

## Guest column The Origins of Veterans Day

In 1921, an unknown World War 1 American 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 November 11, giving universal recognition to the celebrated ending of World War 1 fighting at 11 a.m., November 11, 1918 (the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month). The day became known as "Armistice Day."

Armistice Day 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 1 was "the War to end all Wars," November 11 might still be called Armistice Day. But only a few years after the holiday was proclaimed, war broke out in Europe. Sixteen and one-half million Americans took part. Four-hundred seven-thousand of them died in service, more than 292,000 in battle.

Realizing that peace was equally preserved by veterans of WWII and Korea, Congress was requested to make the day an occasion to honor those who have served America in all wars. In 1954, President Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11 as 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 1. One was killed in World War 1, the other in the Korean War. In 1973, a law passed providing interment 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 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard), keeps day and night vigil.

A law passed in 1968 changed the national commemoration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that November 11 was a date of historic significance to many Americans. Therefore, 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 November 11, 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 of the United States urges all Americans to honor the commitment of our Veterans through appropriate public ceremonies.

Submitted by: The Department of Kansas, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

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## Lots to ponder following the election

Tuesday's election was interesting, to say the least. The big surprise of the night was the Democrats taking over control of the House of Representatives. As of this writing, the Democrats' James Webb was holding a 7,000-vote lead over Sen. Allen in the hotly contested Virginia Senate race. That may well have been decided by the time you read this. But here are some lingering thoughts.

• A lot of new faces are going to Washington to look after our cause. How that will work out remains to be seen. But the Democrats, who made surprising gains in Tuesday's election, don't have much time to affect change before we go to the polls again in 2008.

• I haven't figured out yet whether the overall result was an anti-Iraqi war vote, displeasure with President Bush's leadership, corruption, the improving economy that seems to not be filtering down, or a lot of restlessness among conservative Republicans who feel the party has left them behind and forced them to vote otherwise.

• Some of the incumbents cast aside raised eyebrows. Those so called safe seats weren't. There were big names among them, like Sen. Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, the third ranking Republican senator, Sen. Conrad Burns of Republican rich Montana, and as of this writing Sen. Allen of Virginia. It was a crazy night.

• Here in our state, Gov. Sebelius won a second term. She carried 12 of 20 counties in our region. But in Norton County, where the Sebelius name is household, she lost. She won in Decatur, Ellis, Graham, Osborne, Phillips, Rooks, Rush, Russell, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith and Trego. She lost in Cheyenne, Gove, Logan, Ness, Norton, Rawlins, Thomas and Wallace.

• Kansas will have two Democrats serv-

### Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



ing in the House of Representatives, and that is sort of a rare thing. Two Republicans won re-election, Jerry Moran of the big First District and Todd Tiahrt of the Fourth District. Democrat Dennis Moore was re-elected in the Third District and Democrat Nancy Boyda in the Second District. She beat longtime Republican Congressman Jim Ryun. And that is ironic because President Bush flew into Topeka for a Ryun rally Sunday night in hopes of shoring up his campaign.

• Democrat Paul Morrison is our new attorney general. He landslided incumbent Phill Kline. That wasn't much of a surprise. It was a bitter, nasty race. And Kline's appearance earlier in the week on the Bill O'Reilly show didn't help matters.

• President Bush was disappointed with the election results. Karl Rove, his political architect and mastermind of all things good, wasn't able to deliver the goods this time around. Wonder if Karl will need to begin scanning the help wanted ads.

• The Republicans should have relied more on their star out on the campaign trail instead of the president and the vice president. Condi Rice, Secretary of State, is the party's most popular person and pretty much accepted by the majority of Americans. Her impact would have outshined that of Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney. No question about that.

• I can understand how upset some Republican candidates are after hearing that President Bush turned Secretary of

Defense Donald Rumsfeld out to pasture. They question why he didn't do that BEFORE the election. They feel it would have greatly helped their cause. And they are right. They were blindsided.

