

Memorial DAY

Remembering our heroes

CITY CEREMONY MONDAY, MAY 30

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..... COL. KEVIN ROBINSON

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Welcome Center and Museum open daily 11-3
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The poppy is a symbol for those who pay ultimate price

By Daniel Winningham
editor@perryvillemews.com

The poppy is a little red flower, which may seem insignificant to some, but to others it carries quite a bit of weight, especially around this time of the year.

The poppy flower will be seen quite a bit around Memorial Day as a sign of remembrance for those who paid the ultimate price serving the United States in the military. The small flower has quite the history.

From 1914 to 1918, World War I took a greater human toll than any previous conflict, with 8.5 million soldiers dead of battlefield injuries or disease. The Great War, as it was then known, also ravaged the landscape of Western Europe, where most of the fiercest fighting took place. From the

devastated landscape of the battlefields, the red poppy would grow and, thanks to a famous poem, become a powerful symbol of remembrance.

Across northern France and Flanders (northern Belgium), the brutal clashes between Allied and Central Powers soldiers tore up fields and forests, tearing up trees and plants and wreaking havoc on the soil beneath. But in the warm early spring of 1915, bright red flowers began peeking through the battle-scarred land: Papaver rhoeas, known variously as the Flanders poppy, corn poppy, red poppy and corn rose. As Chris McNab, author of "The Book of the Poppy," wrote in an excerpt published in the Independent, the brilliantly colored flower is actually classified as a weed, which makes sense given its tenacious nature.

Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, a Canadian who served as a brigade surgeon for an Allied



From left, are Nancy Wilfong, American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Days Co-Chair, City of Perryville mayor Larry Riney and American Legion Auxiliary Chair Pat Heuman gather for a group photo earlier this month. American Legion Auxiliary, Unit No. 133, members distributed poppies at various locations Friday, May 20.

SEE POPPY/PAGE 5C

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter the words, but to live by them."
— John F. Kennedy

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MAYOR LARRY RINEY

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Memorial Day and coins at graves

By Daniel Winningham
 editor@perryvillenews.com

Memorial Day, always held the last Monday in May in the United States, since it was established as a federal holiday more than five decades ago, is an opportunity to recognize those that went before who paid the price for the freedoms and people can now enjoy the benefits of that freedom.

While many may recognize the day with a parade or a barbecue, perhaps the proper way to commemorate this special day of service is to visit a cemetery. Oftentimes, a variety of symbols or objects are placed at service members' grave sites, including flowers and flags. However, there are other traditions, as well, and they may come from many different places.

Take a visit to a national cemetery, in America, or on another continent, and there probably is a decent chance a coin of some type will be on the graves.

Just where did this tradition start, and does each coin signify a certain message or connection to the fallen soldier?

Pennies can be placed to symbolize respect and remembrance, which can make them the top choice of coins put at or near graves. A nickel could mean the person placing it knew the person in the military, possibly training at the same place

together. A dime at a grave marker could mean the person placing it served alongside the former military member. A quarter is placed to imply that an individual was present when the person in the military died.

Visiting the grave of a fallen soldier may cost a penny (or, a nickel, dime, quarter or more). However, for that soldier, it cost them much, much more — their life.

Is there a proper way to place a coin at a grave? There is not a great deal of research on this, though a good rule of thumb is to do so quietly and respectfully.

Treat the coin just as if it were flowers at a grave. Don't touch them. Since a person may not know the specific reason a coin was placed, it's a good bet that it was not done by accident.

No matter what type of coin is left behind, it is often meant as a message to the deceased service member's family that someone has stopped by, visited a grave site and paid their respects.

One tradition is that the money left at grave markers at national cemeteries and state veterans' cemeteries is collected and the funds go toward cemetery upkeep or paying for the burial costs for veterans that are unable to do so. While many Americans may think this tradition started in the United States, it can be traced back to the Roman Empire.

In the United States, the tradition



of placing coins grew in popularity during the Vietnam War. The war led to sharp political divides in the country and leaving behind a coin was viewed as a way to communicate the message of visiting a grave site rather than contacting the military member's family, which could often lead to disagreements over politics which were related to the war.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs a total of 76 Civil

War era national cemeteries were formed between 1862 and 1867. The nation's first national cemeteries were formed during the Civil War, from 1861-65. At the conclusion of hostilities in April 1865, the U.S. Army Quartermaster General's Office planned additional national burial sites at the locations of major battles, prisoner of war spots and hospitals. The closest national cemetery to Perry County is Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis.

