

We should keep veterans in mind before they're 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 judgment. 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

Garden tends to be money pit

Ah, the love of the outdoors.

The smell of newly mowed grass, the beauty of the trees and flowers and the birds at the feeders, all wonderful.

And the garden; I love my garden. I love planting and harvesting. I don't even mind watering and weeding.

I don't, however, feel that my garden is a money-saving exercise in grow-it-yourself vegetables.

In fact, it's sort of an expensive hobby. Not as expensive as skiing or growing hothouse orchids, but not as cheap as you might think, either.

It starts first thing in the spring with tilling. You need to hire someone to till your garden, you rent a rototiller or you get yours out of the garage and pay someone to repair it so you can get it running.

My favorite is to hire someone. One year, the guy we hired charged me \$50. This was a reasonable price, and what I had expected to pay. I wrote the check without another thought.

It was also a reasonable price to Steve, and when the guy asked him, he also paid \$50.

The last two years, Steve has rented a tiller and done it himself. That tends to be excruciating for all concerned, but it does work.

If you use raised planters, like our oldest daughter, the tilling has its own special problems, and you have



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

to keep repairing or replacing the planters. This year, she purchased four stock tanks to supplement her raised beds. At \$159 each, she'd better be using them for a long time. Then she went out and bought bags of gravel and soil to go in them. She's such a city girl now.

Once your garden is tilled, you get to start planting. Your choice is seeds or plants. I use a mixture.

I have no idea why, but I always buy plants for my tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, cabbage and cucumbers and I always get seeds for everything else — corn, peas, beans, squash, zucchini, turnips, carrots, beets and, this year, parsnips.

Once your plants and seeds are in the ground, you need to prop them up and protect them. For us, that means a three-foot fence all around the garden. Anything lower is an invitation for the dog to do high hurdles.

The fencing is \$12 to \$15 a section. The garden takes about five sections and it lasts about four years.

And, oh yes, it has to be special ordered.

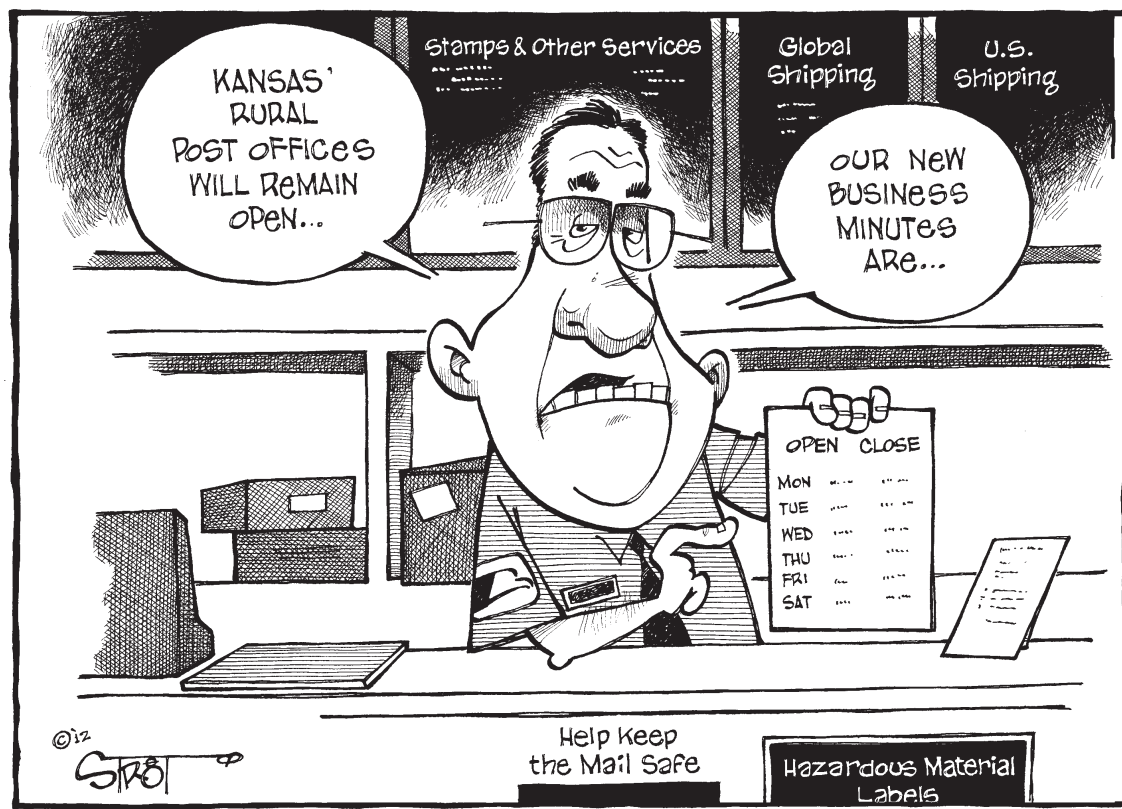
Down in oldest daughter's garden in Augusta, Ga., her fence is five feet high with a trellised gate. I didn't even try to guess what all that cost, but it looks real nice and keeps her dogs, which are twice as big as mine, out of the vegetables.

