

# Opinion

## Quote of the Day

*"When liberty is taken away by force it can be restored by force. When it is relinquished voluntarily by default it can never be recovered."*

— Dorothy Thompson, Journalist, 1958

## Editorial

# A good home

Newcomers shed light on a gem we know all too well

We all knew it. But it's nice to hear it, too. Franklin County is a nice place to live. That sentiment is one we're hearing a lot more recently.

Franklin County is one of the faster growing counties in the state, according to the Census Bureau.

That means we have a lot of people moving into the area who are giving a fresh, renewed perspective on why living here is a good idea. And they like to talk about it.

Bob Fahnestock and Keteri Fleet shared their impressions in a front-page story in Wednesday's Herald, after moving to the area from California.

Gene Harris, a recent transplant from New Mexico, now shares his observations every two weeks in a regular column in The Herald.

And there is a common thread in their thoughts.

The area is a beautiful place with changing seasons to enjoy and friendly people. It also is a good place to live close to both a major metropolitan area and a major university.

Each of the area communities has reasons to be proud, from putting on successful festivals and fairs to outstanding architecture and history. And, of course, friendly people.

We all knew it. But it's nice to hear it, too.

— Gordon Billingsley, Herald content director



ONLINE EXCLUSIVE: More editorial cartoons at [http://www.ottawaherald.com/news\\_opEdToons/](http://www.ottawaherald.com/news_opEdToons/)

# Veteran equals hero? Not always

What makes someone a "hero?" It's a term that gets tossed around a lot these days.

Football players. Comic book characters. The guy who helps you change your tire in the middle of a rain storm.

So, who's the real deal? One popular axiom tells us: "Any man or woman who wears the uniform of our country is an American hero."

But is it true? If so, do we really believe it?

Former prisoner of war John McCain found out how people treat "heroes" when he ran for president last year. After acknowledging his service, opponents wasted no time demonizing and ridiculing him.

McCain's allies were no better. Reviled by Republicans, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright (President Obama's radical former pastor) got no sympathy from conservatives, despite his military service in the Marine Corps and the Navy.

Clearly, being a veteran isn't a free pass. And it shouldn't be.

Just look at Timothy McVeigh. He was a veteran of the Gulf War. He earned a Bronze Star. He also blew up the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City and killed 168 people. He hardly was a hero.

How about John Allen Muhammad? He too was a veteran of the Gulf War. He earned top ratings as an Army marksman and later used those skills to become the "D.C. sniper." He killed 10 people and is sentenced to die Tuesday. Again, not a hero.

McVeigh and Muhammad are extreme examples, and not representative of American veterans, but they highlight a truth: Being a hero takes more than just donning a uniform.

Veterans aren't super-human. They're not immune to criticism. They're not impervious to the desire to do bad things.

And they're not perfect. Veterans simply are ordinary people who were asked, or who volunteered, to do extraordinary things on behalf of our country.

### TOMMY FELTS



Voices From the News

So why do we celebrate them? We need look no further than World War II for the answer — not because we should value the service of those veterans over that of fighters in other wars, but because World War II offers the most clear picture of what could have happened without brave Americans respecting their nation's call to duty.

All of us likely have seen movies and TV shows envisioning what the United States would be like if Nazis had won the war: Jack-booted troops roaming the streets, swastikas flying everywhere, a population terrified and submissive to brutal tyranny.

Oh, and we'd all be speaking German. But it goes deeper than that superficial setting.

Let's not forget who the Nazis were and what they wanted to achieve.

If Americans hadn't fought and died to stop the Axis powers from conquering the globe, people today would be in a world without Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice or Barack Obama. They'd be in a world without Jerry Seinfeld, Alex Rodriguez or even Chuck Norris.

They'd live in a world where many of us, our coworkers, acquaintances, neighbors and family members simply don't exist.

Why? Because the Nazis likely would've exterminated all those outside the boundaries of Aryan "perfection."

There are a lot of "what ifs" — possibilities of what could've happened after a German victory — but because of the service of 16 million

Americans, and the sacrifice of the more than 400,000 of them who died in the conflict, we don't have to live in those Nazi-fied alternate realities.

For that, and the service of those who followed them, we owe all veterans our thanks.

Thank you for defending us. Thank you for leaving your families so we could remain with ours. Thank you for sacrificing the prime years of your lives so we might enjoy life free from those who would deny us liberty.

Thank you to those who paid the ultimate price.

Thank you to those who survived and carried (or still carry) the wounds, seen and unseen, of war.

When Wichita abortion doctor George Tiller was slain in June, the Patriot Guard — a group of U.S. veterans — was at the funeral. They came with 50 or so motorcycles and parked outside the church service to honor a man many despised.

Why?

Because Tiller was a Navy veteran. Many of the Patriot Guard members had to put aside their personal beliefs about Tiller's work, and honor his service to the country. That doesn't mean they were giving wholesale support to all he had done; it meant they valued his military contributions.

We don't have to like every veteran. We may not consider them all worth celebrating. But we should respect what they've done for us.

Many veterans, of course, are indeed genuine heroes, but it's more about choices than merely a uniform.

Choosing to serve with honor. Choosing to live life with integrity. Choosing to uphold the dignity of the "veteran" distinction.

Know someone who fits that description? Join me in saying thanks to a hero.

Tommy Felts is the proud grandson of two World War II veterans and is the day news editor for The Ottawa Herald. E-mail him at [tfelts@ottawaherald.com](mailto:tfelts@ottawaherald.com)

## ONLINE POLL

### What do you most like about living in Franklin County?

- The people are friendly.
- The rural environment is pleasant.
- It's near Kansas City and/or Lawrence.
- Area communities are good places to live.
- The economy is relatively strong.
- Schools are excellent.
- I feel safe because of relatively low crime rates.
- I'd rather live somewhere else.
- I don't live in Franklin County.

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■ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510-1605; (202) 224-4774. Online e-mail form: <http://roberts.senate.gov/public/>

■ **U.S. Sen Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; (202) 224-6521. Online e-mail form: <http://brownback.senate.gov/public/contact/emailsam.cfm>

■ **U.S. Rep. Lynn Jenkins**, 130 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. Phone: (202) 225-6601.

■ **Gov. Mark Parkinson**, Office of the Governor, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Ave., Ste. 212S, Topeka, KS, 66612; (785) 296-3232. Online e-mail form: <http://www.governor.ks.gov/comments/comment.htm>

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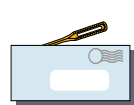
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