

from other pens...

## A little history on Veterans Day

In 1921, an unknown World War I soldier was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. This site, on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River and the city of Washington, became the focal point of reverence for America's veterans.

Similar ceremonies occurred earlier in England and France, where an unknown soldier was buried in each nation's highest place of honor (in England, Westminster Abbey; in France, the Arc de Triomphe). These memorial gestures all took place on Nov. 11, giving universal recognition to the celebrated ending of World War I fighting at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month. The day became known as "Armistice Day."

The observance officially received its name in America in 1926 through a Congressional resolution. It became a national holiday 12 years later by similar Congressional action. If the idealistic hope had been realized that World War I was "the War to end all Wars," Nov. 11 might still be called Armistice Day. But only a few years after the holiday was proclaimed, war broke out in Europe. Sixteen and a half million Americans took part; 407,000 of them died in service, more than 292,000 in battle.

Realizing that peace was equally preserved by veterans of World War II and Korea, Congress was asked to make this day an occasion to honor those who have served America in all wars. In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming Nov. 11 as simply Veterans Day.

On Memorial Day 1958, two more unidentified American war dead were brought from overseas and interred in the plaza beside the unknown soldier of World War I. One was killed in World War II, the other in the Korean War. In 1973, a law providing burial of an unknown American from the Vietnam War, but none was found for several years. In 1984, an unknown serviceman from that conflict was placed alongside the others. To honor these men, symbolic of all Americans who gave their lives in all wars, an Army honor guard, the 3d U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard), keeps vigil day and night.

A law passed in 1968 changed the national commemoration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that Nov. 11 had historic significance to many Americans. In 1978, Congress returned the observance to its traditional date.

The focal point for official, national ceremonies for Veterans Day continues to be the memorial amphitheater built around the Tomb of the Unknowns. At 11 a.m. on Sunday, a combined color guard representing all military services executes "Present Arms" at the tomb. The nation's tribute to its war dead is symbolized by the laying of a presidential wreath. The bugler plays "Taps." The rest of the ceremony takes place in the amphitheater.

Every year, the president proclaims the day and urges all Americans to honor the commitment of our veterans through appropriate public ceremonies.

*This guest editorial was submitted by the Department of Kansas Veterans of Foreign Wars, Topeka.*

Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 11/09/07 www.caglecartoons.com



## The fine line between the two Chinas

Chen Shui-bian is used to walking a fine line.

As the first opposition leader to be elected president of the Republic of China, his life is controversy. He faces daily protests from the Kuomintang and other opposition parties on Taiwan, contempt from the mainland Communist government and lukewarm support from his U.S. guardians.

In his seven years of office, he's been shot, seen his wheelchair-bound wife indicted for alleged corruption, been snubbed by the U.S. State Department and had to put his party's dream of independence on hold.

Yet he's firm and clear speaking to a group of American editors, noting that next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the lifting of martial law by the old government in 1988. Taiwan lived under military rule for 38 years after World War II, with no free elections and only lip service to liberty from the ruling Nationalists.

Today, he says, it is among the freest nations in the world and has no intention of surrendering that freedom to achieve reunification with the mainland.

"We cherish our hard-won democratic fruit," the president says. "The Martial Law period lasted 38 years. The last 20 years, we've worked very hard. Now, we have achieved true democracy. We have real freedom. We are proud of what we have now."

He notes that the first true popular election of a president came only in 1996, and his election in 2000 was the first peaceful transfer of power in the history of Taiwan or of all China.

Under martial law, he said, the government maintained bans on newspapers and opposition parties. He spent a year in prison for libel as punishment for things he said about govern-



**steve haynes**

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ment leaders in his magazine.

While as president, Mr. Chen has not pushed for formal independence from the mainland, he has refused to adopt the official "One China" police which has long governed U.S.-China relations.

After World War II, with the eviction of the Japanese invaders, everyone — the U.S., the Communists, the Nationalists and the world — recognized China as a single nation. The contest was over who would rule.

After the Red victory in 1950, the Nationalists withdrew to Taiwan, where they ruled by military decree, first under President Chiang Kai-shek and after his death in 1975, under his party. The Nationalist claim even today to be the legitimate government of all China, while Mr. Chen's Democratic Progressive Party says it wants independence for a free Taiwan.

Interestingly, the mainland government finds the Nationalist position closer to its own. Independence, the mainland says, can only lead to war. Mr. Chen says he'll hold off as long as the Communists don't move to invade his island.

