

The meaning of Memorial Day

C.G. Museum exhibit explores vets and graduates

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

On Sunday, the Cottage Grove Museum hosted a Memorial Day exhibit to showcase old gear and historical military equipment from local donors, as well as remembering the first graduates of Cottage Grove High School. The exhibit kicked off with a guest speaker, Jonathon Landon, a retired U.S. Army Chaplain who served on active duty and reserve time for a total of 28 years. In his speech, Landon suggested that the meaning of Memorial Day has become lost on most Americans.

"It has become a national day of barbecue," he said. "It has become a day off from work to celebrate 'all things summer.'" Landon continued to point out, however, that Cottage Grove's Memorial Day tradition is a solemn and appropriate one.

Every year, the tradition is to gather in the Armory in the morning, then proceed to the Memorial Park, where a wreath of flowers is cast into the river while 'Taps' is played.

"That tradition is solemn, dignified, honorable and appropriate," Landon stated.

But the issue within the community on Memorial Day is attendance of

C.G. Memorial Day celebration

Monday, May 30
Begins at 11 a.m. at the
Cottage Grove Armory

such a ceremony. Where usually there are only about 200-300 that attend, Landon believes that based on this town's population, there should be at least 1,000 from veterans and their families alone.

Landon says that this is a result of an overall dwindling understanding about the military among the public. According to a New York Times article referenced by Landon, less than half of a percent of the population currently serves in the armed forces, while over 12 percent served during World War II. Furthermore, 70 percent of Congress members had military service under their belt in 1975. That figure has now dropped to only 20 percent.

It was pointed out that it is some-

times the small details that perpetuate this lack of understanding or lack of knowledge about the military. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration published an article in 2010 titled "Understanding the Military: The Institution, the Culture and the People." But the cover photo of the online article shows military service members standing shoulder to shoulder, and the caption reads: "background image of soldiers in fatigues standing at attention." The problem is that they aren't soldiers. They are Marines. Soldiers serve in the Army, Marines in the Marine Corps, sailors in the Navy and airmen in the Air Force.

"If you told a counselor that you served in the Marines, and that counselor then referred to you as a soldier, wouldn't that reduce your trust in that counselor's ability to understand you and your military experience?" Landon asked.

Landon offers simple, yet important solutions to fixing the problem.

"Before we can educate the public, we need to persuade them that this knowledge is important," he said. Landon stresses that the public and our nation's leaders must first understand how little they know about military life. He then suggests that their needs to be



photo by Sam Wright

Mary and Jim Gilroy listen to a presentation by Army chaplain Jonathon Landon Sunday afternoon.

an improvement in the visibility of veterans in communities and that military service members and veterans should address the public regularly.

But most of all, Landon says that Memorial Day and other memorial services and ceremonies should be treated seriously.

"For our families and friends at the

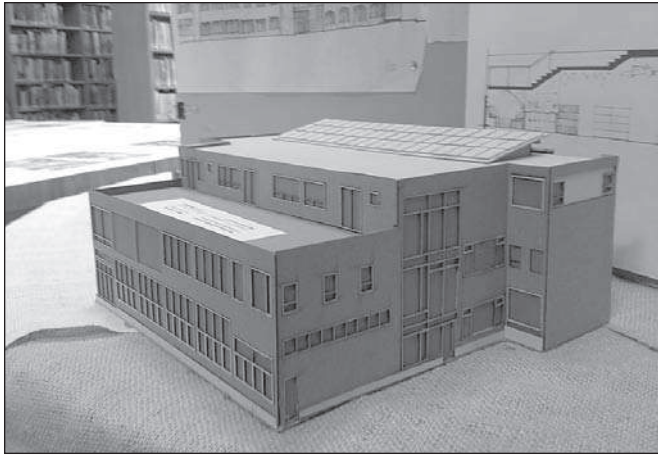
passing of a veteran, there is little comfort in the medals and badges; however, there is tremendous comfort in knowing that a grateful nation recognizes and honors the important contribution made to the freedom of our men and women who were willing to put our lives on the line," he said.

NEW LIBRARY ENVISIONED

The Cottage Grove Library currently features an exhibit that aims to imagine its successor.

During their winter term, a class of 45 graduate students at the University of Oregon focused their design efforts on creating a vision for a new Cottage Grove Library. The group focused on sites at Main and Seventh Street downtown, which were chosen so students would have the challenge of designing a contemporary library building in a historic context.

Community Services Director Pete Barrell pointed out that the exercise was merely theoretical; there is no current plan or funding to replace the Library, but Barrell said the



Library is already frequently short on space for its programs.

"However, this could be interpreted as the first step toward envisioning what the library in Cottage Grove might

look like five, 10 or 20 years in the future," Barrell said.

A visit to the Library offers the chance to peruse the designs of a few of the 45 students.

Flood code gets public hearing

Attendees at the Cottage Grove Planning Commission got a chance to hear an explanation of the proposed changes in the City's Flood Damage Prevention Code, which aims to help curb such damage locally in the event of a flood.

City Planner Amanda Ferguson told the crowd last Wednesday, May 18 that the proposed new code has been updated in an effort to ensure that Cottage Grove be included in the community rating system of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which provides federal flood insurance for those structures required to carry it.

The new code would primarily affect homes near the Coast Fork of the Willamette River, Ferguson said, as much of the land around the Row River is

owned by the City. The Coast Fork is quite channeled out, Ferguson said, so the floodway can usually be defined as the area between its banks, and the only properties that should be affected by the code are located near River Road.

A more stringent code throughout a municipality can help reduce flood insurance rates, Ferguson said. In April, Ferguson and Community Development Director Howard Schesser attended a class that she said uncovered how out-of-date Cottage Grove's current code is. State and federal laws have changed in response to disasters such as Hurricane Sandy, and the new code would bring the City into compliance with the most recent codes.

The code recommends that no construction be allowed in

the floodway, though homes already built there are "grandfathered in" unless their owners choose to substantially improve their dwellings. During public comment, two longtime citizens spoke of the uproar created when FEMA attempted to redefine the floodplain in Cottage Grove in the 1980s, which would have led to the requirement to purchase flood insurance for many properties.

"The proposed codes are a little tougher, and that can't be good from a layman's position," said David Hemenway. "FEMA is going to try to expand the floodplain, and we can't let that happen."

The proposed code will appear before the City Council for another public hearing on June 27.

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