

A time to remember war, and pray for peace

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Feature Co-Editor

Clackamas Community College will be closed Friday, Nov. 10, in honor of Veterans' Day, a national holiday originating with the signing of an armistice, between the Allies and Germany, to end World War I.

When the armistice was signed on "the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year" in 1918, it was prayed that the end of this "war to end all wars" would signify the beginning of world peace. A year later, November 11 was named Armistice Day. It was intended that at 11 a.m. on this date every

year, merchants would suspend business transactions for two minutes to honor the soldiers that had fought for America.

In 1921, following the burial of an unidentified French soldier at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, and the burial of an unidentified English soldier at Westminster Abbey in London, an unnamed soldier was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC. This gravesite became the focal point for the national observance of Armistice Day.

Hopes for peace

Hopes for world peace were shattered only a few years after Armistice Day was proclaimed a

national holiday in 1938. The beginning of World War II drummed out the message that world peace is a difficult goal to attain.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill to change the name of the holiday to Veterans' Day, in order to honor all Americans who have served their country during wars.

Tomb of the Unknowns

Today, four unidentified soldiers are buried at Arlington in honor of World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, and the site has become known as the Tomb of the

Unknown Soldiers. It is guarded day and night by an honor guard that silently keeps vigil over the symbols of all Americans who have lost their lives in America's wars.

After the Vietnam War, memorial ceremonies across the country began to shift their focus to peace rather than marching soldiers. Friends often quietly visit the Vietnam Memorial, which is referred to by many as "The Wall," and relatives who want to touch the names of their loved ones inscribed in the stark, black granite wall line up by the thousands every year at the memorial.

Arlington today

An amphitheatre surrounds the tomb. On Veterans' Day, after a color guard consisting of members from all military services plays "taps", a ceremony takes place inside, usually honored with the presence of the country's highest officials.

This holiday has been so dear to the people of America that when Congress passed a law in 1968 to change its observance to the fourth Monday in October, only a few years passed before many states returned to observing it on Nov. 11. Due to the strong nationally sentiment, the federal government changed the date back to Nov. 11 in 1975.

Clackamas Army veteran practices heroism daily

SANDY LUPO

Opinion Editor

Clackamas student Jennifer Eskola, age 30, has always taken the road less traveled.

After a year in college in Kentucky, Jennifer entered the United States Army in 1990, when women were still a real minority in the military. She served out her two-year enlistment in Korea, where she chose to live among the Korean people rather than on the army post, experiencing local buses, trains and other conveniences (and inconveniences). She left the army as a PFC (private first class).

"Not bad for two years," she remarked, grinning.

After being diagnosed with leukemia three years ago, Eskola chose to enter a test study at Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU), and is one of four people in the world in complete remission after treatment with the drug ST571, scheduled for Federal Drug

Administration (FDA) approval next January.

Today, Eskola is a full-time wife to her husband Cliff, mother to her five year old daughter Winter???, in kindergarten, and student in Clackamas' Microelectronics System Technology program, where she plans to earn her associate of applied science degree.

No military, no freedom

When asked what she would like to have Clackamas students understand this Veterans' Day, about serving in the military, Eskola spoke proudly.

"The people who serve are the ones who make things possible (in America). If we did not have the military, there would not be freedom. Everybody in the military contributes, regardless of what they do—a lot of time people don't realize the lowest person is still valuable," she remarked.

Eskola is grateful for and sensitive to educational assistance she now receives from the Veterans'

Administration, for her military service.

"You still see some flak when people hear you are a veteran," she remarked, "like they think we're going to get a free ride."

While Eskola loved the hard physical life in the Army, she left it with a bum knee from the running, and a badly healed dislocated shoulder that has since required surgery. Those injuries ended her previous pastime of kayaking. And she still owes \$3000 for her first bone marrow after her leukemia diagnosis, which her Army medical benefits did not cover.

"I'm a true veteran," she quipped, "painfully broke."

Despite insufficient medical and educational veterans' benefits, Eskola would not trade her service to her country.

"I think everybody should serve two years," she said, "because you get a lot more understanding for what you have. You take more pride in your country; you have

more of a stake in it. It's something that gets in your heart and won't let go. I still get mad if I see a uniform that doesn't look nice, or see a soldier walk into a building with his hat on—'take that hat off,' I say, 'you are representing us all'."

Once a soldier...

"Once a soldier, always a soldier," she exclaimed.