This year, in a somewhat disingenuous move, the Progressives have put their efforts into a push not for independence, but membership in the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

If that sounds different, it is and it isn't. The U.N. admits only sovereign nations and adheres to the One China policy. Control of the China

seat passed to the Red government in 1971. Even so, Mr. Chen is backing a referendum on U.N. admission for Taiwan.

The evening after our visit, he launched an 11-day around-the-island torch relay promoting the U.N. bid, starting from a stage and giant posters erected in front of the presidential palace.

"We have full confidence that the referendum will pass," he told us. "We know we need to work hard to normalize relations between China and Taiwan, but China refused to give up the use of force."

He said he's worried that his tiny island, with just 23 million people, has invested too heavily in the mainland and won't be able to maintain an independent economy. Seventy percent of off-island investments are on the mainland, and Taiwan businesses control much of the economic growth there.

"No other country relies so heavily on China in trade and the economy," he said, noting that despite the chilly official relationship, the two governments have opened commercial and banking links, with direct flights on the horizon. (For the time, all travelers must pass through a neutral point, such as Hong Kong.)

No one thinks Taiwan will regain a U.N. seat any time soon. The U.S. State Department already has said we won't back the move. But the campaign puts more pressure on the mainland to open up trade and transport.

It is, as we said, a fine line. Elections next year might return the island to a One China policy anyway. For now, though, the official line is on the edge.

"Since Taiwan is a sovereign nation and not a part of China," Mr. Chen says, "we believe it is important to seek recognition."

Fighting words, perhaps, or just a negotiating stance. It's hard to tell.

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## Health savings account is a beautiful thing

"You're switching to a high-deductible health insurance policy! You're going to go broke!"

"You have it backwards. My high-deductible policy will save me money. And it allows me to set up a health savings account, which might make me a bunch of dough."

"You're going to have to explain."

"Did you know America's health costs have risen 140 percent in the last decade? We spend \$2 trillion on care every year -- twice as much per capita as other industrialized countries."

"How come?"

"There are lots of reasons, but the chief reason is this: health care consumers are completely divorced from health care costs."

"Divorced?"

"Before World War II, health insurance was designed to protect people against catastrophic events. People paid for doctor's visits and prescriptions out of their own pockets."

"They paid for that stuff!"

"Yes, and because they spent their own money, they shopped around for the best quality of care at the lowest-possible cost."

"What did the war have to do with health insurance?"



**tom purcell**

• commentary

"During the war, the government imposed wage and price controls. Companies were unable to raise wages. To keep employees, they began offering health insurance."

"That's why everybody expects their employer to provide health insurance?"

"Yes, and as the economy boomed after the war, powerful unions were able to demand ever-better policies for their members."

"Sounds good to me."

"It WAS good while it lasted. But it took away the incentive for consumers to shop around. Once nobody cared what things cost, nobody shopped. That's when costs began to soar."

"We should bring back shopping?"

"Exactly. Instead of unleashing more big-government programs, we need to unleash individuals and give them more control over their care."

"That's why you're switching to a high-deductible policy?"

"Correct. I'm 45 and self-employed. I buy my own health insurance. I just applied for a new policy that has a \$1,200 deductible. I'll pay 10 percent of all care up to \$10,000. If I become ill, the most I'll be out of pocket will be \$2,200, plus the cost of my premium."

"But your premium has to be sky high."

"Nope! It's only \$135 a month. Here's what's better: I'm able to sock away up to \$2,850 each year in a health savings account -- my contributions are tax deductible."

"And you can only spend that money on health care?"

"Until I'm 65. Then I can use the money for anything. And if I take care of myself and keep healthy, there will be a lot of money in that account."

"But what if you get sick and need to go to a doctor?"

"Then I'll draw out some of the money. And because it is my money, you better believe I'm going to shop around for services and goods. I'll do my part to keep doctors and pharmacies honest."

"But won't people avoid getting needed care if they have to pay for it with their own dough?"

"You don't have much faith in the average person. Most people will do what is best to take care of themselves and their families."

"But don't health savings accounts attract healthy people? And won't that drain big bucks out of insurance companies, forcing sick people to pay more?"

"As more people move into high-deductible policies, insurance companies will SAVE money. As for people who are ill, we need to reform current laws so they can afford to buy high-deductible policies, too."

"I don't know. I'm afraid I'm not smart enough to make all my health-care decisions."

"Look, you have car insurance, don't you. Your policy doesn't pay for gasoline, brake pads, tune-ups and transmission repair. You had to figure out how to take care of these things."

"If only the government provided universal car insurance!"

"The way some of our politicians are talking, it's only a matter of time before they will."

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### Letter Policy

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