

WHO IS A VETERAN?

Who is a veteran?

His was the empty seat in the school gym when his son sank his first varsity basket, or the Wmissing Mom when her daughter put on her beautiful prom dress.

He may bear the scars of wounds suffered in many battlegrounds around the globe.

True veterans also served in other fields than combat: the cooks and clerks and all the supporting roles which are critical for our forces in the field.

Some wore the brass symbols of command while some others were the foot soldiers that Bill Mauldin, with loving humor, created with his "Willie and Joe" cartoons in WW11.

Millions of veterans returned to a civilian life that had changed so much since their induction. They adapted and blended into the everyday activity from which .they had been called away.

Some vets are a parent or grandparent, listening to their son's voice change as he matured, or helping their teen age daughter primp up for the prom.

John Gillespie Magee, an American pilot flying for the RCAF in WW11 wrote a lyrical description of flight. His ending words were:

"I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark or even eagle flew --
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God."

His poetry was prophetic, as he was killed flying a Spitfire at the age of nineteen.

So today as our veteran fishes back in the closet to admire his old uniform , which he can no longer get into, he experiences the shadow of deep sadness when he hears the plaintive strain of the bugler playing TAPS, and remembers those many who have gone before him to touch the face of God.

Who is this veteran? He is you.

Congratulations.

Walt Stevenson

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