

### Old Glory belongs to every one of us

In case you missed it, Veteran's Day was last week. This day sparked some continuing reflection on my part. Being a Vietnam-era veteran and having served my country in the U.S. Army for nearly three years during the early '70s, gives me good reason to speak about an issue that's been on my mind the last several years.

What I can't seem to understand has to do with our flag. How it's displayed, where it's displayed, and for goodness sake — what in the heck it means to some people.

As a boy growing up in Sheridan County (northwestern Kansas) I attended a two-room school. By the time I reached 10 years of age, one of our responsibilities in the rural Seguin school was to hoist the flag each morning and take it down in the afternoon before we went home. I can recall dreaming about this opportunity. When it really happened, I was sitting on top of the world — what an honor, what a privilege.

Back then, there were a few less stars on Old Glory and a few less flags displayed in communities across Kansas. Courthouses, schools, hotels and summer camps flew the flag, but not car dealers, gas stations, shopping malls, pickup trucks, vegetable stands and the moon if our flag is still there.

Because there were fewer flags when I was a youngster, it seems to me that we noticed them more. Old Glory proudly waved everywhere on Veteran's Day, Memorial Day and July 4th. It made you proud to see them waving on front porches, in kids' hands, on bicycle handlebars, near fireworks stands and in parades. Seeing the flags made you think about what the holiday stood for and maybe what the flag stood for too.

As I matured, I was fortunate to spend nearly two years in Germany and traveled throughout Western Europe during my tour of duty. At the 563rd Engineer Battalion headquarters, I was lucky enough to see our American flag waving proudly in the breeze every day. Ironically, we were staying in some of the same barracks Hitler housed his troops in during World War II. Back then the Nazi swastika no doubt flew from the same pole that our Stars and Stripes then waved.

Hearing the retreat ceremony each evening was something I never took for granted and looked forward to. I still do today when I'm fortunate to take part in such a revered activity. During retreat, everyone on the base stopped and stood at attention and saluted while taps sounded and the flag was lowered. It was at times like these I felt calm. Sometimes it took me home, or even reminded me why I was there in Germany to help sup-

### Guest Editorial John Schlageck

port our NATO allies in the fight against Communism.

What were my comrades in arms thinking about during this same period? I don't know. We didn't talk about it but I'm sure their thoughts were similar to mine.

That said, the feelings running through my mind and heart were private, just like the soldier standing next to me. I could make the flag stand for whatever I wanted it to be — after all I was an American. I had freedom of choice. This freedom was given to me by my father, my uncles, my cousins, my grandfather and my great great-grandfather and all their contemporaries who had served in our armed forces before me during the Korean War, World War II, World War I and the War Between the States.

Yes, as the trumpet sadly sounded and the flag dropped from the sky, I had privacy — a brief period of time to myself. That was the best part for me because the whole idea about our flag — about patriotism — is that I could decide for myself what it stands for and what it meant to me.

Our flag is many things to many people. It is a symbol — not of something simple — but of something complicated. The issues and beliefs we all have are vast and varied, some we may believe in while others we may detest.

The Stars and Stripes must remain this way. It can never stand for just one thing or a few things. Our feelings about the flag can never be public and dutiful; instead they must be kept private and free.

We can never make the flag an icon with the same meaning for all of us. Most people, I suspect, don't even think about the flag that much, or even at all because it has become so public and is displayed everywhere. It belongs to us all including advertisers, politicians, and patriots. You name it, if you're a citizen of the United States, the flag can mean whatever you wish.

Old Glory is mine too — to be what I want it to be. This is America, the home of the free.

*(John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.)*



### Remember to thank all our veterans

When the priest asked us to pray for all the dead, especially those who have died in wars, I started thinking about the veterans I know and I said a prayer for one special veteran who probably has only me and my mother left to pray for him.

We have quite a few people who have served this country working for our company — Tom Dreiling, publisher of *The Norton Telegram*, is an Air Force veteran; Dick Boyd, former *Telegram* owner, now Blue Jay sports reporter, Army; Dave Bergling, *Oberlin Herald* advertising manager, Army; John Dehn, the Internet guy, Army; Tom Betz, *Goodland Star-News* editor, Navy; Steifon Matthews, *Colby Free Press* graphic artist, Army, Navy and Marines; and Jim Jackson, *Nor'West Press*, Army, and maybe another one or two I missed.