• The president is the president of ALL the people. So, why is it sitting presidents (Mr. Bush is not the exception) suddenly become president of only their particular party during election campaigns? Lawmakers should make a law that presidents maintain an impartial stance when it comes to elections. After all, someone who wins voter approval for this most important office on the planet receives votes from ALL interests, not just from their faithful. Their faithful alone would not be enough to elect them. I've been harping on this issue for years.

• When a president campaigns all over the country aboard Air Force One, who picks up the bill? At one time, as I understand it, the national committee of the party in power picked up the tab. We wonder if that is still the case.

• The voter turnout in Norton County was 51 percent. That's good, but it certainly could have been better. The weather was perfect. Why would someone register to vote and then not vote? That's always been a mystery. That's like buying a dozen lottery scratch off tickets and then throwing them away instead of scratching them off!

• The 2008 race for the White House is now officially underway. Keep your eye on Iowa and New Hampshire where the wannabes will be swarming around like the last flies of summer.

There isn't even a time out.

-td-  
Have a good weekend.  
Salute a veteran on this Veterans Day weekend.

And don't forget your date at the church of your choice.

### FROM THE MAILBAG:

## Let us all remember our veterans on their special day

To the Editor,  
Dwight D. Eisenhower, one of Kansas' most famous sons and one of the most beloved military leaders in American history, once reflected on the day he began his military career at West Point. Eisenhower recalled, "A feeling came over me that the expression 'The United States of America' would now mean something different than it had ever before. From here on it would be the nation I would be serving, not myself."

It is remarkable that from the Revolutionary War to today, America has been blessed by men and women who — like Eisenhower — were willing to put on a uniform and put country before self. On Veterans Day we pay tribute to those who have given so much and who continue to give on our behalf.

Among us today are 24 million Americans, including 250,000 Kansans, who have earned the title veteran. They come from many generations. These veterans have fought in the deserts of the Middle East, the jungles of Vietnam, the mountains of Korea, the beaches of Normandy, the sands of Iwo Jima, and even the trenches of World War I. Kansas is the proud home of Smith County veteran Jud Wagner, who at 107 is our nation's oldest living World War I veteran with overseas service. He is the oldest Marine and one of only 17 living U.S. veterans from the Great War.

Today, we know veterans like Jud Wagner as our community leaders, our teachers, our neighbors and our family members. The responsibility they learned

through military service has not been forgotten. They continue to be examples of courage, honor, duty and sacrifice, influencing our lives and making us better citizens.

Those who served in our country's past wars gave us not freedom, but the opportunity for freedom. The battle to preserve our liberty must be fought by every generation each day. A new generation of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coastguardsman are now fighting to secure our country. This November 11th, as our nation observes Veterans Day, I ask that Americans pause to remember and honor the generations who stepped forward to answer the call of duty and defend our way of life. They deserve our lasting gratitude.

Congressman Jerry Moran

### Thumbs Up to . . .

✓ **Bob Strey** and **John Faber**, for running a clean, respectful campaign. It's too bad we didn't have candidates of this quality in some of the other races. (e-mail)

✓ **Julianne**, at Jamboree Foods, for the kind and courteous service rendered, You are a credit to your employer. (e-mail)

✓ **All of our veterans** here...and elsewhere. Thanks! (telephone)

✓ **The Drama Club** at Norton Community High School,

good luck with your fall play, "Shoestring Theatre." (tomd at The Telegram)

✓ **Richard Thompson**, on your election as Norton County District 1 County Commissioner. (e-mail)

✓ **Wilma Wiseman**, latest top picker in The Norton Telegram Pigskin Pick-Em Contest! (e-mail)

✓ **Jill Edgett**, on your well-deserved statewide recognition and honor. (e-mail)

(To submit names, please e-mail tomd@nwkans.com, call either 877-3361 or 877-6908, fax 877-3732 or mail to or drop by the office at 215 S. Kansas Avenue, Norton. Thanks.)