



Volume 4- December 2015 - © 2015 WreathsForTheFallen.org

Happy Holidays!

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Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah, Happy Kwanzaa...whatever it is you celebrate this season, we wish you peace, happiness, and joy!

At WreathsForTheFallen.org., this is the season we work for all year long. Our chance to pay tribute to our state's Fallen Heroes finally realized after months of planning, outreach events, mailings, and other behind-the-scenes details.

As of this writing, another Remembrance Ceremony is now behind us. This year's ceremony was held on Saturday, December 12th and we couldn't have asked for better weather.

(But if you are one of those hardy Minnesotans looking forward to the snow, you may have a slightly different definition of "better" weather that doesn't involve green grass and rain).

With the help of a record number of volunteers, we were able to place the wreaths in no time at all.

We are aware of some glitches that occurred this year, and we sincerely apologize for any confusion this may have caused. If you have any concerns or ideas for future ceremonies, we would appreciate your feedback.



A Soldier's Christmas

By Michael Marks



The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
my daughter beside me, angelic in rest.

Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.
The sparkling lights in the tree, I believe,
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.

My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep
in perfect contentment, or so it would seem.
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
But I opened my eye when it tickled my ear.
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know,
Then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.

My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
and I crept to the door just to see who was near.
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
A lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.

A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.

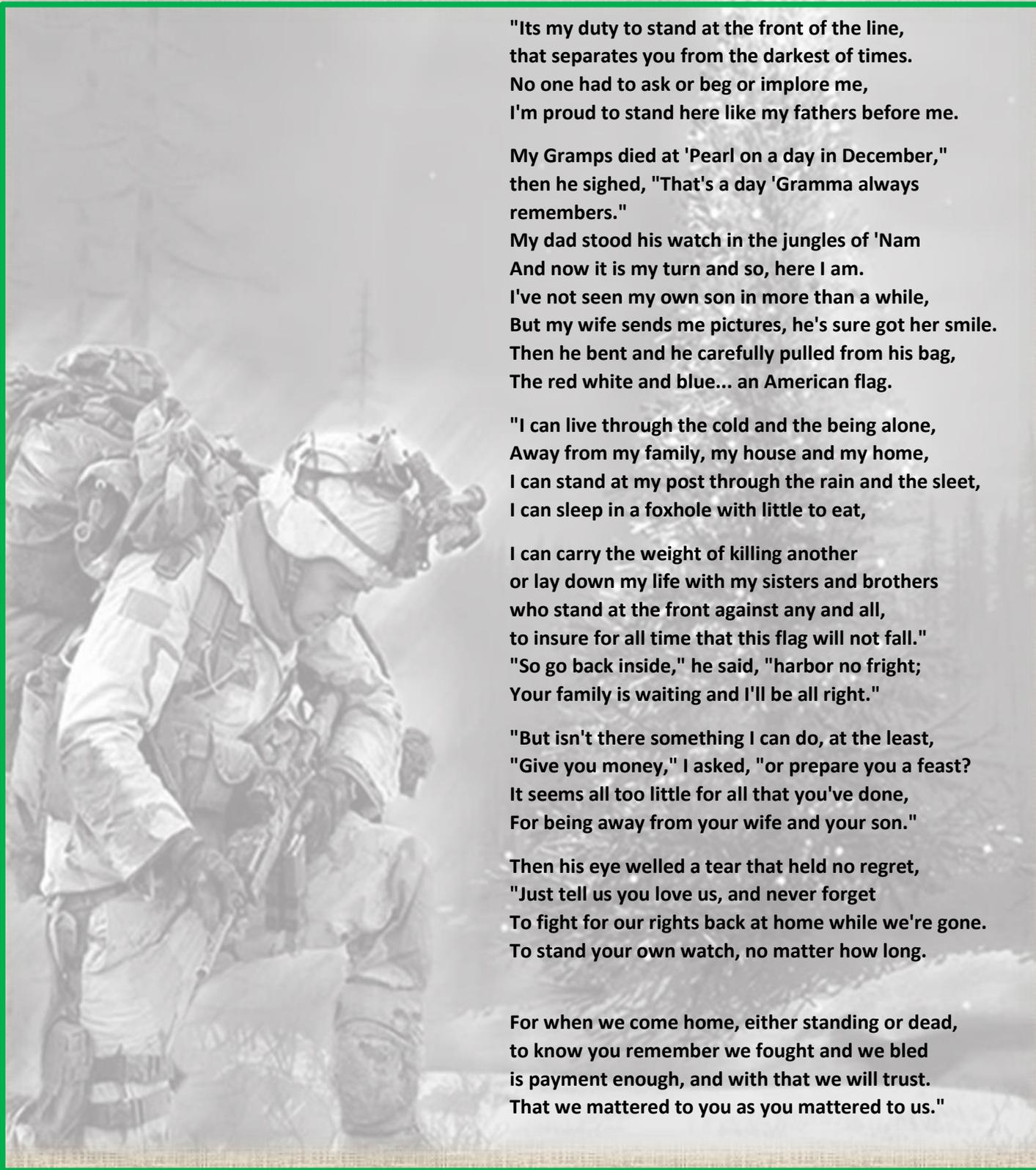
"What are you doing?" I asked without fear
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve,
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"

