

# On Hallowed Ground

Walking through the white headstones of the National Cemetery in Chattanooga, Tennessee, is a solemn occasion for me, for it is hallowed ground. Laid to rest there are those who have sacrificially served our nation with dignity and honor.



To stand among these grave markers compels a spirit of admiration and contemplation, of reflection upon all that is good and decent and right about America. For there lie the remains of men and women throughout our country's history who have been willing to shed their blood, even to the giving of their very lives, for the cause of liberty.

Although he is not buried there, I could sense the presence of my uncle John Norris. He could have been interred in this cemetery, but he chose to be placed beneath the soil of his home territory of Putnam County, Tennessee. But this is the final resting place of some of his buddies, those comrades in arms who fought alongside him in some of the fiercest campaigns of World War II. Many of them died on those battlefields, and some returned to a triumphant welcome of the American people.



*John Norris*

Norris was a soldier – a fighter who participated in the Italian Campaign and the Invasion of Normandy, where Allied forces hit the beaches of Juno, Gold, Omaha, Utah and Sword, the code names of those shores, and where 120,000 casualties occurred.

My Uncle John was a fun-loving individual who delighted in telling and hearing a funny story. But there was always a very quiet, introspective side of him. If questioned about the war and his exploits, he got a faraway look in his eyes. His response was always polite but firm: he was not going to talk about it. Only in later years did I learn much about his involvement. He began to open up about where he had fought, and the battle plans, and the success of the operations. Throughout his lifetime, he maintained a fierce loyalty, a reverence, for the American flag he had fought to defend.

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After returning from the war, Uncle John became a minister of the gospel. No doubt he was driven in that calling by what he had experienced on the front lines and in the trenches, where friends around him were slain by bullets or shrapnel, of man's inhumanity to man, and the brevity and uncertainty of life. He preached that the trials and tribulations of our journey upon this earth are not all there is. Instead, awaiting us is an eternal life, free of pain and tears and suffering and the sounds of war. That victory is secured by faith in Jesus Christ, my Uncle John proclaimed, and not by some armistice signed by generals.

We owe my Uncle John, the veterans who repose National Cemetery, and all veterans much. We owe them the freedom of worship, the right to speak our minds, the right of peaceful assembly, the right of security in our households, the right of a fair trial. We owe them the very survival of the republic.

Let's be thankful to them on this Veterans Day. And in my mind, I will be traveling to that one cemetery plot in Cookeville, Tennessee, where a dedicated soldier lies at rest.

He was a good uncle, and a great American.

– Beecher Hunter