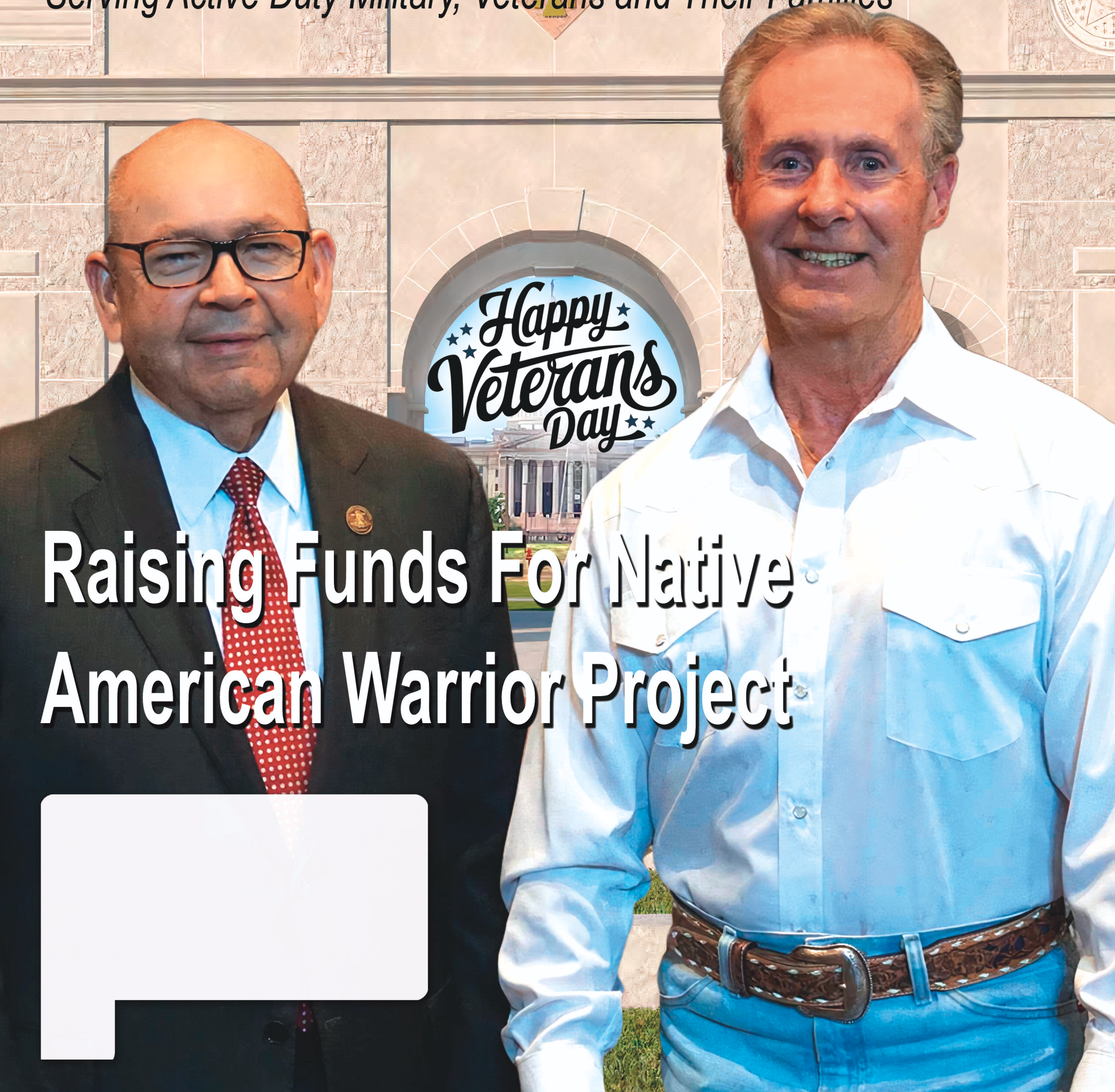


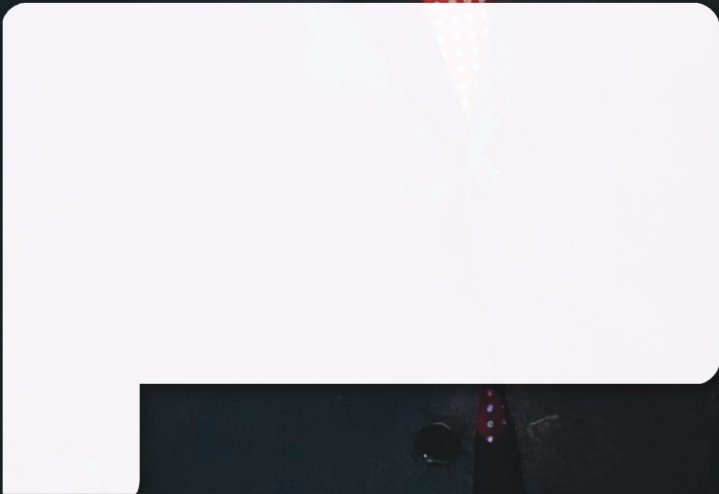
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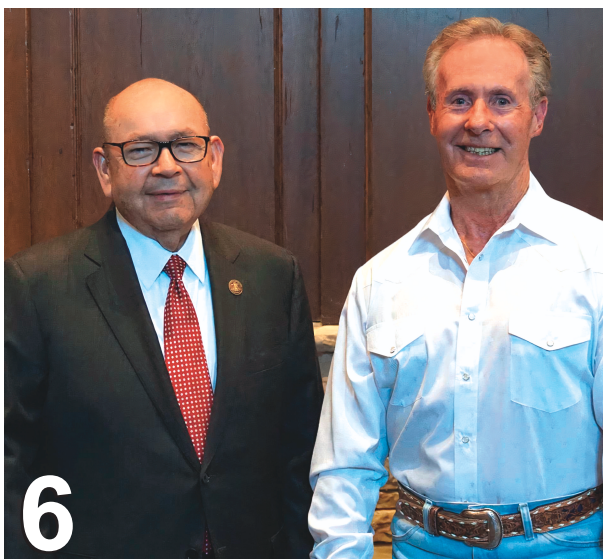
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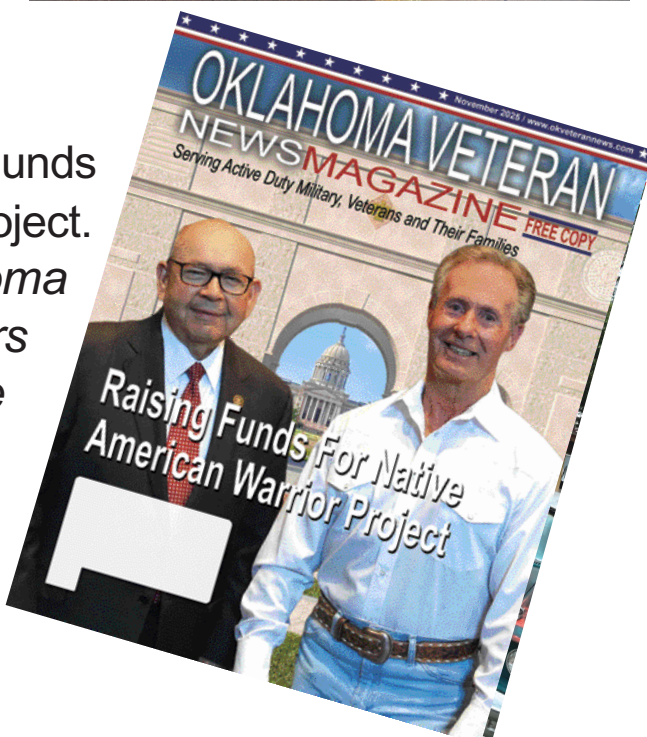
Raising Funds For Native American Warrior Project





MORE INSIDE

On The Cover: Tour to Raise Funds for Native American Warrior Project. *Former director of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs tasked by his close friend, the late Gov. George Nigh*



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Faces of the Fallen by Jill Stephenson

My name is Jill Stephenson.

I moved to the Tulsa area earlier this year with my father. We are from Minnesota, however I spent the last four years in NW Arkansas and have previously lived in several other states. My only child honorably served in the military for three years before making the ultimate sacrifice to defend our beautiful America in 2009 at the age of twenty-one. Although I am not from Oklahoma and my son is counted as a MN fallen soldier, I will be sharing stories of Oklahoma/greater Tulsa area fallen military. My first offering will be about my son. Going forward I will focus on local families by sharing stories of courage, patriotism and selflessness. Above all, I want you to get to know the faces and the families of those who have sacrificed so much in the name of freedom.

My son Benjamin Kopp joined the military and became an Army Ranger out of respect and admiration for his great grandfather, a WWII veteran, and to avenge the events of September 11th. After 9/11, at the age of 13, Ben vowed to serve his country with determination and pride. He arrived at Ft. Benning, Georgia exactly one month after his high school graduation. His tenacity made him an accomplished Army Ranger only seven months later. The daily challenges of being an elite Army Ranger do not come easy, but quickly turns boys into men. Ben was no exception. On his first visit home, the change in him was noticeable and it was apparent he was doing exactly what he was meant to do.

Ben maintained his childhood friendships from his hometown of Rosemount, MN, but also established new friendships within his fellow brothers of the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. He became known for his fearless attitude, crooked grin and his charm with the ladies. Ben had an infectious personality and all would agree he was a best friend to many. Ben served two tours in Iraq before his third tour in Afghanistan in May of 2009.

On July 10th, during a firefight with the Taliban, he saved the lives of six of his fellow Rangers before being shot in the leg. Unfortunately, recovery from the trauma his body endured from the gunshot wound and following surgery would prove to be too much. Ben Kopp died on July 18, 2009 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC. Prior to his death, Ben ensured his living will stated that upon his death, all of his organs, bone, skin and tissue be donated. His donations saved or enhanced the lives of 60 people. His heart lived on and continued to beat for fifteen years and seven months in a woman from Illinois who passed away from health issues unrelated to her heart earlier this year. Ben's strong ranger heart stayed with her until the objective was complete.

