

WHAT IS A VET?

Some veterans bear visible signs of their service: a missing limb, a jagged scar, a certain look in the eye.

Others may carry the evidence inside them: a pin holding a bone together, a piece of shrapnel in the leg - or perhaps another sort of inner steel: the soul's ally forged in the refinery of adversity.

Except in parades, however, the men and women who have kept America safe wear no badge or emblem.

You can't tell a vet just by looking.

What is a vet?

He is the cop on the beat who spent six months in Saudi Arabia sweating two gallons a day making sure the armored personnel carriers didn't run out of fuel.

He is the barroom loudmouth, dumber than five wooden planks, whose overgrown frat-boy behavior is outweighed a hundred times in the cosmic scales by four hours of exquisite bravery near the 38th parallel.

She - or he - is the nurse who fought against futility and went to sleep sobbing every night for two solid years in Da Nang.

He is the POW who went away one person and came back another - or didn't come back AT ALL.

He is the Quantico drill instructor that has never seen combat - but has saved countless lives by turning slouchy, no-account rednecks and gang members into Marines, and teaching them to watch each other's backs.

He is the parade - riding Legionnaire who pins on his ribbons and medals with a prosthetic hand.

He is the career quartermaster who watches the ribbons and medals pass him by.

He is the three anonymous heroes in The Tomb Of The Unknowns, whose presence at the Arlington National Cemetery must forever preserve the memory of all the anonymous heroes whose valor dies unrecognized with them on the battlefield or in the ocean's sunless

deep.

He is the old guy bagging groceries at the supermarket -
palsied now and aggravatingly slow - who helped liberate a Nazi death
camp and who wishes all day long that his wife were still alive to hold
him when the nightmares come.

He is an ordinary and yet an extraordinary human being, a
person who offered some of his life's most vital years in the service of
his country, and who sacrificed his ambitions so others would not have
to sacrifice theirs.

He is a soldier and a savior and a sword against the darkness, and he
is nothing more than the finest, greatest testimony on behalf
of the finest, greatest nation ever known.

So remember, each time you see someone who has served our
country, just lean over and say Thank You. That's all most people need,
and in most cases it will mean more than any medals they could have been
awarded or were awarded.

Two little words that mean a lot, "THANK YOU".

Remember November 11th is Veterans Day

"It is the soldier, not the reporter, Who has given us freedom of
the press.

It is the soldier, not the poet, Who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, Who has given us the
freedom to demonstrate.

It is the soldier, Who salutes the flag, Who serves beneath the flag,
and whose coffin is draped by the flag, Who allows the protestor
to burn the flag."

Father Denis Edward O'Brien, USMC