Daughter says that she does save some money by starting most of her plants from seeds. She bought a \$100 seed starter just so she could, though she claims she only paid \$50 on eBay.

After tilling and planting, you have to weed and water. That's probably the cheapest part of the operation as long as you look at it as exercise and don't try to charge your normal hourly rate.

By the time you pick your vegetables, you can really enjoy your \$35 tomatoes and \$12 carrots, knowing that you are saving the planet, saving money and getting great exercise and a sunburn.

Enjoy!



She's not a good mother hen

I feel like such a failure. Only five chicks hatched out of the 50 eggs I set. Two others cracked through their shell, but could not break out and died. The live ones, though, are cute little black puffs. No way of knowing yet if we have roosters, pullets or a mix.

I'm not going to give up, though. Tomorrow I'll set a new batch. Not so many this time, and I'll candle them after a few days.

And if we don't have better results next time, we're going to "fire" a certain rooster.

—ob—

There's absolutely no way one more function could have been crammed into the weekend. And as busy as we were, we still missed lots of events we wanted to go to. I know of at least one breakfast we missed, know we missed an afternoon tea, missed a quilt exhibit and I know we missed talking to some people we should have.

Still, we did so much I'm looking forward to going to the office today just so I can get some rest.

My brother Bob came for his 65th high school reunion, and we all went to the Alumni Banquet. May I just say right now how disappointed I was that only one representative of the class of 2012 showed up. I know there was a state track meet, but still. A note of apology or something?

Since my peonies, iris and roses had already bloomed and gone, I took my hanging baskets from the front porch and planted them with more purple petunias, the kind that



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts65@gmail.com

grow long and lush. We hung them on my folks' grave and on Jim's son Jeremy's grave. We visited all our other family members' graves, but that was the best we could do this year.

I cooked all day Saturday in preparation for two big meals, one at the little country church where Jim preaches and one at the Haven for all our weekend guests.

I cooked an eight-pound brisket, 10 pounds of potato salad, a triple batch of pasta salad, three dreamy pineapple pies, two Texas sheet cakes and four dozen deviled eggs. If anyone went away hungry, it's their own fault.

—ob—

We have a bad habit of going to sleep with the television playing. About 4 a.m., I was awakened by a woman's screams.

No, it wasn't a murder mystery. She had just been told that over 25 years ago, a long-lost aunt had left an estate of \$91,000 — and she was the only heir. Naturally, she was excited. And, naturally, you would want to know how she got so lucky.

Well, for \$19.95 (plus shipping and handling), you could have the book that shows you how to find money the government is holding for unsuspecting heirs. Maybe you're one. Maybe you're not.

Those kind of shows and commercials for weight-loss products seem to be most prominent. We all want something without having to work for it.

