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A Tribute to Veterans

Read the story on page 2

**Also in
this issue**

Page 8, Former Governors
Share Experience

Page 18, Tribute to
Oklahoma Military

Page 32, WWII
Infantryman Celebrates

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About the Cover: Clemson University Air Force ROTC cadet Brittney McKeone, a senior studying electrical engineering from Aynor, S.C., helps place American flags around the Scroll of Honor for Veterans Day and Military Appreciation Week, at Clemson, S.C., Nov. 10, 2022. The Scroll of Honor is Clemson’s memorial to its 497 alumni who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Their names are carved in the stones around the barrow. (U.S. Army photo by Ken Scar)

History of Veterans Day

World War I – known at the time as “The Great War” – officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, in the Palace of Versailles outside the town of Versailles, France. However, fighting ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of “the war to end all wars.”

Veterans Day continues to be observed on November 11, regardless of what day of the week on which it falls. The restoration of the observance of Veterans Day to November 11 not only preserves the historical significance of the date, but helps focus attention on the important purpose of Veterans Day: A celebration to honor America’s veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

Veterans Day Timeline

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day with the following words: “To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country’s service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations...”

The original concept for the celebration was for a day observed with parades and public meetings and a brief suspension of business beginning at 11:00 a.m.



Americans line the streets of Philadelphia Street in Indiana, Pennsylvania, to watch the Veterans Day Parade in 1920. The first parades were known as the Armistice Day Celebration. (Photo provided by the U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs)

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VETERANS DAY

Continued from Page 2



Thomas Woodrow Wilson (December 28, 1856 - February 3, 1924) served as the 28th president of the United States from 1913 to 1921. (photo provided by the Encyclopedia Britannica)

1926

The United States Congress officially recognized the end of World War I when it passed a concurrent resolution on June 4, 1926, with these words:

The United States Congress officially recognized the end of World War I when it passed a concurrent resolution on June 4, 1926, with these words:

Whereas the 11th of November 1918, marked the cessation of the most destructive, sanguinary, and far reaching war in human annals and the resumption by the people of the United States of peaceful relations with other nations, which we hope may never again be severed, and **Whereas** it is fitting that the recurring anniversary

of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations; and

Whereas the legislatures of twenty-seven of our States have already declared November 11 to be a legal holiday: Therefore be it Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), that the President of the United States is requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the officials to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on November 11 and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples.

1938

An Act (52 Stat. 351; 5 U. S. Code, Sec. 87a) approved May 13, 1938, made the 11th of November in each year a legal holiday—a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as “Armistice Day.” Armistice Day was primarily a day set aside to honor Veterans of World War I.

1954

In 1954, after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen in the Nation's history; after American forces had fought aggression in Korea, the 83rd Congress, at the urging of the Veterans service organizations, amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word “Armistice” and inserting in its place the word “Veterans.” With the approval of this legislation (Public Law 380) on June 1, 1954, November 11th became a day to honor American Veterans of all wars.

Later that same year, on October 8th, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the first “[Veterans Day Proclamation](#)” (PDF) which stated: “In order to insure proper and widespread observance of this anniversary, all Veterans, all Veterans’ organizations, and the entire citizenry will wish to join hands in the common purpose. Toward this end, I am designating the Administrator of Veterans’ Affairs as Chairman of a Veterans Day National Committee, which shall include such other persons as the Chairman may select, and which will coordinate at the national level necessary planning for the observance. I am also requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch of the Government to assist the National Committee in every way possible.”

1958

In 1958, the White House advised VA's General Counsel that the 1954 designation of the VA Administrator as Chairman of the Veterans Day National Committee applied to all subsequent VA Administrators. Since March 1989 when VA was elevated to a cabinet level department, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has served as the committee's chairman.

1968

The Uniform Holiday Bill (Public Law 90-363 (82 Stat. 250)) was signed on June 28, 1968, and was intended to ensure three-day weekends for Federal employees by celebrating four national holidays on Mondays: Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Columbus Day. It was thought that these extended weekends would encourage travel, recreational and cultural activities and stimulate greater industrial and commercial production. Many states did not agree with this decision and continued to celebrate the holidays on their original dates.

1971

The first Veterans Day under the new law was observed with much confusion on October 25, 1971. It was quite apparent that the commemoration of this day was a matter of historic and patriotic significance to a great number of our citizens, and so on September 20th, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed Public Law 94-97 (89 Stat. 479), which returned the annual observance of Veterans Day to its original date of November 11, beginning in 1978. This action supported the desires of the overwhelming majority of state legislatures, all major veterans service organizations and the American people.

To view the “[Veterans Day Proclamation](#)” (PDF) visit:

<https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/fedreg/fr019/fr019198/fr019198.pdf>

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14th Annual The Santa Market Craft Show

Story and photos by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

The Santa Market Craft Show, December 1-2, in the Pavilion Building at the OKC Fairgrounds, is Oklahoma City's premiere free, two-day showcase for one-of-a-kind, Christmas-themed creations benefiting the Alzheimer's Association of Oklahoma.

As one of Oklahoma's most extensive free-admission, nonprofit arts and crafts shows, the 192 carefully chosen, creative vendors will sell their products during the 14th annual festive shopping experience. The show offers free parking, a silent auction, and more. The hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday and Saturday. Handcrafted items are available for all of the shoppers' seasonal gift needs at an event that raised \$44,000 last year for Alzheimer's work.

Visitors are encouraged to bring their children to get free photos taken all day with Santa at Oklahoma City's most prestigious Christmas market each year.

"We work on this show all year," organizer Molly Nye said. "It is a true labor of love and helps all of us

by doing something positive to combat Alzheimer's. If anyone would like to be involved by volunteering, donating an item or service for the auction, or an item for the Alzheimer's booth, please contact Joan Clarke at 405-314-1033. Be sure to get your free picture with Santa, Del Humphreys and visit with the lovely Mrs. Claus, Linda Turner. I also have it on good authority that The Grinch himself will be there this year."

Shoppers are treated to home decor, homemade arts and crafts, boutique and holiday items, jewelry, children's clothes, books and food goodies. The first 1,000 visitors receive free shopping bags sponsored by local businesses.

Joan Clarke, Molly Nye and Megan Nye began the event in 2010, after Joan's husband died of Alzheimer's in 2007, to support the charity addressing one of America's most challenging diseases.

"Molly and I had been selling items at craft shows for years, and we decided to start our own event. We booked a small room in a hotel and



Played by Del Humphreys last year as a naturally bearded Santa, Santa is available for visitors to get their free photos taken during the two days of the show.

See SANTA Page 7



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Linda Turner poses as Mrs. Claus last year.

SANTA

Continued from Page 6

started with 17 vendors,” Clarke said. “By the time our third year began, we realized how much work putting on a quality show involves, so we decided to make it a fundraiser. Molly immediately

suggested Alzheimer’s since Joan lost her husband and Megan lost her father to the terrible disease.” All funds raised through The Santa Market further the care, support and research efforts of the Alzheimer’s Association, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. All donations are

tax-deductible as allowed by law. “Our excellent vendors make this show what it is each year. We are one big family; everyone helps promote the show, advertise, and find new vendors. They donate to our cause, monetarily and with their products, even though it’s voluntary,” Clarke said. “They help with set up, clean up and everything in between. We have three vendors that have been with us all 14 years. Countless more have been with us for 5, 8, or even 10 years. One vendor named it ‘The Greatest Show on Earth,’ and it truly is.” The organizers limit the number of crafters assigned spaces. Clarke says It is not about turning away new vendors but only allowing a limited

number of each type of vendor. They wish they could take everyone, but having a variety makes for a better shopping experience, and the vendors have a much better chance of success. Clarke says some vendors see the event as an opportunity to make sure their favorite charity receives as much as possible from their craft world and them personally. By writing personal checks to the Alzheimer’s Association when The Santa Market rolls around, these vendors do their part to help. They also donate products and gift certificates to the Alzheimer’s auction and the Alzheimer’s booth. The Santa Market promoted the

More SANTA Page 11

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Former Governors Share Experience, Wisdom During Fireside Chat

Story and photo by Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

Former Oklahoma Gov. George Nigh, age 96, recalled listening to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous fireside chats as a child.