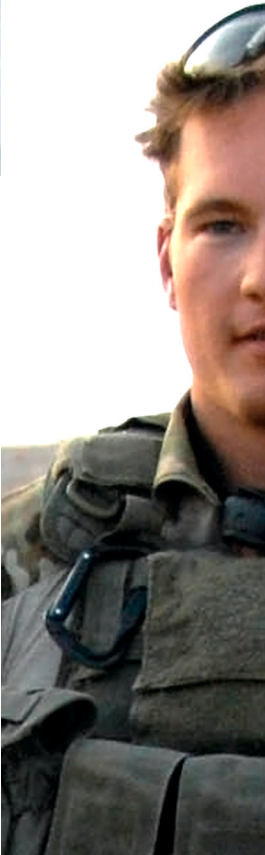
He distinguished himself with the Army Achievement Medal with two awards, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, Parachutist Badge and the Ranger Tab. Upon his death Ben was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for Valor, the Meritorious Service Medal and the Purple Heart. He was also posthumously promoted to Corporal. Per his wishes, he is laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in the famed section 60, where he is surrounded by heroes from all conflicts dating back more than one hundred fifty years.

The pride I have been gifted in being Ben's mother is something that has continued to grow. His positive influence and inspiration to all who knew him and many who came to know him after he died, remains alive and well. Among many admirable traits he possessed, Ben was also a champion of



above: Last photo of Jill and Ben. Taken before his final deployment.

Picture, Right: Ben Kopp, 2nd Deployment to Iraq, 2008.



the underdog, an aspiring leader, humorous, driven, convicted, courageous and selfless. Saving the lives of his brothers on the battlefield and then of strangers upon his death, were true testaments to the kind of person he was.

He is sorely missed to this day by all who know and love him. In life and in death, Corporal Benjamin S. Kopp was and still is a hero. I couldn't have asked for a better son. He was my best friend. We will always be the land of the free because of the brave. ●

story by Jill Stephenson



Bens resting place at Arlington National Cemetery. Memorial Day 2016.



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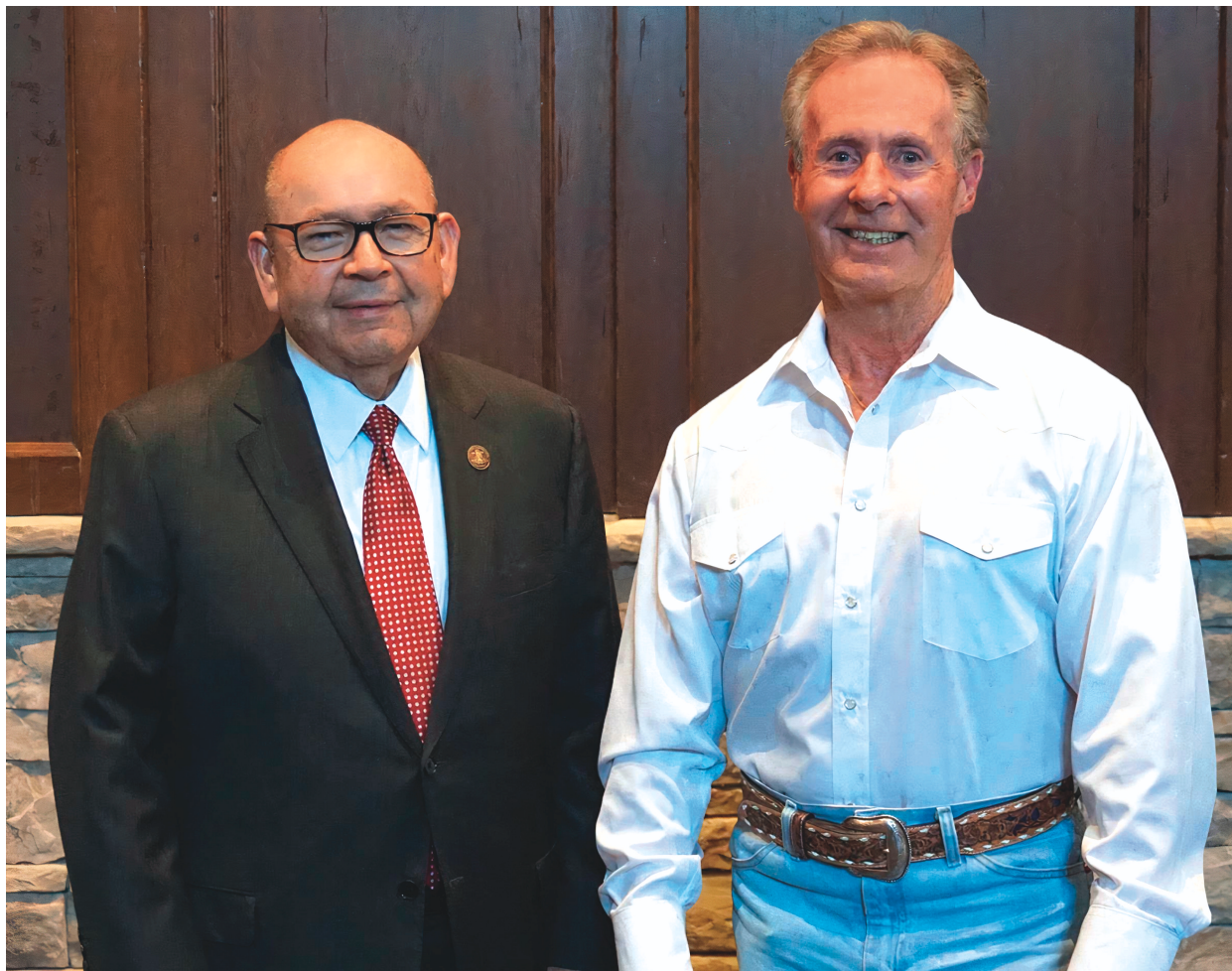
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ON THE COVER

Tour to Raise Funds for Native American Warrior Project



Pete Reed, former director of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, right, and Bill Anoatubby, Governor of the Chickasaw Nation, are working to help make the Native American Warrior Project in Oklahoma City a reality.

Pete Reed, former director of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, was tasked by his close friend, the late Gov. George Nigh, to work with the Force 50 Foundation to help bring the Native American Warrior Project to fruition.

Reed, who began his career in public service at age 25 and became director of the Department of Veterans Affairs at 29, has been working with the Native American Warrior Project to establish a monument recognizing Native Americans' contributions in the U.S. military.

In August, Reed kicked off a statewide tour to honor Native American veterans and raise funds for a new monument at the state Capitol in Oklahoma City.

The tour, dubbed the "Season of the Warrior Campaign," will visit 100 communities across Oklahoma in under 100 days.

Reed and his team plan to meet local leaders, visit community landmarks, and engage with newspapers to raise awareness for the project.

"He (Nigh) asked me to pursue with the Force 50 Foundation to visit all 77 counties," Reed said. "Our goal is to raise \$2.5 million from 100,000 Oklahomans at \$25 each. That's one quarter of 1% of our state, and we believe there are 100,000 Oklahomans at \$25."

The Force 50 Foundation, headquartered in Norman, is dedicated to safeguarding

the well-being of Veterans by enhancing their access to essential healthcare, mental health support, and transportation services. Through strategic collaboration with an extensive network of partners, they strive to empower Veterans with the resources and support they need to thrive.

Nigh, a special advisor to Force 50, penned a letter to Oklahomans to support the Native American Warrior Project.

"As someone that believes in the State of Oklahoma and supports all Oklahoma veterans, I would like to ask your participation in the Native American Warrior Project," he wrote. "This is a Special Recognition Vision of the Force 50 Foundation, a non-profit organization committed to serving the healthcare needs of all Oklahoma Veterans."

Nigh continued, "This project promotes the dedication of a First American Warrior monument at the newly established Oklahoma Veterans Memorial Park on the southside of the State Capitol. We are asking all Oklahomans to support this project. Our success depends on you and the many good Oklahomans you know. Please help us spread the word within your community and assist us in our fundraising efforts to honor the heritage and military history of these special Oklahomans!"

The project has garnered support from prominent figures including former University of Oklahoma football coach Barry Switzer.

Reed also highlighted the creation of the Oklahoma Veterans Memorial Park at the state Capitol, which will feature the 45th Infantry Arch as its centerpiece. He said the Native American Warrior Monument will be the first of its kind in the nation and will honor the state's diverse military history.

Native Americans have served in every major military conflict since the Revolutionary War. In the 20th century, more than 12,000 Native Americans served in World War I, and 10,000 Native women joined the Red Cross.

During World War II, over 44,000 Native Americans served, including nearly 800 women. Since 9/11, Native Americans have served at a higher per-capita rate than any other ethnic group. While their reasons for serving are as diverse as their tribal affiliations, many cite their desire to follow in the footsteps of family members and the cultural value placed on patriotism, duty, and Warrior traditions.

Reed said the Oklahoma Legislature appropriated \$4.3 million for a 45th Infantry arch and site development.

"Even though the 45th Infantry arch will



be the anchor monument to the new Veterans Park, what we are doing is going out and working to establish the other monuments and sculptures in the park. The first one being the Native American Warrior Monument,” he said.

Reed said the Veterans Park; the Veterans Arch and the Native American Warrior Monument have already been approved by the Oklahoma Arts Council.

“The Arts Council cannot put the project out to bid until we raise the funds. Once the funds are raised, invitations to bid on the project will only go out to Native American artists and sculptors,” he said.

Reed said his statewide tour is going well.

“We’re getting great newspaper coverage, front-page coverage on every rural newspaper in every rural city that we visit. So, we’re getting the word out,” he said.

Reed said he would like to have all the funds raised by early 2026, but construction on the project may not start until Fall 2026.

“The Arch and the site development will all be completed and dedicated sometime in the middle of next summer, 2026,” he said. “Until that’s dedicated, we can’t put another monument on there.”

Reed said he is grateful to play a part in Nigh’s vision for the project.

“He was my dear friend, and no one represented the state of Oklahoma better than George Nigh. There will never be another George Nigh in Oklahoma,” Reed said. “And so, this means everything to me to see this Veterans Park beginning with the Native American Warrior Monument to become a reality. Nothing means more to me, and I will not stop until we succeed.”

Check donations for the project can be mailed to 50 Foundation, PO box 722838 in Norman, Okla., 73070. Visit www.force50foundation.com or use your phone and scan the code below. ● *story by Van Mitchell, staff writer*

Scan Here



The Native American Warrior Monument arch rendering is shown at the state capital in Oklahoma City.



