

More than Books

Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Korean War

Between now and the Fourth of July, you'll find a display on the second floor of the library courtesy of the Northwest Illinois Chapter of the Korean War Veterans. The display commemorates the 60th anniversary of the Korean War. It consists of five narrative posters describing five phases of the war, from June 25, 1950 to July 27, 1953.

Look for an accompanying display of library materials about the war, including copies of a handsome volume, "Korea Reborn." Copies of this book were distributed to U.S. veterans of the Korean War and their families. Members of the Northwest Illinois Chapter of the Korean War Veterans donated several copies to the library.

I also recommend "Korea, the Forgotten War." It is a 56-page book – lots of photographs, statistics, maps, and stories - put together by members of the Illinois Korean Memorial Association.

Observing Memorial Day

I plan to observe Memorial Day by watching "Chosin," a documentary about the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir, fought in the winter of 1950 over some of the roughest terrain and the coldest winter weather of the Korean War. Both the film's director and co-writer are former Marines. In addition to searching through 300 hours of none-too-well organized archival footage in the National Archives in Washington D.C., the pair spent 14 months traveling around the United States interviewing survivors of the Battle of Chosin.

To my mind, it is the personal narratives, accompanying the combat footage, that make "Chosin" both harrowing and riveting viewing. The film was supported by a number of veterans' groups. It was shown here in 2010 and again in 2013 at the Freeport Eagles Club, when some Chosin veterans were present.

I am sorry to say I missed both showings. Thanks to Library Board President Scott Haugh, who donated a DVD of "Chosin" to the library, I'm able to view it now, as Memorial Day approaches.

When is a war not a war?

It you ever wanted to tick off my ex-husband, and I'll admit I occasionally wanted to do that very thing, the quickest way to do so was to refer to "the Korean conflict." I thought of my no-longer-dearest just recently when I read in the "New York Times" the mini-history lesson of the day on the editorial page. It was a little Memorial Day factoid: *"On May 30, 1958, unidentified soldiers killed in World War II and the Korean conflict were buried at Arlington National Cemetery."*

How he hated the decades-long journalistic practice of calling the Korean War a "conflict" instead of a war. I can hear him now: "You don't say The Revolutionary Conflict or The Conflict of 1812! How about The Mexican-American Conflict? Or The Indian Conflicts? The Cold Conflict?"

What criteria determine the difference between a war and a conflict? Beats me. Of course, Korea followed so quickly on the heels of World War II, and then, it was overshadowed by Vietnam. Hence, its soubriquet, "the forgotten war."

My recommendation? Watch "Chosin." You won't forget it!

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