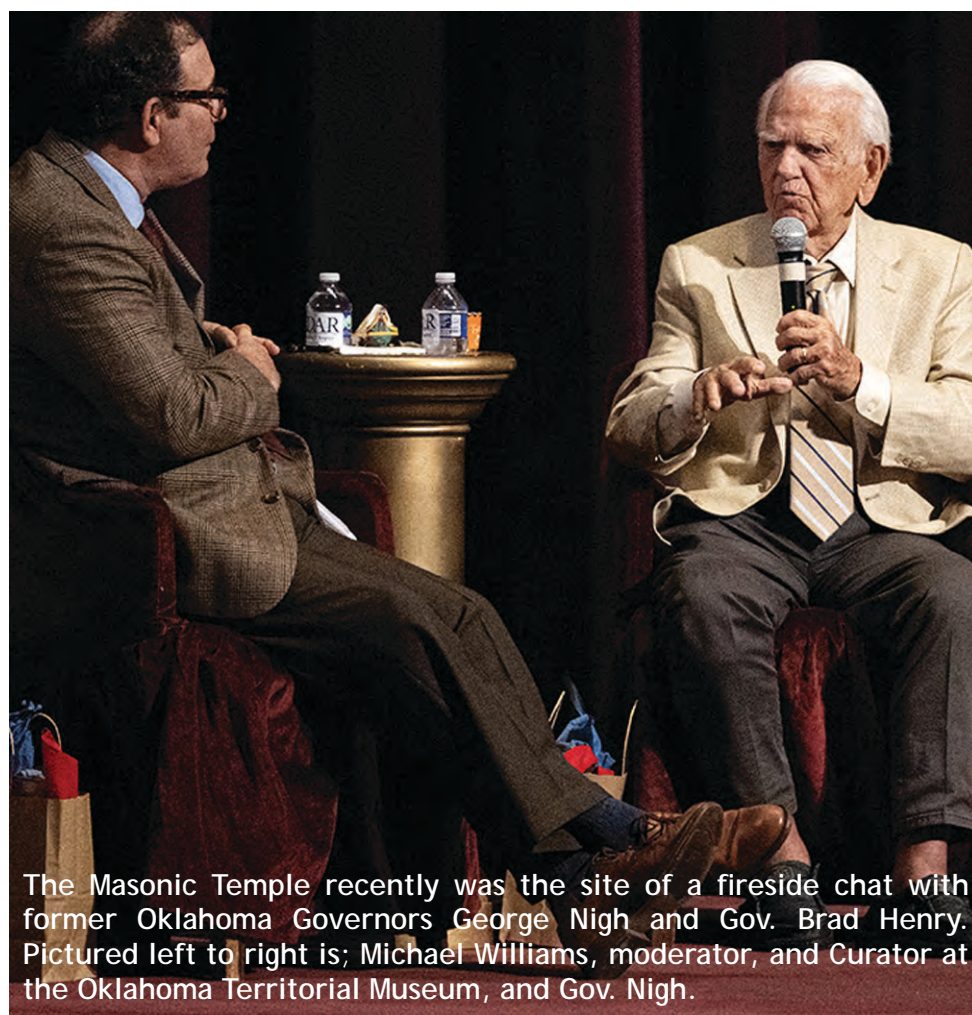
Nigh and former Gov. Brad Henry both got to participate in their own "fireside chat" before an audience recently at the Masonic Temple in Guthrie. The event was a fundraiser for the Oklahoma Territorial Museum which is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2023.

Nigh served as the 17th and the 22nd governor of Oklahoma and as the eighth and tenth lieutenant governor of Oklahoma. He was the first Oklahoma governor to be re-elected and the first to

win all 77 counties in the state. Additionally, short term vacancies in the governor's office twice resulted in Nigh assuming gubernatorial duties while serving as lieutenant governor.

In 1950, at age 23 Nigh became the youngest member of the state legislature when elected to the House of Representatives from Pittsburg County. In 1953 he introduced the bill that made "Oklahoma!" the official state song.

"As a kid in school, I listened every week to Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chat before hardly anybody in this room was born," Nigh told audience members which included students from Guthrie Junior High,



The Masonic Temple recently was the site of a fireside chat with former Oklahoma Governors George Nigh and Gov. Brad Henry. Pictured left to right is; Michael Williams, moderator, and Curator at the Oklahoma Territorial Museum, and Gov. Nigh.

and hardly ever did he attack somebody personally, hardly ever did he call (someone) a dirty word or anything, but he talked about how things were. He basically brought the country through the Depression. Then he brought the country through World War II, and he died shortly before Japan surrendered in 1945. He was not the dictator, he was not the emperor, he was not the king. He was the president. He was an executive. And he led personally and motivated this country."

Henry, who was the last Democratic governor of Oklahoma, said Nigh was a mentor to him.

"I want to say that he is literally and figuratively my mentor," Henry said. "When I was a sophomore in college, he allowed me to intern in his office. But it was not your typical intern experience. One of my jobs was every morning to get there a little early, go through the main newspapers and cut out any article that related to the governor or the Legislature, legislation pending legislation, things of interest to the governor's office. I would copy them all and make it packageable. George would come in and sit down with me while I was reading the paper, and would just visit with me about the day's news or whatever was on his mind. As you can imagine. It was just absolutely fascinating."

Henry said Nigh served as a

role model for him deciding to run for public office.

"I just had to recognize my friend and mentor George, because he's a big part of my quest and my decision making and my drive to serve people," Henry said. "I love the way he puts it. I absolutely agree with him. It's not about politics, it's not about being a politician, in my view, it's about public service."

Henry said he comes from a public service family.

"I grew up in a family of public servants and I wanted to serve the public," he said. "My mother was a school teacher. My aunt and grandparents were school teachers. My father was a state representative and a county judge. My uncle was a county judge. My cousin Robert Henry, who you all probably know was state representative then later Attorney General and on and on. I just always wanted to serve."

Henry initially tried to recruit other Democrats to run for governor, but was persuaded to give it a try.

"The bottom line is I looked back to the service of George Nigh and Henry Bellmon," he said. "It wasn't just a Democrat or Republican thing; it was a servant thing. I met Henry Bellmon when I was working for George and became very close and good friends with Henry. I think George and I and Henry are two of the

See CHAT Page 9

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CHAT

Continued from Page 8

greatest governors that this state has seen. Those two individuals really inspired me to take that risk, take that step."

Henry told the audience that you sometimes have to take risks for something you believe in.

"I think it's important to be willing to take a risk to put yourself out there, to be willing to fail," he said. "Because if you're not willing to fail, if you're not willing to make a mistake, you're never going to make it be successful. And that's what it boils down to me."

Nigh said he knew at an early age he wanted to become governor.

"When I was in the ninth grade, I took a vocations class at McAlester," he said. "You wrote down what you wanted to be

when you grew up, this was before Pearl Harbor in 1941. I wrote down that I wanted to be governor, and then you discussed that for the semester."

Nigh has given commencement speeches across the state and around the country hoping to motivate young people to go into public service during their lifetime.

"I've made hundreds of commencement speeches, and what I want to tell these students is you cannot be drafted to be a legislator or governor or President," he said. "You have to offer yourself. Be involved in serving the people. Yeah, be a politician. Take out an ad, shake hands, kiss a few babies, make a speech, but then be a public servant. And that's why all 77 counties are important to Oklahoma, not just the one you come from. I want to encourage everyone to get involved."



Dr. Elise Brantley

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Denise Slattery, P.E., CFM, CPM
Former caregiver to my mom, Patricia Slattery (1943-2018)

Her eyes were wide open. She looked scared, lost and confused. This was my mother, in the summer of 2018. I had put her to bed (it was about 9 p.m. or so), but she had woken up a little bit later, adamant about going home to be with her kids.

She stopped recognizing me as her daughter some months before. She was getting agitated and my frustration was definitely not helping. We had gotten into an argument, and she started walking away from the house, along the curb. I tried following her, but she yelled at me to stay back. While we were passing a neighbor's house, he recognized my mom and had called 911. A fire truck had come, with only the lights on (the siren was too loud and it very well could have scared my mom even more).