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Post 12 Launches Veterans for Country, Service, Inc.

The American Legion Waggoner-Trimble Post 12 of the Department of Oklahoma has established Veterans for Country and Service, Inc., a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created to strengthen and expand the Post's mission of serving veterans, families, and the community through charitable giving and partnership programs.

This new charitable foundation enables Post 12 to receive tax-deductible donations and grants that directly support initiatives rooted in The American Legion's Four Pillars Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

"The creation of Veterans for Country and Service, Inc. is a major milestone for Post 12 and the Bethany-Warr Acres community," said Brett Martin current Finance Officer of Post 12. "It allows us to expand our outreach and ensure every donated dollar helps where it's needed most whether it's aiding veterans in crisis, supporting youth leadership through Oklahoma Boys State, a program of the Oklahoma American Legion and Girls State, a program of American Legion Auxiliary, Scouting America, or strengthening our neighborhoods through fellowship and service. This embodies the spirit of For God, Country, and Service."

Through Veterans for Country and Service, Inc., Post 12 will focus on initiatives that include:

- Assisting veterans and families in need through its community food pantry and emergency relief efforts.
- Hosting regular American Red Cross blood drives that give back directly to the community.
- Supporting youth development through Boys State, Girls State, and partnerships with the Boy Scouts of America.
- Coordinating the annual Flag Retirement Ceremony in conjunction with Robert Keyes, honoring our nation's symbol with dignity and respect.
- Promoting patriotism, civic responsibility, and unity through year-round community programs.

Veterans for Country and Service, Inc. will serve as the charitable arm of American Legion Post 12, ensuring transparency, sustainability, and expanded capacity to serve the needs of local veterans and citizens for generations to come.

The American Legion Waggoner-Trimble Post 12, located in Bethany-Warr Acres, is part of the Department of Oklahoma's American Legion Family. Post 12 is dedicated to serving veterans, military families, and the broader community through programs inspired by the Four Pillars of The American Legion: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

Martin said the new 501(c)(3) will help Post 12 better

reach their goal of sending more students to Boys State and Girls State.

"Last year we sent 22 boys and 11 girls," he said. "Our goal this year is to send 30+ boys and 15+ girls. Each boy we send to Boys State costs \$350 and the girls we send to Girls State cost \$335 each. It adds up quickly."

Martin said Post 12 also uses social media to highlight their programs and needs.

"We got our first donation check and the other day off the social media post I put up from the Mcanally Foundation, LLC.," he said. "They want to sponsor one girl and one boy at Boys and Girls State. You must be careful how you use it, but social media works."

For more information about Post 12 and its services call (405) 818-1607. ● story by Van Mitchell, staff writer



AMERICAN LEGION POST 12 EVENTS

1 November, 8-11am, **Monthly Breakfast.** Open to the public. \$8 adults, \$4 kids. All you can eat! We will have the Mobile Blood guys in the parking lot taking blood donations too! Donors sign up here: <https://www.yourbloodinstitute.org> or scan this QR CODE.



Post 12 will be handing out poppies ahead of Veterans Day weekend at the SPARK Creative Lab performances of Ditty Bop. Friday November 7th at 7 pm, Saturday, November 8 at 7 pm, and Sunday, November 9 at 2 pm. Location is the Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center, 11 NW 11th St., OKC, OK 73103. Discounted Veteran tickets are on sale now for \$12.50. For more info, visit: Oklahoma Contemporary <https://okcontemp.ticketapp.org>



Monthly Spaghetti Dinner is scheduled for Friday, 21 November, 6pm-8pm. Open to the public. \$10 adults, \$8 kids. All you can eat. The table is set. All that is missing is you. Won't you join us? Location: 6101 NW50th St., Warr Acres, OK 73122

Craft Fair & Cow Patty Bingo Event: It's happening! American Legion Post 12 presents our first-ever Cow Patty Bingo alongside the Unit 12 Auxiliary Craft Fair! **Saturday, Oct 25. For more info., scan this QR CODE.



Chaplain's Corner

Your Sabbath

Greetings, I'm SFC (Ret) George Shafer. I served as Chaplain at the American Legion in Guthrie, Oklahoma while earning my M.Div. I'm now the Digital Media Pastor for Generations Church in Guthrie. It's a great Christian community.

As Veterans, we share an ethos that guide our decisions, ethics and moral compass. Concepts like timeliness, integrity, courage and selfless service. We learned the value of hard work and its positive impact on our organization, mission and fellow service members. But we often struggle with balancing these proactive values with the concept rest. When we take time to stop and rest, it can be followed by underlying guilt, even shame. We are culturally driven to do the work, to grind it out, no time off, even at the expense of neglecting those we care about. So, how do we avoid these consequences?

There is an amazing alignment between the science of health and wellness and the teachings in scripture concerning the need for rest, it's called Sabbath. The same root word as sabbatical. The Sabbath is a staple of the Judeo-Christian culture, yet we witness daily the results of ignoring its benefits. Exhaustion, worry, anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, quick tempers, damaged relationships, work burnout,

addictions and others are symptoms of our overworked and under rested lifestyles.

We were created in God's image and likeness. We were made to rest. We were made to stop. We were made to meditate on God. Just reading those three sentences may make you cringe or laugh on the inside. "George, you don't know my schedule." "You don't understand the pressure I'm under." "I need to feed my family." All valid points, but all too often these people arrive at jobs, even to church, burnt out, full of contempt and bitterness, going through the motions. Now more than ever we need to seek peace, joy, and contentment. These are three fantastic byproducts of the Sabbath, if we'll only embrace and practice it!

Yes, adhering to the Sabbath is difficult. Attempting your first 24-hour Sabbath will likely be a rehearsal of all that you forgot to do! But it is through this challenge that the fruits of the Sabbath are revealed. Honoring the Sabbath requires you to schedule around it. Early Hebrews understood the Sabbath to begin once the third star is seen in the night sky on Friday evening and concludes when the third star is observed on Saturday evening. It shows us that the Sabbath is not ritualistic as it varies from week to week when the stars are visible to us.

For five years I have intentionally practiced my Sabbath. It has helped me find a balance that has created a closer, more intimate relationship with God and my family. I am healthier, clear-headed, more patient, and more flexible with change. The Sabbath has given me peace, joy, and contentment, and has been an integral part of refreshing my mind, body, soul, and emotions.

Communication has been key to sustaining my Sabbath. In-depth and consistent communication with my wife, my family, my job, and my friends has helped create the space necessary to observe the Sabbath. It also gave unspoken permission for the people around me to observe the Sabbath in their own time.

Take time to focus on your own Sabbath, find rest for your soul. Christ shares this promise: Matt 11:28, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.



Rev. George F. Shafer, SFC (Ret.), M.Div., B.S., Chaplain (TAL Post 58)



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Saint Ann 24-hour Concierge Enhances Fun, Friendly Culture

People of all faiths love living at Saint Ann Assisted and Independent Living and say it is one of the nation's top senior living communities. Concierge services enhance the fun and friendly culture and the home's focus on providing top-notch amenities and lifestyle.

Do you ever wish you had a personal assistant or someone on hand for certain situations? Saint Ann Assisted and Independent Living provides a 24-hour Concierge for residents' convenience. Concierge Director, Jessica Ledford, embodies the heart of Saint Ann's mission to ease and enrich residents' lives. Deeply committed to providing exemplary service, Jessica loves being there for people. Whether it's a postage stamp, a finicky phone, or something more serious, Jessica is quick to offer help with a smile and a hug. As well as being a devoted wife, mother, and avid gardener, Jessica is a bona fide sports fanatic. She gets everyone fired up for game days. Her competitive spirit keeps things amusing as she arranges trivia contests, sports brackets, and contests for everyone to enjoy.

Saint Ann Assisted and Independent Living is a ministry owned and operated by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. People of all faiths love living there and say it is one of the nation's top senior living communities. Concierge services enhance the fun and friendly culture and the home's focus on providing top-notch amenities and lifestyle.

The Concierge desk is open around the clock to assist people in a myriad of ways. It functions as an information hub and is staffed by people who go the extra mile to simplify residents' lives. From notary services and making copies, to opening jars or helping navigate online portals, Saint Ann's Concierge is devoted to making residents' lives easier. The Concierge department coordinates transportation to doctor appointments two days per week. It also manages daily deliveries from all types of stores, florists, pharmacies, and other vendors. The Concierge orders room service meals and reserves guest apartments and event areas for private parties. At its core, having a Concierge available day and night helps give residents peace of mind because they know someone is a phone call or short walk away. In assisted living, staff are also available to assist residents with personal care, medication administration, and individualized services.

Jessica Ledford manages the Concierge department. Trained as a massage therapist, Jessica says that, "Human touch is so important. Feeling a gentle hand on the shoulder or the warmth of a hug can be so comforting. Such a simple gesture lets residents know they are cared for." Jessica is a true confidant—a sympathetic ear and a comforting shoulder, willing to take time to offer reassurance, kind conversations, or a heartfelt prayer. Jessica builds a personal relationship with residents as well as their families. Clarita, an independent living resident said, "Jessica is such a delight! Everyone in my family knows her, including my brother in Germany!"

After normal business hours, the Concierge staff also help with maintenance and housekeeping tasks like trash collection, replacing batteries, and resetting TV's. Thanks to the Concierge, aromas of fresh coffee and cappuccino fill the "Beverage Bar" daily where people linger to laugh and chat.

At times, the Concierge Department is on the frontline in identifying potential health



issues with independent living residents. Daily interaction with residents sometimes leads to noticing a change in cognition, mobility, hygiene, or behavior. If something seems off, the Concierge can help alert families. This heads-up often expedites the medical attention, medication adjustment, or in-home care that residents need. The Concierge makes "wellness checks" on independent living resident when requested by others or it is noticed they are conspicuously absent from events or dining. If a resident is unwell, the Concierge will order a complimentary room service meal delivered to their apartment.

Families say knowing the Concierge is on-site and available for their loved one is a tremendous comfort and asset. The Concierge department conducts security checks of the building, monitors cameras, and tracks weather events. They are trained in emergency preparedness protocols like putting out first floor hallway seating during tornado watches.

