

Remembering our Heroes on Veterans Day

Veterans Day is a special time to remember our Servicemen and women "living and dead" who for 230 years stood up in defense of this great nation. The liberty bell continues to ring because of people like: George Washington, Robert E. Lee, Presidents Wilson and Truman, Generals Douglas Mac Arthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and George S. Patton. The all black World War II fighter squadron called the Tuskegee Airmen and all Japanese 442nd Infantry Regiment who both fought two wars.

Hitler's bid to rule the world was denied in part because of brave men like 442nd Infantry Regiment and the Tuskegee Airmen.

The most decorated infantry regiment in military history, the 442nd made up from Japanese interment camp volunteers during World War II had the dubious distinction of being called the "Purple Heart Battalion" because almost everyone who served in the 442nd had at least one Purple Heart. "At full strength the 442nd only numbered 4,500 men, but this unit earned over 3,900 individual combat decorations for heroism.

The all black Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 2,000 combat missions during World War II – not losing a single bomber to enemy fire – it is a record unmatched by any other fighter group. The tenacious bomber escort cover provided by the 332nd "Red Tail" fighter's often discouraged enemy fighter pilots from attacking bombers escorted by the 332nd Fighter Group. They destroyed over 1,000 German aircraft, received hundreds of Air Medals, and received more than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses

Both the Tuskegee Airmen and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team had to fight two wars, one was World War II in Europe and the other was racism at home.

This Veterans Day let us remember that:

George Washington led his troops in prayer before they crossed the Delaware River on a cold-snowy night to surprise the British and Hessian Troops on December 26, 1776.

Andrew Jackson and a ragtag army defeated the British in 1815 at the Battle of New Orleans. A young officer named Wade Hampton of South Carolina rode 750 miles in ten days to Columbia, South Carolina, and then to Washington, D.C. to tell President Madison and the country of the great victory.

In March, 1836, a small group of men at the Alamo stood between Santa Anna's 5,000 man army and the unprepared small army of Sam Houston. In the lonely monastery of the Alamo were Davy Crocket, Jim Bowie and less than two hundred men under Colonel William Travis. Just days before Santa Anna's final assault, these men came into the Alamo, knowing they might die.

On their last night on earth the men of the Alamo prayed that their battle would, somehow, lead to victory even though they might not see it. A short time later at San Jacinto Houston defeated Santa Anna with the battle cry of "Remember the Alamo!"

Remember the men of the Confederacy and Union who fought four long-bloody years during the War Between the States, 1861 - 1865 that ended slavery in America.

May we continue to remember that in February 1898, the American Battleship Maine was blown up in Havana Harbor with loss of nearly 300 American sailors that began the Spanish-American War.

In Greensboro, North Carolina a six year old girl named Mary Frances Barker awoke to the shouts of a boy far down the street. It was 5:00AM November 12, 1918. It was the paper boy shouting, "The war is over, the war is over!" World War I had finally come to an end on the 11th day of the 11th hour and the 11th month of November 1918.

The United States Congress proclaimed "Armistice Day" a year later on November 11, 1919. Armistice Day became Veterans Day in 1954.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, the first word of the attack on Pearl Harbor came by radio. Newspapers did run "extras" that Sunday with little information and a lot of fear. That Sunday would become "a day of infamy." On Monday December 8th President Franklin D. Roosevelt, during a special session of congress, spoke of the attack and declared war on Japan. His speech was broadcast on the radio.

F.D.R.'s closing words were: "With the abounded determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph, so help us God!"

Since World War II, there has been American soldier's blood shed in Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Desert Storm, Afghanistan and Iraq. We can not forget that we were attacked again on September 11, 2001.

Let's all remember men like: Ira Hayes, Mike Strank, Franklin Sousley, Rene Gagnon, John Bradley and Harlon Block who placed the United States flag on top of Mount Suribachi during the Pacific Island Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II. Three of these men were later killed at Iwo Jima.

Let us not forget Audie Murphy the soldier, actor and Congressional Medal of Honor winner of World War II who did not think of himself a hero; he believed the heroes were of the soldiers who died in battle.

Take a few minutes this Veterans Day to thank a Veteran and light a candle for those serving our country around the world and in harms way.

Let Us Never Forget!