They started talking to mom in a gentle caring voice. I brought my car near to where mom was sitting on the step of the fire truck, and the firemen helped her get into the passenger seat. I was standing some distance away with the neighbor, hesitant and scared of my mom's reaction to me. Would she recognize me? Would she still be angry?

After a bit, the fireman 'introduced' me to her as her daughter and motioned for me to come forward. Walking towards her, with the sun going down, I could just barely see her eyes and they reflected her emotions then: scared, lost and confused. When I came closer to her, and said Hello Mom in a gentle voice, she recognized me and hugged me. She was not agitated and felt so happy to see me.

This is just one of many stories I could tell you about giving care to

my mom who had dementia for about 4 years, before she died from its complications in late November of 2018, just five days shy of her 75th birthday. Giving care to a loved one who has dementia is not an easy road at all; it can deplete you of all that is you. You are no longer his or her spouse, child, sibling or friend; you are a caregiver. If you are just starting down this road, or you may suspect your loved one has dementia, here are few do's and don'ts to follow:

Don'ts:

- Don't stand over the person in dominance. Instead, talk at their eye level.

- Don't raise your voice. Keep your voice gentle and calm.

- Don't correct, disagree or argue. Try not to think logical as you would normally. Their world is no longer the one we see but the world they see. Try to 'enter' that world and be with them.

- Don't invade their space, but don't be afraid of touching. A gentle touch on their hand can be reassuring.

- If you offer to stay with the person who has dementia in order for their caregiver to have some time for themselves or for them to run a few errands, please adhere to this. Don't say that you would love to help, but then rescind your offer when they ask you because you have an errand to run or an appointment to keep. If you say you want to help, please mean it.

Do's:

- Do establish a routine. The more you can set a routine throughout the day-to-day activities, the more you both will know what to expect, and the smoother your days will run. This helps provide stability for your loved one and doesn't add to their confusion.



Denise Slattery and Mom, Patricia Slattery (1943-2018)

This also includes upending their lives, by moving them from their home into yours. If this something that has to be done, please understand that your loved one will be angry or upset for some time; you are creating chaos in their world and because they can't tell you how they feel, they react by being angry or agitated.

- Be patient, kind and flexible. Caring for someone with dementia is like riding a wave; go with it. Meet them where they are mentally and emotionally at any given moment. It will change constantly, and it is best to expect nothing else. And try to always remember: your loved one is still your loved one; it's the dementia that is causing them to act this way.

- Allow as much independence for your loved one as long as possible. For instance, if they want to wear sweaters in June, then let them. Allow the person to keep as much control in their lives as possible.

- Try to spend some time for yourself. Take breaks, call a friend, or go for a walk if you can. Find a caregiver support group meeting by calling the national Alzheimer's Association number at 1-800-272-3900 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Encourage a two-way conversation for as long as possible. If the conversation dies, then engage the person in an activity such as coloring or perhaps looking through a photo album.

People tend to often see only the memory impairment of someone who

has dementia, but that is not the only symptom. There are many more: the person finds it difficult to make decisions or solve problems, they put things in unusual places such as the iron in the fridge or socks in the pantry, they can't complete everyday tasks we usually take for granted: putting clothes on the correct order or how to prepare a meal, they can't think of words to say and cannot follow a conversation so they become more withdrawn. In the later stages of dementia, the person may become incontinent, their eating patterns will be affected and they may not recognize you anymore or know your name.

As a caregiver you want to give your loved one the best care possible, and part of giving this care is getting to know more about this disease and its symptoms in all stages. Always remind yourself that your loved one is not being difficult; they have lost the ability to tell you how they are feeling, so they act out. By trying to figure out what it is they are trying to tell you can help resolve the problem quickly and helps keep your loved one calm. There are many websites to learn from and books to read from, but, in my experience, the best resource is [The Alzheimer's Association](https://www.alzheimers.org). Find your local chapter by calling 1-800-272-3900 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week, and look into what resources they have that might help you and your loved one.

SANTA

Continued from Page 7

show at the annual Walk to End Alzheimer's that occurred on October 28 in downtown OKC. This year, the event saw 1,431 people walk in 290 teams at Scissortail Park to help raise awareness and funds for care, support and research. The event exceeded its \$625,000 in donations goal.

Clarke and her family have walked every year since 2003.

National presenting sponsor Edward Jones helps to make the walks the world's largest event to fight

Alzheimer's. The Santa Market was one of three Impact Sponsors this year and fielded a team for the walk.

This year, the US Food and Drug Administration approved LEQEMBI, a prescription medicine treatment for people with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or mild dementia due to Alzheimer's disease. This newly approved drug in the US targets amyloid proteins and reduces existing amyloid brain plaque.

In a large, 18-month study, treatment with LEQEMBI was proven to slow the progression of early Alzheimer's disease. It helped people

remember, solve problems, and complete daily activities for longer.

The organizers say the successful 13 years of The Santa Market Craft Show could only be done with the help of quality vendors, loyal customers, volunteers, sponsors, and donors. They

call it The Santa Market Family and hope everyone will attend to make it a success again this year. This year, Steve Eldridge, Senior News & Living and Oklahoma Nursing Times publisher, is a Diamond Sponsor. For more info, see: www.thesantamarket.org.

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“We have pushed our community engagement and outreach programs to travel to remote locations to personally reach out to our Veteran population and provide them with the answers to their questions,” said Wade Vlosich, OKC VA Director. “Many Veterans are not sure if they are eligible for VA healthcare or not, and the best way to find out is by letting us help you navigate the VA eligibility process with our expert staff.”

As of August 2023, the OKCVAHCS data results include:

- OKCVAHCS consists of a 192-operating bed facility, located in central Oklahoma serving 47 Oklahoma counties and two counties in North Central Texas (Wilbarger and Wichita), with a total unique Veteran population over 74,600.
- OKCVAHCS consists of 15 outpatient clinics, 4 outpatient clinic

partnerships with the Department of Defense and a Friendship House/Compensated Work Therapy transitional residence.

- OKCVAHCS is in the process of procuring space off-site for a Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Program (SARRTP) and Community Living Center.

- OKCVAHCS currently has outpatient clinics in Ada, Altus, Ardmore, Blackwell, Clinton, Enid, Lawton (DoD), Lawton North (DoD), Norman, North Oklahoma City, North May, Shawnee, South Oklahoma City, Stillwater, Tinker (DoD), Wichita Falls, and Yukon.

Through the OKC VA partnership with DoD, they have opened clinics on Fort Sill Army Base and on Tinker Air Force Base. OKC VAHCS is a part of Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 19, which includes facilities in Oklahoma, Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming.

Positive changes and improvements have been made throughout the system to include:

- One of 15 VA Systems in the

country to receive the exoskeleton robotic device providing spinal cord injury providing Veterans the ability to walk.

- OKC VA is the only VA to have completed minimally invasive outpatient lumbar spine fusion surgeries.

- Offers VA Express Care Clinic at the main hospital and in Outpatient Clinics. The Express Care Clinic is similar to an urgent care clinic.

- Robust Lean-Six-Sigma management program with a running total of 205 projects.

- Implemented a robotic surgery program.

- OKC VA HCS has sharing agreements with DoD Facilities to increase integration of best practices of health care services to military service members and Veterans.

- In 2020, first VA to deploy and staff mobile ICU on campus to support the Oklahoma City area with additional bed capacity due to increased COVID cases.

- Opened new Veterans Resource Center in 2019 which houses: Veterans Recovery Center, Mental Health

Intensive Case Management, Homeless Patient Aligned Care Teams, and HUD-VASH.

- Selected as one of 12 sites to receive a Fisher House. This will be the first Fisher House in the state of Oklahoma.

“We are proud to announce that according to FY23 VHA statistics, we are leading the nation in growth but we are even more excited about is the ability to take care of the nation’s most precious resource—our Veterans,” Vlosich said, “Not only do we strive to provide the best medical care for our Veteran population but we are also thinking outside the box on innovative ideas to reach the most rural areas in Oklahoma. The statistics prove that what we are doing here at the OKC VA, is working and we plan on keeping up this positive momentum going forward for 2024.”

