

CHRISTMAS TRUCE AT FRO

STORY TOLD IN
LETTERS FROM
THE TRENCHES
TO DAILY MAIL

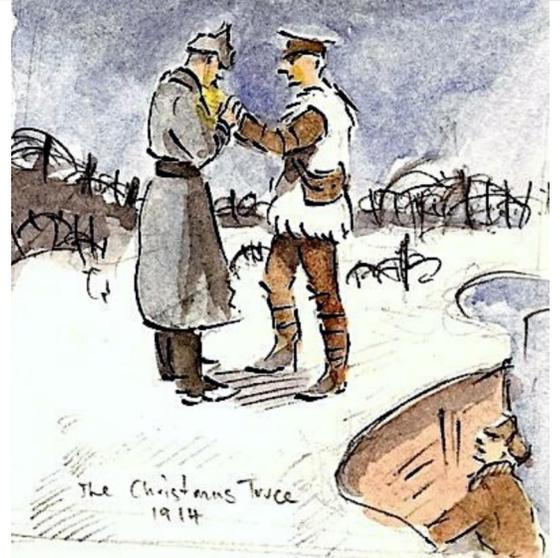
AN E-MAIL SITUATION REPORT (SITREP) OF THE PUTNAM COUNTY VETERANS
SERVICE AGENCY



Christmas in the Trenches

by John McCutcheon

My name is Francis Tolliver, I come from Liverpool.
Two years ago the war was waiting for me after school.
To Belgium and to Flanders, to Germany to here
I fought for King and country I love dear.
'Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost so bitter hung,
The frozen fields of France were still, no Christmas song was sung
Our families back in England were toasting us that day
Their brave and glorious lads so far away.
I was lying with my messmate on the cold and rocky ground
When across the lines of battle came a most peculiar sound
Says I, "Now listen up, me boys!" each soldier strained to hear
As one young German voice sang out so clear.
"He's singing bloody well, you know!" my partner says to me
Soon, one by one, each German voice joined in harmony
The cannons rested silent, the gas clouds rolled no more
As Christmas brought us respite from the war
As soon as they were finished and a reverent pause was spent
"God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" struck up some lads from Kent
The next they sang was "Stille Nacht." 'Tis 'Silent Night', says I
And in two tongues one song filled up that sky
"There's someone coming toward us!" the front line sentry cried
All sights were fixed on one long figure trudging from their side
His truce flag, like a Christmas star, shown on that plain so bright
As he, bravely, strode unarmed into the night
Soon one by one on either side walked into No Man's Land
With neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to hand
We shared some secret brandy and we wished each other well
And in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell
We traded chocolates, cigarettes, and photographs from home
These sons and fathers far away from families of their own
Young Sanders played his squeezebox and they had a violin
This curious and unlikely band of men
Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France once more
With sad farewells we each prepared to settle back to war
But the question haunted every heart that lived that wonderous night
"Whose family have I fixed within my sights?"
'Twas Christmas in the trenches where the frost, so bitter hung
The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung
For the walls they'd kept between us to exact the work of war
Had been crumbled and were gone forevermore
My name is Francis Tolliver, in Liverpool I dwell
Each Christmas come since World War I,
I've learned its lessons well



Each year our Christmas Issue opens the same way. The message is so powerful and universal it should be read each year.

In 1914 there was an unprecedented and unofficial Christmas truce between the British and German Troops. The US had not entered the war; in fact the war was only a few months old. Perhaps the troops knew that it was going to be a long and bloody war, they were the people who were doing the actual fighting after all. There was never another Christmas Truce during the War to End all War. Garth Brooks, in his classic song "Belleau Wood", created an American Christmas Truce. The only problem is that the Battle of Belleau Wood took place in June of 1918 not Christmas time. Also as mentioned earlier the US was not in the war at the time of the truce.

Notwithstanding creative history let each of us embrace the spirit of that Christmas Truce and pray for peace and keep close to our hearts those who even now guard the gates of freedom.

From the Veterans Service Agency Staff,

Kiana Steve, Art & Karl





PUTNAM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
KEVIN M. BYRNE

December 2023

As we enter the holiday season and reflect on our blessings with family and friends, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all our Veterans and active military.

