

Can a person feel good about going to an interment at the cemetery?

Usually, a trip to the cemetery is a sad occasion. It means the loss of a friend or relative. It means the end of visits and chats with the person. It marks the end of a person's life, a person who will no longer be with you, a person who will no longer be there to share your joys or sorrows, a person who will no longer be there in times of need. And after the service at the cemetery, most of us go home feeling sad.

But sometimes we are privileged to have a different feeling, one of feeling good about ourselves. There is an organization, Missing in America Project, that has a special mission. Their mission is to locate, identify, and inter the unclaimed remains of American Veterans. Several times a year, I am able to attend the interment ceremony for these Abandoned Veterans, both at Calverton National Cemetery and Long Island National Cemetery.

It is very sad to think that a Veteran would have no one to claim the remains when they have passed away. When these situations arise, we have no idea why the Veterans remains were never claimed. All that is really known is the date of their death, and information from their DD-214 from their honorable service in the Armed Forces. But we do know they served, and we know that their service was honorable. For the men and women who attend these interments, that is enough for us to make the trip to the interment ceremony. We can stand as brothers and sisters to a fellow Veteran. We can take the place of the family and friends they did not have at the time of their death. We can salute them and let them know that they have not been forgotten.

Although we did not know the Veteran in life, we all share a bond with him. We are all Veterans, and we will give the departed the respect that they have earned by serving.

After leaving the ceremony, we can feel good about ourselves. We know that we took the time to pay respects to a departed comrade.

For God and Country

Jon Ralph

Commander - American Legion Patchogue Post 269