For more information about the OKC VA Health Care System and programs, please click the link below or visit the VA website at: Oklahoma City VA Medical Center | VA Oklahoma City Health Care | Veterans Affairs



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Navigating the Next Phase: Strategies for Thriving in Your Newly Empty Home

Story by Lisa Gonzalez, Contributing Writer

Entering the empty nest phase can be both exhilarating and daunting. Parents often experience a mix of emotions, from sadness to liberation, as their children leave home. However, it's also an opportunity for self-renewal and personal growth. In this helpful guide presented by **Senior News & Living OK**, we will delve into eight pivotal strategies for making this new stage in life truly fulfilling. These suggestions can help parents shift focus towards their own aspirations.

Unearth Hidden Talents: Cultivating a New Hobby

Ever wanted to write poetry or learn how to scuba dive? Now is your chance! **Acquiring a new hobby** or skill brings with it a sense of accomplishment. Empty nesters can utilize their newfound freedom to explore interests they never had time for before. From painting landscapes to cooking gourmet meals, this is an opportunity for both joy and self-expression.

Degree of Success: Furthering Your Education

Longing for a career change or promotion? Going back to school may be the right move. With fewer family commitments, it's easier to focus on academic achievements. Opt for an online program that offers a flexible schedule and suits your specific interests and career goals, such as one **with a bachelor's degree in business**. Such programs cater to adult learners and can pave the way for new career opportunities - all on their own schedule.

Wanderlust Unleashed: Visit Your Dream Places

Traveling as an empty nester offers a unique opportunity to rediscover the world and oneself without the constant demands of parenting. The freedom to spontaneously explore destinations or delve into long-desired adventures becomes a reality. For those who've dreamt of experiencing the magic without the constraints of child schedules, Disney World stands out as a mesmerizing destination. To make this dream more accessible, there are websites that offer deals and insider tips to

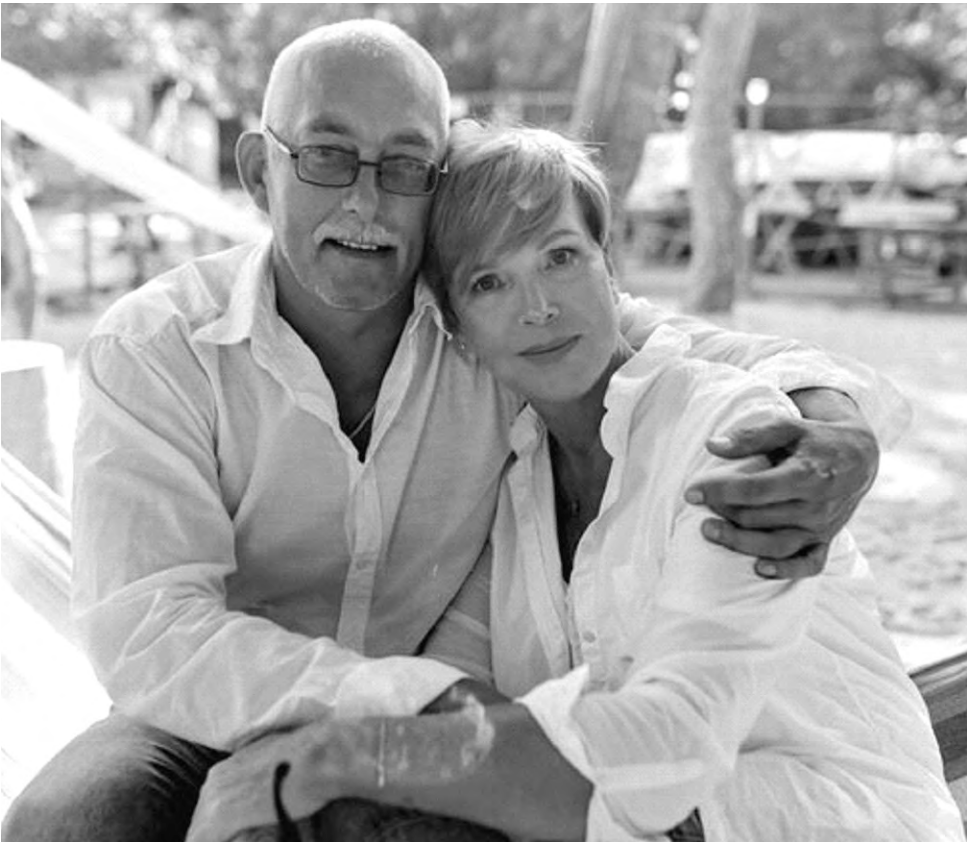


Image by Freepik

ensure an affordable experience; simply visit <https://mouselifetoday.com> to start the journey. Embracing this phase of life can be rejuvenating and fun.

Strengthen Family Bonds: Reconnect with Your Kids

Family remains essential, even when the nest is empty. The absence of daily responsibilities presents an opportunity to nurture family relationships in a new way. **Empty nesters** should prioritize family visits, gatherings, and even vacations. Moments like these strengthen family ties and create lasting memories.

Reinvent Your Castle: Home Revamp

With extra space and time, why not consider a home makeover? You can transform that old kids' room into a cozy reading nook or a **sleek (but functional) home office**. **Investing in home improvements** like kitchen renovations or redecoration projects can be fulfilling. The result is a home that reflects your current needs and aesthetic preferences.

Serenity Now: Embrace Mindfulness

A quieter home offers the perfect backdrop for introspection and self-care. Activities like yoga, meditation, or even **simple nature walks** can be calming. Empty nesters can channel this tranquil energy towards better mental and emotional well-being. Incorporating mindfulness into your daily routine can yield a balanced, healthier life for years to come.

Expand Your Circle: Make Social Connections

Although your kids might have moved out, there's no reason to feel isolated. Now is the perfect time to cultivate new friendships and rekindle old ones. Whether joining a book club, partaking in social gatherings, or engaging in community service, social activities can be a balm for loneliness. An expanded social circle can offer emotional support and enrich your life.

Community Engagement: Offer Your Time and Skills

Volunteering is a fulfilling way to **give back and stay active**. Offering your time to causes you care deeply about can be immensely satisfying. Whether you opt to volunteer at a local animal shelter, school, or charity, your efforts can make a difference. Engaging in community service can also provide a sense of purpose.

Transitioning into the empty nest phase is an exciting journey into personal freedom and discovery. By venturing into new hobbies, advancing your education, exploring the world, reconnecting with family, sprucing up your home, practicing mindfulness, widening your social circle, and volunteering, you can enrich this chapter of your life. Your nest may be empty, but your life doesn't have to be. So, why not embrace this new phase and explore all it has to offer?

SUDOKU

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5			3					6
3		8						
8				4				
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	4						5	9



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SNL CENTENARIANS OF OK



John Kilman

(Right) **100 years old.** John Kilman of Oklahoma City will be 100 on October 11th. Family and friends gathered this weekend to celebrate. John served in the US Army during WWII. He had a career as a typesetter, retiring in 1986. Looking back on John's 100 years of living, there have been many memorable changes in technology, automobiles, computers and telephones.



Terry Underwood

(Left) **100 years old.** Terry Underwood volunteered for St. Francis Hospital for 53 years and 32 years for the Red Cross. Words of wisdom for us today: Don't Ever Give Up; Keep Saying You Can Do It; Be Nice to All Even if They Aren't; Count Your Blessings; and Be Grateful for What you Have.

Paul Max Dudley

(Right) **100 years old.** WWI Army Air Corps Veteran, Paul Max Dudley of Bixby retired as Deputy Fire Chief after being with the Tulsa Fire Department for 40 years. Words of wisdom: "Be respectful to others, be humble, be thankful for the opportunities you have, listen and learn!"



KNOW A CENTENARIAN?

If you know of a Centenarian you would like to honor, please visit <https://centenariansok.com> and download and submit our form.

Marjorie Anglen

(Right) **100 years old.** Marjorie Anglen of Broken Arrow had a career as a Drill Press Operator for McDonald Douglas, was an Eastern Star, loved to travel and still loves anything sweet!



