

Siuslaw News Community Voices

MILITARY HERITAGE CHRONICLES —

Armed forces and Rhody Days



CAL APPLEBEE
Special to Siuslaw News

Our annual Rhody Days is fast approaching, where the entire community comes out in a variety of ways to celebrate this century-plus tribute to our community's heritage.

Our streets and highways will fill with tourist traffic, not to mention us locals, for several days. Our town will be buzzing with activities such as a vendor's fair on Maple Street. The Port will be overflowing with

the Davis Carnival, who has been a part of the celebration since 1955!

Shows for flowers, cars and motorcycles will be spread around town. There will be a car cruise for vehicles, a Rhody Run for pedestrians, and the Rhododendron Court Coronation for the whole community kicking the festivities off Thursday night.

Parades will be held on Saturday for the little kids, and on Sunday for us bigger kids.

While our community has been celebrating this way since 1908, it isn't actually the 111th such celebration because the Florence community took breaks in the previous century

when interrupted by WWI, the stock market crash, and again by WWII.

Despite all this bustling activity going on the third weekend of May, one celebration that is always overlooked is the recognition of Armed Forces Day, observed on Saturday May 19.

It might be considered ironic that those very Veterans who served in WWI and WWII when our Rhody Festival tradition was interrupted, were actually off in foreign lands serving our nation to preserve our opportunities to so celebrate.

Yet, during this annual celebration when our community is so busy celebrating the flower

and traditions, we fail to celebrate Armed Forces Day and recognize our military traditions.

Since the five armed branches were all established on various dates ranging from 1775 to 1947, originally each branch celebrated their own birthday on dates pertinent to those established dates.

Armed Forces Day was formally created in 1949 to honor Americans currently serving in all of those branches, combining the various 'birthdays,' and President John F. Kennedy established Armed Forces Day as an official federal holiday in 1962.

So, as we celebrate Rhody

Days this May, hoist an American flag or your favorite military branch flag. Or, stop by the Oregon Coast Military Museum and view our Armed Forces Day display.

Take the time to thank the Veterans of our community and reflect on what the traditions of our nation's military heritage do for us.

You can learn more about military heritage by visiting our website at www.oregoncoastmilitarymuseum.com or visit the museum, which is open Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 4 p.m., located at 2145 Kingwood St.

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Us TOO FLORENCE —

Behind the headlines



BOB HORNEY
Special to Siuslaw News

My comments this month go beyond prostate cancer to include aging and prescription drugs.

Several months ago, I purchased the book, "Are Your Prescriptions Killing You?" The author, Armon Neel, is a board-certified geriatric pharmacist who details the effects our aging may have on the prescription drugs we take.

The book's cover lays out his message: *How to Prevent Dangerous Interactions, Avoid Deadly Side Effects, and Be Healthier with Fewer Drugs.*

I'm barely touching the highlights of his book. It is over 225 pages of startling information (at least for me). If my comments pique your interest, you might want to talk with your doctor or maybe buy the book.

Neel has opened my eyes to the fact that my life is much more than prostate cancer. I've naturally been pulled toward that disease following my own diagnosis, treatment and survival. However, that's no excuse for not realizing I have grown older and my body's response to many prescription drugs has changed dramatically.

What is it with aging that suddenly causes us problems with the drugs that are supposed to be keeping us healthy?

Well, it isn't so much "sud-

denly," as it is a gradual decline.

Neel states, "If you study geriatrics, at some point you'll hear about the 'basic rule: namely, that by age 70, the body's organ functions will have diminished to about half their peak levels.'"

Neel points to kidneys as being the most important filters in our body and that we start losing, on average, about 1 percent of their efficiency per year starting at age 30.

As to the liver, Neel states that our blood supply to it starts dropping around age 20 for women and 25 for men, declining 0.3 to 1.5 percent per year.

Additionally, as we grow older, some of the chemicals and enzymes that are essential for breaking down medications also start to gradually disappear, further impairing liver function.

These age-related changes in our bodies affect our drug therapy in two ways: first, in

the choice of age-appropriate medications and, second, in the determination of age-appropriate doses. In addressing a group of physicians on the topic of drug therapy in the older patient, he used nitrofurantoin (Macrobid) as an example of a drug that should not be prescribed to older people.

The reason was because their kidneys lack the ability to excrete it in a timely manner, and the consequent drug buildup can lead to many serious adverse events.

This is one of many instances where a drug that is effective with young adults, leads to serious consequences with older adults because our kidneys and liver are functioning at about 50 percent efficiency. Because we are not flushing out the excess from each dose, our organs are accumulating more of the drug from each subsequent dose.

That leaves us vulnerable to a toxic buildup of the prescribed drug and potential serious problems, including death.

We patients need to take this seriously ... and some don't. One local physician told me that some of the most difficult patients are those who have successfully used these drugs for years and strongly resist giving them up, even though they may now cause great harm.

Neel cites Beers' criteria for classifying medications as inappropriate for older adults if their potential risks outweigh their potential benefits. This list was compiled by Mark H. Beers and a 13-member panel of experts in 1991.

It has undergone several revisions since then with 2012, 2015 and 2017 being the latest ones. It is available online — Beers criteria.

Neel includes his own annotated version of Beers criteria in his book.

Neel also talks about poly-pharmacy, meaning "many drugs," and the multitude of patients taking 10 to 20 or more drugs daily.

Beers stated, "Once you're taking more than two or three drugs you have to realize that every time you add a new drug, the risk of something going wrong goes up exponentially, not linearly." Neel adds, "Soon after five medications a day, you hit the 100 percent risk threshold."

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WHAT'S COMING UP:

- 17 - Rhody Court Coronation - 6:30 p.m.
- 18 - FRAA Art Festival - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- 19 - FRAA Art Festival - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- 19 - Rhody Run - 9 a.m.
- 19 - Siuslaw Rhododendron Flower Show - 1 to 5 p.m.
- 20 - Siuslaw Rhododendron Flower Show - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- 21 - Florence City Council Meeting - 5:30 p.m.
- 24 - Vivace Pre-concert Talk - 6:15 p.m.
- 24 - SEAcost presents Vivace - 7:00 p.m.
- 26 - Music Matters - 7:00 p.m.
- 27 - Music Matters - 3:00 p.m.