Saint Ann Assisted and Independent Living has an outstanding life-enrichment program with numerous activities, entertainers, and things to do. Thanks to the evening and weekend Concierge, residents enjoy even more socials such as Thunder watch parties, weekend chair-volleyball practice, movies, Monday night hymn sing, and Friday night bingo.

Independent living resident, Michelle Tuttle,



Saint Ann Assisted and Independent Living provides Concierge Director, Jessica Ledford.

said, “Living at Saint Ann is like living on a cruise ship!” With housekeeping, maintenance, dining, and the Concierge on call, I don’t need to worry about anything. I can just relax and have fun.” Residents agree, Saint Ann’s Concierge Department is a blessing and a mainstay to Oklahoma City’s premier Senior Living Community.

Saint Ann Assisted and Independent Living is located at 7501 West Britton Road in Oklahoma City between Council and Rockwell. Call Lisa or Jessica at (405) 721-0740 for a personal tour to see all Saint Ann has to offer. ● story by *Van Mitchell, staff writer*

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Oklahoma joins the nation in honoring the U.S. Navy's proud heritage at a ball rich with tradition and camaraderie.

Men and women in Dinner Dress Blues. Dresses and gowns. Fine dining, toasts, speeches - and best of all, camaraderie. These hallmarks of naval tradition were on full display at the 250th United States Navy Birthday Ball at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum on October 4. Jointly organized by the Navy League Oklahoma City Council, Strategic Communications Wing One (SCW-1), and the Midwest City Chamber of Commerce, it was a fine gala attended by 464 people.

During the social hour, active duty sailors reflected on what makes the Navy a strong service. Lieutenant Commander Paul Mobley said, "Some of our youngest sailors have to live and work in some of the most hazardous environments, like ships, and still manage to operate with exceptional discipline." Petty Officer First Class Johnson Romero, with Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron 3, added that success depends on "keeping people stable - sailors and their families - so they can concentrate on their mission." Both offered clear examples why the U.S. Navy remains a first-rate force.

After presenting the Colors, playing the National Anthem (by harpist Maylynn Heykens), and paying respects to the POW/MIA Table, guests watched as the Navy's birthday cake was cut. Michael Koiber, President of the Navy League, provided opening remarks. He read a proclamation from Senator James Lankford: "For 250 years, the men and women of the United States Navy have been at the forefront of our nation's defense. Thank you for defending freedom and protecting prosperity."

Captain David Gardner, Commodore of SCW-1, recognized distinguished visitors and thanked many people for organizing and holding the celebration, including Shaina Bennett, President of the Midwest City Chamber of Commerce, Navy League, and SCW-1 protocol team members Bob Holland, Jeff Bottoms, and MA1's Lauren Green and Lisa Kolivoski.

Gardner introduced the night's keynote speaker, Rear Admiral Gregory Slavonic, who retired from the U.S. Navy Reserve after a 34-year career (promoting from E-1 to O-8). His distinguished career included commanding four units and serving in combat deployments to Vietnam, First Gulf War, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He later became Acting Under Secretary and the 18th Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Slavonic's interesting speech highlighted the Navy's global mission and Oklahoma's lasting contributions to it. To illustrate how closely nations are tied to the World Ocean, he explained the "70-80-90 rule." "First, 70% of the Earth is covered by water. Second, about 80% of the world's population lives within a hundred miles of the world's global commons..." and 147 of 200 nations border an ocean or a sea, and third, "more than 90% of international trade...travels via the sea..." and 90% of global internet traffic passes through undersea fiber optic cables.

After mentioning China and Russia as challenges, he stated, "With some 330,000 active duty members, nearly 60,000 reservists and nearly a quarter million civilians, today's Navy has nearly 300 ships and thousands of aircraft on any given day" to deter and if needed, defeat enemy aggression.

The Admiral paid tribute to Oklahoma's naval legacy. "Foremost, of course, is the USS Oklahoma battleship (BB 37), which was sunk by the Japanese Navy during the attack on Pearl Harbor with the loss of 429 sailors and Marines." He added, "There are about

30 ships which have names of cities, counties here in Oklahoma and...we've got about four ships, USNS ships that bear tribal names." The USS Oklahoma (SSN 802), a Virginia Class nuclear powered attack submarine, will be christened in the spring of 2026.

Finally, Slavonic highlighted Oklahomans who provided careers and lives to the Navy. Included were Admiral Mark Mitchner who "commanded the Hornet in the Battle of Midway"; U.S. Marine Corps Major Kenneth Bailey, "a Pawnee, who was killed in action...while leading an attack on the island of Guadalcanal..."; Commander Ernest Evans of the USS Johnston, hero of the Battle of Leyte Gulf; Admiral Joseph Jocko Clark, who commanded aircraft carriers; and Admiral John Kirkpatrick.

To close the event, Kloiber returned to the stage and thanked Admiral Slavonic and corporate sponsors Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin and others for a successful night. Guests received a distinctive, three-inch commemorative challenge coin. Toasts to each military service were made given and then couples danced to music.

Kloiber was pleased with the night's success, citing the size of the crowd, good food and phenomenal event center.

A toast to you, U.S. Navy-for 250 years of defending freedom and sailing strong.

Click the link for more information about SCW-1 or go online to Strategic Communications Wing 1. or use your camera to scan the code below ●
story by Lt Col Richard Stephens, Jr., USAFR, Ret.

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A table of seamen and their dates from Strategic Communications Wing One pose during the 250th Navy Birthday Ball, Oct 4, 2025.



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WWII Veterans Honored With 80th Anniversary Celebration

Although far fewer WWII veterans are alive or able to attend ceremonies, eight of our Greatest Generation celebrated the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII at the Claremore Veterans Home auditorium on Sept. 2. Scott Hannaford, owner of Buffalo Challenge Coins, planned the successful event around giving a "Ruptured Duck" challenge coin to each veteran.

Hannaford addressed the eight veterans. "This celebration will be but a small gesture of which words can never fully convey our gratitude of their service." After saying a prayer, presenting the Colors, singing the National Anthem and America the Beautiful (with gusto by Aubrey Bartmann) and paying respects to the POW/MIA Table, distinguished guests were introduced. Oklahoma State Sen. Ally Seifried, District Two-Republican, Admiral Jay Bynum, Executive Director of Oklahoma Department of Veteran Affairs (ODVA) and Deborah Wimpey, Mayor of Broken Arrow were recognized.

What is a Ruptured Duck?

Hannaford explained, "In World War II, there was a clothing shortage. The United States Armed Forces came up with the Honorable Service Insignia, which depicted an eagle inside of a wreath. It was issued as a cloth patch or a lapel pin... It also allowed this discharged hero to wear their uniform for 30 days in order to have some time to obtain civilian clothing... Although to many, it looked more like a duck than an eagle... there was a common saying when someone was going quickly (leaving the service), they took off like a ruptured duck." This brought chuckles from the 60 attendees.

Proclamation and Challenge Coins

Seyfried, whose district includes Claremore, read a special proclamation from the Oklahoma Governor. After reading five "Whereas" clauses, she ended with "it is fitting that the state of Oklahoma dedicates this day (Sep 2) as 'Oklahoma Ruptured Duck Day' in tribute to the iconic emblem worn by discharged service members and as a lasting acknowledgement of the legacy and heroism of our World War II veterans."

Hannaford, Wimpee and Donna Lee, with the VFW Post 577 Auxiliary, met each veteran where they were seated, thanked them for their service and gave them a Ruptured Duck challenge coin and a print of a patriotic eagle made by Air Force veteran Gil Cornett. Recipients Eugene Bargus, John Cockrum, Jerry Crockett, Robert Everitt, Joseph Menninger, William Mauch, Preston Wheaton and Billy Ray Young looked pleased.

Keynote Speaker

Josh Starks retired from the 45th Infantry Division, Oklahoma National Guard, after deploying to Afghanistan in 2011 and 2012. He moved the audience with two stories of WWII veterans he knew. Space only allows for one story.

Starks said that when he was a child and visited his grandmother's house on her farm, there was a smaller farmhouse where her brother, Paul, lived. "She would bring bread, some ham, some cheese, some water, and I never really understood it. I can think in the 15 years of going... out there, that man probably said five words to me that I understood."

Paul served in WWII. "He was in the invasion, went all the way to Berlin, and when he came back, he was changed forever. When he came back, he couldn't function, he couldn't deal with life, he couldn't deal with people. He had lost too many people along the way and had seen too many things that I found out much later."

After Starks' two-year tour in Afghanistan, he visited his grandmother and many family members came. Paul, in his 90s, lived in the main house then. "My uncle Paul... sprung up from his chair like he was 18 years



Retired 45th Infantry Division Oklahoma Guardsman Josh Starks told two moving stories about WWII veterans.



The Wings of Honor program provided names of key individuals who were part of the celebration. The names of WWII veterans were gained by looking at their name cards.

old, ran to me, gave me a hug, and started telling me every story he had. He told me about his friends that he knew..." Starks grandmother, who had never cried before, wept uncontrollably.

Starks finished with the following. "So, when we talk about the cost of war, it runs deep. It's not just the individuals that served, it's the families that have taken care of those individuals that have served for their entire lives."

During the event's conclusion, each military service's song was played - WWII veterans standing, Bartmann sang a moving "God Bless America," and thanks were given to the Claremore Veterans Center, ODVA, Mission Barbecue for lunch, ARC Document Solutions, and to Keith Meyer and Donna Lee.

Note. The World War II Museum estimates 462 WWII Oklahoma veterans are alive in 2025. Robert Lige Everitt died on September 22, 2025. Bison Challenge Coins, <https://bisonchallengecoins.com/#> or scan the QR CODE below. ● story and photos by USAF Retired Lt. Col. Richard Stephens, Jr., See Rich [Travel Niche](#)

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Air Force Veteran Served in Both World War II and Korean War

Lt. Colonel (Ret.) Bill Williams, 99, was born to fly.

Williams, a resident at Album Quail Springs, a retirement community located at 14201 N. Kentucky Avenue in Oklahoma City, will turn 100 on Dec. 21. A party will be held at noon on Dec. 22 at Album Quail Springs to honor him.

He is a Veteran of World War II and the Korean War.

"The war (World War II) was slowing down, and so my folks let me sign up for the Army. And I signed up for the aviator cadet program, and they called me in July of 1944, and went through the training," Williams said.