Putnam County takes tremendous pride and pleasure in honoring our nation's military heroes, whether it be on national holidays like Memorial and Veterans Day, supporting the Putnam County Veterans' Residence – the only county owned and operated residence of its kind in New York State, or through other local traditions like the Row of Honor along Lake Gleneida. Earlier this year we also returned our annual Veterans' Chow Down back to normalcy, with the first sit down in-person meal since 2019.

We're fortunate to live in a county filled with supporters of our Veterans, but it's also important to recognize that there is a core group of people in Putnam County who often serve as our boots on the ground to make sure Putnam County continues its proud tradition of supporting and honoring its Veterans. Much of the credit belongs to our Veterans Service Agency, led by our Director Karl Rohde and Deputy Director Art Hanley, community partners like Guardian Revival and United For the Troops, local organizations like our VFW's and American Legions, and countless of other volunteers who take time out of their busy lives to lend a hand and support numerous Veteran related causes in our community.

Some of our greatest joys come from when we give to others. Throughout this year, I witnessed firsthand how many of our residents gave their time, money, and talents to support our remarkable Veterans. We have much to be joyful and proud of in Putnam County this holiday season.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and a safe, happy and healthy New Year!

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Byrne
Putnam County Executive

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WWW.PUTNAMCOUNTYNY.COM



Lest we forget



DAVE SPALUNDO



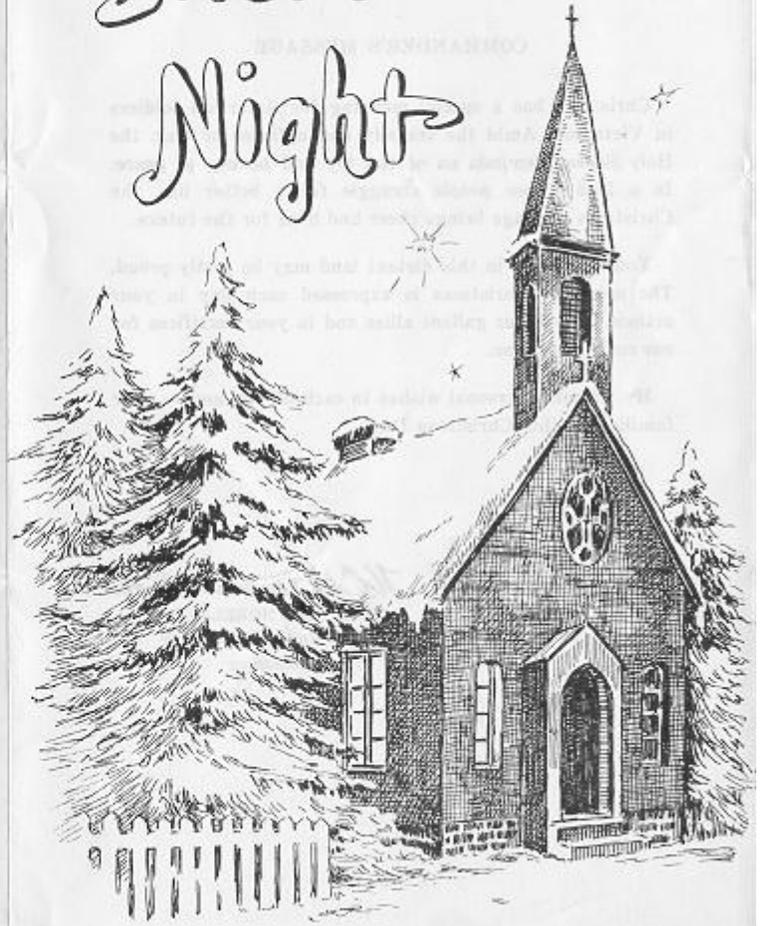
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KARL ROHDE, DIRECTOR
ART HANLEY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Almighty God, We praise Thee that Thou mysteriously waitest to touch with light and to fill with love the hearts of those who wait before Thee. We praise Thee that Thou hast made this day glad and this night bright with the memory of the birth of One who revealed the might and gentleness of Thy Spirit. We praise Thee that, in the fullness of time and in Thine own way, Thou didst cause One to walk the dusty roadways of this world who was, indeed, the Son of Thy Spirit and the shadowing forth in flesh of Thy tender love. Accept our gratitude, offered in joy, for this most wondrous showing forth of Thy love. Grant, on this day when we rejoice in the nativity of Jesus Christ, that, like His, our heart may be made humble; that, like His, our life may be so ordered before Thee that it shall show forth Thy praise. We bless Thee. We glorify Thee. We give Thee thanks that heaven and earth are so full of Thy glory. Amen.

A BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO ALL!

Silent Night



COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Christmas has a special meaning for American soldiers in Vietnam. Amid the tragedy and ugliness of war, the Holy Season reminds us of the joy and beauty of peace. In a land whose people struggle for a better life, the Christmas message brings cheer and hope for the future.

You who serve in this distant land may be justly proud. The spirit of Christmas is expressed each day in your actions toward our gallant allies and in your sacrifices for our country's cause.

My warmest personal wishes to each of you and to your families on this Christmas Day.

W. C. Westmoreland
 W. C. WESTMORELAND
 General, United States Army
 Commanding

Christmas Day Dinner

VIETNAM 1966

- Shrimp Cocktail
- with Cocktail Sauce and Crackers
- Roast Tom Turkey
- Giblet Gravy
- Cornbread Dressing
- Snow Flaked Potatoes
- Glazed Sweet Potatoes
- Cranberry Sauce
- Buttered Garden Peas
- Crisp Relish Tray
- Parkerhouse Rolls
- Butter
- Pumpkin Pie with Whipped Cream
- Mincemeat Pie
- Old Fashion Fruit Cake
- Fresh Chilled Fruit
- Mixed Nuts
- Assorted Candy
- Tea
- Coffee
- Milk



Tips For Managing Stress Around the Holidays

There are many joyous things about the holiday season, but this time of year can also bring on stress, depression, and other challenges. For Veterans or their family members, the unique experiences of the military and transitioning back to civilian life can make enjoying the season difficult.

Here are a few things to keep an eye out for as the holiday season approaches — as well as healthy tips for managing these challenges.

Withdrawing From Friends and Family?

The holidays are typically times spent with family members and friends. But Veterans transitioning back to civilian life — or even those who returned home years ago — might find themselves avoiding the people and activities they would usually enjoy.

“I’m a pretty extraverted, amicable person, but I didn’t want anything to do with anybody. I didn’t want to talk with anybody,” says Bryan, a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran. Sometimes a vicious cycle can develop: The more time you spend alone, the less you feel like people will understand you. And the less you feel like people understand you, the more time you want to spend alone.

“You can’t isolate yourself,” says Bryan. “You have to surround yourself with good people that want to see you do better. Take advantage of the programs they have at the VA or the nonprofit organizations that are there to help Veterans out.”

Feelings of guilt can sometimes lead people to withdraw, become irritable, or feel like life has lost meaning.

These behaviors can strain personal relationships, especially during the holidays, when most people spend a lot of time with family members and friends. But if you’re having trouble forgiving yourself — for something you did or *did not* do — talking with your family members and friends is actually a positive first step.

If you notice yourself withdrawing from loved ones, here are a few ways to begin breaking a pattern of isolation. If these actions feel overwhelming, start with small steps.

- Identify the thoughts and feelings that make you want to be alone.
- Reach out to your family members or friends, even if it’s the last thing you feel like doing. Research shows that spending time talking with family members and friends improves your mood and your health. Connect with Veterans’ groups or participate in clubs or hobbies focused on something you like.

“Isolation and withdrawal [are] not going to get you the end result that you need,” says Marylyn, a U.S. Army Veteran. “You want to get back to enjoying your life, the things you like to do, and be able to explore new things. So you’re going to eventually have to talk to someone and connect with someone.”

Feeling on Edge in Large Crowds?

Whether you’re walking through a crowded shopping mall or attending a large party with loud noises, you may find yourself in situations that make you uncomfortable during the holidays. Your military training taught you the importance of being observant and alert when you need to be — and being in that state of high alert in civilian life may be stressful.

“When you’re in large crowds or there’s a lot of chaos, you have to keep an eye on everything because you don’t know where a potential threat is,” says Casey, a U.S. Army medic. “After you see things like a life or death matter, your No. 1 goal is ‘I’m always going to protect myself.’”

