



PUTNAM VETERANS NEWSLETTER

An E-Mail Newsletter of the Putnam County Veterans Service Agency

Christmas in the Trenches

by John McCutcheon

My name is Francis Tolliver, I come from Liverpool.
Two years ago the war was waiting for me after school.
To Belgium and to Flanders, to Germany to here
I fought for King and country I love dear.
'Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost so bitter hung,
The frozen fields of France were still, no Christmas song was sung
Our families back in England were toasting us that day
Their brave and glorious lads so far away.
I was lying with my messmate on the cold and rocky ground
When across the lines of battle came a most peculiar sound
Says I, "Now listen up, me boys!" each soldier strained to hear
As one young German voice sang out so clear.
"He's singing bloody well, you know!" my partner says to me
Soon, one by one, each German voice joined in harmony
The cannons rested silent, the gas clouds rolled no more
As Christmas brought us respite from the war
As soon as they were finished and a reverent pause was spent
"God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" struck up some lads from Kent
The next they sang was "Stille Nacht." "Tis 'Silent Night'," says I
And in two tongues one song filled up that sky
"There's someone coming toward us!" the front line sentry cried
All sights were fixed on one long figure trudging from their side
His truce flag, like a Christmas star, shown on that plain so bright
As he, bravely, strode unarmed into the night
Soon one by one on either side walked into No Man's Land
With neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to hand
We shared some secret brandy and we wished each other well
And in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell
We traded chocolates, cigarettes, and photographs from home
These sons and fathers far away from families of their own
Young Sanders played his squeezebox and they had a violin
This curious and unlikely band of men
Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France once more
With sad farewells we each prepared to settle back to war
But the question haunted every heart that lived that wonderous night
"Whose family have I fixed within my sights?"
'Twas Christmas in the trenches where the frost, so bitter hung
The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung
For the walls they'd kept between us to exact the work of war
Had been crumbled and were gone forevermore
My name is Francis Tolliver, in Liverpool I dwell
Each Christmas come since World War I,
I've learned its lessons well
That the ones who call the shots won't be among the dead and lame
And on each end of the rifle we're the same

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Each year this Christmas Issue open the same way. The message is so powerful and universal it should be read each year.

In 1914 there was an unprecedented and unofficial Christmas truce between the British and German Troops. The US had not entered the war; in fact the war was only a few months old. Perhaps the troops knew that it was going to be a long and bloody war, they were the people who were doing the actual fighting after all.

There was never another Christmas Truce during the War to End all War. Garth Brooks, in his classic song "Belleau Wood", created an American Christmas Truce. The only problem is that the Battle of Belleau Wood took place in June of 1918 not Christmas time. Also as mentioned earlier the US was not in the war at the time of the truce.

Notwithstanding creative history let each of us embrace the spirit of that Christmas Truce and pray for peace and keep close to our hearts those who even now guard the gates of freedom.

From the Veterans Service Agency Staff,

Mim, Richie, Art, and Karl

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December 17, 2014

The holidays, Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanza, are rapidly approaching. At this time of giving, we should make an extra effort to remember those who are serving in the military and those who may be separated from their family and loved ones at this otherwise festive time. We should never lose sight of the fact that they are providing us with one of our greatest gifts, our freedom.

This year I launched the Stockings for Soldiers program, a joint effort with United for the Troops that will supply small comfort packages to those in the U. S. Armed Forces serving overseas. United for the Troops was founded by Putnam's own Jim and Patty Rathschmidt. Its sole purpose is to make life while away from home a little better for our brave military men and women by sending them care packages and letting them know they are not forgotten during the holidays. The program was an immediate hit with County employees who responded generously.

Still, while these special days are mostly joy-filled and fun, there may be some among our Veteran population who find themselves feeling out of step and unable to cope with this celebratory season. Depression is not uncommon at this time of year when social and financial obligations can become overwhelming.

