

Local veterans honored twice in community

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 15 November 2012 14:31 -



Those who served nation dine at Senior Center and school event

Korean War veteran Jack Ostergard shared history, poetry and more as keynote speaker of the annual Veteran's Day ceremony at Gothenburg Public Schools Monday.

Ostergard shared highlights of the history of the holiday which honors men and women who have served in the U.S. armed services.

President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Nov. 11 as Armistice Day in 1919 to remind Americans of the tragedies of war and that World War I was the war to end to all wars, he said.

Quoting British historian James Bryce, Ostergard said Bryce observed that Americans are a special case because their ideals are a basis of national identity.

"They are a multitude of peoples linked by a political tradition," Ostergard said. "The United States is a nation that was abruptly founded in 1776 on a set of principles that became its people's common bond."

Americans are joined by the blood of several peoples through an American culture that puts the ideology of the country as something worth living and dying for, he said about Bryce's observation.

"These men and women that we remember today—lived and died for the dream of an American," he said.

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Ostergard also borrowed from Father Denis Edward O'Brien of the U.S. Marine Corps in sharing "What Is a Vet?."

The passage included descriptions as "some veterans bear visible signs of their service: a missing limb, a jagged scar, a certain look in the eye."

"...It is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press. It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech. It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who has given us the freedom to demonstrate. It's the soldier who serves beneath the flag,

"And whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protector to burn the flag."



OSTERGARD

After recognizing veterans at the ceremony who served during the different wars, Ostergard shared a poem he wrote for Korean War veterans because the conflict is known as the "forgotten war" because it's sandwiched between World War II and the Vietnam War.

Korea: The Forgotten War

Memories of forgotten war

Destined to linger on

In the minds of those who held the torch

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Between World War II and Nam.

They call it the Forgotten War

And there is not misnomer there.

It caught us at a time of life

When we didn't have a care.

But the call again was answered

As bits of Khaki and Navy Blue

Drifted in between

Us and friends we knew.

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We knew the cause was noble

And we knew the cause was just.

To stop the spread of communism

To us fell the trust.

Yes, the duty fell to us

And halfway round the world

In a country unknown to most

Old Glory was unfurled.

Strange names became commonplace

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Pork Chop Hill, Heartbreak Ridge, and Toko Ri

Pusan, Yalu River, 38 Parallel

Seoul, Inchon, Old Baldy.

And the Chosin Reservoir

Where the angels cried, that's true,

And the gates of Heaven opened wide

To accept the Chosin Few.

The terrible conditions

After winter had begun,

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Made a look into hell

Almost bearable to some.

Something triggers memories

And they drift back we find,

They have stayed forever young

In the dark depths of our mind.

Our forgotten status hurts

Because our blood bled just as red,

And those who made the sacrifice,

Our heros, just as dead.

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Honoring this memory

Don't lose this idea,

It deserves a hallowed place in history

The Forgotten War: Korea.



Gothenburg High School student council president Blake Ristine welcomed veterans and served as master of ceremonies.

Ristine said he had a grandfather who served in World War II, something that he took for granted until his grandpa died.

The high school junior described Veteran's Day as special and thanked veterans for their service.

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Dr. Michael Teahon, school superintendent, challenged students gathered to stand with their hands on their hearts when the national anthem is played.

Teahon said showing respect to the American flag and while the “Star Spangled Banner” is played is a way to thank veterans for their service.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636