This experience of feeling on edge is also called hypervigilance, a symptom experienced by some Veterans who have returned from war or experienced traumatic events during their time in the military. Hypervigilance is a state of being on very high alert — constantly “on guard” — to possible risks or threats.

“It takes a long time to shed that alertness,” says Casey. “Once it’s there and you depend on it to stay alive, it’s really hard to lose it once you’ve been back.” Talking to your family and friends can be a first step. Turn to them whenever you are ready.

On edge?

Here are a few tips to keep in mind if you find yourself feeling on edge in large crowds:

- If you’re with friends or family, tell them what you’re feeling so they can try to help you work through it.
- Try grounding yourself by focusing on details of your surroundings or neutral physical sensations, such as the feeling of your feet on the floor.
- Practice relaxation exercises, such as taking slow, deep breaths. Calmly remove yourself from the situation.

“Being able to talk helps me manage, because it’s not built up,” says Ertell, a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran who served in Vietnam. “It helps me to manage my hypervigilance.”



Christmas Day and the Christmas Truce Statue

Across a muddy battlefield, two young men reach out to shake hands over a football – marking one of the most extraordinary events of the Great War...

Normally on Christmas Day you'd find me walking the dogs, cooking a big roast dinner, having a glass of champagne with family, friends and neighbours in my little French village in northern France. This year though was different.

It was the anniversary of the Christmas Truce of The Great War so I decided to drive to the French border and a few miles into Belgium near Ypres with a few friends and a football...

Christmas Eve 1914, the Great War was in full and terrible swing with many thousands of lives lost. Trenches were gouged into the land for hundreds of miles to form the Western Front. We can't possibly understand the misery of those cold, wet, wretched men as they contemplated that first Christmas at war. But on Christmas Eve something unexpected happened all along the line of the Western Front. After mercilessly slaughtering each other just hours earlier, men laid down their arms and embraced Christmas together.

In one of the most poignant and unusual military events in history, soldiers dropped their weapons, climbed out of their trenches and crossed the shell-blasted no-man's land. Throughout the next day up and down the line these

sworn enemies shook hands, sung carols and exchanged gifts. A small number of football matches were played up and down the length of the 500-mile front line, the most famous of which occurred in Belgium, around eight miles south of Ypres. Here, in the fields of the village of Ploegsteert, the British Tommies called it "Plugstreet", men from both sides played a game of football. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (author of Sherlock Holmes) called this short break in fighting "one human episode amid the atrocities which have stained the memory of war".

I woke up to a clear day but with a bitter wind after a hard frost (very much like the day 100 years before) and I expected to find nothing at Ploegsteert but empty fields. However there were lots of cars there and I was astonished to see people from the UK, France, Belgium and as far away as Australia and Costa Rica – they too had come to pay their respects. Also there was Tom Butler from Liverpool. He was with his father to place a beautiful sculpture at the site that morning before moving it to other locations around the area. The larger than life-size statue depicts two young men reaching out, just touching at the tips of their fingers to shake hands over a football. An iconic image designed by sculptor Andy Edwards to commemorate the Christmas Truce of 1914. Seeing it against the muddy field, with its memorial trenches and barbed wire was an unexpected and very touching sight.

The 8ft statue was originally made out of clay at the Wedgwood factory in Barlaston, but has now been reproduced in fibreglass. Cecil Wedgwood, the chairman of the factory and many of its workers volunteered during the war; Cecil

died in 1916 at the Battle of the Somme.

It is intended that the sculpture will be cast in bronze at the foundry owned by Tom's father. The piece is called All Together Now after the song by Liverpool band The Farm, which describes the Christmas truce. Tom told me "this statue is for all humanity", an incredibly moving and poignant memorial.

We had a bit of a kick about in the field, laid a poppy at the Khaki Chums Memorial and had to retrieve the ball after my friends dogs ran off with it into the middle one of the muddiest fields I've ever seen, after which we decided to seek a café to warm up.

In the town of Mesen we came across the Café de Centre, absolutely delightful and with a couple who make everyone feel at home and who were celebrating Christmas in their own unique way. When we came out, the statue that had been at Ploegsteert was now in the town's bandstand and the people who lived in the town had started to bring candles out and light them at the base – it was quite astonishing to witness the effect that this sculpture has.