For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts,
to the window that danced with a warm fire's light
then he sighed and he said "It's really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night"



A Soldier's Christmas

Continued from page 2



"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,
that separates you from the darkest of times.
No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.

My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day in December,"
then he sighed, "That's a day 'Gramma always
remembers."

My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.
I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
But my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile.
Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
The red white and blue... an American flag.

"I can live through the cold and the being alone,
Away from my family, my house and my home,
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat,

I can carry the weight of killing another
or lay down my life with my sisters and brothers
who stand at the front against any and all,
to insure for all time that this flag will not fall."
"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright;
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."

"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,
"Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?
It seems all too little for all that you've done,
For being away from your wife and your son."

Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone.
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.

For when we come home, either standing or dead,
to know you remember we fought and we bled
is payment enough, and with that we will trust.
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us."



2015 Remembrance Ceremony 12-12-15

Thanks to all who showed on Saturday to help honor our Fallen!

Together we were able to place 4157 wreaths and pay our respects to the men and women interred at the Little Falls Veteran's Cemetery.

Please enjoy these photos that show the fantastic results of our teamwork, and the beauty of our gesture to remember those we've lost.



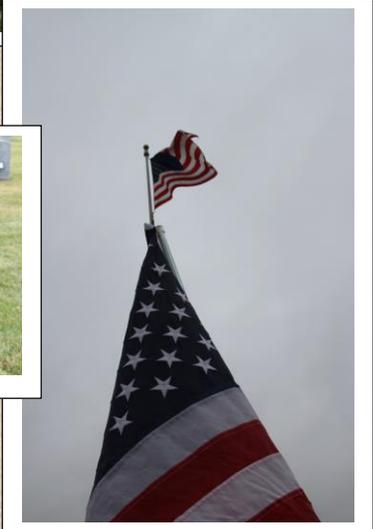
BEFORE



AFTER



Remembrance Ceremony, Continued from page 4



Remembrance Ceremony, Continued from page 5

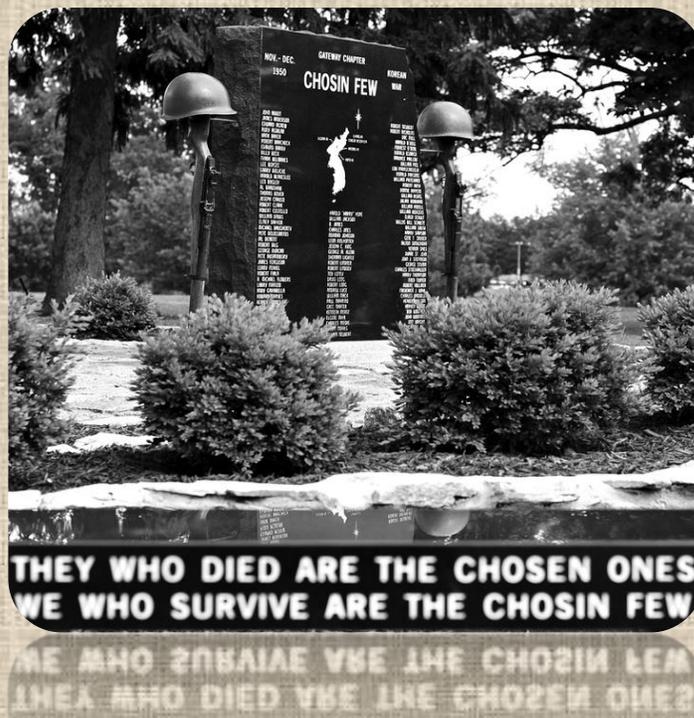


Tootsie Rolls



The Battle of Chosin Reservoir occurred 65 years ago, ending on December 13, 1950. It was during this battle that some of the harshest weather conditions of the Korean War occurred, including temperatures hovering near 35 degrees below zero (without adding in the windchill factor).

The weather presented dangers and challenges for our troops. Frostbite was a possibility for flesh exposed even for a few seconds, and weapons froze up. My father is one of the "Chosin Few", and a fellow Marine included a comment about him in a Korean War memoir: "his BAR froze up and the only way to get it going again was to feed one round in at a time until it heated up and he could get it to fire on automatic."



