



Happy Veterans Day!

As you know, Veterans Day is a chance to honor those who have served our country. Of course, we always hope that when soldiers return home from defending our country, they are rewarded for their heroism. Sometimes, it may be in the form of a ticker tape parade. Sometimes it may be a medal ceremony. Sometimes it may be a plaque hung in their honor at their old high school. It can come in many forms, but recently, I read about one soldier – Air Force pilot Royce King – who received the greatest reward of all. You see, Royce got to watch his wife walk down the aisle in her wedding dress.

He just had to wait 77 years to do it.

The year was 1944. World War II was still raging across several continents when Royce King was told he would be stationed overseas for the Air Force. Royce had always wanted to fly and had no qualms about serving his country. But there was just one problem: He and his fiancé, Frankie, were due to be married. Because the young couple had already been engaged for six months, they didn't want to delay their marriage until after the war. After all, no one knew how long it would last – or if Royce would come home at all.

Unfortunately, Royce was given only two days to say his goodbyes. That simply wasn't enough time to stage their dream wedding, so Frankie and Royce had to improvise. They quickly booked a local church, but there was no photographer. No elaborate meal for all their friends and family. No grand wedding cake. Not even a dress – Frankie wore a tailored suit instead of a white gown.¹

But it was enough. Because what they did have was each other.

The next day, Royce shipped out. For a year, he flew a C-47 over the Himalayas. Luckily, he returned home in one piece, and though they didn't get a dream wedding or idyllic honeymoon, he and Frankie spent over seven happy decades with each other.

Yet, while Royce and Frankie were content, their children – and the staff of St. Croix Hospice, who care for the elderly lovebirds – were not. So, they took matters into their own hands.

On September 24, 2021, staffers helped the 98-year-old Royce into his old Air Force uniform. They placed a handkerchief over his eyes and led him into the backyard to stand under a white arch. In the background, another staffer played hits from the 1940s on his guitar and saxophone. Then, Royce's daughter, Sue, stepped up and said, "Are you ready to see your bride?"

They removed the blindfold. For the first time, the pilot, the veteran, the hero, was able to see his beloved Frankie in a beautiful white dress.

As Sue later described it, "He gazed at her and just beamed. They both did."²

The rest of that afternoon, husband and wife kissed under the arch, danced to the tunes of their youth, and posed in front of a photographer. For the staff of St. Croix Hospice, it was a chance to give back to a hero. For Royce and Frankie's families, it was a chance to finally be able to peruse photos of a beautiful wedding.

And for one old soldier, it was a reward long delayed...but a reward well-worth the wait.

As you know, veterans give up so much in defense of our country. Their time, their talents, and sometimes their lives. But they also give up many of life's richest experiences. High school graduations and first dates and Saturday nights spent with friends. Opportunities to be best men or bride's maids. Birthday parties and funerals. Their child's birth. Their child's first steps.

The chance to see the person they love walk down the aisle.

Our job, as citizens, is to honor and reward our veterans as much as we can. The staff of St. Croix Hospice did that. We hope we can all find opportunities to honor them in our own way, too. So, this Veterans Day, let's all strive to remember the veterans in our communities. Let's all strive to make their futures as rich as the future they have given us.

From everyone here at Hudock Capital Group, we wish you and the veterans in your life a happy Veterans Day. And to Royce and Frankie...congratulations!

Sincerely,



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¹ María Luisa Paúl, "After 77 years, Iowa couple gets long overdue wedding photos – with help from hospice workers," *The Washington Post*, October 10, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2021/10/10/hospice-workers-help-couple-take-wedding-photos/>

² Caitlin O'Kane, "Couple gets wedding photo redo 77 years later," *CBS News*, October 14, 2021. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bride-wedding-day-hospice-77-years-later/>

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