

## **WWI and Facebook**

As we marked the ending of World War I 100 years ago, I decided to write something about the conditions our soldiers met and number of deaths. About 4 million US soldiers were mobilized and about 116,000 died of illness, combat and wounds. Another 200,000 were wounded but survived. Many of the wounded died before reaching a hospital. Medical support at and near the front was not very good. Many of the wounded and killed were a result of artillery where one side shelled the other's front line and artillery. This war saw extensive use of trenches. Both sides had trenches near each other. Life in the trenches was terrible with shelling, rifle fire and weather. Imagine sitting or standing in a trench in the snow and rain with the dirt turning to mud and freezing.

This brings me to Veterans Day weekend and actions of President Trump. He was scheduled to attend a memorial ceremony at Aisne-Marne cemetery which contains nearly 2,300 graves of troops who fought in the surrounding area. Trump did not attend because it was raining. After returning to the White House, Trump also did not go to Arlington Cemetery to honor our Veterans, saying that he was too busy. Later the same week, he spent three days golfing in Florida. I listened to Trump's calls to overseas service members and appreciated him thanking them for their service.

I posted questions about these two slights to our Veterans on Facebook. Responses from some of my right-wing Facebook friends were quick and insulting. I was called a liberal phony, Obama lover, Trump hater, shallow, annoying, spouting liberal drivel plus a few others that I won't put in this column. One of them even criticized this column as phony even though he admitted that he has never read any of them.

We have another crisis with Veterans not receiving their GI Bill payments for this fall term. As of 15 November, 73,000 claims have yet to be processed, nearly a 27 percent increase from last year according to a VA representative. About 10,000 of the payments have been delayed for over 30 days. Recently discharged Veterans seldom have other funds available to pay college expenses early in the term. Tuition, fees and housing bills for the term are nearly always due at the beginning of the term. The VA blames an outdated IT system for most of the delays. I was the GI Bill person at MSUM for 36 years and nearly every year the VA blamed outdated computers for problems in getting payments out in a timely fashion. I even served on a national advisory committee that provided a detailed plan on how to fix the problem. Congress has budgeted funds for the VA to provide timely service to our Veterans. Apparently, nothing has worked. Meanwhile our college-attending Veterans are without funds. VA toll-free customer service number also has extremely long wait times.