

Families, veterans pay their respects

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

As the sound of the Taps bugle call echoed across the Hermiston Cemetery on Memorial Day, more than 600 American flags waved gently behind the crowd standing in silent attention.

The flags aren't mere decoration — anyone who knows where to look can find the name on each flag of an area veteran who has died.

"My dad's flag is out here someplace," David Marks said after the memorial ceremony finished. "My uncle's flag is out here. I've been in town long enough to know a lot of the people on the flags, if I can find them."

Marks, an Army veteran himself, said he enjoyed the service at the cemetery the morning of Monday, May 31. The event included patriotic songs from Hermiston High School's choir and band programs, and several ceremonial honors for veterans, including the reading of names of local veterans who died since the American Legion and VFW last held the ceremony in 2019 (it was canceled in 2020 due to COVID-19).

Living Faith Church Pastor Dean Hackett, an Air Force veteran, spoke at the event, telling the story of Charles Plumb.

Plumb was a "top gun" naval pilot who completed 74 combat missions over Vietnam from the USS Kitty Hawk. On his 75th mission, his plane was hit by a surface-to-air missile and he ejected, parachuting into enemy territory. He was captured and spent six years as a prisoner of war, tortured and beaten.

After he was freed, Hackett said, a man approached him at a restaurant one day and exclaimed, "You're Charlie Plumb!" Plumb didn't recognize the man, who proceeded to tell him that he had packed his parachute.

Hackett said Plumb later said he laid awake that



Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald

Members of the Army National Guard do a 21-gun salute during a Memorial Day service at the Hermiston Cemetery on Monday, May 31, 2021.



Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald

Members of the Hermiston High School Band play service songs during a Memorial Day service at the Hermiston Cemetery on Monday, May 31, 2021.

night, thinking about the man who saved his life by packing his parachute correctly, wondering how many times he had passed him on the ship and not bothered to say hello, because he was a fighter pilot and the man

was "just" a sailor. "He made a vow to never let a day go by without thanking someone who packed his parachute emotionally, who packed his parachute spiritually, who packed his parachute finan-



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Oregon Army National Guard Staff Sgt. J.J. Tudela unrolls a flag at the Hermiston Cemetery on Thursday, May 27, 2021, in preparation for Memorial Day.

cially," Hackett said. He said many people go through the day never thinking about the people who "packed their parachute" in some way to help protect the life they are leading. "Today I say, thank you

to the families of those men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice, that we might live in liberty, in the land of the free and home of the brave," Hackett said. After the VFW and American Legion canceled

annual ceremony and the Avenue of Flags in 2020, due to concerns about protecting elderly veterans from COVID-19, attendees at Monday's service expressed their appreciation for seeing the flags fly once again.

"They're so beautiful," said Kelly Zielke, of Stanfield.

She was out at the cemetery with other family members to pay her respects to the veterans honored in the memorial service, and her father-in-law, a veteran who now rests at the Hermiston Cemetery.

Kevin Hedgepeth, retired Coast Guard, said he found the entire observance moving.

"I'm still a little teary-eyed," he said.

As a veteran of the smallest branch of the military, he was pleased to find three flags at the cemetery for Coast Guard veterans.

"When I was active duty, there were more cops in New York City than Coasties in the entire world," he said.

Hedgepeth grew up on the Oregon coast, though, and said he chose the Coast Guard because he had a great respect for them after watching the rescues, protection and other benefits they provided to commercial fishermen. Even in times of peace, he said, the Coast Guard saves lives and protects livelihoods.

His specialty in technology meant he wasn't often the one physically pulling people out of the water, but he said he will never forget the look in a man's eyes after he pulled him out of the ocean after three days drifting in an incapacitated boat.

As people began to leave the cemetery, he said he hopes people remember that Memorial Day is much more than a three-day weekend.

"It's an opportunity to remember those who put themselves in harm's way so we can continue to enjoy life," he said.



Hermiston Herald, File

Whisky Fest spectators wait for Post Malone to take the stage on July 13, 2019, at the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds. This year's headliner will be country music star Toby Keith.

Toby Keith headlines Pendleton Whisky Music Fest in 2021

HERMISTON HERALD

Pendleton Whisky Music Fest is ready to thrill again.

Songwriters Hall of Fame inductee and two-time Academy of Country Music Awards Entertainer of the Year Toby Keith is set to headline the annual summer event on July 10, 2021, at the historic Pendleton Round-Up Grounds.

Country music's Clare Dunn, Clay Walker and Cole Swindell also are slated to perform, according to the announcement from Pendleton Whisky Music Fest.

Doug Corey, Whisky Fest co-founder, said the entertainers have been easy to work with and "having a top notch agent and one that is respected in the industry" was central to getting the lineup.

"Trying to do this without an agent would be difficult," he said. "There are simply too many moving parts. We are extremely lucky to have secured Toby Keith, Cole Swindell and Clay Walker, all on such short notice. It will be a wonderful country music event. We are excited for this year's Pendleton Whisky Music Fest."

Organizers canceled the 2020 festival due to the coronavirus pandemic. The new lineup of 2021 performers will replace the

original headlining artist Eric Church, who is now set to perform at the Pendleton Whisky Music Fest in 2022, along with Macklemore.

Whisky Fest also plans to take place in front of a live audience, but there will be differences from previous years.

Pendleton Whisky Music Fest, according to the press release, will follow all health and safety guidelines per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as local and state government health officials. This year's main event will have a reduced capacity of 12,000 fans, and title sponsor Pendleton Whisky will provide face masks at each entrance to festivalgoers who choose to wear one.

The event has showcased some of the biggest names in the music performance industry, including Maroon 5, Blake Shelton and, in 2019, Pitbull and Post Malone.

This year's festival will kick off as usual with a Friday night party in downtown Pendleton, featuring musical performances by Kurt Van Meter, Precious Byrd and DJ Govern-T.

For updates on the 2021 and 2022 musical festivals, including ticket information, visit www.pendletonwhiskymusicfest.com.

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