



Keep veterans in mind before they are gone

As another Memorial Day fades away, so do the veterans of past wars.

The last veterans of the "War to End All Wars" slipped away over the last decade. In the U.S., only about 10 percent of the 16 million who wore uniforms during the second World War remain.

Still, nearly everyone knows or knows of one of these veterans. Soon, however, they will join the ranks of silent soldiers who have fought and died for this country - the veterans of the Civil and Spanish-American wars and other military adventures, great or not.

Many of us grew up knowing the World War II veterans and the service groups they joined after the war. Rather than starting their own, they fill in the ranks of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and others.

In most Kansas towns, life centered around one or the other of these service clubs. Nearly every member of the "Greatest Generation" belonged to one. Nearly every man that age had served.

And that continued with the Cold War draft right up through the Vietnam War era.

Today, however, our military comprises a relatively small group of volunteer professionals. Most of us know one of them, for many come from the ranks of the citizen-soldiers, the National Guard and Reserve forces scattered across America.

These men and women are serious soldiers, the kind who won World War I and World War II, yes, but better trained, better equipped and better led than ever. In a nation of 330 million, however, they are few in number, only about 1.4 million. That compared to 16.1 million who served in World War II out of a population of 136 million.

That was nearly 12 percent of the population then, but less than half of 1 percent today.

The service organizations continue today, with veterans of Vietnam, the Gulf war and returning vets from Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, but like farmers, their influence may wane as their numbers decline.

As Americans, however, it's our duty and our privilege to honor all these veterans who served their country - our country - in times of need. Many volunteered, more were drafted, some against their will and better judgement. Nearly all did what was expected of them - and more.

Many gave the "last full measure." World War II alone accounted for 291,000 battle deaths and more than a million total casualties. Korea and Vietnam added to the ledger, but by the standards of another day, neither the Gulf War nor the current conflicts amounted to much: just 113 in the Gulf action and a few under 5,000 in the combined "War on Terror" so far.

Yet that is no comfort to those who lost a father, son, brother, sister, or other relative. And yes, most of us know someone for whom that loss is real. Someone they knew, someone whose son or daughter did not come home.

Each of us should take time, not just to remember those heroes, but to thank the ones who came back from any of these military "adventures."

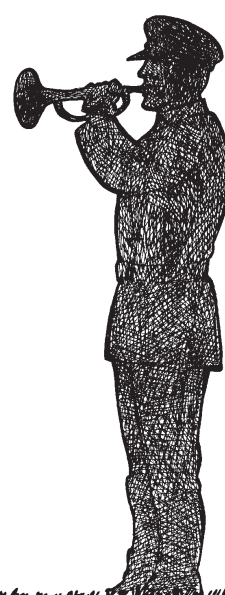
They have done what our fathers and grandfathers did, but what most of us will never have a chance to do: worn the uniform and served their country, and served her well.

It's a debt we cannot repay, but one we must acknowledge. Do not wait. Say something today.

- Steve Haynes

Memorial Day ~ 2012

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"For love of country they accepted death."

JAMES A. GARFIELD

The Gardener

By Kay Melia



I'm sitting here trying to reach a decision of utmost gardening importance, and after a show of hands, I finally have an answer.

I have determined that the absolutely without question nicest thing you can do for your backyard vegetable garden right now, is to mulch it! No other decision you make concerning the summer-long care of your garden is as important as mulching it. Nothing. Not watering, not weeding, not fertilizing... nothing!

The thing of it is that if you mulch your garden crops now, you will not have to water it, weed it, or fertilize it as often as you normally would. That is a proven fact!

Think about it. A substantial layer of mulch alongside your growing plants will suppress the growth of weeds, and very few will show up the rest of the summer. It will also shade the sun from completely drying out the soil, and you will save untold dollars on your water bill.

And finally, the heavy layer of mulch will also slowly release a few nutrients to your garden soil. The big payoff comes next fall when you plow the mulch deeply into the soil where it will biodegrade as it provides a winter supply of food for the earthworms that will surely be attracted to your garden due to your generosity in providing it for them.

Do I have your attention yet? If I do, you may be asking questions like "Alright smart guy...where do I find this mulch stuff, what is it made out of, and how much does it cost?" Actually, most of us have it available right there in the yard, and it doesn't cost a dime.

In many cases, I may be preaching to the choir here. Many of you, particularly the veteran gardeners among you, know all about the good things that can happen when you add great gobs of biodegradable material

(read mulch) to your growing garden. If you don't mulch, it doesn't mean your garden is doomed. It's just that mulching makes your job so much easier, and the garden is going to be so much more productive, this year and next.

Choosing the right mulch is a snap! The best one is the one that is most available to you, and that would be dry grass clippings. Don't use them when they are freshly cut as they will form an airless barrier at the soil surface and will tend to rot, causing an unacceptable odor. Dry them out completely before using them.

My favorite mulch, by far, is leaves. Like those that fall from trees. I store dozens of big trash bags full every fall, and use them the following summer. Most of the ones I use have been run through a lawnmower and as such are mixed with a few grass clippings which makes them even more useful. (Thanks Ron!)

In the summer, as soon as soil temperatures approach 65 to 70 degrees, I force many, many handfuls of these delicious leaves alongside just about everything I have growing, and then sit back and watch the plants thrive.

Other materials that make great mulch include straw, rotted hay, dry horse, cow, or chicken manure, shredded newspaper, and shredded wood chips. Just about anything that is biodegradable after being plowed under next fall is fair game.

Indeed, mulch is a protective cover placed over the soil near your vegetable plants and help retain soil moisture, reduce erosion, provide nutrients, and suppress weed growth and seed germination. Mulching the garden mimics the leaf cover that is formed on forest floors. Now, today or tomorrow, is the time to apply it!

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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The other day I had an interesting talk with our chocolate lab, Cain.

Me: "Hey buddy, when I was a kid in Denver there was an organization that took care of dogs and cats who needed new homes. It was called the Dumb Friend's League. Do our four-legged pals get worked up over politically correct names?"

Cain: "Your kind calling my kind 'dumb?'" Now that's a laugh! Since we're touching on

your past once again, why don't you tell me about your "decent haircut" story."

Me: "Ouch! Yea, not one of my brighter moments. It was Lezlie's and my wedding week. Luckily she is a talented barber and gives me wonderful haircuts at a very good rate. Smart guy here thought he'd give her a break and allow one of the local professionals a chance to provide me with a "decent" cut before the big day."

Cain: "Nice move. So how long was it before she took the scissors to your noggin again?"

Me: "Some time. I looked like Howard Hughes in his later years when she finally gave in. Let me tell you, I was a little nervous to see what she might carve on the back of my cranium. How did you hear about that anyway? That happened before you were even born."

Cain: "You forget about the Dalmatian and Scottie that were here before me? When ever they needed a good chuckle that one would come up."

Me: "I see. So I would do well not to mention the DFL or "decent haircuts" in the future?"

Cain: "Gee, and they say you can't teach us new tricks! And back to the politically correct mumbo-jumbo, what a waste of energy. We stick to the basics; Gravy Train, Beggin' Strips and fire hydrant."

Photo Policy

The Saint Francis Herald and Bird City Times wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or new happening that we should attend, please call 332-3162.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event. Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

Laser prints of photos which have run in The Herald or Times are available, first come, first served. Special-order laser prints of photos will be available at \$3 each.

GOD SAYS
The Lord looketh from heaven;
he beholdeth all the sons of men.
From the place of his habitation
he looketh upon all the inhabitants
of the earth.
Psalms 33:13, 14

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