

NEWS RELEASE



Touchmark at Coffee Creek

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'Fourth' not just a picnic, but a precious commodity **Touchmark residents share Independence Day memories, meaning**

EDMOND, Okla. — George Rowley recalls in the '80s when the Fourth of July fireworks display in Edmond “all went off at the same time, at the (university) football field.”

No one was injured, but the only alternative was to just “go home,” said the longtime former Edmond schools superintendent.

Rowley joined others at the Touchmark at Coffee Creek community to talk about their favorite “Fourth” memories during “Morning Glories with Cathy.” Each Wednesday morning, residents and others get together to reminisce about various topics. The weekly sessions are organized by Life Enrichment/Wellness Director Cathy Bird.

With a ‘Fourth’ birthday, Betty Matthews remembers the grownups had more fun than the “sort-of-ignored” child growing up in Wyoming.

And the Fourth didn’t mean much to a farmer, said Kansan Scott Kelsey. “All work, no picnics” with little or no money to buy fireworks.

Other early-century Fourths involved hopscotch, handmade decorations, now-illegal Roman candles and church, community or backyard picnics. For Faye Kelsey, her rural Kansas town watched community baseball rivals, Rossville vs. St. Mary’s.

For Karen Jones, it meant taking up a collection every year to fund the most outstanding statewide display of fireworks in her Saginaw, Mich., hometown, she says.



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For military veterans, however, the Fourth is not just picnics but a precious commodity.

A Navy World War II veteran, Scott Kelsey's middle name is "Winfield," a name given to each succeeding generation of his great-grandfather, Union General Winfield Scott.

When asked where he grew up, World War II tail gunner L.M. Sullivan says he "grew up in 1944 over Germany."

"Freedom is a misnomer," said Sullivan, a former school superintendent and State Department employee. "There's nothing free in this world. The freedoms we enjoy are bought by other people."

Feeling it deep enough meant coming back from Germany with 242 holes in his B-24, "not one of them touching us."

Kathryn Blanks, who grew up in Holdenville, spent many years as a World War II military wife with husband, C.D. Blanks. She remembers the "line" of the Brandenburg Gate, at the threshold of Nazi Berlin.

Streets and homes on the West-German side were neat and clean, while those on the Nazi side had water running down the middle, Blanks said.

Sullivan reminded the Touchmark gathering of those who signed the Declaration of Independence; they knew they were signing their "death certificates." They would be charged with treason against King George III.

The final line of the document states, "we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

Freedom's not just another word for "nothing left to lose," the song lyrics that would brand the "free" generation of the late '60s and early '70s, almost 200 years later.

"It is one of the most precious commodities we have and one of the least appreciated. ... It's something you can actually feel if you sense it deep enough," said Sullivan.

Touchmark offers a wide range of homes and lifestyle options. The active adult community is located just north of Covell Road in Edmond. For more information, visit Touchmark's Web site at TouchmarkEdmond.com or call (405) 340-1975.

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Caption: From left, Touchmark's Life Enrichment/Wellness Director Cathy Bird and Peggy and L.M. Sullivan, who treasures the replica of the Declaration of Independence — signifying the signers who pledged to each other their lives, fortunes and sacred honor, and who would have died for that commitment.