Eskola and her family live in Hillsboro. Holidays and birthdays "mean a lot more" since the leukemia was diagnosed, and Eskola is very active in her church with the teen outreach programs. She teaches Sunday school and has started a cancer support group.

The OHSU leukemia study requires blood tests every three to five weeks, and bone marrows, for which Eskola must be sedated, every three months, but Eskola takes these interruptions in stride. She looks forward to finishing school, and perhaps starting a small business with other veterans in the



MIKE POLLOCK / Clackamas Print
Jennifer Eskola hopes for recognition of veterans.

microelectronics program. The comradeship with fellow veterans is central to Eskola, as the military service was central to her life. She hopes students will recognize the contributions of all veterans.

"When you think of a veteran, don't just think of a name on a wall, or at a nice grave," Eskola said.

"They (veterans) all did their time; they all were willing to say 'I would give my life for my country'."

USS Cole tragedy stirs memories and concerns

On Oct. 12, 2000, 17 U.S. sailors died and 39 were injured as the ship they were stationed on, the USS Cole, was attacked by Yemen terror-



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ists. A bomb explosion ripped a hole in the port side of the guided missile destroyer, rendering the ship immobile. The crew consisted of 26 officers and 296 enlisted crewmembers.

The US Navy is probably the most feared and well-organized military might in the world today. Ask almost anyone, and the answer is, no one has a more powerful military arsenal. But how much assurance does someone going into the Navy have that he is safe?

During my four-year stint with the US Navy, from 1995-99, I was in wartime conditions with an attack on my ship possible at any time. I also served during peacetime. I had a deep

fear at times because my ship, an aircraft carrier, was a very large and possible target for Iraq when we were called off our deployment to the Persian Gulf for air support in Operation Desert Shield.

Even with all the state-of-the-art equipment onboard, long-range tracking and the ability to shoot down any aircraft inbound, the threat of danger was still very real to me.

Injury and death

The USS Cole suffered what any sailor fears worst while on board a ship—a surprise attack and injury and death to fellow sailors. I cannot imagine what was going through the minds of the sailors on board the Cole when the bomb blasted off. Were they going about their daily duties, following the routines they performed each day? Were they enjoying chow below decks, laughing and joking with friends?

Were they on watch, thinking the routine refueling and re-supply would be over soon and they would be back to sea running drills and continuing to their next port?

And suddenly chaos

The next minute, a chaos blast rocked the small attack destroyer. Following was not the silence that reassures everyone that everything is all right; but instead the alarms and screams from fellow comrades that tell you everything is not all right.

There are drills and procedures to train naval personnel on board a naval ship to deal with such incidents. Dog hatches. Lockdown doors. Prepare for the worst. But drills cannot prepare a sailor for his real deal happens. Especially when he trusted the ship was safe; they were safe, in a friendly port.

I lost four friends while at sea, and each was a loss greater than I thought I could handle. Two of them died while running ops on deck during the Desert Shield Operation. Neither could have been saved.

Even though I believed I could have possibly done something to prevent it, there was nothing I could have done. Both men had launched and trapped aircraft hundreds of times; they knew what they were doing. But in a dangerous environment like an aircraft carrier's flight deck, accidents can happen at anytime. I learned the hard way, by losing close friends.

In peacetime, I lost two other friends. One was doing routine checks on fire-seal safety, the other was lost overboard. None ever thought about what kind of danger he might have been in, and realistically, no one in the Navy ever does, until its too late.

The Navy may be a huge superpower, but no one in the Navy is ever truly safe. Most have a false sense of security. Because the US is feared worldwide for its military power, we have nothing to fear, we are protected. So we think. Just because we have a mighty hand to crush our enemies does not mean our hand cannot be burned or broken. No one really thinks that anyone, in any job, is at risk of injury

or death at anytime. And in the Navy, risks are largely increased.

The sailors on the USS Cole who lost their lives were brave and honorable, just as my friends were, but their deaths were not justified.

I understand firsthand how hard Navy life can be, not only physically but also mentally. And not until I had finished my first deployment did I truly realize the losses that attend to protecting freedom. Nor did I really know how mentally tough some issues are to deal with. At the time, I was not ready to accept those losses, as I am sure some of the sailors on the USS Cole are not ready today. Good or bad, Navy experiences will be with us our entire lives.

Maybe the odds are that some disaster like the USS Cole will not happen. But how do we tell that to the brave men and women who lost comrades on the USS Cole? How do those who survived the attack, who have to deal with the horror and loss feel safe again?

Who is protecting these men and women while they protect all of us?