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Tribute to Oklahoma Soldiers and Friends



Tinker Airman greets motorists with a smile (Above) Airman 1st Class Ragan Crossland finds something uplifting to say to every motorist he encounters at the Tinker Air Force Base gates. He is assigned to the 72nd Security Forces Squadron. (U.S. Air Force photo by Margo Wright)



Swimming laps

(Above) Retired Lt. Col. Rich Rasmussen carves his way from end to end at the fitness center pool at Tinker Air Force Base; a path he has made hundreds of times as the winner of a Red Cross fund-raiser for the past 12 years. (U.S. Air Force photo by Margo Wright)

Preparing for the powwow

(Right) After painting his face, Eddie "Two Clouds" Zermeno prepares to dance at the Tinker Inter-Tribal Council's first powwow. Everything he wears, including the color of his face paint, is symbolic. Red paint signifies bloodshed in all wars, and black represents American prisoners of war. Zermeno is a journeyman electrician at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla. November is also Native American Heritage Month. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Efrain Gonzalez)



(Above) Gavin Nelson from Team Minnesota wrestles against Tate Picklo from Team Oklahoma during the US Marine Corps Cadet and Junior National Championships in Fargo, North Dakota. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Naomi May)



Child's play

(Above) Aircraft mechanic Ken Grimshaw buckles 2-year-old Isaac Watson into a troop seat aboard a KC-135 Stratotanker. Isaac's visit was part of the "Bring a Child to Tinker". (U.S. Air Force photo by Margo Wright)



(Above) Major General Thomas H. Mancino was appointed as the Adjutant General for Oklahoma by Gov. Kevin J. Stitt in November 2021. In this function, he serves as the top military advisor to the Governor and commands the Oklahoma Army and Air National Guard.



(Above) Captian Nathaniel Stancampiano of the 45th FAB (courtesy of 45th Field Artillery Brigade, Oklahoma Army National Guard)

Harvey Pratt in Da Nang, Vietnam. Pratt, the designer whose concept was selected to create the Smithsonian's National Native American Veterans Memorial for the National Museum of the American Indian is a Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal member. He is a self-taught artist from Oklahoma and a forensic artist. Pratt works in oil, watercolor, metal, clay and wood. His works include themes of Native American history and tradition and the Cheyenne people. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Anita Newman)



THANK YOU VETERANS



Three Healthcare Missteps of Military Retirees

Story by By Steven Sibley, MBA/Healthcare Administration

I enjoyed a 36 year career in the military, in the Air Force and Army, on active duty and in the reserve. I was honorably discharged from the Active Guard Reserve (AGR) in 2017 at the age of 61, after 10 years as an Army Reserve Career Counsellor, where my primary duties were recruiting, retention, and educating reservists about their benefits. Now, I do the same for military retirees with their healthcare benefits. While we have great healthcare benefits, many retirees do not access or understand how to maximize them. In my opinion, they make the following three crucial missteps.

First, many retirees fail to use the VA Healthcare System or file for VA disability. Generally, anyone who has served on active duty, is eligible for both these benefits. Veterans can seek care with the Oklahoma VA Hospital by enrolling into the VA's OKC downtown location,

room 1B109. Veterans Services Officers (VSOs) are in the same room who can assist with filing disability claims. Claims can also be file at most VFW and American Legion post's, the DAV, and the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA).

Secondly, many retirees seek another career after leaving active service. Those employers generally offer healthcare benefits. Since retirees are eligible for Tricare Prime or Select up to age 65, they should carefully review their employer plan with Tricare, to see which offers the best benefits and lowest costs. Once a retiree turns 65, they will convert to Medicare with Tricare for Life (TFL). TFL is a premium free wrap around plan, secondary to Medicare, with prescription drug coverage (aka express scripts). Once on Medicare, there is no need for a retiree to continue paying for an employer health plan, which becomes the 3rd

payor. This means they only pay the remaining balance after both Medicare, the primary coverage, and TFL, the secondary pays everything Medicare doesn't. In this scenario, there would be no unpaid balance, so there would be no claim to file with a 3rd payor. It's simply insurance you do not need.

The third problem is that there is little clear training given about TFL and exactly how it works. Retirees just know that they go to the doctor, get care, and don't get a bill. While that's a great benefit, veterans deserve and can access more from the Medicare portion of their TFL by using Medicare Part C (Medicare Advantage) which will positively impact their health, wellness, and more.

I offer needed education, along with answers and advice to both veterans and their beneficiaries about their healthcare benefits. No cost, no



Steve Sibley is a native Oklahoman and Native American. He is also a retired, disabled veteran of both the Air Force and Army, and holds an MBA in Healthcare Administration.

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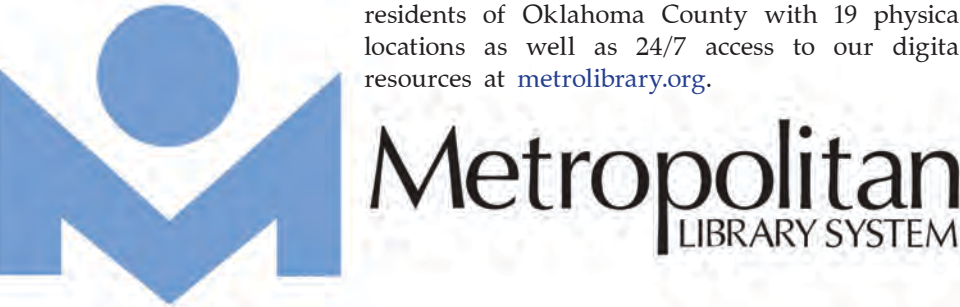
Library by Mail also offers monthly newsletters with suggested titles from the Library by Mail collection.

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About Metropolitan Library System: The Metropolitan Library System provides library services for more than 800,000 residents of Oklahoma County with 19 physical locations as well as 24/7 access to our digital resources at metrolibrary.org.





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1012-ASC-3

9/23

My dog would like a bottle of your finest bourbon

by Greg Schwem

I recently received a concise text message that, depending on your affection for canines, was adorable or unbelievable:

“Sorry, I can’t meet tonight. I have a swim class for my dog. She is spoiled.”

“She” and her owner are exactly the types of travelers Harvest Hosts CEO Joel Holland has on his radar.

Holland, 38, purchased the 13-year-old travel membership network from its original owners in 2018. Aimed at “self-contained” travelers (aka campers and RV-ers,) Harvest Hosts partners with thousands of farms, wineries, breweries and other unique destinations only too happy to host camping vehicles ranging from your basic fifth-wheel to your tricked out Airstream, for a night. Occupants, and their pets, pay no camping fees; instead they are sort of on the honor system to purchase products — perhaps a wine club membership or a bottle of homemade bourbon — their gracious hosts are selling.

“We recommend a \$30 purchase. But it’s not a requirement,” Holland said. People are very generous and tend to spend \$50. That turns into \$50 million that goes back into these small businesses.”

Harvest Hosts takes none of those profits; participating properties pay a fee to join the program and get listed on its site.

So what about those guests who just can’t leave their beloved pooches at home? Harvest Hosts recently found 52% of travelers base their routes, and destinations, on pet-friendly camping locations. If that location contains a body of water for dogs to show off their swimming skills, all the better. Holland estimates a quarter million Harvest Hosts travelers, mostly over 55 and empty nesters who consider a dog their “new kid,” take their pets along for adventures.

“We learned early on that we needed to have a filter that said ‘pet friendly,’” Holland said. “In the process of recruiting hosts, one of the things we angled for were pet friendly locations.”

Swilled Dog, a distillery of bourbon and cider in Upper Tract, West Virginia, has proven to be the perfect Harvest Hosts partner. Currently slammed with campers taking advantage of fall colors that complement their day hikes to Spruce Knob, Seneca Rocks and Smoke Hole Canyon, the property hosts up to four RVs per night.

Once parked, dogs have free reign.

“Dogs are allowed to relax alongside their owners in both our cider tasting room and whiskey room or even play a game of cornhole outside,” said Lauren Hagman, Swilled Dog’s operations manager.

Upon hearing this, I texted my friend and asked if her dog was currently enrolled in cornhole lessons. I have yet to hear back.

Most guests abide by the aforementioned honor system, purchasing bourbon or cider for family and friends, Hagman said. The distillery also donates a portion of its profits to various dog rescue and adoption programs.

