



## **(U) Veterans Day Recollections**

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*(U) Last week we [invited](#) readers to tell us about their most memorable Veterans Day celebrations, or events, of years past. Here's what we learned:*

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### **(U) In Normandy**

**Comment:**

(U) Two weeks ago I visited the American Cemetery at Colesville-sur-Mer in Normandy, France. Looking across the sea of headstones so close to the hard-won shoreline, considering that each one marks a life that probably ended before the age of 25, you understand the price paid by these soldiers in a way that is deep and clear.

(U) I also visited several of the landing sites and museums. Hearing the D-Day story while standing on the ground where it happened, seeing the way the French people still appreciate the gift they were given more than 60 years later, it becomes so much more than a history lesson. Red poppies still decorate the memorials every day.

(U) This Veterans Day, when I put the flag up outside my front door, images from the Normandy beaches will be in my mind.

- [REDACTED]

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### **(U) Armed Forces Parade**

**Comment:**

(U) My most memorable Veterans Day took place while I was going through analyst school at Goodfellow Air Force base. They had the Veterans of Foreign Wars set up a parade to walk through the town. At the time, I was waiting for class to begin, so all of us who were in that position were asked to don our greens and represent the base for this parade.

(U) At first I was not sure what to think, but the more we walked through the town and heard the crowd with their praises it made me feel proud to be part of the armed forces. The parade ended and we were treated to a dinner at the hands of the VFW. Hoorah!

- [REDACTED]

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### **(U) Good News on Veterans Day**

**Comment:**

(U//FOUO) On Veterans Day, 1973, I was stationed at Ramasun Radio Research Facility, Udon Thani, Thailand, and, as luck would have it, on mid-shift break. I was called back to the operations building to respond to an "immediate" message. The message turned out to be from the Red Cross, informing me that my son was born six weeks early at Patterson Army Hospital, Ft. Monmouth NJ, and that mom and son were fine. Ironically, this Veterans Day finds my son, now 33, dealing with his own newborn daughter.

- [REDACTED]

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### **(U) A Visit to the Women in Military Service Memorial**

Comment:

(U) It was a beautiful fall day, not unlike today. The air was clear and clean, the sky a piercing blue, and the trees gorgeous in their fall colors. The Women In Military Service Memorial had opened only a year earlier, and I had promised myself that I would make a pilgrimage to the memorial on Veterans Day. I couldn't have picked a more perfect day. Walking up to the memorial, I was so proud that I, along with thousands of other women veterans, had turned the crumbling entrance to Arlington National Cemetery into a beautiful graceful structure worthy of its location. I took my time walking through the inside of the memorial and then climbed the stairs to the top to view the capital city on one side and the cemetery on the other. It was a perfect day, and a perfect place to commemorate the sacrifices made by **all** veterans.

- [REDACTED]

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(U) A Reunion at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Comment:

(U) I'm not sure if you would classify it as a Veterans Day commemoration or not, but for me, it was definitely an event. The time was November 1992. The place was at the Wall in DC. The reason for being there was a promise.

(U) Twenty-five years earlier several of us had made a promise to get together for a "drink or two" if we made it back to the world and we were to meet at a central location for our 25-year reunion. For whatever reason, I had avoided all of the usual vet stuff and - until this get together - I had successfully avoided the Wall and everything it stands for. Now it was time.

(U) It was late, dark, chilly and not too crowded. I showed up with a bottle, toasted the others - one at a time as I read and touched their names. We were all there as promised, even though I was the only one able to toast. Some visitors looked at me strangely, others just nodded. I left the half-empty bottle at the base of the wall along with two-plus decades of anger and got on with my life.

- Name withheld upon request

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(U) A Remembrance Day "Down Under"

Comment:

(S//SI//REL) I owe my most memorable "Veterans Day" to an NSA TDY! In fall of 1994 or possibly 1995, I headed the NSA delegation to the FORNSAT Planning Conference, held that year in Canberra.

(U) One of the streets of Sydney was closed for a parade and a group of bagpipers was playing the old hymn "Abide With Me." I was told that it was approaching "Remembrance Day" (= our Veterans Day) in Australia and New Zealand and that this was a very poignant holiday there because of the peril those countries had experienced from the Japanese in WWII, and also that they remembered very clearly how America had stood by them in defense during that time. This indeed was the start of a week when reminders of that time were everywhere, including seeing the memorial to the Americans in World War II. And during which I heard "Abide With Me" about twenty times!

(U) But perhaps the most poignant single experience was in Wellington NZ on Sunday (where we had continued on from the conference to visit). Our group was planning a grand sightseeing expedition in the afternoon, and I got up to go to an early service at the Wellington Cathedral of St. Paul (where Queen Elizabeth had visited the week before, by the way). As I was leaving the early service, all kinds of people in uniform and flags and everything started appearing. I asked one of the priests what was happening, and he said it was their Remembrance Day service. "Oh, do stay," he said. So I did.

(U) Veterans of World War II, in their uniforms - worn and sometimes a little stretched - gathered beneath the flags of their units to march with tears in their eyes together into the nave. A military band played (including "Abide With Me," of course). The most senior General from the New Zealand Armed Forces read one of the lessons and a young woman who must have been the most junior lieutenant (perhaps not the right rank) read the other. Some hymns

were sung in both English and Maori. Remembrance of and gratitude for the sacrifice of so many that had brought them through that conflict was overwhelming. I was moved and proud to stand with them on that day and to remember the Americans who had stood with them before.

- [REDACTED]

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(U) Poppies at Westminster Abbey

Comment:

(U) Our family's most memorable Veterans Day was in the early nineties while we were stationed in the UK. We had traveled to London for the long holiday weekend and were able to observe the ceremonies there for "Remembrance Sunday," the UK equivalent to Veterans Day. The foreground of Westminster Abbey was divided into small plots for individual units, and veterans had placed small wooden crosses adorned with [poppies](#) in the plots. Each cross had the name of a service member killed in the war. Many older men in WWII uniforms stood about, helping any visitors who wished to place a cross with a loved one's name in one of the plots. There were thousands of crosses, which from a distance formed a field of poppies.

(U) It was extremely moving and brought home the enormous cost of wars. The UK did not forget their allies in their Remembrance Sunday observance, and there was a small plot for American crosses. My then 7-year old son was thrilled to get a cross from one of the veterans and place it in the American plot in honor of my great uncle, who was killed in the breakout from Normandy.

-- [REDACTED]

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*(U//FOUO) Thanks to all who sent in their stories!*

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