

## OF REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING

by Joe Carvalko.



*Each year, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, we pause to pay tribute to you, our veterans and their families. On behalf of our great city, we thank you for service to our nation, while we pray for our heroic dead, who, in the words of the great civil war general John A. Logan, made their breasts a barricade between our country and its foes.*

*Today we draw our attention to the unbroken chain of patriots who have come forward to serve and defend us in times of war and protect us in times of peace. And, today we want also draw attention and express a special gratitude to those who served during the Korean War.*

*Sixty three years ago young men and women answered the call to protect us against communism, which at that time, was this country's greatest threat. Many of them left from that very railway station behind us. And rest assured that even 63 years later that railway station has not forgotten the boys turned men, some who returned on those very rails as fragments of war, lost limb or were shell shocked. And, as railway stations do not forget, neither should we.*

*On a day like today, if you listen carefully you might hear laughter imposed on horns of sorrow, the approaching locomotive's rumble, back then a local brass band might have played, a tubist's notes might have modulated the station master's monotone, bellowing arrivals and departures of young men going to war or returning home, some to start new lives and some to be buried in a field of white crosses, lilies and sometimes forgotten.*

*The Korean War was waged between WWII and the Vietnam War, it is itself often forgotten, or at least unacknowledged. But, let us use this occasion to remind ourselves that the soldiers who end wars leave on the battlefields their bodies, minds or spirits, and sometimes the loved ones of those who died often themselves live without an answer to where they may be found.*

*What all generations that followed in the wake of this catastrophic event should not forget is that as of today more than 7,900 American soldiers are still missing in action from the Korean War.*

*Of the 7,190 who were captured, approximately 3000 died in captivity—, 43%, largely of starvation.*

*U.S. Deaths from hostilities were 33,739 and U.S. wounded in action was- 103,284. It was a vicious war.*

*I would like to read a poem about the battle for Hill 555 North of the 38th Parallel during the Korean War.*

*A cold and moon-less Christmas morn, the bugler lifted his silver horn; the chaplain led the men in prayer, that the Lord might light the souls soon bare. In communion they marched into a darkness, unable to change that in its starkness, breached the seam that unglued man, in every conflict and every land, love, hate and humanity splayed, a scorched earth of napalm laid, naked upon a frozen floor, where fields of broken bodies bore, monstrosities, brutalities folded and strewn, soldiers stilled in the yellow moon.*

*In anticipation of this holiday I challenged myself to remember my first Parade, WWII had just ended, when I stood next to my mother watching men in uniform 4, 8 and 16 across, three times as tall as I, marching down Main Street, USA echoes of brass bands playing in the distance, people cheering, clapping each time the skeleton of a new regiment crossed our path. I remember*

*troops passing who'd fought in the Spanish American War, 1899, dozens of companies who'd fought in World War I, 1918, and then a few of the wounded from WWII, and those that were then serving in the home front. Among those in the crowd were parents and grandparents, brothers, sisters, veterans and veterans to be, and those that would perish in the unfinished business of wars yet named: the Cold War, Korea, Vietnam, the first Iraq War, of a second Iraq War and Afghanistan. Thinking about those days comes hard, so far away, time gradually erasing the details of scores of flag waving parades in the course of a long life.*

*But, what cannot be erased, and which I'm occasionally reminded, is the toll of lives lost in war. So, it is incumbent up us who are secure in life, liberty, happiness and our property that we must do everything in our power to prevent war—as our nation sprints into the future.*

*Rather than the number of wars diminishing, the number is increasing. Yet, for all the resources modern nations exploit, few are committed to counterbalancing, in inspiration, advocacy, people or money— a non-violent war against war.*

*Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world – indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” It is with the hope that Veteran’s Day can be set aside to show respect to those who gave their lives during armed conflict by opening a conversation that focuses attention away from war rather than its propagation.*

*But the present reality is that we have veterans, many whom need our help. Remember that long after the battle ends, long after our heroes come home, whether from the Cold War, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq or Afghanistan, we must not forget what these men and women endured, we must strive to locate the missing, strive to help veterans who ask for it, and at every conceivable opportunity, urge our elected officials to do the same. Not by saluting once a year, but by fighting for you and your families every day.*

*Again on this day, we thank all of our veterans from all of our wars – not just for their service to this country, but for reminding us why America is and always will be a great nation.*

*God bless you. God bless our veterans and our men and women in uniform. And God bless these United States of America. Thank you very much.*