

MM Veteran's Day — 2016

SALUTING VETERANS IN THE MORNING

I stopped to talk with four men sitting on the sidewalk outside the Post Office. They had spent the night at the men's shelter a couple of blocks away. Now they were down town waiting the opening of the day program at First Christian Church.

"You know, don't you, that the Post Office is closed for Veterans Day?"

Yes, they knew, but people still came to collect mail from lock-boxes that were open. Maybe they could collect a little extra money.

"Do any of you happen to be veterans?"

I have asked the question many times on Veteran's Day in past years during our morning river walks. There are usually several veterans among the men. It has been discouraging to see how young some of these men sometimes are. And discouraging that they should be homeless, veterans or not.

They turned to one another and shrugged. None of the four was a vet. But one said:

"I am a veteran in the battle of life."

We all chuckled at this reply. Aren't we all? I was the oldest among us.

One of the men asked me, *"Are you a Civil War veteran?"*

We all laughed and I said, *"No, but thanks for the compliment."* Not that I would have wanted to be involved in that horrible war. Some people are still fighting it.

I thought, *"There's nothing 'civil' about any war."*

Jean and I continued our walk. I always seek out street veterans on Veterans Day. This was the first time I didn't find one. I should have saluted these men anyway. They are fighting a battle most of us don't really understand.

Just as today's veterans coming home still fight battles most of us never see or understand.

That 20 veterans commit suicide each day is a disturbing thought.

We could afford to do right by these veterans of foreign wars...and home town wars...but so far we haven't done it.

For the Moment....

Art Morgan

Note:

Paul Pritchard will be singing with the Corvallis Repertory Singers in a Veteran's concert this Saturday evening at the United Methodist Church.