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Memorial Day story on Independence Court trip

By Daniel Winningham
 editor@perryvillenews.com

Earlier this month, a dozen residents of Independence Court traveled from Perryville to Bloomfield to tour the Stars and Stripes museum.

Earl Reed, a member of the American Legion of Dexter, recently spearheaded the effort to head to Bloomfield. Reed has lived at Independence Court in Perryville since February.

In cooperation with the Missouri Conservation Department and law enforcement entities, the excursion to Bloomfield took place Friday, May 20.

"They all participated in it, different businesses and organizations donated to get the thing going," Reed said. "We brought the veterans to Bloomfield from Cape (Girardeau), Poplar Bluff, and any of the nursing homes or facilities that had veterans. It was just a veterans day for them to get them out."

Organizing treks to Bloomfield used to happen more frequently. However, that hasn't been the case due to COVID-19.

"I worked with the guys down there, the (American) Legion and different people and got some donations from different organizations to pay for the fish and what all it takes to put on a fish fry," Reed said.

An estimated 100 veterans attended the May 20 event at the Stars & Stripes Museum in Bloomfield. They visited the museum as well as the Missouri National Veterans



From left, Independence Court residents Ted Harnagel, Earl Reed, Paul Monier, Terry Erlacker, Oyla Lance, June Vinson, Ray Myers, Rose Diekamp, Sally Modde, Bob and LeeAnn Modde and Arlan Steffens; front, employee Janal Whistler. The group traveled to the Stars and Stripes Military Museum Friday, May 20.

Cemetery, and also took time to go fishing in the nearby lake.

"It's a lot of extra preparation to get this thing pulled off," Reed said. "You've got to get the veterans' homes and the nursing homes and stuff to where they don't have any activities going on that day and the American Legion where they didn't have anything going on, and the cemetery."

Close to 3,000 veterans are buried there. Veterans have the option of having their spouses buried at the Bloomfield veterans cemetery. In December, wreaths are placed at every grave as part of the Wreaths Across America initiative.

"To see the veterans having a

day of relaxation and enjoyment, catching a fish (makes it worthwhile)," Reed said. "They all enjoyed it, to get out. A lot of them never get to go anywhere."

"Everything from Civil War days up to present day," Reed said. "It's all military stuff. There are newspaper clippings about certain days, you know, when stuff happened, like D-Day and Pearl Harbor.

The displays include military items from both World Wars, as well as Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Germany.

The location is where

the Stars & Stripes publication, the official newspaper of the military, began in 1861. The museum highlights the history of the Stars and Stripes from the first issue, which was printed by Union troops in November 1861, through the wars of the 20th century and into the modern era.

Visiting is something that schools as well as others should consider for the learning aspect of it, according to Reed.

"It would be worth a trip to me," Reed said.

"They're struggling after the COVID-thing hit, and they were trying to get people back," Reed noted.

Reed served in the U.S. Navy in the 1950s, after the U.S. left Korea.

The museum hosts a "hats ceremony" every November 11 on Veterans Day, in which the veterans of all of the fallen service members from each branch are recognized.

"To me, it's a real touching ceremony," Reed said. "They

SEE CENTER TRIP/PAGE 5C



Center Trip

FROM PAGE 4C

have a hat from each branch and a glass turned upside down. It's something you've just got to see. People turn out from all over the place to see that."

"If it wasn't for them, you and I probably wouldn't be sitting here talking," Reed said. "When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, if they would have kept coming, they would have won the war right there. I mean, it wiped out Pearl Harbor, but they stopped and didn't come on in. We were sitting there asleep, but the American people ganged up. The women went to work in

the factories, building ships and bombs and airplanes."

"They were all really impressed," Reed said. "They saw stuff they didn't know was there."

The Stars and Stripes Museum and Library, which is located at 17377 Stars and Stripes Way in Bloomfield, is open Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"It was a neat deal, it turned out really good," Reed said. "I was a little apprehensive how they'd all take it. It was wonderful. It was one of the best ones I've ever went on."

