

Note from AFA President – National Doctors Day, WASPs

AFA members, this week I attended a Remembrance Ceremony dedicated to fallen military medical personnel in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The medical community – in its largest sense – was there to honor the fallen and their families at Arlington National Cemetery. I was struck by three things at this ceremony. First – the losses sustained in our current conflicts were much higher than I had imagined. The nation has lost 216 KIA in Iraq and Afghanistan – a staggering number for a community generally protected under the Geneva Conventions. Secondly, one of the speakers – I believe it was the Surgeon General of the Navy – observed that we, as a nation, should take the time to honor our physicians on National Doctors Day – which occurs each March 30th. The history of National Doctors Day goes back to the 1930s – but it wasn't officially recognized until signed into law in 1990. Thirdly, the ceremony was an outdoor one ... and when the National anthem was sung, I, as a veteran, saluted the flag. After the ceremony, I was asked by many if it were permissible to do so. I noted that in Oct 2008 the law changed – thanks in large part to Senator Inhofe of Oklahoma – with the support of AFA – to permit military not in uniform or veterans to salute the flag when it is raised and lowered and when the National Anthem is played. The VA press release describing this can be found at: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1609> I encourage all of you who serve or have served to render a hand salute where appropriate. I have noticed that doing so attracts attention and causes young people to wonder why ... and to ask questions – and that is generally good.

Secondly, last week the Air Force Association was honored to host an estimated 1,300 people at the nation's majestic Air Force Memorial for ceremonies coinciding with the Congressional Gold Medals for the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). WASPs served in WWII in a variety of roles: ferry pilots, test pilots, towed targets for gunners, pulled weather reconnaissance missions, flew student navigators and bombardiers, and instructed male pilots. In all, more than 1,000 women flew for the AAF during the war, and 38 were killed, 11 in training and 27 in line of duty. They served in civilian status, wore made-over men's uniforms, and when there were enough males to fill the flying jobs, were sent home with little more than an official thank you. Their story has been told many times in many places. Probably the best pieces written have been published in **AIR FORCE Magazine**. You can find them at: <http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/2001/April%202001/0401wasps.aspx> and <http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/1995/November%201995/1195valor.aspx> We put a few of the pictures at the ceremony on our website. My favorite is just a simple sign: http://www.afa.org/media/press/WASP_Ceremony.asp For the rest of the pictures go to: http://www.afa.org/media/press/WASP_Ceremony.asp

For your consideration.

Mike

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