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October 26, 2011

Cheering Louder For Freedom

There are an incredible amount of details I never knew about Veterans Day. In fact, I had hardly any idea of its fascinating history or what it means to celebrate the servicemen and women of our country. A patch worked knowledge base of parades, flags, and the military may have acted as a substitute, but there is so much more under the surface to November 11. This holiday, so patriotically and sentimentally significant, has affected the nation and myself in a variety of ways.

On the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, the hostilities between the Allies and the Germans came to an end. To thank the returning soldiers for their heroic service to the people and mark the conclusion of a great and terrible war, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as Armistice Day in 1918. Armistice itself means a truce, or a cease-fire. So, in this way, Armistice Day was also a commemoration towards world peace as much as it was for veterans of World War I. However, after World War II and the Korean War, the 83rd American Congress changed the name to "Veterans Day" at the request of veterans' service organizations in 1954. President Eisenhower issued a declaration forming a Veterans Day National Committee only a few months later and named Harvey V. Higley its first chairman. To this day, the committee meets three times a year in preparation for the holiday and its memorial ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. It is also responsible for educating American children about the sacrifices and tribulations soldiers have faced in our nation's history. In 1968, the Uniform Holiday Bill was passed, making Veterans Day one of four national holidays celebrated

on a Monday. This law also changed the date from November 11 to October 25, much to the country's confusion. Some states simply continued to observe it on the 11th, while others followed the federal government. Four years after this change came into effect, President Gerald Ford fixed the date back to the 11th, on which it has been observed since without conflict. Throughout its history in all fifty states, Veterans Day has been a time to show appreciation for service members, both currently and from past wars, in local communities and across the nation.

Being a country of many nationalities, it's important to remember that we are all together in our love for democracy and liberty. One of the things that makes the United States a great power is the force of patriotism in our past and present, and how we are dedicated to our belief in freedom. Veterans Day is something that is celebrated year-round, though we don't usually take notice. Freedom of speech, press, and the pursuit of happiness are only three rights we enjoy on the behalf of our veterans and fallen. When I was too young to understand their sacrifice, I remember my mother telling me to clap as loud as I could when the veterans marched past in the parade. Before me, my grandmother used to tell my mother the same thing when she was a little girl, proving how important an impression they have made generation after generation. I haven't attended the Veterans Day parade in three years. I plan on attending the parade this coming November with my grandmother, who always fosters patriotism in me with newspaper clippings and books. Maybe this time I will stand by the memorial in Lowell and read the names on the plates. Maybe I'll call my great uncle in Arizona, who served as a pilot. No veteran should remain un-thanked on the day dedicated to them by their government and fellow citizens. Or, maybe, I'll sing the national anthem all the louder, and shake the hands of men and women in uniform when I see them in the grocery store.

From the end of World War I and on, Veterans Day will always stand for the solidarity of our country and the reverence its people feel for those who did so much to keep us safe and our ideas alive. By learning its background, I've come to further appreciate veterans not only as a citizen, but as a person as well. In the midst of its facts and figures, the history of Veterans Day has the power to affect the patriot in all of us and remind us of what veterans have done for the United States of America for generations.