"It was all very interesting," said Ted Harnagel, who had visited the museum years before.

POPPY

FROM PAGE 2C

artillery unit, spotted a cluster of poppies that spring, shortly after the Second Battle of Ypres. McCrae tended to the wounded and got a firsthand look at the carnage of that clash, in which the Germans unleashed lethal chlorine gas for the first time in the war. A total of 87,000 Allied soldiers were killed, wounded or went missing in the battle.

Struck by the sight of bright red blooms on broken ground, McCrae wrote a poem, "In Flanders Field," in which he channeled the voice of the fallen soldiers buried under those poppies. Published in Punch magazine in late 1915, the poem would be used at countless memorial ceremonies, and became one of the most famous works of art to emerge from the Great War.

"The poem begins, "In Flanders fields the poppies blow / Between the crosses, row on row," and ends, "If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields."

Across the Atlantic, a woman named Moina Michael read "In Flanders Field" in the pages of Ladies' Home Journal that November, just two days before the armistice. A professor at the University of Georgia at the time the war broke out, Michael had taken a leave of absence to volunteer at the New York headquarters of the Young Women's Christian Association, which trained and sponsored workers overseas. Inspired by McCrae's verses, Michael wrote her own poem in response, which she called "We Shall Keep Faith."

As a sign of this faith, and a remembrance of the sacrifices of Flanders Field, Michael vowed to always wear a red poppy; she found an initial batch of fabric blooms for herself and her colleagues at a department store. After the war ended, she returned to the university town of Athens, and came up with the idea of making and selling red silk poppies to raise money to support returning veterans.

Other nations soon followed suit in adopting the poppy as their official symbol of remembrance.



Today, nearly a century after World War I ended, millions of people in the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Belgium, Australia and New Zealand don the red flowers every Nov. 11 to commemorate the anniversary of the 1918 armistice. According to McNab, the Poppy Factory is still the center of poppy production, churning out as many as 45 million poppies made of various materials each year.

In the United States, the tradition has developed a little differently. Americans don't typically wear poppies on Nov. 11 (Veterans Day), which honors all living veterans. Instead, they wear the symbolic red flower on Memorial Day—the last Monday in May—to commemorate the sacrifice of so many men and women who have given their lives fighting for their country.



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City guest speaker

Kevin P Robinson, COL (USA Retired) is a former military aviator who started his military career as an enlisted heavy equipment mechanic with Co B 1140th Engineers in Perryville. Kevin served in both the Army and the Air Force for nearly 29 years. During this time, he logged several thousand accident-free maintenance test pilot hours in the UH-1 Huey, AH-1 Cobra, OH-58 Kiowa and UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters. Fixed wing aircraft include the C-23 Sherpa and the C-12 Huron. After retiring from the military, he has directed Risk Management programs for

Jet Aviation, business development for Robinson Construction, and logistics and process improvement programs for aviation programs at Calibre Systems in Alexandria, VA. He holds a master's degree in aviation safety from CMSU and a bachelor's degree in Aeronautics from Embry Riddle University. He is active on the Perryville Airport Board, President of the Board for the Missouri's National Veterans Memorial and Chairman of the Board at River Region Credit Union in Jefferson City. He has been married to Charlotte Robinson for 28 years and together they have two grown children.

MNVW guest speaker

Stan Shurmantine will be giving a Memorial Day address Monday, May 30, at Missouri's National Veterans Memorial at 2 p.m.

Born and raised in Lexington Missouri. Graduate of Lexington High School and Wentworth Military Academy Junior College in Lexington. Graduate of Missouri State University (formerly Southwest Missouri State University) in 1974 with a Bachelor of Science in Public Administration.

Upon graduation, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the US Army and assigned to Infantry Officers Basic Course. Upon graduation from IOBC I was assigned to the Second Infantry Division in the Republic of Korea, as a rifle platoon leader and subsequently as a rifle company



commander. Upon return from Korea in 1977, he was discharged from active duty and placed in the U.S. Army Reserve where I served for 26 years before retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 2003.

As a civilian, he worked as an executive in the nonprofit field from 1979 until retirement in 2013.

Shurmantine began volunteering at Missouri's National Veterans Memorial in November 2019 and was hired as the Event Specialist in May 2021.

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