Last March, I introduced the County's latest emergency resource, the Putnam County Cares app. The **free** app is compatible with both Android and Apple phones and can be downloaded from Google Play or the Mac Apple Store. The Suicide Prevention Education and Awareness Kit (S.P.E.A.K.) icon on our Putnam County Cares app is filled with helpful information concerning depression and suicide. It's a wonderful resource and I would urge everyone, Veteran or not, to download it today.

Making sure the holidays are bearable days is doable when the public knows there are readily available resources for help. No one needs to battle alone with their feelings of distress or anxiety. Putnam has plenty of great resources within quick, easy reach and SPEAK is one of them. Remember, we are here to help.

Thank you for your service to our country and may all of you and your families enjoy the happiest of holidays.

MaryEllen Odell

MaryEllen Odell
 Putnam County Executive



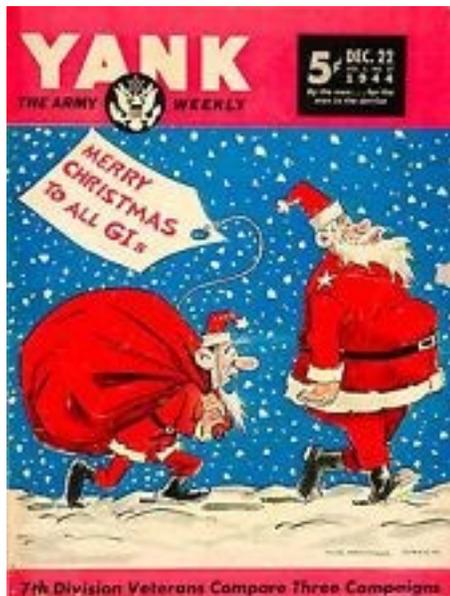
Veteran-Friendly Gifts – Where to Start?

by Tim Hudak

The holiday season is a prime opportunity for loved ones to share past memories. While family and friends gather together, why not help your Veteran share his or her experiences? Military service is likely not something the Veteran will bring up of his or her own accord.

Like many Veterans I know, I have a typical collection of motivational gear at home. I have a plaque from my last command with messages from Marines I served with; a foot locker full of odds and ends; and a Hawaiian spear given to me by an awesome gunnery sergeant. I don't own anything that reflects where I served or what I did. I don't have a shadow box and, honestly, wouldn't feel comfortable buying myself one. It's one of those things that someone else has to give to you, just like how you don't give yourself your own nickname.

I know where I would start to find a gift for a fellow Veteran, but a non-Veteran might find it to be a challenging task. If you don't have a personal perspective, how do you know if a military-themed gift is too generic,



too corny, or even insensitive? Fortunately, there are military gifts experts who can help.



Joe Winslow of the Tripoli Gift Company spent 22 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, and after retiring, he started his own company that produces gifts for Veterans. Joe spent 15 years as the command adjutant, and it was often his responsibility to prepare awards for Marines. That's when he saw the need for recognition gifts in the civilian world.

"(Veterans) will come in and only have one or two gifts from their command that commemorates what they did in the Marine Corps," Winslow said. "That is the one thing on their wall that, when they are grandparents, their kids will look at and say,

"That's what my dad or grandpa did in the Marine Corps."

He also offers some advice when selecting a gift for a Veteran who has been involved in combat.

"It should have some thought behind it; everyone comes back from war with a different experience," he said. "Some may have experiences they don't want to remember, so you have to be thoughtful about that."

Most of all, he says the gift should be American-made. Winslow works with military units and businesses alike to produce lasting keepsakes. He has produced all kinds of gear, from unit coins to giant green Army men, to even the official seal seen in the backdrop of presidential addresses.

It's clear that Winslow has true passion for helping Veterans remember their military service. His experience in the military is the reason he started his business in the first place. Soon after 9/11, he volunteered to be recalled to active duty and soon found himself in Fallujah, Iraq, as a field combat historian. It was during these times that he became aware of the sacrifices that Servicemembers make.

"These [gifts] are really my kind of tributes to them," he said. "To recognize their sacrifices, decisions and heroics, on their part, means a lot to me."

