

I'd like to welcome everyone to Riverside Park and the Veterans Day Ceremony.

Last week, the City recognized several Veterans of World War 2 during a Council meeting. It was an honor to stand there next to these men and present them with certificates expressing the Cities appreciation. As each Veteran walked up, you could tell that time had taken its toll on their bodies, but they still carried themselves with pride and dignity. And by their occasional wry smiles and good natured jabbing between each other, you could see that the 18 year old soldier was still there somewhere inside of them.

But, it was what I saw in their eyes that really struck me. Even after all these years, that very private and lasting mark that their war time experiences had left them with, was visible for a brief yet powerful moment in the eyes of these proud and honorable men.

Maybe the 18 year old hidden inside them was there again, far away from home for the first time, in a strange place, in grave danger and in the heat of battle. But, just for a moment. How could such memory's not remain with them?

We are all, to a certain extent, products of our experiences. Not defined by them...just changed. Sometimes, they craft our character like iron is tested by fire. Yet, even though it is said that they leave us stronger, arguably better able to cope with what life has in store for us, we still carry the scar. Not necessarily a physical scar, but one deep inside our spirit where it only dares reveal itself under great emotional stress.

Those of us who have never had the privilege of serving in the Armed forces can only imagine the memories that our veterans must carry with them. These men and women, these Veterans, who have served so bravely, sacrificed so much and now share our lives deserve more than our gratitude. They deserve our respect and our love.

After the Council meeting a favorite quote came to mind ... "Each one of us, at one time in our lives...will look upon a troubled loved one who is in need and being at a loss as to what we should do, we will all ask the same question.

"We are willing to help, ...but what, if anything, is needed?" It is true that it can be difficult to help those closest to us. Either we don't know what part of ourselves to give...or more often than not, the part we have to give... is not wanted. And so it is those we live with and should know who sometimes elude us...but we can still love them. We can love completely...without complete understanding.

God Bless our Veterans...God Bless America

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