Then there's the family. Both Steve's dad and my father served during World War II. Lacy Haynes was in the Navy and Buford Desilet in the Army. Both made it through without a scratch, as did my uncle Jeff Ellis, who served in the Navy, and my aunt Madelyn Curtis, who was an Army nurse.

In the next generation, both nephews on my father's side served.

### Open Season Cynthia Haynes



1966 and served in Vietnam and elsewhere for more than 20 years, retiring as a lieutenant general.

The oldest granddaughter, Judy Curtis, followed both her parents — her father had served in Korea — into the service, first in the Navy and then as an Army nurse.

But, my special prayer was not for the living or even for my grandfather, father or father-in-law. It was for Charles McClure, who was killed on D-day.

The McClures lived next door to the Ellises, and Charles was like a second brother to my mother. Either he was at their house or they at the McClures as they grew up. They attended the same grade and high school, and when my mother tells a story from her youth, it's more likely than not Charles McClure is in it.

When mother moved into the nursing home a few years ago, my sister and I went through her photo album. There among the photos of smiling sorority sisters and men with huge strings of fish was an obituary, carefully preserved for more than 50 years.

Rest in peace Charles, grandfather, Lacy and Buford. And, thank you Tom, Dick, David, Steifon, Tom, John and cousins.

Cousin Greg Ziller was in college and not really too excited about being drafted for the war in Vietnam, so he joined the National Guard in Missouri. His unit was one of the few called up during that war.

Cousin David Lynn joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) when he was a student in the University of California at Berkeley, where some of the first protests against the war started. He eventually joined the Air Force investigation unit, and served until he retired as a colonel.

My maternal grandfather had to take medical retirement as a captain after serving during World War I and with John J. "Black Jack" Pershing who went over the Mexican border after Poncho Villa. Spinal meningitis stopped his career before my mother was born.

His only grandson, my cousin George Crocker, graduated from West Point in

### Many churches pushing the envelope

I remember very well the first petition introduced into our Sparks, Nev., church in the 1970's. Although I agreed with the premise of the issue, I felt it was a misdirection of the role of my church. The church, for me, is to strengthen my relationship with God. This relationship then helps me to determine what God wants in my service to Him.

The First Amendment provides for the separation of church and state, a result of having seen the effects of both the Church of England and Catholicism in governments in the British Empire and Europe. In addition churches and other service organizations in this country claim a tax exempt status to aid in the financial operations of the church and encourage members to give greater amounts in order to receive a 'break' on their taxes.

The Internal Revenue Service clearly states what constitutes a tax exempt status. In addition, it may not be an action

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



members of a democracy are missing. They have taken the business of the state and injected it into the workings of the church.

Some would say the church needs to be involved in the matters of society to be relevant in today's world. When the church makes 'policy' decisions we all lose out. We become more polarized and unfortunately more tainted. Our faith is not strengthened by everyday distractions, but instead by the mystery and grace of a loving Father.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, Americans are "among the most religious people in the world." Much of this is because of the lack of governmental intrusion in our religious institutions allowing us to build our nation based on religious values, customs, holidays, etc. Churches must put their fear of losing control aside and regain their faith in the people.

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organization, i.e., it may not attempt to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities and it may not participate in any campaign activity for or against political candidates.

During the campaign and since the election we have seen church groups, priests, pastors and other religious leaders withhold Communion, attach labels, threaten and campaign in the pulpit etc. to influence parishioners. Not only is this unbecoming, it is downright illegal. These people would claim to be Christian as well as being patriotic and yet the very fundamentals we claim as Christians and

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### Thumbs Up

To... **Amy Griffey**, for organizing the chicken/noodle dinner at the First United Methodist Church of Norton. (Of course she'll say it was the volunteers who did all the work!) (e-mail)

To... **everybody**, who had anything at all to do with organizing the wonderful Veterans Day parade in Norton last Tuesday. (Telegram staff)

To... **the Dan Skrdlant family**, on the outstanding honor. (called in)

To... **Principal Corey Roy**, on your unusual way of putting your kids' brains to work. (see, no 'e' in this underlined message. -td)

(To submit a name of names, please e-mail tom.d@nwkansas.com, phone 877-6908 or 877-3361, fax 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654 or bring to the office. Thanks for your continuing input. -td)