

VETS DAY 2012

When I was born, Coolidge was president. So by the time I grew up WW2 was on, and I served under a Commander-in Chief called FDR, who primarily leaned on his top generals and admirals. After him came Truman, himself a WW1 veteran. To this day I thank G-d for Harry Truman who made the historic decision that saved my life. (See my column "The Sailor, the Cowboy and the Student" for details on that.)

Anyway, back to Truman. Understandably I consider him one of our outstanding presidents. John Kennedy too, also a veteran. We didn't have too many outstanding CinC's, but more about that later. This year, as every four years. Veterans Day comes between Election Day and Thanksgiving. On Election Day all I could really feel was disgust -- disgust with our political process. For one thing, the campaign goes on for four years and gets totally corrupted by money. Besides, it becomes less and less important which party gets elected, because either way Big Oil still runs the show. Our last two national administrations were both failures. We are still fighting two wars that so far took ten years, cost too many lives and accomplished very little. We still have some 20 million unemployed, and bringing back our troops next year figures to add thousands more to that scene. We get lots of talk about climate change which becomes a political cause, but no real action on alternative energy because the big contributors hold huge stocks of fossil fuel. Go out to buy something and whatever it is most likely is Made in China. With the current administration reelected and free from any pressure to plan for 2016, we had better start learning Chinese, because that's who will own this country by then. Where's another Harry Truman when we need him?

Let's look back to the beginning of the 20th century and rate the 19 administrations that led this country in peace and war since then. Start with those 75% successful or better:

- 1 - Teddy Roosevelt
- 2 - Woodrow Wilson
- 3 - Harry Truman
- 4 - John Kennedy

Now for those whose success rating we can call 50-75%:

- 1 - Coolidge
- 2 - FDR
- 3 - Eisenhower
- 4 - Reagan
- 5 - Clinton

Next come the 25-50%ers:

- 1 - Taft
- 2 - Hoover
- 3 - LBJ
- 4 - Nixon
- 5 - Bush #1

And the 0-25% administrations:

- 1 - Harding

- 2 - Ford
- 3 - Carter
- 4 - Bush #2
- 5 - Obama

What does all this have to do with Veterans Day? A great deal. Like many of those serving today, in Iraq or Afghanistan or elsewhere, I am proud of my service and glad for the opportunity to defend a great nation. Unlike them, I came back to a life of optimism, a GI Bill that helped us build a future, and an American people that welcomed us, because we were a united country. Oh yes, there were some that said we never should "fight England's wars" but they were few and they were scorned. The general public just pushed toward prosperity. Today's vets don't have that kind of experience. Too many of them find themselves homeless, out of work, undertreated for combat trauma. Many of them must be wondering why they volunteered.

We had 4 words that helped win WW2. The first two words were "Total War." Whether you were in the armed forces, or a civilian air raid warden like my father, or working in a defense plant, or knitting Bundles for Britain -- it was your war. Everyone was involved. Including the media, and Hollywood, and industries that converted from manufacturing civilian products to wartime needs. The other two words were "Unconditional Surrender." Roosevelt and Churchill set that goal and held to it. If a kamikaze sank an American ship, FDR did not invite Tojo to a peace conference.

We don't have anything like that unity or that resolve today, and we need it. Because we are in World War 3 and none of our alleged leaders wants to admit it. The extremists who lead the Muslim world now picked us for enemies. Some of them deny it -- like Saudi Arabia who extorts us for their oil. Others pretend to stay out of the violence because they subsidize terror gangs like Hezbollah and Al Qaeda and Hamas to do their dirty work, while they send their surplus population to infiltrate Western countries. And then there's Iranō

For those serving in the armed forces today, one tour of duty in the war zone follows another. And in between, what do they find here?

A sick society, mired in debt, fumbling with immigration policies and how to deal with foreigners who come here legally and illegally, and family values in dangerous decay. What kind of future can they expect?

Today we will watch a parade or two, listen to high-sounding words at military cemeteries, and maybe exchange a few memories. What about tomorrow?