Veterans Day

November 11, 2008 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Seventy years ago today, the Germans signed the Armistice to end World War I. Known as Armistice Day or Remembrance Day around the world, the United States commemorates today as Veterans Day.

I served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. As a veteran, I'm humbled by veterans who were in combat and especially the military personnel who died serving our country.

I was called up to active duty during the Gulf War, but I did not go to the Persian Gulf and never saw combat. I was to participate in the ground invasion, but the land war lasted only 100 hours. My role as backup was never needed. Nonetheless, I am proud to have served my country.

As a result of the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War, there are many thousands of newly minted veterans. Regardless of how we may feel about war in general or these wars in particular, we owe all veterans both a symbolic and tangible debt of gratitude.

Too many men and women are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with wounds that are physical and mental (amputees, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.)?and they require serious attention. We asked them to sacrifice their lives, so the least we can do for them in return is provide them with the best medical services available for the rest of their lives.

Click here to read "Sergeant Ozzy Ramos Comes Home" by James Wortman from the June 2008 issue of POZ. The article recounts the heartbreaking and inspiring story of this fellow Marine turned activist who lost his wife, daughter and stepson to AIDS.

Click here to listen to an AIDS.gov podcast conversation with Ronald Valdiserri, MD, director of the Public Health Strategic Healthcare Group at the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Administration (the Department of Veterans Affairs is the "single largest provider of HIV care in the United States"). They report that there are more than 22,000 HIV-positive veterans.

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