Williams, a North Carolina native, was stationed in Schofield, South Carolina, and later in Montgomery, Alabama awaiting an opening in the aviator cadet program. Williams, who lived in Alabama as a child, worked weekends at his grandfather's farm near Montgomery.

"Every weekend I was up on the farm with my uncle on my grandfather's farm," he said. After being discharged from the Army, Williams attended the University of North Carolina for three years, before a fellow student passed on information that changed the trajectory of his life.

"One morning as I was leaving the barracks to go to class, a friend of mine passed by," Williams said. "He said, 'He said, 'Hey, I understand the Air Force is recruiting cadets again.' I said, 'Good.' I skipped to class and went to a recruiter in Chapel Hill."

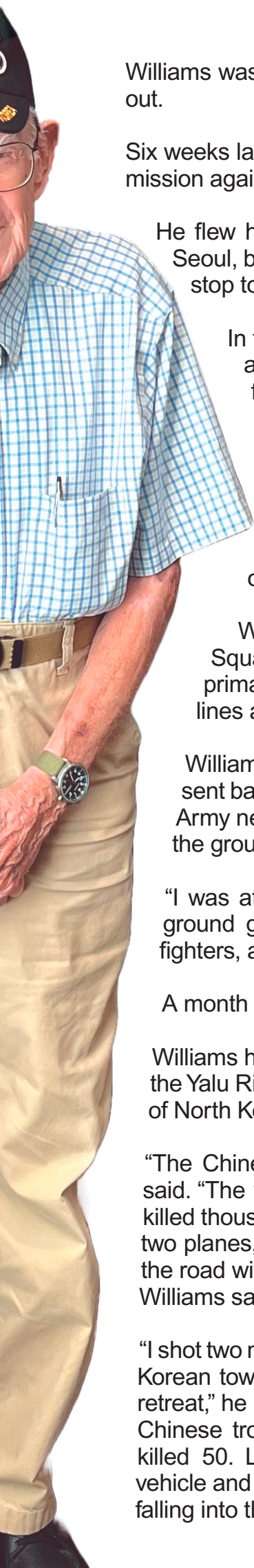
The Korean War started on June 25, 1950, and ended on July 27, 1953, after the signing of an armistice agreeing that the country would remain divided.

At the end of the Second World War, Korea - which had formerly been occupied by the Japanese - was divided along the 38th parallel. This was an internal border between North and South Korea based on a circle of latitude.

North Korea, supported by the Soviet Union, invaded the south on June 25, 1950, which was supported by the United States.

The three-year war was exceptionally bloody and led to the deaths of 3 million people and tens of thousands of casualties.





Williams was stationed in Okinawa, Japan when the war broke out.

Six weeks later, he found himself flying out of Japan on his first mission against the enemy in Korea.

He flew his jet out of Kimpo Air Base a few miles west of Seoul, but the communist Koreans and Chinese soon put a stop to United States flights out of Kimpo.

In the early winter of 1950, the communists launched an offensive, which nearly pushed the United Nations fighting forces into the ocean.

"The enemy was six miles away from Kimpo. We tried to strafe the advanced troops with rockets and machine guns, but they just overpowered us," Williams said previously in a newspaper interview. "We evacuated and flew to Japan. They ran us out."

Williams was with the 16th Fighter Interceptor Squadron of the 51st Fighter Wing. It was the squadron's primary job to win ground support and go behind the lines and stick and wreck anything that looked military.

Williams was later detached from the Air Force and was sent back to Korea with an infantry division at the front. The Army needed a combat expert pilot to direct fire pilots from the ground to nearby enemy installations.

"I was attached to an artillery group," he said. "When our ground guns got out of range of targets, I'd call out our fighters, and they'd take over."

A month later, he returned to his old outfit.

Williams holds the Distinguished Flying Cross for action near the Yalu River when the Chinese started pushing the U.S. out of North Korea.

"The Chinese caught a large convoy of ours in retreat," he said. "The vehicles were surrounded and the battle probably killed thousands of Americans. We went up there on a flight of two planes, and saw 200, 300 American trucks on the side of the road with no signs of life."

Williams said he did see the enemy.

"I shot two men near a Howitzer and went from there to another Korean town and found more trucks cut off from the route of retreat," he said. "We left there and found a couple of hundred Chinese troops on the road. We strafed them and probably killed 50. Later, the two planes returned to the entrapped vehicle and destroyed as many as we could to keep them from falling into the communist hands."



Lt. Colonel (Ret.) Bill Williams, 99, will celebrate turning 100 in December at Album Quail Springs in Oklahoma City.

In the spring of 1951, Williams returned to the US and was stationed in Nevada and Kansas. He has 100 flying missions to his credit over enemy territory in the Korean War.

Williams summed up his thoughts on the Korean War in his newspaper interview.

"You can't let the communists have everything. The war was justified. President Truman did the right thing," he said. ●

story and photos by Van Mitchell, staff writer

OKC Area Nonprofit Helping Veterans

Nonprofit Socks for Seniors Oklahoma has been delivering more than 500 donated Christmas gift bags to veterans in the Norman Veterans Center who might not otherwise receive a gift since 2017.

Starting in 2013, founder Sue McMillan and a friend delivered 127 pairs of socks to three local nursing homes during their first holiday season, with the intention of making the recipients feel remembered and special. Staff informed them that for some residents, this would likely be the only Christmas gift they would receive.

This impactful experience, where the recipients' joy was palpable, inspired McMillan to create the organization and expand the number of recipients. The heartfelt response from the recipients so touched McMillan that she has used her business administration background to solicit sponsors year-round, and the number of volunteers has grown significantly.

"This nonprofit's mission became my passion," McMillan said in an interview while working their booth at the Second Half Expo in October. "This has grown so much we must thank Morningstar Storage and Gate Keepers Storage for their generous donation of space. It may sound strange to point this out in an interview, but they allow us to store inventory and to work on the bags year-round."

This program, which focuses on seniors and veterans who have limited family interaction and are at risk of feeling forgotten during the holidays, quickly evolved into a well-received 501 (c) (3) nonprofit. Many merchant sponsors in Oklahoma City have donated space in their stores, allowing customers to make direct donations.

Volunteers assemble holiday gift bags filled with personal care items. The organization relies on donations from the community and now many local businesses to fill the bags. Many community business sponsors recognize that by providing a simple, thoughtful gift, Socks for Seniors OK brings joy, comfort, and a reminder to seniors and veterans that they are valued members of the community.

Now, bags contain essential and comforting items, such as socks (especially diabetic socks), gloves, scarves, toiletries, lap blankets, and activity books. They put a special "Thank You For Your Service" card and an American flag in each of the veterans' packages. Socks for Seniors OK began serving veterans in the Norman Veterans Center to expand its mission beyond underserved nursing homes to serve military veterans. Delivering gifts to the center's Alzheimer's unit shows their commitment to helping veterans with specific needs. In 2024, the organization delivered gifts to 502 residents, accounting for over 20 percent of its total holiday gift packages.

Focusing on facilities with residents who have limited interaction with family, this is especially important for veterans who may have outlived family members or live far from relatives.

Gifts for the Norman Veterans Center, like those for all other veterans centers, are assembled and delivered by volunteers in December, creating a direct connection between the community and the veterans who have served.

Readers can volunteer or donate to Socks for Seniors OK by contributing their time, mailing monetary gifts or gift cards, or donating specific items from their wish list. The best time to volunteer is in November, but the organization accepts donations year-round.

Socks for Seniors OK relies on volunteers for many tasks throughout the year. To get started, readers can contact the organization directly through their website to



From left, Susan Moorman and Sue McMillan pose at the Second Half Expo, October 18, 2025

express their interest.

Volunteers are needed year-round to assist in preparing items for the gift bags, including pairing socks, sorting donations, and delivering donation baskets to local businesses. Your help is crucial to our ongoing mission.

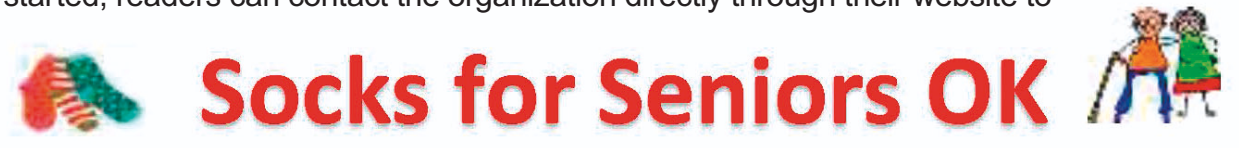
The busiest time for volunteers is the week after Thanksgiving and the first week of December, when the gift bags are assembled and delivered to local nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Financial donations enable the organization to purchase items in bulk, often at more favorable prices. These items are then used to fill the veterans' gift bags. Readers can mail a check or gift card to Socks for Seniors, OK, 3240 W Britton Road, Ste 103, Oklahoma City, OK 73120.

Their website provides a PayPal account for online donations. They need donations of new socks, particularly diabetic socks. Toiletries (small-sized) such as hand lotion, shampoo, conditioner, body wash, lip balm, and deodorant are accepted.

They solicit comfort items such as gloves, scarves, caps, and lap blankets, as well as puzzle books, playing cards, and small notebooks and pens.

For readers' shopping convenience, they can find the organization's current gift list on Amazon by searching for "Socks for Seniors OK". The best way to coordinate dropping off a large donation is to contact the organization via email at



socksforseniorsok@coxinet.net
to ensure someone is available
to receive it.

Local businesses can
participate by donating directly,
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story and photos by Darl DeVault,
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OKLAHOMA - IN THE NEWS

VA Oklahoma City Healthcare System Expands Services

More changes are coming for the VA Oklahoma City Healthcare System as it strives to meet the demands of a growing Veterans population in Oklahoma.

The latest was the opening of a new location in for the Women's Health Clinic and specialty care clinics which are relocating from the VA Medical Center.

The North Portland VA Clinic will consist of two separate buildings and will cover a total of 25,604 square feet, said Wade Vlosich, Director of the Oklahoma City HealthCare System. The facilities will employ 75 staff members.

Building 5, located at 3625 NW 56th Street, will house the Women's Health Clinic, Imaging, and Lab services. This relocation will provide the women's Veteran population with a facility outside of the VA Medical Center.

This move will offer an environment for female Veterans who may feel uncomfortable using the medical center due to past trauma.

