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*If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?*

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## **I Was A Soldier, I Am A Veteran**

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**" By Colonel Daniel K. Cedusky, USA, Retired**

I was a Soldier or I am a Veteran: That's the way it is, that's what we were...ARE.

We put it, simply, without any swagger, without any brag, in those four plain words.

We speak them softly, just to ourselves. Others may have forgotten  
They are a manifesto to mankind; speak those four words anywhere in the world -- yes,  
anywhere -- and many who hear will recognize their meaning.

They are a pledge. A pledge that stems from a document which said: "I solemnly Swear", "to  
protect and defend" and goes on from there,

and from a Flag called "Old Glory".

Listen, and you can hear the voices echoing through them, words that sprang white-hot from  
bloody lips, shouts of "medic", whispers of "Oh God!", forceful words of "Follow Me". If you  
can't hear them, you weren't, if you can you were.

"Don't give up the ship! Fight her till she dies... Damn the torpedoes! Go ahead! . . . Do you  
want to live forever? . . . Don't cheer, boys; the poor devils are dying."

Laughing words, and words cold as January ice, words that when spoken, were meant, .. "Wait  
till you see the whites of their eyes". The echo's of I was a Soldier.

You can hear the slow cadences at Gettysburg, or Arlington honoring not a man, but a Soldier,  
perhaps forgotten by his nation...Oh! Those Broken Promises.

You can hear those echoes as you have a beer at the "Post", walk in a parade, go to The Wall,  
visit a VA hospital, hear the mournful sounds of Taps,

or gaze upon the white crosses, or tall white stones, row upon row.

But they aren't just words; they're a way of life, a pattern of living, or a way of dying.

They made the evening, with another day's work done; supper with the wife and kids. A Beer  
with friends;

and no Gestapo snooping at the door and threatening to kick your teeth in.

They gave you the right to choose who shall run our government for us, the right to a secret  
vote that counts just as much as the next fellow's in the final tally;

and the obligation to use that right, and guard it and keep it clean.  
They prove the right to hope, to dream, to pray, and the obligation to serve.  
These are some of the meanings of those four words, meanings we don't often stop to tally up or even list.

Only in the stillness of a moonless night, or in the quiet of a Sunday afternoon, or in the thin dawn of a new day, when our world is close about us,

do they rise up in our memories and stir in our sentient hearts.  
And we are remembering family & buddies, who were at Iwo Jima, Wake Island, and Bataan, Inchon, and Chu Lai, Knox and Benning,

Great Lakes and Paris Island, Travis and Chanute, Bagdad, Kabul, Kuwait City, and many other places long forgotten by our civilian friends.

They are plain words, those four. Simple words.  
You could carve them on stone; you could carve them on the mountain ranges.  
You could sing them, to the tune of "Yankee Doodle."  
But you needn't. You needn't do any of those things, for those words are graven in the hearts of Veterans, they are familiar to 24,000,000 tongues,

every sound and every syllable. If you must write them, put them on my Stone.

But when you speak them, speak them softly, proudly, I will hear you, for I too,  
I was a Soldier, I AM A VETERAN.

Inspired By "Creed" I am an American by Hal Borland