Holland, a seasoned traveler who believes “there is something fun to do in every state,” is only too happy to share his unique adventures, which include getting a massage from an 84-year-old nun, a proprietor of **Heartland Farm**, an Alpaca ranch in Pawnee Rock, Kansas. Although not listed on the property’s website, massages are a legitimately offered service.

“I learned it’s OK to be naked in front of nuns in the right context,” he chuckled.

With post-pandemic travel restrictions easing, Harvest Hosts business is booming as travelers opt for wide open spaces so they, and their pets, can roam freely. Holland says he’ll continue running the business, and seeking new dog-loving sites, “as long as it’s fun.”

What could be more fun for a dog than to belly up to a bar and join



Greg Schwem is a corporate stand-up comedian and author.



Grab your pet and hit the road in your RV, booking “unlimited stays at unique camping locations” with Harvest Hosts.

their owner in a glass of locally produced wine? Particularly if the dog has completed Wine Appreciation school.

(Greg Schwem is a corporate stand-up comedian and author of two books: “Text Me If You’re Breathing: Observations, Frustrations and Life Lessons From a Low-Tech Dad” and the recently released “The Road To Success Goes Through the Salad Bar: A Pile of BS From a Corporate Comedian,” available at <https://www.amazon.com/>. Visit Greg on the web at <https://www.gregschwem.com/>.)

You’ve enjoyed reading, and laughing at, Greg Schwem’s monthly humor columns in Senior Living News. But did you know Greg is also a nationally touring stand-up comedian? And he loves to make audiences laugh about the joys, and frustrations, of growing older. Watch the clip and, if you’d like Greg to perform at your senior center or senior event, contact him through his website at <https://www.gregschwem.com/>)

JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LEYID

PZTAO

NOIWDW

ONBTEN

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“ ”

(Answers Next Month)

OCTOBER ANSWERS

Jumbles: STUNT STYLE AGENCY EXCEED
Answer: Some members of the U.S. House of Representatives ate lunch at the — “DELEGATE-TESSSEN”

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

I'm so proud of you all! We finished on a high note because you never gave up.

Can we get ice cream?

THEY ENDED THE SEASON WITH JUST A SINGLE VICTORY, WHICH WAS THEIR ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

SUDOKU

4	9	6	7	3	8	5	1	2
1	7	3	2	5	6	4	9	8
2	8	5	9	1	4	7	6	3
7	1	9	8	6	5	2	3	4
5	2	4	3	7	1	9	8	6
3	6	8	4	9	2	1	7	5
8	3	1	5	4	9	6	2	7
9	5	2	6	8	7	3	4	1
6	4	7	1	2	3	8	5	9

Puzzle Answers from Page 14

SNL WORD SEARCH - NOVEMBER

Find the words. When done, unused letters spell out a hidden message.

T	H	A	N	K	S	G	I	V	I	N	G	S	O	M	E
O	H	M	U	M	E	H	T	N	A	S	Y	R	H	C	F
T	N	S	Z	H	G	R	A	T	E	F	U	L	E	D	A
Y	O	S	A	T	I	N	L	L	A	B	T	O	O	F	N
O	I	V	P	U	H	S	N	O	I	T	C	E	L	E	E
M	T	B	O	E	Q	A	R	D	A	Y	L	I	G	H	T
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Chrysanthemum	Football	Pie	Thanksgiving
Daylight	Grateful	Pilgrims	Topaz
Elections	Heritage	Pumpkin	Tradition
Family	Maize	Squash	Turkey
Feast	Parade	Thankful	Veteran

Check Out Answers in the Classifieds Page 26

SNL CROSSWORD CORNER

Across	57 Safari equine	Godard
1 Sarah Spain's network	58 Most CFOs	27 LAX postings
5 Percussion set	60 Some game	28 Superhero once
10 Cards	61 "Middlemarch"	played by Stephen Amell
14 "Go on, git!"	novelist	on The CW
15 Tickle	62 Bend at a barre	29 "___ Comes to
16 ___ were	63 Retired boomers	Pemberley": P.D. James
17 Textile machine	64 Action	novel
18 Nigerian seaport	65 Blood bank fluids	30 Obama daughter
19 "Ciao"		34 Friendly honk
20 Medic with an office at	Down	36 Rats, gnats, and brats
Fisherman's Wharf?	1 Subj. for those wishing	37 Element in an
23 Expert	to be bilingual	algebraic equation
24 Extremely chill	2 Utterly beyond repair	38 Wall St. event
25 Leaders inclined to work	3 Play down	39 Key that exits full-
as a group?	4 Motto for the ruthless	screen mode
31 Extremely cold	5 Meteorological effect	40 Brand of packaged
32 Channel marker	caused by refraction	bagels
33 Picked up the tab	6 Desktop with an	41 Is extremely frugal
35 BYU or NYU	AppleCare option	42 Ladybug prey
36 Sun screen	7 Literary award with a	43 Shuts
37 Strive (for)	spaceship logo	44 "The Gleaners"
40 African country in the	8 Starting on	painter Jean-Fran ois
Maloti Mountains	9 Lab work	46 River that rises in the
41 Drains	10 Thinned (down)	Bernese Alps
42 Summits	11 Pulitzer-winning	48 Fuzzy states
45 Captain Hook's	journalist Wilkerson	51 Move to a warmer
incredulous assessment of	12 Early ICBM	state?
his nemesis?	13 Hung around	52 Drama honor
47 Statue base	21 Play-___	53 Cut short
49 Melber of MSNBC	22 "Science of Logic"	54 Ink
50 Puts comfy shoes	philosopher Georg	55 Place to hibernate
through rigorous testing?	25 Small ammo	59 "Wide Sargasso ___":
56 Tropical spot	26 Director Jean-___	Jean Rhys novel

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63					64						65			

Answers on page 35

VillagesOKC - A Plan for Aging That Connects The City

Story and photo by Eddie Roach, VillagesOKC Member/Volunteer

"VillagesOKC is everywhere!" That's what we hear from friends who've been watching as we've grown over the past five years. And, while we aren't everywhere, we are lots of places with our own events and partnering with others.

Our newest partnerships are with the YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City and the Neighborhood Alliance of Central Oklahoma. The YMCA partnership is intended to foster a sense of community and social connection among members of the YMCA and VillagesOKC. The Neighborhood Alliance partnership includes the opportunity to publish older-adult focused articles in the Alliance's quarterly newsletter, which has a distribution list of 6,600.

Here are some of the other organizations with which VillagesOKC partners to connect members with information and resources to age successfully - with vitality and purpose.

- Caregiver Ambassadors is a program within VillagesOKC which helps train a network of volunteers guiding faith communities through the challenges of aging.
- Senior Living Truth Series offers two monthly seminars on topics affecting older adults. We are education partners with the Truth Series.
- NewView Oklahoma is a valuable partner that provides services and employment opportunities to empower individuals who are blind or have low vision.
- Oklahoma Senior Journal provides a comprehensive guide to all things senior as well as hosting the Second Half Expo each October.
- OKC Town Hall Lecture Series brings nationally recognized speakers to the city. We are proud to partner with them and promote these stimulating and informative lectures.
- Veterans Initiatives include partnering with Force50 Foundation, Oklahoma Warriors Honor Flight, Vietnam Era Veterans recognition and pinning, and Path to Freedom hosted by NewView Oklahoma.

Details for all our activities and those of our partners are on the Events Calendar on our website: <https://www.villagesokc.org/>, or call (405) 990-6637. We'd love to see you!



Ashley Dickson Oso, program/communications director for the Neighborhood Alliance of Central Oklahoma, left, joined VillagesOKC Executive Director Marilyn Olson for the September Neighbors Night Out.



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Senior News & Living and VIPCare will be hosting a Veteran Resource Fair November 16th at the Guthrie American Legion LeBron Post 58 at 123 N First St., Guthrie, OK 73044.

Coffee, beverages, snacks, and donuts will be served at the event, and veterans are encouraged to attend and enjoy learning and socializing.

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Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris: An Honor Overdue for Oklahoma Hero

Story and photos provided
by Katie Lange, DOD News

In 1969, Army Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris waded through a blistering firefight in Vietnam to rescue a fallen comrade and keep crucial information out of the enemy's hands. He was injured three times during the fight, but after recovering, went on with his military career. Forty-four years later, in 2014, the initial accolades Morris received for his actions were upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

Morris was born Jan. 7, 1942, in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, a rural community east of Oklahoma City. His father, John, was a handyman who found work when he could, while his mother was a homemaker. Morris said when he was young, he enjoyed fishing, hunting and hanging out with his three brothers and four sisters.

