

Sample “Veterans’ Day Speech

By Ken Kalish

When Ken sent this out to everyone in the AFVN@Yahoogroups.com, he wrote “Use it or share it as you wish. If shared, please remember attribution.”

Length is about 3:15.

We are human, and for that reason we tend to forget “things.” We forget birthdays and appointments and names.

Sometimes we invent methods to remind us of those more important “things.” We set alarms. We make up tickler files. We carry around little calendars. Some of us even know how to use those apps on cell phones.

When we aren’t sure of when some important “thing” happens, we invent markers. Religious scholars are certain that Christ wasn’t born in December, but that’s where we put Christmas. We celebrate July 4th as the birth of our nation in 1776, although many Americans don’t know it’s because our Declaration of Independence was adopted on that day. Adopted, not signed.

Sometimes, though, “things” are too painful to remember. We may mark an occasion for a while, but we change it to make it a less important, less painful, than it was. Eventually it fades from memory.

When I was a child every family knew the meaning of VE Day, VJ Day, Armistice Day. VE Day was May 8th, and it marked the end of World War II in Europe in 1945. VJ Day was August 14th, that day in 1945 when the Japanese officially surrendered to end World War II in the Pacific. Armistice Day was November 11th, that day in 1918 when World War I finally

ground to a halt after more than 17 million people had been killed. The Armistice was signed at 11:00 a.m. on November 11th, the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Very few people remember July 28th, 1914, one hundred two years, one hundred six days ago today. That's the day the carnage of World War I began.

Ask any American born after 1950 and they probably won't know why those dates are important. Those memories have been discarded, forgotten in the name of reducing the number of legal holidays for which businesses must pay overtime. November 11th may as well be called Mattress Sale Day or Summer Clearance Day, or Give Some Old Guy a Free Meal Day. But it isn't.

November 11th is the day we call Veteran's Day. Today is the day upon which our nation recognizes a

ll of those who have served in uniform. Society no longer asks our citizenry to remember those millions of war-dead from a century ago. It asks only that we reserve a small piece of our calendar, a moment or two from our day, perhaps only a few seconds, to thank those among us who have, voluntarily or involuntarily, served in the defense of our nation.