After a stop at several more memorials and at Messines Church where my friends lit a candle, we made our way home through the quiet streets of France back to my village in the Seven Valleys to toast the end of Christmas Day 2014...

[Janine Marsh](#)
[My French Life](#)



Celebrating Hanukkah with a U.S. Navy Family

With more than 1.4 million Active-Duty Service Members, the military represents a diverse population of cultures, beliefs, and traditions – each Service Member and his or her family celebrating the holiday season in uniquely different ways. As our Jewish Navy Families celebrate Hanukkah this week, we sat down with Commander Alexa Jenkins to talk about her Jewish faith growing up and how it has impacted her life and as a Navy Family. Commander Jenkins is currently serving as an Executive Officer aboard a guided-missile destroyer. Her spouse, Rod is a former Naval Surface Warfare Officer as well and they live together with their son in Jacksonville, Florida. She is scheduled to become the first Female Commanding Officer of the USS CARNEY DDG-64 in mid-2022.

Can you give us a brief history or a favorite memory of growing up celebrating Hanukkah and what it means to your family?

Hanukkah is a smaller holiday for Jewish families than Christmas is for Christian families. The gist of the holiday is that after a battle, the temple was raided. There was only enough oil to light for one night, but miraculously it last-

ed for eight days. In Israel, they don't even celebrate the holiday with gifts. We do gifts in my family but focus on small gifts rather than large extravagant ones. I share a love of puzzles with my Dad, and he was amazing at finding eight different types of puzzles/brain teasers each year that we could try to solve together. (Well, I am sure my mom helped him.) It gave us all something to figure out as a family. (And in the age before streaming television shows, that was what people did with their nights.) My mom made sure that we always lit the candles and sang the blessing together. Hanukkah means celebrating the miracle of light and oil: but I always think of it as "it shouldn't have worked, but it did." It is a powerful message as a military family to remain flexible and be thankful for the things that work out against all odds.

How do you celebrate Hanukkah with your family now? Do you have a favorite tradition that you look forward to?

Now we celebrate much in the same way, but my son is too young to really know why he gets small treats/presents each night, but he still enjoys the surprise. We all light the candles at sunset and sing the blessing, sometimes via zoom with my parents.

Are there any special food dishes that you prepare or look forward to having during this time of celebration?

Since everything about this holiday

celebrates oil, most of the foods are fried in some manner: latkes (fried potatoes) or donuts are personal favorite

How does being a Jewish Family in the Navy impact the way you celebrate or the traditions you observe?

As with most other family traditions, being in the Navy means that we might not get to celebrate in person with each other. I have been blessed to be in ships with inclusive wardrooms and crews that have made celebrating away from home easier. I would still light the candles (under close supervision) underway, and my culinary specialists have always taken recipes from my family and made them a part of the crew's dinner. We did latkes on CARNEY last year. I love sharing my culture with my shipmates—it makes it feel that much more like home, even when I'm far away.

We are so appreciative of the culture and diversity that our Sailors and their families bring to the U.S. Navy, giving each of us an opportunity to learn more about different traditions and beliefs. Thank you to Commander Jenkins and her family for their service to their Country, the U.S. Navy, their shipmates, family, and friends. To our Jewish Navy families and friends, we wish you a very Happy Hanukkah!