Unfortunately, he grew up during an era of recessions, so there were few career opportunities in his area. But there was the military — something in which most of the men in his family had served, including his two

older brothers and an uncle who was a member of the all-Black 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion during World War II. Morris said he admired those men and their uniforms and that serving was something he considered from a young age.

There weren't many Black men in the Oklahoma Army National Guard in the late 1950s, but the service was recruiting, so in 1959, Morris signed up. After about a year, he requested to join the active-duty Army. He attended artillery and airborne training before deciding he wanted to join the newly created Special Forces. He started that training in 1961, and by September 1963, was a fully qualified Green Beret.

"I was 5 foot 4 inches, 117 pounds," Morris said during a 2015 Library of Congress Veterans History Project interview. "But I was a strong little fella."

Morris said that at some point, he was reassigned to the 82nd Airborne Division and sent to the Dominican Republic for about a year and a half as the U.S. intervened in that country's civil war. But by 1967, he'd returned



Army Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris received the Medal of Honor for bravery under fire.

to the Green Berets as part of the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

While he was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Morris met Mary Nesbitt, whom he married three months later. The pair went on to have two sons and a daughter before he volunteered to go to Vietnam in February 1969.

Into the Jungle

Morris said he saw combat pretty quickly after his arrival, which prepared him for the hard test he would go through in September 1969. Then a staff sergeant, Morris was the commander of a five-man Special Forces team within IV Mobile Strike Force that supported South Vietnamese troops and other local Soldiers.

On Sept. 17, 1969, his unit was on a search-and-destroy mission in southern Vietnam's Mekong Delta, near the Cambodian border. Morris said his company was behind two others who had gone through a village that seemed mostly empty. But shortly afterward, the two companies at the front were ambushed.

Several men were injured very quickly and had to be evacuated by helicopter, Morris said. Soon after, he learned by radio that another team commander, Master Sgt. Ronald Hagen, had been killed near an enemy bunker.

Morris immediately reorganized his men to defend their position, then took two men with him to go forward and bring back the fallen commander. Morris said when they reached Hagen, enemy gunfire stopped

just long enough for him to pray over the body. Quickly, though, hostile fire reignited, wounding the two men with him.

Morris helped them back to safety, then recruited two more men to continue the mission. With only their team's gunfire to protect them, the trio rushed forward through heavy enemy machine gun fire. As they neared the bunker closest to Hagen, Morris took out the enemy soldiers inside, grabbed Hagen, then began the arduous journey back to friendly lines.

Morris said he made it back unscathed, but he realized that a map case of Hagen's had fallen to the ground along the way. It included vital, classified information that couldn't get into the hands of the enemy, so he and another Soldier had to go back for it.

Having collected as many grenades as he could, Morris launched them at every bunker he could find along the route, taking out four. He and his comrade were able to retrieve the map case and run, but on the way back, Morris was shot at close range.

"I could see bubbles coming out of my chest," he remembered.

Morris said he patched himself up behind a palm tree, then threw his last grenade toward nearby enemy soldiers. That's when he got shot in his right arm, which caused him to drop his weapon out of range of where he could easily pick it back up.

Continued next page



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HERO

Continued from Page 28

Morris needed help badly, so he said he radioed the Air Force to ask for close-air support. They didn't have a defined target, though, so they were concerned they might hit him if they dropped artillery. Instead, Morris contacted Navy Seabees, who had a helicopter in the area. He got them to drop smaller explosives on top of the enemy, which gave him a chance to reach his weapon again and start firing, despite getting hit a third time in the finger.

"I fired every magazine I had," Morris said. "My training was kicking in and I was recalling everything I had to do. Believe in your training. That's all I got to say. I was trained well."

The chaos gave Morris just enough time to get out of the path of direct fire and back to friendly lines. He was eventually medevac'd to a field hospital, then Saigon, then Japan for treatment before being flown back home to Fort Bragg. He spent about three months in hospitals to recover from his wounds.

Soon after, he learned that he'd earned the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions. The military's second highest award for valor was presented to him by Lt. Gen. John T. Tolson in April 1970 during a ceremony at Fort Bragg, according to

the Okmulgee Daily Times newspaper.

Within a few weeks, Morris volunteered to go back to Vietnam for a second tour of duty. This one lasted 13 months.

Morris left the Army around 1975 and stayed out for about three years, but his desire to serve pulled him back in by 1978. He eventually retired in May 1985 after serving for 23 years.

Morris said he initially struggled with returning to civilian life, as well as post-traumatic stress from what he'd seen in Vietnam. But he said he eventually sought help and, with the help of the veteran community and his family, was able to get his life back on track.

Overdue Honors

In the early 2000s, Congress mandated a review of service records of several service members from earlier wars to determine if any of those men had been passed over for the Medal of Honor due to discrimination of the time. The review determined that several men should have gotten the nation's highest honor for their valor.

So, in May 2013, Morris got a phone call he wasn't expecting. President Barack Obama was on the line to tell him that his Distinguished Service Cross was being upgraded.

"He also told me I had to keep it confidential. Keep your lips zipped for 10 months? That's tough," he joked in his Veterans History Project interview.

Morris received the Medal of Honor on March 18, 2014, from Obama during a long-overdue White House ceremony. Nearly two-dozen other service members received the upgraded medal that day for their service in Vietnam, Korea and World War II.

Morris later said that the honor wasn't for him alone; it was for all the Soldiers who were with him that day, especially those who died heroes and never had the chance to be recognized.

"This is for them and for the whole nation," he said.

Since receiving the Medal of Honor, Morris has spent a lot of time talking to people in the military community, as well as school students. He said he



President Barack Obama unexpectedly called to tell Army Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris his Distinguished Service Cross was being upgraded.

wants to pass his knowledge on to the younger generation.

"These children today are our leaders of tomorrow. If they don't have the knowledge or the ability, we're slipping," Morris said in his Veterans History Project interview. "A nation that fails to recognize its heroes fails as a nation."

In 2015, a bronze statue of Morris was unveiled at Riverfront Park in Cocoa, Florida, where he and his wife currently reside.

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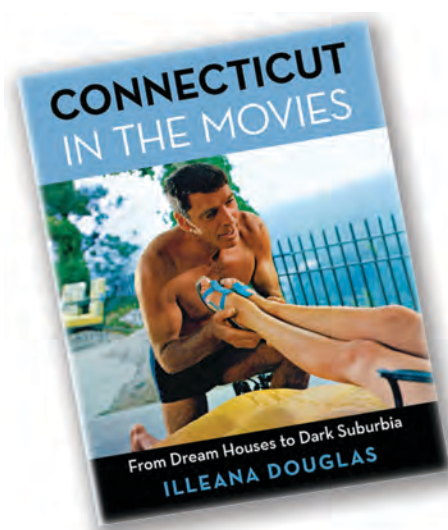
Illeana Douglas pens Connecticut's Hollywood connections

By Nick Thomas

In her new book, "Connecticut in the Movies" released in October, actress Illeana Douglas explores Hollywood's long love affair with the Constitution State.

"The book features movies from the silent era to modern films that were either shot in Connecticut or featured the state in some way in the storyline or production," Douglas told me when we met at the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center in Old Saybrook, Connecticut, this past summer.

"On the one hand, you've got country-living comedies like 'Christmas in Connecticut' (1945) and 'Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House' (1948)," explained Douglas. In the latter, a New York businessman (Cary Grant) builds his dream



home in rural Connecticut, but the remodeling goes horribly wrong in a costly yet hilarious way.

The book's subtitle, "From Dream House to Dark Suburbia," alludes to



Illeana Douglas is an actress, writer, producer, and director.

the other more edgy themes and darker storylines in the collection.

"Films like 'Gentleman's Agreement' (1947) and 'The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit' (1956) have dark suburbia at their core," said Douglas, referring to movies that deal with anti-semitism and disillusionment in the postwar generation, respectively. But it was back in the 80s after viewing "The Swimmer," a 1968 film set in Connecticut, that she first developed an interest in films connected to the state.

