

WWI – The End

I had some positive comments about last week's column about events near the end of World War I, so I decided to review a few more this week. During October 1918, the Allies freed France and Belgium from German occupation. The Allies pushed back the Turkish arm and forced Turkey to sign an Armistice on 30 October which allowed the Allies access to the Dardanelles which separates Turkey from main-land Europe allowing access to the Black Sea. In early November, the Hindenburg line separating eastern and western Europe fell when the Allies overran it. On 9 November, Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated as German Emperor and King of Prussia. That ended the 400 plus years of Prussian rule by the House of Hohenzollern. Interestingly, in 1919 Germans abolished the defined class of nobility and declared that all Germans were equal before the law. Two days after Wilhelm's abdication, WWI ended with the signing of an Armistice in the French town of Redonches at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Wilhelm died 4 June 1941.

Veterans Day originated as "Armistice Day" on Nov. 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I. Congress passed a resolution in 1926 for an annual observance, and Nov. 11 became a national holiday beginning in 1938. Unlike Memorial Day, Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans, living or dead, but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country honorably during war or peacetime. In 1954 President Eisenhower officially changed the name of the holiday to Veterans Day. In 1968, the Uniform Holidays Bill was passed by Congress moving Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October taking effect in 1971. President Ford, a Veteran, officially returned Veterans Day to 11 November.

Our Veterans come from all walks of life and are our parents, children, grandparents, friends, neighbors and coworkers and are an important part of our community. It is our responsibility to honor them on Veterans Day. Here are some facts about Veterans according to the most recent report from the Department of Veterans Affairs: average age is 64, 91.4% male, 77.7% white, 37.5 % have gone to college, 35% use the VA healthcare system, 30.1% are disabled, 75.7% own their home, 63.3% are married and 57.1% are 65 or older living at home. The states with the most Veterans are in order: California, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia Illinois.

Sweetie, Bev and I will be honoring our Veterans in Green Valley, AZ. It will probably be similar to last year; sunny, light breeze and about 80 degrees. The celebration will be outdoors, so we plan on arriving early to get a seat in the shade. Mike from the Moorhead American Legion, if you read this, I plan on wearing my Legion 21 hat.

Finally, I am outraged at the senseless killing at the Synagogue in Pittsburgh. New friends of ours here in AZ lost three close friends.