If you are planning on getting your Veteran something special this holiday season, be sure to put some thought behind it. Instead of giving your Veteran the same novelty-type items that he or she is used to, consider giving a gift that invokes positive memories and invites him or her to share some military experiences.

(This is not an endorsement of any company. This article appeared on the VA website)

Counties Team Up to Offer Virtual Job Fair for Veterans through Dec. 31

Online platform connects veterans with job openings

Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell and Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino are teaming up for the third consecutive year to match employment seeking veterans from their counties with businesses ready to hire by sponsoring the Veterans Virtual Job Fair. The online event runs through December 31 and provides an easy-to-use platform through which employers and job seekers may connect.

“Our veterans can be the greatest asset a company could hope to have. The professional training they have had and the skills they have learned while in the military transfer well into the business world,” said Odell. “With the tax credits and training subsidies available to businesses today, now is a great time to hire our veterans.”

Businesses can qualify for up to \$8,000 in federal tax credits for each veteran they hire. In addition, businesses can obtain up to \$20,000 to train the qualifying employees they hire through the Hire Westchester program.

“This is really a wonderful opportunity for our veterans,” said Putnam’s Veteran Service Agency Director Karl Rohde. “When a service member comes home and there are no job opportunities, things look bleak and depression can result. Veterans need support from those of us who remained protected because of his or her service. We have to help them to get jobs so they can continue to support their families and remain a viable part of our society.”

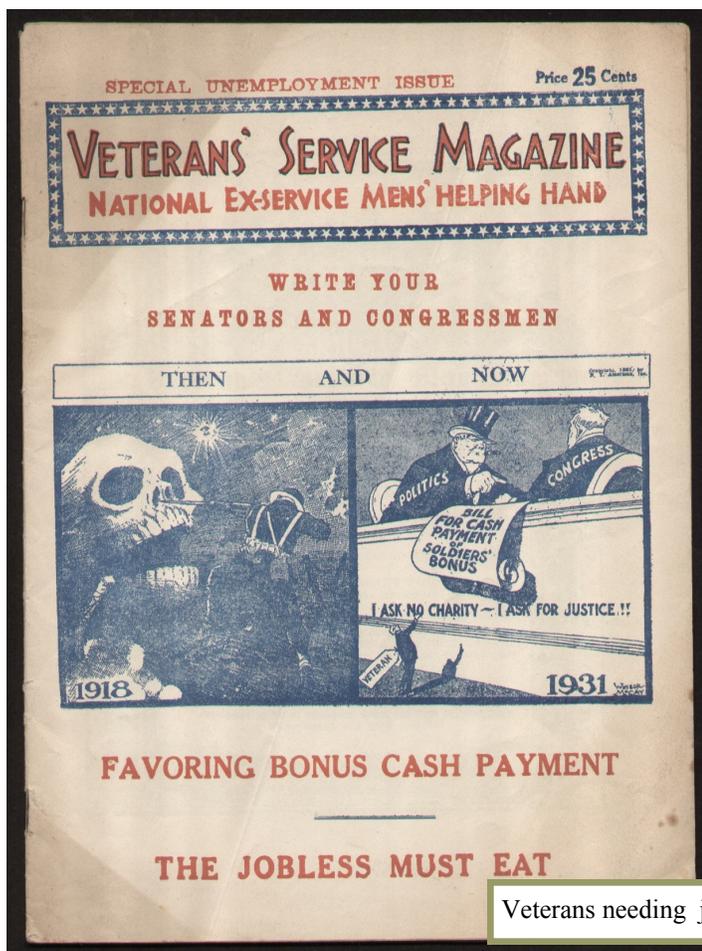
great tool for us to connect with qualified workers, especially for our growing Westchester County operations.”

The online job fair is available free of charge. Putnam and Westchester employers can register their available positions and search online profiles, while veterans can post their resumes and search for jobs. To date, approximately 60 businesses have posted positions available, many at entry level although some are seeking professionals in their field as well.