Building 3, located at 3613 NW 56th Street, will house Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Chiropractic, Acupuncture, Orthopedics, Podiatry, Urology, Optometry, Ophthalmology, and the Optical Shop.

"We will also be opening a mega clinic in Yukon," Vlosich said. "We will be having a new hospital in Norman, so it will be a substance abuse treatment facility and a nursing home unit."

Vlosich said rural America is needing more healthcare options including nursing home beds.

"What's happened in the state of Oklahoma as rural America starts to see some collapse in healthcare, we're losing nursing homes," he said. "The VA does not have in the state of Oklahoma enough nursing home beds for veterans. We have been talking to the ODVA, and what we are looking at is a partnership because they have some unused beds. We are talking about making a share agreement where we will set up VA staff nursing homes in ODVA space because they are not able to fill that. And it meets the needs of both sides. We are looking at a partnership in Norman to expand nursing home beds there and in Sulfur and Ardmore. The VA is opening a new clinic in Stillwater.

Vlosich said the VA had a market assessment done for veteran needs and services in Oklahoma City and the rest of the state for potential future expansion.

"They did a market assessment, and they looked at all the workload for Oklahoma and how it compared to other states also growing in veteran population.

"They talked to us that if the growth in the city/state occurs, they're expecting that we'll need a clinic in Guthrie and Duncan in the near future," he said.



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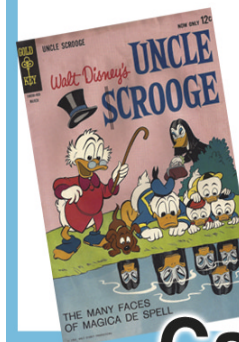
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Helen Holmes: Journalist, Teacher, Mother and so much More

U.S. Army Major (Ret.) Helen Freudenberger Holmes was a trailblazer. She was an Oklahoma journalist, historian, mother, teacher, politician, and Women's Army Corps officer.

Holmes was born Dec. 16, 1915 - the daughter of German immigrants. She graduated as valedictorian from Coyle High School in 1932 and earned a journalism degree at Oklahoma A&M in 1936. In 1942, Holmes was part of the first Officers Candidate Class of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Her service ended due to medical disability.

After graduating from Oklahoma A&M she became editor of the Maud Daily Enterprise. She was the first woman to teach journalism at Oklahoma A&M, which became Oklahoma State University.

Holmes was the first woman in Oklahoma to be sworn into the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps due to the death of her mother, which resulted in her being sworn in before the rest of the first class of recruits.

She served in Washington, D.C., as the WAC's public relations officer. She was promoted to captain as an intelligence officer. After a diagnosis of tuberculosis, she returned stateside and was among the first group of patients to be treated with penicillin. She was promoted to major and in 1948 retired from active duty. She passed away in 1997.

In 2019 and 2020 Holmes was posthumously inducted into the US Army Women's Foundation, the Oklahoma Historians, the Oklahoma Journalism and the Oklahoma Women's halls of

fame and was named a Distinguished Alumna of the Oklahoma State University College of Arts and Sciences in 2021.

Her military uniform and several items were donated to the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City and are on permanent display.

On Saturday, Nov. 15, Holmes and four other Oklahoma State University Veterans will be honored as part of the Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation Hall of Honor. A ceremony will be held prior to the OSU-Kansas State football game at the Wes Watkins Center on the OSU campus in Stillwater and will be recognized on the field of Boone Pickens Stadium just before kickoff.

Holmes married Robert F. Holmes in 1949 and was widowed in 1962. The couple had three children, all of whom graduated from OSU. "She had many firsts," Andrea (Holmes) Volturo, Holmes' daughter said. "She accomplished so much from the start."

In addition to her other accomplishments, Holmes served on the Guthrie City Council and in 1979 was elected mayor and served until 1981.

She wrote a two-volume history of Logan County, Oklahoma, from which she received many accolades, including from former United States Senator David Boren.

"I want to congratulate you on this memorable occasion," Boren wrote in a letter to Holmes. "What you have accomplished is more than public service. By your efforts you have preserved the history of your city, Guthrie, for its citizens and the entire state of Oklahoma. Your compilation will keep the history of Guthrie alive for both new and future citizens to read and enjoy. No area of our state has been more important to the growth and success of Oklahoma than the City of Guthrie."

While Holmes contracted tuberculosis in Germany, Volturo said her mother was placed in a sanitarium stateside to recover.

Volturo said during her recovery, her mother reflected on what she could do with her life and give back.

"She was in the military, and she contracted tuberculosis while serving in Germany, and it was advanced, and they sent her home to a sanitarium, and it was horrific," Volturo said. "And back then, with tuberculosis, you weren't expected to survive. She reflected while she was in the sanitarium and said I want to pay for my space. This is kind of how she looked at it. After she retired with disability, which is how we survived, she got into volunteer work."

Volturo said her mother's most significant accomplishment as a political leader for the architectural renovation of Guthrie.



U.S. Army Major (Ret.) Helen Freudenberger Holmes and four other Oklahoma State University Veterans will be honored Saturday, Nov. 15 as part of the Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation Hall of Honor. A ceremony will be held prior to the OSU-Kansas State football game at the Wes Watkins Center on the OSU campus in Stillwater and will be recognized on the field of Boone Pickens Stadium just before kickoff.

As part of a committed group of community activists, there was a successful lobbying effort by the Oklahoma Congressional delegation to procure funding for brick sidewalks, streetlamps, and facade restoration. Federal appropriation and funding were \$1 million.

This became the largest continuous Urban Development Action Grant in America at the time, exceedingly even that of New York City.

Guthrie became a model throughout America and other communities for historical renovation. This set the stage for the arts to flourish.

In addition, under Holmes' leadership, Guthrie won a key lawsuit against Oklahoma City to protect its municipal water rights and expanded the city limits to capture business expansion for inclusion in the city tax base.

Mobile meals were also initiated in Guthrie. Finally, buses for the Aging Council were purchased when Holmes personally pledged her own funds as security to meet a tight deadline of only a few days and subsequently raised \$35,000 in the community for a matching grant.

In 2024, the Major Helen F. Holmes Memorial Highway was designated in her honor in the town of Guthrie.

"She was very proud of her service," Volturo said. ●
story by Van Mitchell, staff writer



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VETERANS DAY EVENTS

Veterans Day Appreciation Event Nov 8, 2025 LOCATION: Mannford Museum Mannford, OK 74044 **Note:** Spend the afternoon honoring our nation's veterans during the Veteran's Day Appreciation event hosted at the Veteran's Memorial behind the Mannford Museum.

Duncan's Veterans Day Parade

Nov 8, 2025 LOCATION: 828 W Main St B Duncan, OK 73533 **Note:** Bring the whole family out to downtown Duncan this November for a community-wide Veterans Day Parade.

Canadian County Veterans Parade & Program

Nov 9, 2025 LOCATION: 110 S Bickford Ave El Reno, OK 73036 **Note:** Celebrate Veterans Day in El Reno during the annual Canadian County Veterans Parade and Program. This event begins Sunday afternoon with a parade and ends with a program at the Historic Centre Theatre.

Veterans Celebration

Nov 11, 2025 LOCATION: S Littler Ave & East 4th Street, 431 S Blvd Edmond, OK 73034 **Note:** This Veterans Day, head to Stephenson Park in Edmond for a late-afternoon event to celebrate veterans and their families.

Jay Veterans Day Parade

Nov 11, 2025 LOCATION: Main St Jay, OK 74346 **Note:** Celebrate military veterans past and present at the Jay Veterans Day Parade. Bundle up and bring out the whole family to Jay's Main Street to watch as decorated floats line the streets.

Veterans Day Parade

Nov 11, 2025 LOCATION: Main St Eufaula, OK 74432 **Note:** Spend the morning honoring our nation's veterans during Eufaula's Veterans Day Parade.

Midwest City Veterans Day Parade

Nov 11, 2025 LOCATION: 916 S Douglas Blvd Midwest City, OK 73130 **Note:** Honor those who served our country during the annual Midwest City Veterans Day Parade this November.

Veterans Day Parade

Nov 11, 2025 LOCATION: Main St Eufaula, OK 74432 **Note:** Spend the morning honoring our nation's veterans during Eufaula's Veterans Day Parade.

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Veterans Day Parade

Nov 11, 2025 LOCATION: Main St Eufaula, OK 74432 **Note:** Spend the morning honoring our nation's veterans during Eufaula's Veterans Day Parade.

EDITORS NOTE: Be sure to email your events celebration information to be included in our next issue of Oklahoma's Veteran News! Listing are free, and based on space available.

CAR/GUN/CYCLE SHOWS

Cruise-In to Bridging Vines

Nov 1, 2025 LOCATION: 11216 N Cimarron Rd Yukon, OK 73099 **Note:** This November, head to Yukon for the Cruise-In to Bridging Vines. Enjoy a classic car show, live music by classic rock band Intention and delicious food from Big Mama's Spuds & Sweets.

Rodeo Hall of Fame Weekend

Nov 7, 2025 - Nov 8, 2025 LOCATION: National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum Oklahoma City, OK 73111 **Note:** Come salute the best in the rodeo world at the Rodeo Hall of Fame Weekend in Oklahoma City. Held at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, the Hall of Fame Class celebrates the story and people of rodeo culture.

Battle of Honey Springs Reenactment Nov 7, 2025 - Nov 9, 2025

LOCATION: Honey Springs Battlefield Checotah, OK 74426 **Note:** Commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Honey Springs with a special demonstration of the battle in Checotah near Rentiesville. Come and witness as costumed actors bring to life the largest military clash ever to have occurred in Oklahoma.