Korean War Memorial - Washington, DC



During this time a hot, nutritious meal was just a distant memory; anything that wasn't frozen solid was hard to come by. Thankfully, an error in communication helped to boost morale, as well as provide a quick source of nourishment to those on the ground.

Ammunition was running low, so a desperate call for "tootsie rolls" (code name for mortar rounds) was put out. Due to the receiver's interpretation of that radioed message, planes flew in and dropped Tootsie Rolls- the CANDY- down to our troops. This turned out to be a blessing, for the sugar in the candy gave them much needed energy. Many stuck

Tootsie Rolls inside interior pockets, where it was warmer, so when they ate them they would actually soften up.

My parents attend many Marine Reunions, returning with Tootsie Rolls when the Reunion is a Chosin Few reunion. Perhaps I had been told the story behind this as a child and dismissed it, as my father is known to be a jokester, but I don't have a recollection of hearing this until just a few years ago.

If you would like to research further, here is a link to a Chicago Sun Times article and National Museum of the Marine Corps Tootsie Roll video: <http://chicago.suntimes.com/news/7/71/310177/tootsie-rolls-earned-place-american-history>

Thanks to our Korean War Veterans!





To 2016..... And Beyond!

2015's mission is now complete, thanks to the efforts of many.

While the 2016 Remembrance Ceremony is almost a year away, we've already begun the work to make it a success.

In 2016, we plan to continue outreach at the State Fair, county fairs, and other Veteran-centered events. If you would like to volunteer at any of these events, or have suggestions for events and/or fundraising, please let us know.

We continue to grow, as the number of wreaths needed to honor our Fallen increases each year. In addition, there will be more state Veteran's cemeteries in the coming years- Preston (which is already interring Veterans), as well as Duluth and Redwood Falls.

Our goal with the newsletter is to provide information regarding WFTF's progress throughout the year, and to include information that may be helpful to Veterans and supporters. If you have anything you would like to see in future newsletters, please contact Newsletter Editor Laura Becker-Pallister at:

Newsletter@WreathsForTheFallen.org

If you have any events you would like us to share on the Website, or have any comments or concerns, please contact us at:

Office@WreathsForTheFallen.org

It's been a great and rewarding year...here's to many more!



Honor Wreath removal is scheduled for Saturday, January 30th at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery in Little Falls.

A record attendance from our supporters assisted in the record breaking honor wreath placement of 4,157 on December 12th. Many have come to see the amazing accomplishment and now that some snow has covered the grass the sight is breathtaking, with all our nation's fallen veterans having a fresh Balsam honor wreath with a big red bow on their grave.

Our sincere thanks for everyone's support.

So now might be a good time to mark your calendar on Saturday, January 30th at 11am and plan on assisting in the wreath removal. The cemetery staff will have a number of large containers located in the sections for us to put the wreaths in. As last year with a sufficient number of people the removal should be completed by 12 noon in time for lunch. Last year the removal was completed in 20 minutes.

If you would like to sponsor a wreath in honor of a loved one, you may do so on our Website. Please look for this link on our Home page:



[Click HERE to honor a Veteran](#)

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



*May you have a happy,
peaceful, and productive
2016*

It's not about Us, It's about Them

With the 2015 Remembrance Ceremony behind us, we move into the flurry of the holiday season- last minute gifts and preparations, traveling, tidying up our houses for company, and baking delicious treats that give us a reason for New Year's Resolutions.

The freshly laid wreaths are a reminder of those who won't be joining in our festivities this year. For some families, it may be their first holiday without their loved one; while for others, many years may have passed since they spent time with a father, mother, brother, or son.

Some people may fear bringing up a loved one, thinking that they may cause sadness for someone who is grieving. Please DO talk to people who have suffered this loss, for they are thinking of their loved one and miss their presence.

Sharing memories and stories can help survivors in their grieving process, and help them feel they are not alone in their grief. Acknowledging the loved one by donating to a cause they supported in their memory, by continuing a tradition they started, or making a special ornament for the tree can also show you are thinking of them.



Let's also remember the families whose loved ones are deployed or serving far away- like the parents who are temporarily filling the shoes of both mother and father, keeping the home fires burning (interesting tidbit- the British song ***Keep the Home-Fires Burning ('Till the Boys Come Home)*** was recorded 100 years ago in 1915 by James F. Harrison).

While it may be too late for Christmas care package drives for deployed troops, or for holiday events for their families, we have the rest of the year to remember their sacrifices, and to help ease their burden in other ways.

If you would like to be involved in supporting our troops, Veterans, and military families, please contact local Veteran's organizations such as your local VA, VFW's, American Legion's, or Beyond the Yellow Ribbon programs. Many different talents and abilities would be appreciated. This is a wonderful way beyond thanking our troops to show that we truly do support them!

