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Say "Thank You" to Veterans for Their Service and Sacrifice

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Veterans Day is this month and what does this day mean to me? For several years I attended recognition events with my two favorite veterans, the two most important men in my life, my husband a former Army officer who fought in Desert Storm and my father who was in the Air National Guard for twenty-seven years. My family is no stranger to the military, my brother was injured in Desert Storm, my father-in law was in the Marines and my brother-in law was in the Army National Guard. But, the war came close to home for my family once again this summer. My nephew, Joe, who is in the Marines lost one of his best friends in Afghanistan, a young twenty-two year old soldier. One of the most touching elements of the service was the playing of "Taps". There is something hauntingly beautiful in the music of this wonderful call. Its air is melancholy, yet full of peace and always reminds me of the reverence deserved by all veterans. This made me think about what this Veterans Day may mean to many families, those who have soldiers who are or have been deployed.

Who is Veterans Day designated to honor--those who returned, those who fell, or all who served? At some point during this important holiday, think about what Veterans Day means. Veterans Day is about the sacrifice of those who served and the numerous sacrifices that service members make every day so that all Americans can live better lives. Consider the fact that many soldiers left America and never came home. Remember those who serve our country and come home carrying the burden of what they have seen. And if possible, thank a veteran, whether he or she is a stranger met briefly for a moment at a Veterans Day ceremony or a friend or family member. Let a veteran know that personal sacrifice and service have not gone unnoticed and America is eternally grateful. Mark the day and take a minute to remember what America's veterans have done and the sacrifices veterans and their families make every day. Veterans are not just aged men who fought long ago wars; they are parents, grandparents, sons and daughters, siblings and friends. They unselfishly take up their country's call and defend America's way of life, but they return and seek no gratification for putting their country before themselves and their families.

As a former military spouse who was left behind for six months during Desert Storm, I can say that Veterans Day is also about the families who remain at home. They are the ones who wait anxiously every day for any news of their loved ones who are abroad. I spent months not only awaiting the return of my husband, but working as a Family Assistance Center counselor in support of the families that were left behind. Some have said goodbye to their loved ones for the last time. As a service to America's service men and women, we should do what we can to help their families who remain at home. Many years ago when my husband was away in Desert Storm someone gave me a poem called "Loving a Soldier" which

ends “ remember he’s thinking of you every day, he’s sad and he’s lonely for being away, so love him, miss him and try to be bolder, and always be proud of loving a soldier.”

To those who are currently serving ...Thank you. To the families and loved ones of those who have fought in order to keep the world free...Thank you. To all of our fallen heroes who have given the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of freedom and those who have returned home... Thank you.