Wanenmacher's Tulsa Arms Show

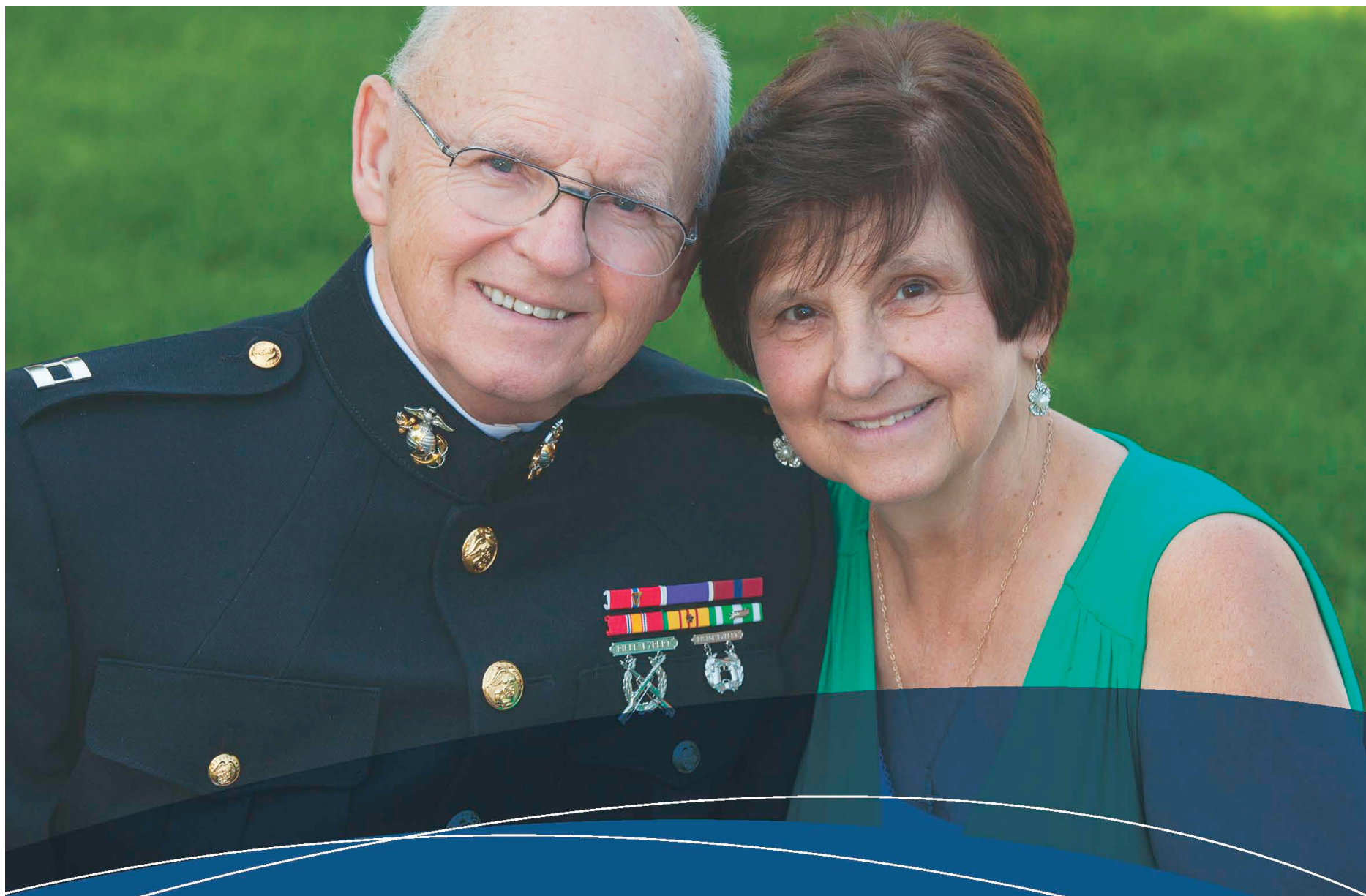
Nov 8, 2025 - Nov 9, 2025 LOCATION: Tulsa Expo Square Tulsa, OK 74153 **Note:** The Wanenmacher's Tulsa Arms Show is one of the largest firearms shows in the world.

Cars N' K9s

Nov 15, 2025 LOCATION: 201 S Division, Asher, OK **Note:** A benefit for animal rescues, featuring classic cars, trucks, imports, and bikes. It includes food trucks, vendors, and a chance to win a prize for bringing a toy for the Asher Angel Tree.

EV Car Show - By First United Bank -

Nov 15, 2025 LOCATION: 201 S Division, Asher, OK **Note:** A benefit for animal rescues, featuring classic cars, trucks, imports, and bikes. It includes food trucks, vendors, and a chance to win a prize for bringing a toy for the Asher Angel Tree.



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At the Southern Plains Fest, it's Mopar or No Car

Route 66 felt the weight of Plymouths, Dodges and Chryslers during the 5th (third time in Bristow) Southern Plains Mopar Fest (SPMF) on Oct. 3-4. On Day 1, a caravan of Mopars cruised 62 miles in the "Run for the Tower Route 66 Cruise." On Day 2, owners checked-in 76 cars and trucks for a car show on three blocks of Main Street (also Route 66).

Doug Cataline, owner/operator of the SPMF, loves Mopar vehicles and shares that enthusiasm with Bristow officials by making the town a SPMF showcase. He estimated 4,500 people attended the second day.

On Oct. 3, at 11:00 a.m., participants in 30 vehicles departed from the Chrysler Plymouth Dealership on 9th Ave. Their quest? Enjoy a "Run for the Tower Route 66 Cruise" and pick up playing cards to earn the best poker hand at seven roadside landmarks,

Daryl Bishop of OKC piloted his 1974 Plymouth Duster. He enjoyed the Route 66 Bowl card stop in Chandler and praised lunch at Butchers BBQ, another card stop. Although he assembled two queens and two 5s, he fell short.

David Griffin of Bartlesville did win the poker run with four "threes" (four of a kind), earning him \$560 and a Top 30 plaque for his 2023 Dodge Demon in the car show. "It was an opportunity of a lifetime...I've never been on Route 66 for that long of a period. It was fabulous to see all the old places," he said.

After returning to Bristow by 5:00 p.m., more than 50 cruisers gathered with locals at C&J Kountry Fixings to eat and socialize. On Day 2, Mopar owners from six states displayed entire lineups of classic machinery: Chrysler 300s, Newports, Barracudas (A-Body), Cudas (E-Body), Superbirds, Road Runners, Super Bees, Chargers and pickup trucks gleamed under the hot sun on both sides of Route 66.

The most unusual entry was an original 1942 Dodge WC54 ambulance painted drab green. Twenty-six year Army veteran Kevin Hicks of Chandler brings it to some car shows "because it's a tribute to the greatest generation." It won a Top 30 plaque.

According to Motortrend.com, Chrysler Corp. introduced Mopar (combination of "motor" and "parts") products in 1937. "When talking with an enthusiast, a Mopar car is one built by one of the original Chrysler Corp. brands, which in order of ascendancy are Plymouth, Dodge, DeSoto, Ram, Chrysler, and Imperial." Jeep qualifies, as Chrysler bought the brand in 1987.

Two distinguished guests flew in to mingle. Paul Rossi, a Mopar representative and champion National Hot Rod Association drag racer from 1963 to 2000, proudly showed his 1970 Dodge Challenger to admirers. Claudia Abel, Miss Direct Connection 1984, journeyed from Detroit. She told attendees, "What an opportunity to drive,

The 1947 Chrysler-Plymouth tower is being refinished and relit with a \$700,000 Route 66 Revitalization Grant.



walk and visit...the nostalgic Route 66."

Why hold the SPMF in Bristow? Cataline explained, "We all are hobbyists and we love the Chrysler Plymouth name...The second reason is to bring absolute awareness to the Chrysler Plymouth Tower that's in this awesome little town...in the crossroads of America...So it gave me inspiration to do a show here." The 1949 "Tower of Power" is being repaired for reinstallation at the corner of Main and 9th Streets in the summer of 2026.

Amid 30 vendors selling merchandise, parts, services, and food, attendees enjoyed live music from Tulsa's "Tempest Revival," covering hits of the '70s through '90s. "Sales have been very good because of the car show," noted Jordayn Fleetwood of Buffalo Beverage Company

Car judging took place from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with awards at 2:00 p.m. Cataline gave the Top 30 plaques first, then special awards. Highlights: Leslie Foster of Ebgeron, Kansas, won "Claudia's pick" (a signed photo) for his 1971 Dodge Charger. Scott Wood took home the Sponsor's Award for a 1961 Plymouth.

Two elite awards went to Kerri Somerville of Edmond. Her spotless, white 1947 Dodge Power Wagon (pickup truck) won the B.A.M.F. (three-foot trophy) and Best of Show (enamel guitar).

Cataline generously donated \$500 to Bristow's FAA and \$1,000 to its Historical Society.

The SPMF contributes to Bristow's ability to draw people downtown to attend free, fun activities. Mayor Kris Wyatt texted, "Events like the Southern Plains Mopar Fest help draw people to our community, supporting local businesses and showcasing the charm that makes Bristow such a special stop along Route 66."

Asked why do car buffs like Mopar, Cataline smiled. "Everything is classic and if you like cars, you have to be here because you'll love these cars. They're old and old is cool." ● story by Lt Col Richard Stephens, Jr., USAFR, Ret.



Kerri Somerville of Edmond won the B.A.M.F. (trophy) and Best of Show (guitar) awards for her white 1947 Dodge Power Wagon (pickup truck) in the Southern Plains Mopar Fest, Oct 2025.