And as far as diet aides, I'm afraid the only thing that gets any lighter is your wallet.

From the Bible

Then Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

— Acts 2: 38-39

Trip to Georgia was great

We did not eat barbecue while we were in Georgia.

We played with the baby, went shopping with the girls, went out for sandwiches, for fine dining for the eldest daughter's birthday, and Cynthia and the girls went to book club, which claims to include dinner, but seems to me to mostly involve wine.

I don't know much about book club. Since Lindsay was at the meeting and Brad was refereeing a soccer match, I was babysitting. And I was kinda busy.

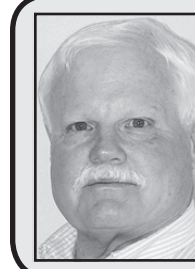
Taylor is 2 plus two months, and she goes to a daycare/preschool place most days. She loves playing with the other kids and learning a little, and she loves to be picked up by mom. They have a routine: mom brings a sippy cup of juice and a snack, or else.

The Sunday before, we'd all spent the day at her Aunt Felicia's pool, where she had a breakthrough day in the water: After more than a year of not liking water, she played in the pool all evening. We all did. We all had a great time. But that Tuesday was to be the first time I'd be left alone with Taylor.

Anyway, we picked her up and brought her home before time for book club. The girls went off, leaving me in charge, with instructions to take Taylor to gymnastics. I had juice, snacks and her ducky blanket, just in case. She whined a bit when Mom left, but then we were fine.

On the way to gymnastics — or 'nastics, as she calls it, I realized later that I hadn't been issued a spare diaper. That worked out OK, however.

Gymnastics class for 2-year-olds is not for the faint of heart. It takes place in a sort of a zoo presided over



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

by Miss Paige and a couple of teenage keepers. Every half hour or so, they get a new crop of kids, different ages and skills.

The place has trampolines, mats, pads, balance beams, all sorts of gymnastics stuff. The kids have to wait until time for their class, then run in and gather round for some stretching and games. And then they cut 'em loose.

Miss Paige tries to work with each child during the half hour, and a few of them do walk a beam or do something with her. Most just run around and jump and do whatever they want. It's pretty wild, but at least when I was there, no one got hurt.

Taylor did a lot of bouncing and tumbling and running. I think she liked it.

On the way home, I gave her her juice and something called a Grammy Sammy, an organic graham-cracker-yogurt-and-fruit snack. She was properly restrained in the back seat a few minutes later when I noticed the sammy was gone. I figured she'd dropped it.

"Where's your sammy?" I asked. "Where'd it go?"

"Mouth," was her reply. I guess she was hungry.

When we got home, we played a little, then it was time for bed. Or at least, I was authorized to get her

ready for bed and try to get her to go to sleep. That, I was told, was getting harder and harder each day. Just getting her to put pajamas on was next to impossible.

I got her to lay still, or relatively so, the same way we'd gotten our girls to lay still for diapers and pjs at that age: I gave her her evening bottle of warm milk.

This is a LOT easier today, too. Diapers have sticky tabs rather than pins, and you can just pop the bottle in the microwave for one minute, no heating water on the stove, and the temp is always just right.

Then, we read a book — "Eggs and Ham, Papa, Eggs and Ham" — and tried to get her to go to sleep. She got up, moved things around, played with stuff, then started to escape. I was about to put her back to bed when mom and Grammy arrived back from Book Club.

Mom gave the kid another bottle, and that put her to sleep.

All in all, I think I did pretty well for a first-time grandpa sitting with a 2-year-old. I survived, anyway.

About Book Club, I never heard much. I'm told it involved a certain sexy best seller that neither President Obama nor I knows anything about. And we're sticking to our story.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800
E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkansas.com

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

Steve Haynes editor
Kimberly Davis managing editor
Mary Lou Olson society editor
Carolyn Kelley-Plotts proofreader, columnist
Joan Betts historian
Cynthia Haynes business manager
Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
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Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcat, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$38 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in U.S. dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.



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