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Copied.

Cemetery Escort Duty

I just wanted to get the day over with and go down to Smokeyø. Sneaking a look at my watch, I saw the time, 1655. Five minutes to go before the cemetery gates closed for the day. Full dress was hot in the August sun. Oklahoma summertime was as bad as ever ó the heat and humidity at the same level ó both too high.

I saw the car pull into the drive, ø69 or ø70 model Cadillac Deville, looked factory-new. It pulled into the parking lot at a snailø pace. An old woman got out so slow I thought she was paralyzed. She had a cane and a sheaf of flowers ó about four or five bunches as best I could tell.

I couldnø help myself. The thought came unwanted, and left a slightly bitter taste: øSheø going to spend an hour, and for this old soldier, my hip hurts and Iø ready to get out of here right now!ø But for this day, my duty was to assist anyone coming in. Kevin would lock the øINø gate and if I could hurry the old biddy along, we might make it to Smokeyø in time.

I broke post attention. My hip made gritty noises when I took the first step and the pain went up a notch. I must have made a real military sight: middle-aged man with a small pot gut and half a limp, in marine full-dress uniform, which had lost its razor crease about thirty minutes after I began the watch at the cemetery.

I stopped in front of her, halfway up the walk. She looked up at me with an old womanø squint. øMaøam, may I assist you in any way?ø She took long enough to answer. øYes, son. Can you carry these flowers? I seem to be moving a tad slow these days.ø

øMy pleasure, maøam.ø Well, it wasnø too much of a lieí ..

She looked again. øMarine, where were you stationed?ø

øVietnam, maøam. Ground-pounder. ø69-ø71.ø

She looked at me closer. øWounded in action, I see. Well done, Marine. Iøll be as quick as I can.ø

I lied a little bigger: øNo hurry, maøam.ø

She smiled and winked at me. øSon, Iøm 85 years old and I can tell a lie from a long way off. Letø get this done. Might be the last time I can do this. My nameø Joanne Wieserman, and Iøve a few Marines Iød like to see one more time.ø

øYes, Maøam. At your service.ø

She headed for the World War I section, stopping at a stone. She picked one of the flowers out of my arm and laid it on top of the stone. She murmured something I couldnø quite make out. The name on the marble was Donald S. Davidson, USMC: France 1918.

She turned away and made a straight line for the World War II section, stopping at one stone. I saw a tear slowly tracking its way down her cheek. She put a bunch on a stone; the name was Stephen X. Davidson, USMC, 1943.

She went up the row a ways and laid another bunch on a stone, Stanley J. Wieserman, USMC, 1944.

She paused for a second. øTwo more, son, and weøll be done.ø

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I almost didn't say anything, but, "Yes, ma'am. Take your time."

She looked confused. "Where's the Vietnam section, son? I seem to have lost my way."

I pointed with my chin. "That way, ma'am."

"Oh!" she chuckled quietly. "Son, me and old age ain't too friendly."

She headed down the walk I'd pointed at. She stopped at a couple of stones before she found the ones she wanted. She placed a bunch on Larry Wieserman, USMC, 1968, and the last on Darrel Wieserman, USMC, 1970. She stood there and murmured a few words I still couldn't make out.

"Ok, son, I'm finished. Get me back to my car and you can go home."

"Yes, ma'am. If I may ask, were those your kinfolk?"

She paused. "Yes. Donald Davidson was my father. Stephen was my uncle. Stanley was my husband. Larry and Darrel were our sons. All killed in action, all Marines."

She stopped. Whether she had finished, or couldn't finish, I don't know. She made her way to her car, slowly and painfully. I waited for a polite distance to come between us and then double-timed it over to Kevin, waiting by the car.

"Get to the 'OUT' gate quick. I have something I've got to do."

Kevin started to say something, but saw the look I gave him. He broke the rules to get us there down the service road. We beat her. She hadn't made it around the rotunda yet.

"Kevin, stand at attention next to the gatepost. Follow my lead." I humped it across the drive to the other post.

When the Cadillac came pattering around from the hedges and began the short straight traverse to the gate, I called in my best gunny's voice: "TehenHut!! Present Haaarms!"

I have to hand it to Kevin, he never blinked an eye- full dress attention and a salute that would have made his DI proud. She drove through that gate with two old worn-out soldiers giving her a send-off she deserved, for service rendered to her county, and for knowing duty, honor and sacrifice.

I am not sure, but I think I saw a salute returned from that Cadillac.

Department Operations

Office Hours: 7:00 am ó 3:30 pm

Office Phone: 812-238-7628

Evenings/Weekends: Dial 000

Ask the operator to page the Chaplain's Office.

Upcoming Events

November 11 – Veterans' Day Celebration ó 8am; Display 9-2.

25 –

Thanksgiving Service ó noon-Combs Memorial Chapel

Quote of the Month

öWeave your beliefs into the very fabric of your day. When you do, God will honor your good works, and your good works will honor God.ö
A.R. Bernard

Editor's Note

Contact Neva McFarland at the Chaplain's Office for any comments or additions. 238-7628.

Primary Sacred Times for World Religions

November 1 – *All Saints' Day* – Christian day for honoring saints, known and unknown.

Samhain – Wicca celebration of endings and beginnings and of remembering the dead. Revering of elders is also observed.

2 – *All Soul's Day* – Christian day of prayers of remembrance and intercession for the dead. Prayers of the faithful are seen as helping to cleanse the soul for the vision of God in heaven.

Guru Nanak Dev Sahib birthday – Sikh – honoring of the birth of the first Sikh teacher who lived from 1469-1539 c.e. Sacred readings, prayers, hymns, meals together.

12 – *Birth of Baha'u'llah* – Baha'i – celebration of the birth of their founder and teacher. Refrain from work.

15 – *Nativity Fast begins (through December 14)* – Orthodox Christian

25 – 28 – *Hajj* – Islam – Pilgrimage rites at Mecca on 7-12th days of month of Dhu al-Hajja. Concludes with Eid ul Adha when those not traveling to Mecca take part.

26 – *Thanksgiving* – Interfaith

27 – *Eid al Adha* – Islam – Feast of Sacrifice. The most important feast of Islam. It concludes the Hajj and is a three-day festival recalling Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to Allah.

Union Hospital Chaplain's Office ó making a difference in the Wabash Valley