The jobs available through the online portal include positions in sales, retail, IT, accounting, financial services, graphic arts, custodial and more. Specific positions include clerks, butchers and managers for ShopRite, CNC operator for Fenbar Precision, property manager for Trion Real Estate Management and more.

“We are honored to employ many veterans at our company. Each veteran brings a unique set of skills to the organization, and their dedication and life experience sets a great example for our associates to follow,” said Tom Urtz, vice president of operations for ShopRite Supermarkets, Inc. “Our partnership with the Veterans Virtual Job Fair has allowed us to reach new heights, and we couldn’t be prouder to employ some of the bravest and most loyal men and women who truly understand our mission statement of caring deeply for others.”

Putnam and Westchester businesses interested in hiring a veteran and veterans looking for employment should visit <http://westchesterveteranjobs.com/>.



Veterans needing jobs is nothing new.





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KARL ROHDE, DIRECTOR
ART HANLEY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

On Christmas Day 1776, General Washington led 2400 troops across



the icy waters of the Delaware River. They were ill clad and many had rags wrapped around their feet while others were barefoot. Winter was a time that most armies took a break, rested and regrouped for the new offensives they would undertake in the spring. General Washington took advantage of this mind-

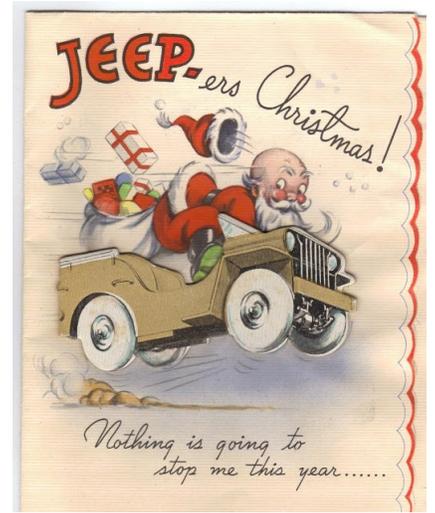
set among the British and Hessian soldiers. His surprise attack on the Hessians early the next morning and the taking of Trenton lifted the spirits of the weary troops throughout the colonies and gave them the gift of hope.

In the ensuing years our Country has faced many adversaries and many have answered the call, stepping forward to protect and defend. Among those living today are Veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Grenada, Panama, Bosnia, Desert Storm, OEF, and OIF.

Those of us who work in the Veterans Service Agency are here to serve you. We are here to say thank you for your gift to us, the gift of Freedom.

I hope that all of you, no matter how you celebrate, find peace and hope during this

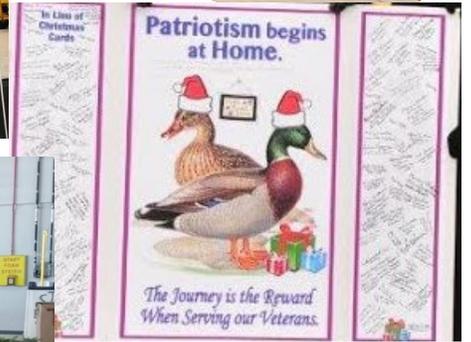
Holiday Season.
Happy Hanukkah!
Merry Christmas!
Happy New Year!



Art



On Monday December 8th My wife Irene who is the President of the New York State VFW Ladies Auxiliary and I had the distinct honor to take part in a program that has been going on for 11 years called "Holiday Cheer". Christmas trees with all the decorations are sent by DHL free to the troops on harms way. Over \$14,000 was earned this year. DHL puts on a great show at JFK Airport. With USO performers and Santa Claus. We even get to help load some of the trees. We are happy to report the trees have arrived in Afghanistan.



Card sent to troops with the trees.



Deputy Director Art Hanley took part in Wreaths Across America at St. Lawrence Cemetery December 13th. This was made possible by the NY Chapter of the Minuteman Riders. What a fitting tribute to those have served but are no longer with us to enjoy the Christmas Season!





Ring out the message
once again,
Peace on earth,
good will to men.

