First Thanksgiving celebrated to commemorate harvest

By Jeffrey C. Doepp, CFAY Public Affairs

In homes across America and on Navy bases and ships throughout the world, families and friends, colleagues and coworkers gather together on the last Thursday of November to enjoy each other's company, watch football, feast on traditional foods such as turkey, stuffing and yams, top it all off with desserts like pumpkin, apple or cherry pie - and give thanks.

The first American Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1621, to commemorate the harvest by the Plymouth Colony after a very harsh winter. In that year, Governor William Bradford proclaimed a day of thanksgiving.

The colonists, who invited the local Wampanoag Indians, celebrated it as a traditional English harvest feast.

Days of thanksgiving were celebrated throughout the colonies after fall harvests.

All 13 colonies did not, however, celebrate Thanksgiving at the same time until October 1777. George Washington, in 1789, was the first president to declare the holiday.

By the mid–1800s, many states observed a Thanksgiving holiday. Meanwhile, the poet ("Mary Had a Little Lamb") and editor Sarah J. Hale had begun lobbying for a national Thanksgiving holiday.

During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln, looking for ways to unite the nation, discussed the subject with Hale. In 1863 he gave his Thanksgiving Proclamation, declaring the last Thursday in November a day of thanksgiving.

"The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies," said Lincoln in his Oct. 3, 1863 Thanksgiving Proclamation in Washington. "To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they can not fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of almighty God.

"In the midst of a civil war of unequaled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union…"

In 1939, 1940, and 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was seeking to lengthen the Christmas shopping season, proclaimed Thanksgiving to be on the third Thursday in each November. However, due to controversy, Congress passed a joint resolution in 1941 decreeing that Thanksgiving should fall on the fourth Thursday of each November, where it remains to this day.

Sailors give thanks before enjoying their Thanksgiving meal aboard the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) Nov. 25, 2010.
U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Cheng S. Yang

Transition benefits: Veterans can continue service in civilian careers

From Department of the Navy Office of Civilian Human Resources

WASHINGTON – Civilian careers with the Department of the Navy (DON) can provide veterans with another opportunity to continue government service.

Jean Mercer, director of the DON's Office of Civilian Human Resources, Human Resource Systems and Business Transformation Department, said veterans currently comprise a large portion of the DON civilian workforce, sharing the skills they have gained during their military service.

"Civilian careers range from machinists to mechanics, sandblasters to scientists, intelligence analysts to IT specialists - the opportunities are far-reaching and ever-changing" said Mercer. "And, because of the diverse offerings, it is important to maximize the tools available through the USAJOBS system."

USAJOBS is the one-stop source for federal jobs, including DON job announcements.

In mid-October, USAJOBS underwent a major upgrade to improve the applicant experience. Included in the upgrade are improved notification settings, more relevant search results, easier navigation and much more. Mercer encourages veterans to explore the tool at www.USAJOBS.gov and become familiar with the key features.

Veterans need to invest time and energy to create an account and build a resume in USAJOBS. USAJOBS comes equipped with a resume builder and allows applicants to build and store up to five distinct resumes. OPM provides resources for veterans seeking federal jobs at www.fedshirevets.gov/job/tsm.aspx.

It is important veterans select the appropriate special hiring consideration they are eligible for including veterans recruitment appointment, 30 percent disabled veterans or Veterans Employmemt Opportunity Act.

Information about the hiring eligibilities and fact sheets to help individuals with the application process are available at the DON Civilian Human Resources website, www.public.nav.mil/donhr/employment/hiringreform.

For additional information, visit the Department of Labor Veterans Preference Advisory website, www.dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm.

For tips about creating a powerful resume, visit www.public.navy.mil/DONHR/employment/CivJobOpps/pages/AllAboutYou.aspx.

The DON remains committed to improving the applicant's experience, reducing the time to fill vacancies and securing quality candidates for DON positions. Civilian careers in the Department of the Navy offer real-world challenges with real-life rewards - careers where purpose and patriotism unite. Questions on the DON civilian employment information may be directed to DON Employment Information Center at DonEIC@navy.mil. Veterans also may pursue resources through their local Fleet and Family Service Centers.

A civilian career with the Navy is one of the opportunities that should be considered by separating Sailors including those affected by the Enlisted Retention Board (ERB).

For the latest ERB information visit Navy Personnel Command's ERB website; www.public.navy.mil/bupers-nps/boards/ERB/Pages/default2/aspx.

Pet of the week

This is Kai. He is a Burmese Mountain Dog with a summer hair cut. Kai is nine-years old but still plays with the young ones. He is the dad of the shelter and keeps the rest of the dogs in check. To find out more about Kai, or any animal at Pets Are Worth Saving (P.A.W.S.) contact 243-9996, or e-mail usskittytalk.yokosuka@gmail.com, or visit the P.A.W.S. Web site at www.pawsyokosukajapan.com