDS AND TO JUST BE HIS FRIEND. ONE OCCASION I VISITED HIM WHEN HE WAS IN INPATIENT AT THE HOSPITAL. HE WAS IN A WARD WITH A LOT OF OTHER MEN WHO WERE SUFFERING SOME OF THE SAME PROBLEMS AS HE WAS. AS I LEFT THE BUILDING AND WALKED OUTSIDE IT WAS DUSK AND WHAT I HEARD WAS THE SOUND OF THE GUNS BEING FIRED AT ABERDEEN. AND I THOUGHT THEN ABOUT HOW LITTLE WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT THE FUTILITY OF WAR. THESE MEN IN THAT HOSPITAL HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES IN THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE THAT JESUS MENTIONS IN JOHN 15: 13 --" GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS, THAN TO LAY DOWN ONE'S LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS."

THIS DAY OF REMBRANCE SHOULD ALSO BE A DAY OF UNDERSTANDING WHY OUR MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM DO WHAT THEY DO. SECONDLY, IT IS A TIME TO REMEMBER THE HORROR OF WAR AND VOW TO OURSELVES THAT WE WILL DO ALL IN OUR POWER TO ACT AND SAY: "NEVER AGAIN". THIRD, IT IS A TIME TO TAKE UP THE TORCH ONCE MORE TO DEDICATE OURSELVES ANEW TO LIVING IN SUCH A WAY THAT

4. WILL NOT BREAK FAITH WITH THOSE WHO SERVED AND THOSE WHO DIED TO BRING PEACE TO OUR WORLD. AND FOURTH, TO COMMIT OURSELVES AGAINST EVIL--THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE VERY THINGS THAT LEAD TO WAR IN THE FIRST PLACE.

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT "FREEDOM IS NEVER FREE" AND THE COST HAS BEEN GREAT. WE CAN PUT A DOLLAR AMOUNT ON THE FINANCIAL COST, BUT THE HUMAN TOLL IS EVEN MUCH GREATER. AS ANY VETERAN WILL TELL YOU BEING PLACED IN HARM'S WAY IS ONE THING, BUT BEING ABSENT FROM HOME AND LOVED ONES COMES AT A GREAT COST. WHILE WE HAVE A GREATER ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE AROUND THE WORLD TODAY, DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR OUR TROOPS MIGHT BE AWAY TWO OR THREE YEARS AND EXCEPT FOR THE FEW LETTERS THAT GOT THROUGH THEIR WEREABOUTS AND WELLBEING WERE UNKNOWN. WIVES AND CHILDREN HAD TO MAKE MAJOR ADJUSTMENT TO THEIR LIVES AND FACED FINANCIAL STRESSES. MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES MISS MANY OF THE LIFE CELEBRATIONS IN THEIR FAMILIES AND WHEN THEY RETURN HOME MUST GET

REacquainted 5. 5. WITH THEIR SPOUSES AND CHILDREN.
SOMETIMES THE CONSEQUENCES OF A LONG ABSENCE IS
THAT THE LIFE THEY PREVIOUSLY KNEW CANNOT BE
RECOVERED.

MANY OF OUR VETERANS HAVE SERVED MULTIPLE
DEPLOYMENTS, WHICH IN ITSELF IS DISRUPTIVE TO FAMILY
LIFE AND MANY HAVE RETURNED WITH A LOSS OF LIMBS,
POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDERS. OTHERS ARE
AFFLICTED WITH DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY AND NEED
PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT. THEY PAY A GREAT PRICE FOR
PROTECTING US AND ALLOWING US TO GO WHERE WE WANT,
SAY WHAT WE WANT, EAT WHAT WE WANT. WHAT WOULD
OUR WORLD BE LIKE WITHOUT THESE FREEDOMS.

AS WE THINK ABOUT THE PRICE MANY HAVE PAID IN SERVICE
TO THEIR COUNTRY AND TO US, WHAT OTHER REACTION CAN
WE HAVE THAN TO SAY "THANK YOU." MAYBE WE CAN VISIT
OUR LOCAL VETERANS HOSPITAL AND SEE WHAT
OPPORTUNITIES THERE ARE TO BE A FRIEND TO A VETERAN
WHO MAY HAVE NO FAMILY OR VISITORS. WE CAN BE AN
ADVOCATE FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE FACING DIFFICULT TIMES

BECAUSE OF DEPLOYMENT OR HELPING CHILDREN WHOSE 6.
6. PARENT MAY BE ON ACTIVE DUTY. DURING THIS TIME
OF HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, MAYBE YOU MIGHT KNOW OF A JOB
OPENING FOR A VETERAN. THE NEXT TIME YOU SEE
SOMEONE IN UNIFORM, NOT JUST ON VETERAN'S DAY, TAKE
TIME TO WALK UP AND SAY A SIMPLE THANK YOU. IF THEY
ARE WILLING, ASK A VETERAN FROM THE WORLD WAR,
KOREA, VIET NAM, OR ANY OTHER CONFLICT TO TELL THEIR
STORY. AND IN THAT LIGHT WE HAVE ASKED ONE OF OUR
OWN VETERANS TO TELL A BIT OF HIS STORY. GIF BILES IS A
VETERAN OF THE KOREAN WAR AND I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE
HIM BRING A VETERANS STORY. GIF.