

Contact Relief
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This past Saturday was Armed Forces Day. On that day, I was able to witness a ceremony that I believe is very important. I was attending a reunion for 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines (Vietnam). They have their annual event at a campground in LaGrange, Georgia. This was the fourth year that I have participated with them. This year, however, they did something new.

This group has their own Battalion Colors, complete with Battle Streamers. This year at the memorial service, the Color Guard paraded the colors and a young Corporal, resplendent in his Dress Blue Uniform, marched forward, saluted the National Ensign and, as the Color Guard lowered the Battalion Colors, he removed the Presidential Unit Citation from the flag and attached a new steamer with an additional star. This young Corporal was in Iraq with 3/5 when they received their 13th PUC.

I think it was fitting to have a current Marine present with these veterans of a previous generation. He and his wife spent the weekend at LaGrange as the honored guest among these older veterans. Stories were shared of battles long ago, but just as clear in their memories, as the young man told of his experiences in more recent battles. Stories were read to the veterans of some of the awards recognizing the bravery and valor of members of their unit. Then we read citations from awards and recognized the families of Marines who served with the same honor nearly forty years ago.

It was a wonderful mix of the old and the new. Both seasoned, but with different experiences in different kinds of war. But all of them had something in common. They had all served in the same unit. They all had seen brutal fighting. They all had lost friends, and they all returned home.

I think it would be good if all veteran's groups would make it a practice of including current members of the military as they remember their friends and share their experiences. In this way, we can be sure the lessons learned are passed down from one generation to the next.

In the military, when a service member transfers or is released from active duty, we have a relief on board to take that person's place. Ideally, we want to have what we call a "contact relief." This allows one person to personally instruct the new individual and pass their knowledge of the job along to the new person. We try to insure that by doing this, as much of the corporate knowledge as possible is passed along.

This is the reason the Bible records much of the history of God's people. It is important for us to remember the lessons learned by our forefathers. We want to be careful to avoid making the same mistakes, while building upon the victories and progress of those who have gone before us.

It is important to pass our heritage along. Not just our military heritage, but also our heritage as a nation and as a people of faith. We must insure that our own children learn from us and incorporate our lessons learned into their future. Learn from the past and prepare the future.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in church on Sunday.