

What and who is a veteran?

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

He's a man who looks the work in the eye. He's a man who feels an extra heart tug when the flag goes by. He's a man who steps a little faster when he hears the beat of a military band. He's a veteran.

He comes in all assorted sizes and shapes. He's a short man. He's a tall man. He is the "doughboy" of WWI. The G.I. of WWII. He's a man who's seen Korea's skies and fought the cold and silent battle of uneasy Berlin. He's a veteran.

He is sailor, soldier and marine. He is flyer seabee and coast guard. He is artillery, infantry, medic, chemical corps, armored and ordinance. He's a veteran.

He has the quiet dignity of a man who knows the price of freedom. He has the clear eyes of a man who respects himself. He is courage living on Main Street. He is patriotism mowing the lawn on Saturday afternoon. He is good citizenship with a smile on his face. He's a veteran.

He is republican, democrat or independent. He is father, grandfather, husband and bachelor uncle. He is plumber, doctor or salesman. He is mechanic, farmer or banker. He is Catholic, Protestant or Jew. He is rich and poor and in between. He's a veteran.

He's a man who loves peace because he knows the price tag of war. He's a member of history's most exclusive fraternity. He's been there. He's a veteran.

He likes the majesty of American mountains and the tranquility of America's valleys. He likes the bustle of America's cities and the friendliness of America's Main streets. He likes the sound of America's children playing on American playgrounds. He likes to see the flag go by and hear the sound of an American bugle playing "Taps." He's a citizen soldier. Peacetime leader. He's the first to volunteer in time of trouble and the last to come home. He's a veteran.

He is proud of his American past, alert to his American present and confident of his American future. He likes the legends of America's great, the Washingtons, the Jeffersons, the Abraham

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Lincolns, the Roosevelts, the Robert E. Lees, the Stonewall Jacksons, the Pattons, the Eisenhowers, the MacArthurs and all the proud patriots who have marched through America's history books. He has bivouacked at Valley Forge, charged the hills at Gettysburg, faced the fire at San Juan Hill and stormed ashore at Omaha Beach. He's a veteran.

In the very rear of his secret heart there is always a tinge of sorrow, a souvenir of sadness for lost and departed comrades. No matter how gray his temples grow or how many inches he adds to his middle-aged waist, he always walks with a distinctive pride that isn't given to lesser men.

He is America with an honorable discharge. He is democracy with a good conduct medal lost in the darkness of his keepsake box. He is freedom with a purple heart. He's a first class fighting man with a quiet walk and a sentimental grin. He's America's most honored citizen. He's a veteran.

By Dan Valentine. Submitted by American Legion Auxiliary Unit #90.