



"My Responsibility to America"



Furrow (Charlotte, North Carolina) is presented the Voices of Democracy pin.



LTC John Heflin was recognized by the VFW for his help in the two essay contests.

Buddy Poppy



In April of 1915 a battle-weary Canadian soldier viewed the final resting place of thousands of young men who had fallen in the second Battle of Ypres in Belgium. Despondently he contemplated the rows of hastily dug graves - each marked by a lonely white cross. In sudden revelation, he heard the singing of larks in the sky, and amid the grave he saw gay little patches of red - wild poppies, struggling through the battle-torn soil and through the clay mounds of the graves to bring their message of life among death. Inspired, Col. John McCrae sat down and penned the three short verses of his famous poem "In Flanders Fields". Published in PUNCH Magazine a few months later, the poem brought a message of confidence to millions of people in the dark hours of World War I and established the Flanders Poppy as the symbol of faith and hope in a war-torn world. Although Col. McCrae never lived to see the end of World War I, his poem has survived in print and in the minds and hearts of generations to whom his personal battle was mere history. The poppies which provided his inspiration still bloom in Flanders Fields; but their message of hope has become reality through the Veterans of Foreign Wars Buddy Poppy. More than 13 million people each year purchase and wear VFW Buddy Poppy to renew their pledge to Col. McCrae's fallen soldier. Since the first nation wide sale was conducted in 1922, nearly half a billion Buddy Poppies have been distributed and proudly worn by concerned Americans. The VFW Buddy Poppy is made by patients in veterans hospitals throughout the United States. The work provides therapy for hands and minds crippled by the ravages of war, and the pay earned provides a few simple luxuries to ease the boredom of hospital life. In keeping with its pledge to "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living", the sale is conducted exclusively by volunteers and the Veterans of Foreign Wars dedicates the profits to the aid and assistance of disabled and needy servicemen and veterans, and the widows and orphans of deceased veterans. Counseling service for disabled veterans, entertainment of hospital patients, assistance to servicemen, direct aid to needy families - all are provided in part by the sale of Buddy Poppies. After more than half a century, the poppy still brings its message of hope to those who have borne the brunt of battle.

