

Community Comment Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015

By Jon Sapper

Veterans Day 2015

For today, someone asked me to please re-read some of the comments I wrote last year for Veteran's Day. I said, "OK".

November 11th is Veterans Day where we honor those who have served in defense of the freedoms too many of us have taken for granted; freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom to demonstrate and freedom to protest. There will be speeches and there will be parades and there will be many who spend some time reflecting on loved ones who served this great country.

So, how do you say thank you? How do you say thank you to a veteran who spent years away from their family and missed many of the special times watching their children grow? How do you say thank you to a veteran who returned from the battlefield missing an arm or leg....or both, that they willingly sacrificed for the freedoms we enjoy on a daily basis? How do you say thank you to a veteran who has suffered debilitating wounds and will need 24 hr. care for the rest of their life? How do you say thank you to a parent who has just received a folded American flag following the playing of taps and a 21 gun salute at their child's funeral? How do you say thank you to the mother who lost all four of her sons in World War II?

How do you say thank you to my father who served as an officer in the Pentagon and then volunteered for the jungles and hell of New Guinea, only to return and spend two years in Letterman's General Hospital in San Francisco recovering from the emotional wounds of the battlefield that were just as real as a bullet tearing through flesh. How do you say thank you to my older sister whose father gave his life in the skies over Germany?

How do you say thank you to those currently serving in our armed forces battling a very real enemy 24/7/365 that wants to destroy our way of life and is using every conceivable land, sea, air, space and cyberspace weapon to attack us?

I do smile at the protestors standing on the corner waving signs that say "Stop War!" It is ironic, indeed, that the only reason they are able to do that is because

of veterans. We need to remember a quote from Father Dennis O'Brien of the United States Marine Corps, "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 organizer who gave us the freedom to demonstrate. It is the soldier who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag." End quote.

So, on this Veteran's Day, and frankly every single day; yes, we need to say thank you, but as President Kennedy said, "The highest appreciation we can show them is not to just utter words, but to live by them".

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.