

Greg Carter, PCC
National Patriotic Instructor

**Monthly Patriotic Instruction
November, 2014**



I saw this grave for the first time in 2011. I was taking pictures of the G.A.R. monument in Linwood Cemetery in Galesburg, Illinois. I saw this token of gratitude to an unknown soldier as I turned the car about to leave the cemetery and head back home. To me, this picture epitomizes Veteran's Day and Memorial Day both.

The person who left this cherub undoubtedly did not know the soldier buried beneath the headstone, yet they cared enough to be an eyewitness to the soldier's presence. Unknown he remains today, but fortunately, not forgotten.

There is no question that America is a warrior nation. We love guns and fighting, we glorify the military today, although we have not always done so. Americans have been involved in dozens of armed conflicts since the 16th century. As we pause on November 11 to remember those who have given their lives for our country and those who have served and are serving, let's take stock of some numbers to consider:

1,321,612 Americans have been killed in combat or died of wounds and disease during war.
1,531,036 American have been wounded in combat and survived.
38,159 Americans are currently listed as "missing" or unidentified. One of them is in the photograph above.

The numbers of American service personnel who bore the mental scars of war their entire lives has never been calculated, and they are often the first to be overlooked.

The American Civil War remains the worst, of course, because we killed one another. In the Civil War, 599 Americans were killed every single day. That's one American death every 42 seconds, every day, for four years.

It's an awful number to contemplate.

Every member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War who is ambulatory will be attending an observance for Veteran's Day. Let's take some time to thank those veterans in our camps and departments as well as those in our communities. If possible, take extra time to thank those veterans of World War II and Korea, for we have precious little time left to do so.

We also have two other holidays of significance to remember this month- Remembrance Day and Thanksgiving. I will look forward to seeing many of you in Gettysburg for the annual Remembrance Day services. From Lincoln's speech that famous day in 1863, I want only to remind you of a few words:

“It is rather for us, the living, we here be dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that, from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here, gave the last full measure of devotion...”

Think about this statement for a moment. The cause the dead at Gettysburg gave “the last full measure” to, at least in my opinion, was America. Can any one of us even begin to list the ways in which we can work to contribute to the cause for which these men gave up everything? I give you a few national examples which come to mind as I write this:

In July, 2014, the bankrupt City of Detroit turned off the water to 15,000 homes where the bill was not paid because people were unemployed. In Chicago, 82 people were shot on Independence Day. In East St. Louis, 70% of the resident male population is dead or incarcerated. In New Orleans, over 60% of repairs from Hurricane Katrina are not finished, despite nine years of work. There are POWs still missing from our nation's many wars, veterans who are mentally and physically scarred who have been neglected, we have a homeless population numbering in the thousands and nationwide we watch as 30% of our high school children drop out of school.

In short, we have inestimable ways in which we must contribute to the cause to which so many fell on those three hot days in July, 1863.

Finally, I want to recognize the many men in our Order who have served our nation. I know full well the feeling of those in military who believe that they are not heroes because they did not lose their lives. Those of you living, no matter whether or not you believe that, are heroes to me, and I salute your service.