

THE AMERICAN VETERAN

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SEGMENT TITLE: JOHN WELLS - NCA

JENNIFER BRADEN, HOST: JOHN WELLS, A GROUNDSKEEPER AT THE SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL CEMETERY, TYPIFIES THE CARING AND RESPECT PROVIDED FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY.

JOHN WELLS, NCA CARETAKER: (READING HEADSTONE ENGRAVINGS)
UNKNOWN US SOLDIER, UNKNOWN US SOLDIER, UNKNOWN US SOLDIER.

YOU KNOW THIS PLACE HAS BEEN HERE SINCE 1864 AND WE ARE STILL TAKING CARE OF THESE GRAVES. WE OWE A DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR THOSE PEOPLE THAT WENT OVERSEAS. PEOPLE THAT HAVE GIVE EVERYTHING AND NEVER CAME BACK HOME. THAT'S WHAT WE FEEL LIKE OUR DEDICATION IS, IS TO PROVIDE A SERVICE -- NOT JUST A SERVICE TO DO THE FUNERAL AND HEADSTONE AND MOWING THE GRASS, BUT YOU FEEL IT INSIDE. IT'S AN ON GOING FEELING. IT DOES NOT GO AWAY FROM YOU. IT STICKS WITH YOU THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

THE CARE OF THE GROUNDS DOESN'T END AT THE FUNERAL. AND THOSE PEOPLE WHO COME HERE, TO SEE THEIR LIVED ONES OFF, IS A BOND THAT STICKS WITH YOU THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN IN THEIR SHOES, YOU'VE BEEN WITH THE COMRADE THEY ARE SAYING GOODBYE TO. IT MEANS TO ME THAT YOU CAN STILL BE CLOSE, THAT YOU CAN STILL DO SOMETHING FOR THE FAMILY OF THOSE THAT HAVE LOST SOMEONE HERE. IF WE'RE MOWING OR WEED EATING OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT AND WE SEE A STONE THAT'S SUNK OR OUT OF ALIGNMENT OR NEEDS TO BE TWEAKED A LITTLE BIT, WE GO AHEAD AND TAKE TIME TO DO THAT.

TO HAVE ROWS OF STRAIGHT STONES WHETHER YOU ARE LOOKING DOWN ON THEM OR DIAGONALLY, REFLECTS UPON OURSELF. IT REFLECTS ON THE BEAUTY OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME BECAUSE IT TOUCHES HOME.

COMING TO WORK FOR THE VA MEANS EVERYTHING TO THOSE WHO WORK HERE, BECAUSE WE LIKE WHAT WE DO. WE DON'T SHOW UP JUST TO DO SOME WORK AND GO HOME. THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CAMARADERIE THAT WE HAVE IN COMMON. WE TAKE PRIDE IN WHAT WE DO. WE ARE DELIBERATE IN WHAT WE DO. AND WE TRY TO SHOW QUALITY CARE. IN OTHER WORDS AT FOUR-THIRTY IN THE AFTERNOON WHEN YOU GET READY TO GO HOME, YOU STAND BACK AND LOOK AT WHAT YOU DID AND YOU TAKE PRIDE IN IT.

BRADEN: THE NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION'S DEDICATED EMPLOYEES SALUTE ALL OUR HEROES.

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