By Dannielle Niewald





DECEMBER CALENDAR

WEEK 1

FRI 12/1 Vet2Vet Gathering ^
6 PM via Zoom

WEEK 2

SUN 12/3 Battery Park City River Walk ^
11:30 AM in New York City

MON 12/4 Jam Session ^
6 PM in Mahopac

MON 12/4 First Line In-Person Gathering ^
7 PM in Carmel

MON 12/4 Mobility Level 1 ^
7:30 PM via Zoom

TUE 12/5 Writers Workshop ^
6:15 PM via Zoom & in Mahopac

TUES 12/5 Jam Session ^
6 PM in Beacon

WED 12/6 Wellness Gathering ^
5 PM via Zoom

FRI 12/8 Vet2Vet Gathering ^
6 PM via Zoom

SAT 12/9 Cornish Estate Nature Walk ^
10 AM in Cold Spring



WEEK 3

SUN 12/10 Cats Rock Day Hike ^
9 AM in Pawling

MON 12/11 First Line Gathering ^
7 PM via Zoom

MON 12/11 iRest Meditation ^
7:30 PM via Zoom

TUES 12/12 Jam Session ^
6 PM in Beacon

WED 12/13 Wellness Gathering ^
5 PM via Zoom

FRI 12/15 Vet2Vet Gathering ^
6 PM via Zoom

WEEK 4

MON 12/18 Jam Session
6 PM in Mahopac

MON 12/18 First Line In-Person Gathering ^
7 PM in Carmel

MON 12/18 Mobility Level 2 ^
7:30 PM via Zoom

TUE 12/19 Writers Workshop ^
6:15 PM via Zoom & in Mahopac

TUES 12/19 Jam Session ^
6 PM in Beacon

WED 12/20 Wellness Gathering ^
5 PM via Zoom

THURS 12/21 American Military History Series ^-
7 PM in Beacon

WEEK 5

NO EVENTS
Week of Christmas

SUN 12/31 New Year's Eve Sunset Hike ^
3 PM in Beacon

LEGEND:

- ^ Guardians Only (Veterans & First Responders)
- Bring a Buddy (Adults)
- * Family Friendly (Kids welcome)
- + Open to the Public



Our Guardian Revival Talk Line is operational 24/7, including on weekends & holidays.

This phone line provides peer support & mental health resources, operated by guardians, for guardians. This is not a crisis line – just a confidential, open opportunity to reach out for connection & support, anytime.

We are always ready to take your call: 845.745.0088



RSVP
calendar.guardianconnect.org
hello@guardianrevival.org



NCAA football · Sat, Dec 9

Roast Goat



Army Black Knights

(6 - 6)

INGREDIENTS:

- 12kg goat cleaned
- 17 onions diced
- 1 head garlic slithered
- Chili, Salt, Pepper
- Sweet paprika
- Bunch spring onions
- Basting mixture: olive oil, lemon & salt

PREPERATION:

Lather all the dry ingredients over the entire surface area of the goat both inside and out.

Make small incisions into the legs and insert slithers of garlic. Stuff the stomach gravity with diced onion and spring onion.

Using appropriate braces, secure the goat to the spit.

Cook Time

5HRS.

IMAGE BELOW

Final

Navy Midshipmen

(5 - 7)



As we approach another New Year I thought that this story I wrote a few years ago would be apt. Please have a wonderful New Year!:

"Often I hear my Navy friends wishing people calm seas. A comforting wish indeed. Recently while on Route 17 motoring to the western side of New York I saw a billboard advertising a therapeutic center. The center was called "Calm Seas Therapeutic Center". Again giving people hope for life to be calm for all their journeys to be calm. As is often the case my mind started to play with the words calm seas. Tumbling them over and over, altering the context, wondering if there could be another reality to what those words were meant to express. Yes that is how my mind works and I seemingly have little actual control of the workings. Another expression from my Navy friends sailed into my mind if you will. You can never become a good sailor if you have only sailed on yes-calm seas. Wow. My mind then churned out other things related to the Navy analogy about the nature of becoming a good sailor. Could a soldier in the Army or a Marine become good at what they do if the never encountered a battle? Could an airman become proficient if they never encountered turbulence in the air? Part and parcel of that is a play on the words. To survive the turbulent waters or the hell of battle you have to remain clam because "Calm Sees". A person must remain calm to see how to survive. The analogy is valid in many pursuits. Vividly in sports the good hitter in baseball sees the 100 mph ball with a calmness that makes it seem slower and hittable the quarterback being blitzed remains clam to see the best route to score. The analogy breaks down with golf where there has to be total silence while the golfer attempts to hit a ball that is not moving but it works in all other sports. Other analogies work as well a firefighter running toward a fire sees beyond the flames a police officer assessing a hostage situation uses his calm to see an assessment. A nurse in an ER experiences calm sees.

So as we move toward New Years let me wish you "Calm Sees". My wish is calm for you so that you may see during the ensuing year and perhaps for life. "

Karl