"Connecticut cinema began to percolate in my head and when COVID hit, I had time to sit down and focus on more Connecticut films," she said. "I simply fell in love with my subject."

So much so, Douglas uprooted herself from Los Angeles and moved to Connecticut, near where she grew up in Old Saybrook. This allowed her to not only travel the state while researching and photographing its Hollywood links, but to also purchase a 19th-century house near her childhood home where she completed the book.

But complications of ironic proportions soon arose, linked to the "Mr. Blandings" film. Like Grant's character in the movie, who relocates from the bustling city to rural Connecticut and purchases an old home that becomes a money pit,

Douglas discovered her new home was desperately in need of major repairs - far more than she anticipated. Plumbers, electricians, and builders became her constant companions for the past 2 years!

An actress in her own right appearing in such big-screen hits as "Goodfellas" and "Cape Fear," Douglas is also a producer, director, and writer, and has appeared as a movie host and interviewer on the Turner Classic Movies network (see www.illeanadouglas.com). However, her personal ties to Connecticut uniquely qualify her as the ideal author to discuss the Hollywood-Connecticut link.

A thoroughly researched book with over 300 photos, Douglas is hoping it will not only appeal to residents of the Nutmeg State and film fans, but will also inspire filmmakers.

"I've demonstrated the diversity of films that have been made in Connecticut," she says. "I hope the book is a blueprint of a renaissance of filmmakers returning to Connecticut."

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery in Alabama and spent this past summer traveling throughout Connecticut and Maine. He writes features, columns, and interviews for newspapers and magazines around the country. See <https://www.getnickt.org/>.

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WWII Infantryman Celebrates Another Veterans Day

Story and photos by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

Born on a cotton farm near Bessie, Oklahoma, Ivan Evans Jr. married his Dill High School sweetheart Erma J. Sallee and was drafted right after graduation to become a decorated infantryman in the U.S. Army during the last year of WWII in Europe.

After only 16 weeks of U.S. Army basic training in Texas, he sailed as a replacement soldier to rainy, fierce fighting in early November in the rugged forested terrain of the French Vosges Mountains. The mountains served as a seemingly impregnable fortress for German troops determined to hold the last barrier between the Allies and the Rhine.

Trained quickly to be a replacement soldier in the infantry because seven out of ten infantry soldiers suffered casualties in WWII, Evans became a light machine gunner.

Evans, now 98 and a 23-year

resident of Spanish Cove Retirement Center in Yukon, saw more action in his almost year on the front lines in Europe than many in the whole war. He is proud that his fellow Spanish Cove residents celebrate and honor American veterans for "their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good."

He paid careful attention in his abbreviated training, earning a Bronze Star for gallantry and a Purple Heart as his proud 100th Infantry Division conquered more enemy territory with fewer casualties than any other division in the war.

"About my Purple Heart, a German did that—nothing I could do about it," Evans said in a recent interview about the fierce fighting taking the Maginot Line.

The only time Evans was not at his light machine gun on the front



WWII infantryman Ivan Evans J. strikes a patriot pose last month in anticipation of Veterans Day, November 11th.



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lines attacking was the seven weeks in a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital unit and recovery from being shot in the arm.

He explains his complete recovery was based on luck as he was moving through triage waiting for surgery when it was the only neurosurgeon on duty's turn. So, Evans received the most skilled surgery available to repair the damaged nerves in his arm and ensure he was pain-free and capable for the rest of his life.

His full recovery meant soon he was back in the line, earning more respect from his fellow soldiers in his platoon.

Evans has now seen 77 Veterans Days honoring his patriotism and service. He is still quick to tell people his survival on fire-swept terrain in WWII was based on mere seconds and inches. He escaped death several times in the world's largest and most violent armed conflict. Sixteen million American men and women served in uniform during the war. More than 400,000 lost their lives.

His 31-lb Browning 30 caliber light machine gun was a "crew-served weapon." Evans was the gunner serving with an assistant gunner who carried the tripod and loaded the weapon and two ammo carriers.

Evans spoke about how the 45 caliber M1911 Colt semi-automatic pistol he was issued as a light machine gunner was not enough

protection when the fighting got in close. He received permission to carry a M1 carbine rifle.

"My Bronze Star medal was my act of bravery, disarming a German and capturing him in hand-to-hand combat when he attacked me in a bayonet charge while I was in my foxhole," Evans said. "In the middle of a pitched battle and heavy shelling, I recognized the form of a German soldier appear before me and reached back to grab my carbine lying behind me. So when he thrust his rifle with bayonet affixed at the center of my body, I was turned reaching back, and he just missed me by sliding his weapon across my chest.

I stopped reaching for my carbine and grabbed his rifle before he could pull it back to stab at me again. The force of his forward motion gave me just enough leverage to catch him off balance and turn him as I struck a blow that stripped him of his rifle. In the ensuing hand-to-hand combat, I got control and captured him as my friend in our foxhole did the same to another German. We were both awarded Bronze Star medals for gallantry in capturing these two enemy soldiers."

Evans returned to wait for the next attack after marching them to the rear to turn in as prisoners. He fought across France and into

VETERAN

Continued from Page 32

Germany as part of the 398 Infantry Regiment to the war's end.

Deep into one of the coldest winters in recent European history, it was often a severe struggle to dig foxholes with smallish entrenching tools through snow and a foot of frozen ground before reaching softer earth.

Evans says once he narrowly escaped death by leaving his foxhole.

"The heavy shelling had just stopped, and the guy in the foxhole with me said the cooks promised to bring up a hot meal," Evans said. "The guy said I'm going to go get that meal. I said I'm not because the Germans will likely begin shelling again soon. I'm going to stay right here and eat my K ration."

So the soldier got up and left.

"I don't remember what made me decide to leave that foxhole after he left," Evans said. "Soon, I was walking about 75 yards back to get behind our fortified area of the line when I heard a big explosion behind me. I realized it was close to my foxhole, so I ran back, only to find our foxhole was a big shell crater. I had to be reissued all my gear and a new machine gun."

"And that's how God took care of me because I wasn't planning to get out of that foxhole," Evans said. "I

was going to stay there and eat my K ration. God and a promise of a hot meal saved us that day."

Evans humbly says his performance was typical in the well-disciplined, effective fighting force of the 100th Division taking the battle to the enemy. He said he was proud when it was life and death and surviving as a unit; they all pulled together.

The chaotic fighting to take the strongly fortified Forts Freudenberg and Schiesseck of the Maginot Line northwest of Bitche, France, from December 17th- 21st, 1944, was some of the fiercest fighting in the war. While farther north, the much-heralded Battle of the Bulge was receiving the lion's share of the world's attention.

Evans often moved over open terrain in the leading elements to set up his machine gun to fire on pill boxes under direct enemy observation. These brave men were subjected to artillery, mortar and sniper fire while keeping the assault moving forward.

The 100 Division fought on after liberating Bitche. They fought to cross the Rhine River into Germany, and then battles in crossing the rivers Neckar and Jagst. They attacked Heilbronn to pursue the enemy forces until April 21 near Stuttgart and became a unit in the Army of Occupation of Germany after VE Day restored freedom to Europe. Evans served the reestablished freedom near Stuttgart for seven months after the war.

Evans then returned to his wife in Oklahoma. Together, they attended Oklahoma A&M in Stillwater, now OSU. Evans earned a bachelor's degree in education, while his wife earned a degree in business education with honors and later a master's degree in the same subject.

They both taught high school students for the rest of their careers. Evans retired from a 40-year education career as a coach, teacher, and high school principal.

Married almost 69 years, Evans and his wife, who died in 2013, had one son, two grandsons, and three great-grandchildren.

"I wouldn't be here talking to you if God hadn't got me through," Evans said. "I've lived a good life. If God were to tell me he'd give me a new life, I wouldn't take it. I wouldn't change a thing. I can't explain how important freedom is; sometimes people do not realize how fortunate they are to have the freedoms they have."



U.S. Army 100th Division infantryman Ivan Evans Jr. created this display of his Combat Infantryman Badge, Bronze Star and Purple Heart from WWII.



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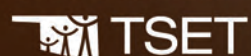
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