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*The Old Veteran*

He sits on the chair by the [window](#). There are things to see out there but not for him. Not today. Today he remembers the war, and all of its horror. He remembers his friends, those that came back, and those that didn't. In his mind he hears the thunder of the bombs around him, the ungodly quiet, and the screams. He tries to forget but his mind won't let him.

He strains to listen for the music they play as they marched down the street in the [annual](#) parade, forgetting that the city stopped the parades years ago. The people who ran things in the city didn't think the wars should be honored any more.

He remembers marching down that street the year he came back. Soldiers were heroes then. The adults cheered and the little kids waved their little flags. Times were so different. Wherever you went people smiled and shook your hand if they noticed the small “ruptured duck” you wore in your lapel. Everybody wore one back then. His “Duck” now rests in the drawer of the nightstand. He stopped wearing it the day someone pointed at it and asked what it was. How could he explain that? There just weren't enough words.

He notices there aren't many flags on the street today. His mind drifts back to the times when the flag was displayed on every corner of his town. People honored it then. It wasn't something that was hidden in a garage, or the attic. No, the old days were gone now. Gone like the days when it was patriotic to serve, patriotic to vote, and patriotic to help a neighbor.

The old man sighed, and for a moment wished the olden days would come back. The life he had lived back then was so different. There had been a family then. Now it was just him, and the window, and the quiet. The visitors had stopped coming years ago. If it wasn't for the morning paper he wouldn't know what was happening outside of his room.

Another lonely veteran, living alone, in a lonely world.

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## **National, Federal and Special holidays – Days the Flag should be Flown**

### **Veteran's Day – November 11 First observed November 11, 1919**

November 11, is the anniversary of the Armistice which was signed in the Forest of Compiegne by the Allies and the Germans in 1918, ending World War I, after four years of conflict. At 5 A.M. on Monday, November 11, 1918 the Germans signed the Armistice, an order was issued for all firing to cease; so the hostilities of the First World War ended. This day began with the laying down of arms, blowing of whistles, impromptu parades, closing of places of business. All over the globe there were many demonstrations; no doubt the world has never before witnessed such rejoicing.

In November of 1919, President Woodrow Wilson issued his Armistice Day proclamation. The last paragraph set the tone for future observances:

To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nation.

In 1927 Congress issued a resolution requesting President Calvin Coolidge to issue a proclamation calling upon officials to display the Flag of the United States on all government buildings on November

11, and inviting the people to observe the day in schools and churches...But it was not until 1938 that Congress passed a bill that each November 11 "shall be dedicated to the cause of world peace and ...hereafter celebrated and known as Armistice Day."

That same year President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a bill making the day a legal holiday in the District of Columbia. For sixteen years the United States formally observed Armistice Day, with impressive ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where the Chief Executive or his representative placed a wreath. In many other communities, the American Legion was in charge of the observance, which included parades and religious services. At 11 A.M. all traffic stopped, in tribute to the dead, then volleys were fired and taps sounded.

After World War II, there were many new veterans who had little or no association with World War I.

The word, "armistice," means simply a truce; therefore as years passed, the significance of the name of this holiday changed. Leaders of Veterans' groups decided to try to correct this and make November 11 the time to honor all who had fought in various American wars, not just in World War I.

In Emporia, Kansas, on November 11, 1953, instead of an Armistice Day program, there was a Veterans'

Day observance. Ed Rees, of Emporia, was so impressed that he introduced a bill into the House to change the name to Veterans' Day. After this passed, Mr. Rees wrote to all state governors and asked for their approval and cooperation in observing the changed holiday. The name was changed to Veterans' Day by Act of Congress on May 24, 1954. In October of that year, President Eisenhower called on all citizens to observe the day by remembering the sacrifices of all those who fought so gallantly, and through rededication to the task of promoting an enduring peace. The President referred to the change of name to Veterans' Day in honor of the servicemen of all America's wars.

### **Veteran's Night/Remembrance Day – Saturday closest to November 19th**

Originally, the "*Ritual and Ceremonials*" defined "*Veteran's Night*" as a ceremonial occasion to be observed by a Camp of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. "VETERAN'S NIGHT - Commemorating the anniversary of the delivery of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, November 19 (1863), to be observed in memory of Lincoln and the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines of 1861 - '65."

### **Ritual and Ceremonials, Official: 1920- '25- '26**

With the passing of Comrade Albert Woolson in 1956, the Grand Army of the Republic ceased to exist. A monument was dedicated by the Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic to the memory of the Grand Army of the Republic near the copse of trees on the Gettysburg Battlefield and a parade and ceremony, now known as "Remembrance Day", has continued to be observed in Gettysburg on the Saturday closest to November 19th ever since.

*Note: I encourage you to attend this event at least once in your lifetime.*

### **Thanksgiving Day – Fourth Thursday in November**

First observed in 1621

The Pilgrims set apart a day for thanksgiving at Plymouth immediately after their first harvest, in 1621; the Massachusetts Bay Colony for the first time in 1630, and frequently thereafter until about 1680, when it became an annual festival in that colony; and Connecticut as early as 1639 and annually after 1647, except in 1675. The Dutch in New Netherland appointed a day for giving thanks in 1644 and occasionally thereafter.

During the American Revolutionary War the Continental Congress appointed one or more thanksgiving days each year, except in 1777, each time recommending to the executives of the various states the observance of these days in their states.

George Washington, leader of the revolutionary forces in the American Revolutionary War, proclaimed a Thanksgiving in December 1777 as a victory celebration honoring the defeat of the British at Saratoga. The Continental Congress proclaimed annual December Thanksgivings from 1777 to 1783, except in 1782.

George Washington again proclaimed Thanksgivings, now as President, in 1789 and 1795. President John Adams declared Thanksgivings in 1798 and 1799. President Madison, in response to resolutions of

Congress, set apart a day for thanksgiving at the close of the War of 1812. Madison declared the holiday twice in 1815; however, none of these were celebrated in autumn. One was annually appointed by the governor of New York from 1817. In some of the Southern States there was opposition to the observance of such a day on the ground that it was a relic of Puritanic bigotry, but by 1858 proclamations appointing a day of thanksgiving were issued by the governors of 25 states and two Territories.

In the middle of the Civil War, prompted by a series of editorials written by Sarah Josepha Hale, the last of which appeared in the September 1863 issue of Godey's Lady's Book, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day, to be celebrated on the final Thursday in November 1863.

Since 1863, Thanksgiving has been observed annually in the United States. In 1939, President Roosevelt declared that Thanksgiving would be the next to last Thursday of November rather than the last. With the country still in the midst of The Great Depression, Roosevelt thought this would give merchants a longer period to sell goods before Christmas. Increasing profits and spending during this period, Roosevelt hoped, would aid bringing the country out of the Depression. At the time, it was considered inappropriate to advertise goods for Christmas until after Thanksgiving. However, Roosevelt's declaration was not mandatory; twenty-three states went along with this recommendation, and 22 did not. Other states, like Texas, could not decide and took both weeks as government holidays. Roosevelt persisted in 1940 to celebrate his "Franksgiving," as it was termed.

The U.S. Congress in 1941 split the difference and established that the Thanksgiving would occur annually on the fourth Thursday of November, which was sometimes the last Thursday and sometimes the next to last. On November 26 that year President Roosevelt signed this bill into US law.