

Preserving their letters one way to honor vets

DEAR READERS: Seven years ago, I told you about a new program called the Legacy Project that had been created to honor American veterans by preserving their wartime letters.

I asked you to send a photocopy of a favorite war letter that you or a loved one had written.

The response was overwhelming. Since its inception in 1998, the Legacy Project has received an estimated 75,000 never-before-seen letters from every conflict in our nation's history — including e-mails from Iraq and Afghanistan.

I thought you'd like to know that the Legacy Project has just announced that the entire collection will be donated to the prestigious Gilder Lehrman Institute in New York City, where the letters will be archived for posterity.

In honor of Veterans Day, I will share with you one of the letters from the collection. It was handwritten by a young soldier named Justin Merhoff, who currently serves in the U.S. Army and will soon be deployed to Afghanistan. It was addressed to his grandfather, Hugh Merhoff:

"Dear Gramps: I want to write you and let you know what I am doing these days.

I found out that my unit was responsible for manning five of the 22 funeral honors teams that represent the 10th Mountain Division.

"Since I've never been to a funeral before, I did not know what to expect. There were times that I had



Abigail Van Buren

• Dear Abby

to try not to cry after seeing the family go through the turmoil that death brings. These emotions were new to me and were hard to take at first. What really got me was that there were guys who were not U.S. citizens but were fighting for our country.

I might never have met these soldiers, but they are all my brothers and sisters in arms. We will forever, even in death, be bound to each other by our service to our country. "This whole experience has helped me better understand what happened during World War II, Korea and Vietnam, and the sacrifices made by those who served honorably — and by their families. I know that you say you do not consider yourself a veteran because you were drafted and did not see action. You used the time you served to your advantage and became a doctor.

You saved countless lives. You are the reason I am in the Army today.

You instilled in me the values that you learned during your service, and it has made me a better soldier. Most important, it has made me a better person. — Love, Justin"

READERS: If you would like to read more letters like this one, and learn more about the Legacy Project, please visit its Web site at www.WarLetters.com.

DEAR ABBY: A long time ago — many years, for sure — you had a definition of "maturity" that I kept and liked a lot. I can't find it. Can you dig it up, please?

— MOTHER IN OSCEOLA, ARK.

DEAR MOTHER: Consider it dug. It was penned by my mother:

This is maturity: To be able to stick with a job until it's finished; to do one's duty without being supervised; to be able to carry money without spending it; and to be able to bear an injustice without wanting to get even.

DEAR ABBY: I married my husband, "Ralph," two years ago. We moved from New York to Arizona after he retired, one month after the wedding. We both have grown children and grandchildren back east.

The issue is: I'm not allowed to hang pictures of my family in the new house.

I'm allowed to have four pictures in the office, one picture in the den and one in the living room. If I receive a new picture in the mail, I must choose which of the old ones

will be removed and replaced with the new one.

Ralph feels that only "old people" put pictures up all over the house. I requested that we come to some agreement on this. He said that as far as he's concerned, the issue has been resolved.

Abby, I can't tell you how much I miss my family back east. To display their pictures brings me so much joy.

Because I feel like I am a child who can't make any decisions in "his" house, I refuse to buy anything for "his" house, and things are still in boxes after two years because I refuse to decorate "his" house. What do you think?

— STUCK IN ARIZONA

DEAR STUCK: I think that if ever I heard about a newly married couple who needed professional mediation, it is you two. Ralph is being inflexible, and you are being childish. Please schedule an appointment with the best marriage counselor you can afford. And if Ralph refuses to cooperate — go without him.

Editor's note: Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

High Plains Archaeology group plans to meet Sunday in Colby

The High Plains Kansas Archaeology Association's chapter meeting will begin at 2 p.m., Sunday, at Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th, Colby.

The group is having member artifact show-and-tell day and encourage anyone with archeological artifacts to bring them, said Kathy Arendt, one of the coordinators.

One of the items on our fol-

lowing meeting agenda will be to discuss how we can go about documenting area collections — what items were found, where, and when — to benefit both the owner's understanding of what they have, and the scientific community's understanding of how people and things moved around on the Great Plains, she said.

Everyone is invited to attend.

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