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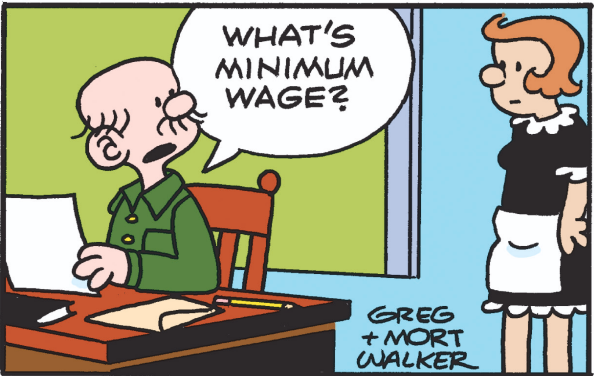
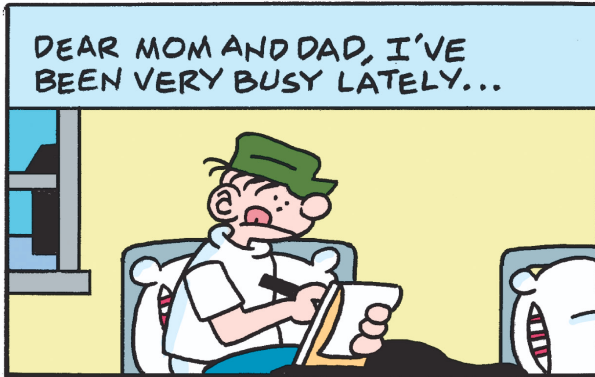
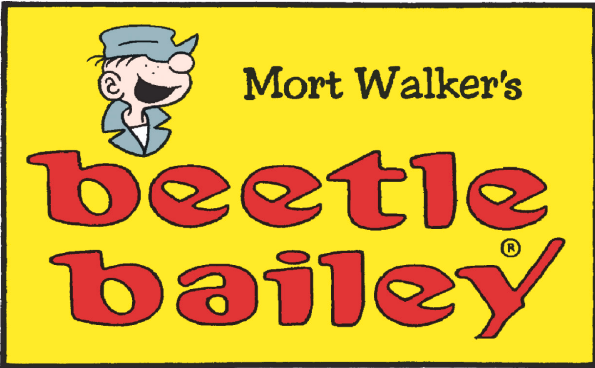
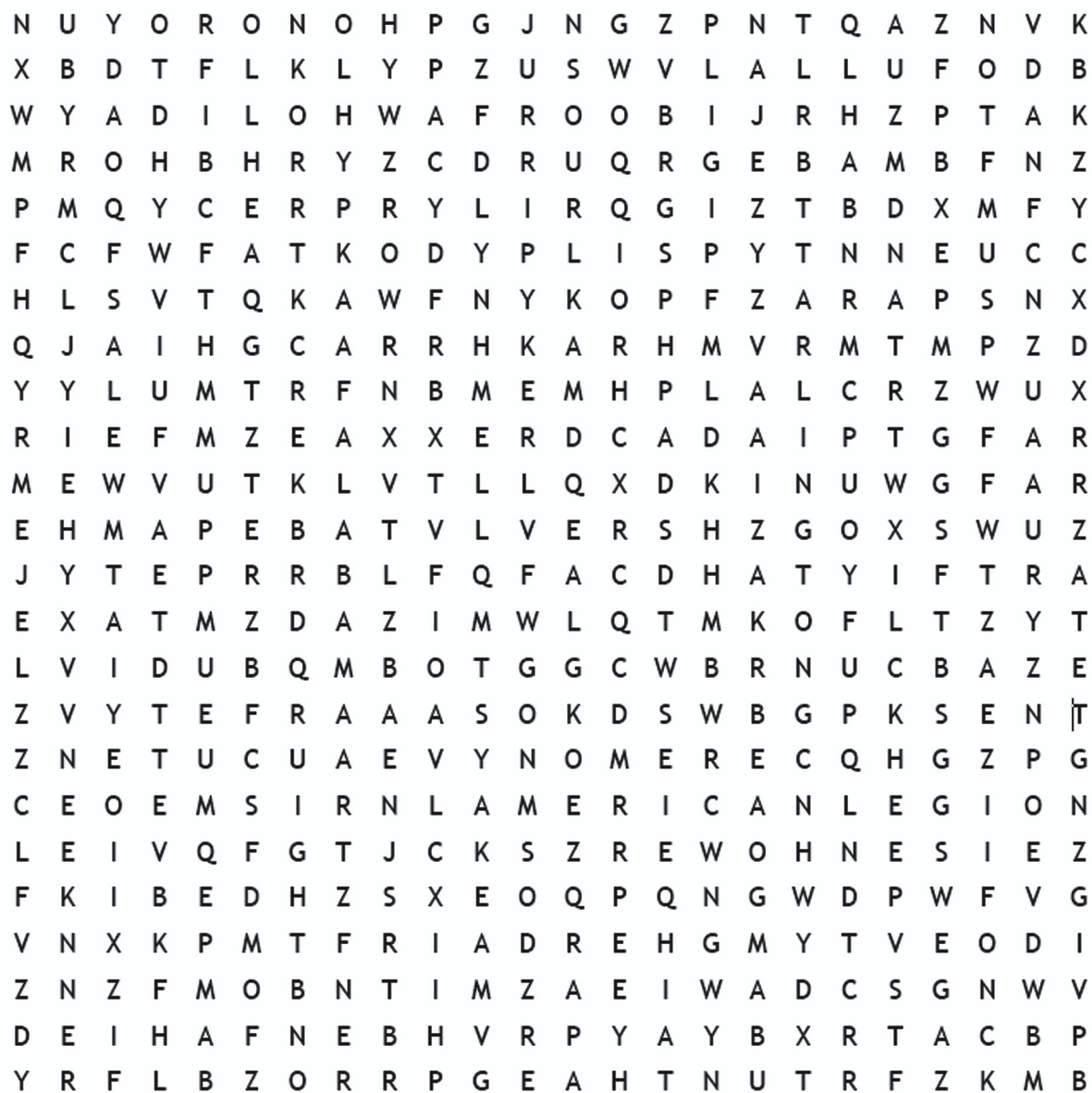
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Veterans Day Facts - Happy Veterans Day!

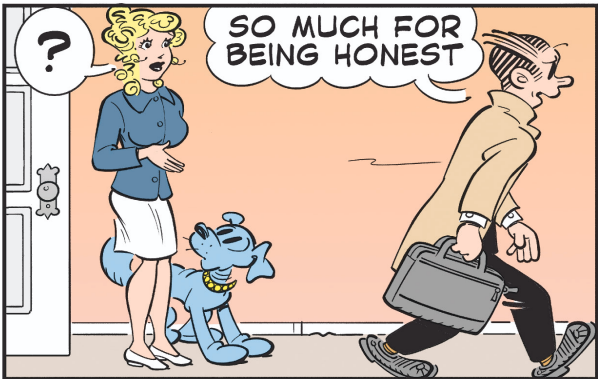
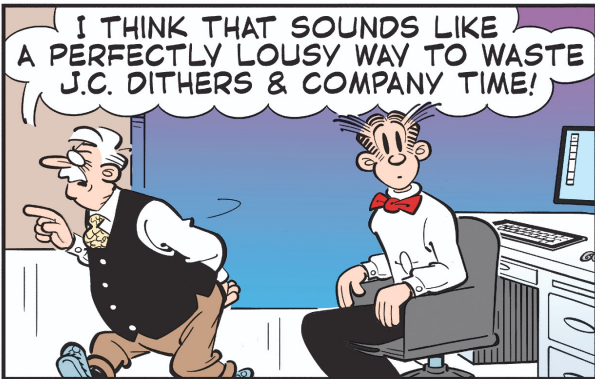
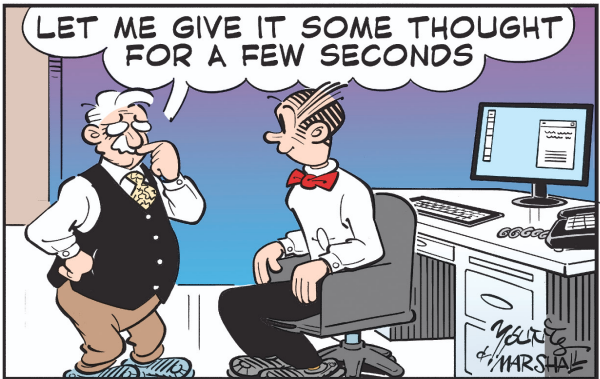
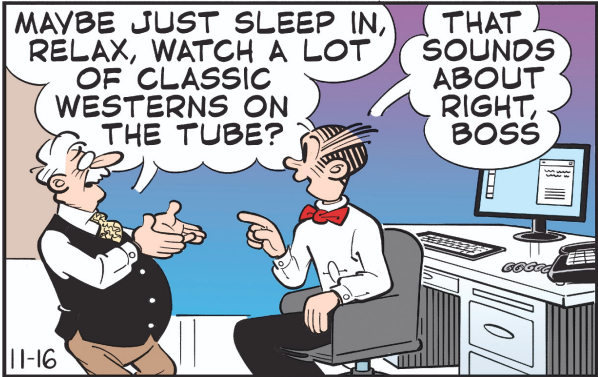
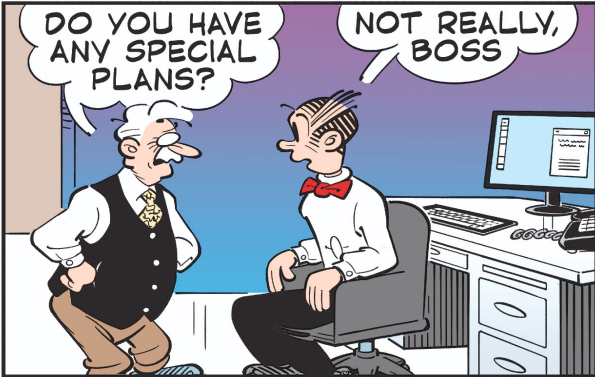
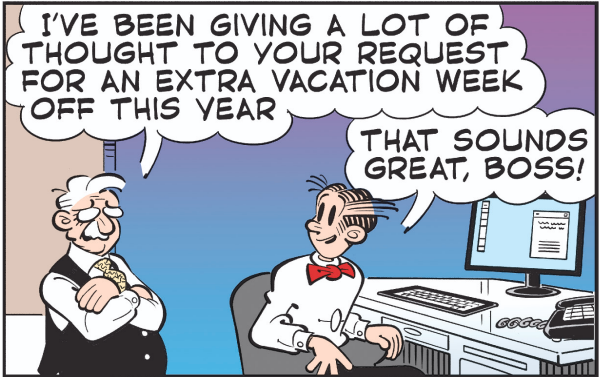
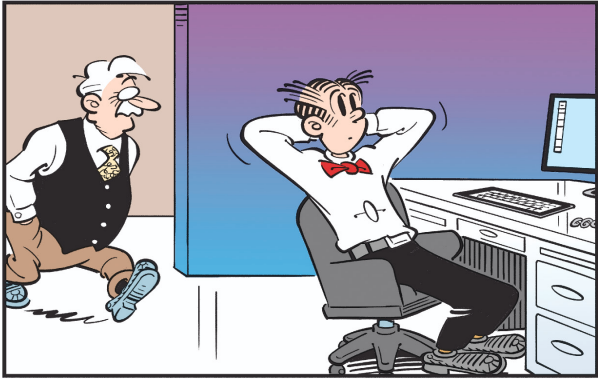
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