



Stateline

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COLORADO CELEBRATES AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

BY JANE E. NORTON
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

As Chair of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs (CCIA), I was pleased to join Southern Ute Tribal Chairman Clement Frost, and Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Chairman Manuel Heart in hosting the third annual American Indian Heritage Month Celebration on November 17, 2005. The event recognized state and national proclamations designating November as American Indian Heritage Month, honoring the original inhabitants of North America, American Indians, and the unique and distinguished role they have played in our nation's history and culture through vital contributions to government, medicine, education, religion, architecture, environment, and the military.

Please see HERITAGE, p. 7



Lt. Governor Norton with Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Chairman Manuel Heart, Commander John Herrington, Southern Ute Tribal Chairman Clement Frost, and Ernest House, Jr.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

BY JEFF WELLS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DPA

RECENT CHANGES TO STATE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

This is part of a continuing series of articles intended to provide guidance to employees on issues they may face during their career with the State.

Annual leave and sick leave are important components of the total compensation package the State provides its employees. Significant, employee-friendly changes on how accrual rates are calculated have recently been instituted.

Annual Leave

Break in Service

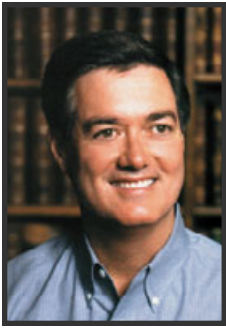
Legislation effective on August 2, 2004 allows the State to apply leave accrual rates in a more generous manner than in the past. Prior to that date employees who left the state personnel system and later returned, *after a*

five-year break in service, lost their former leave accrual rates. Now, the State credits *all* past state service, when determining leave accrual rates for former employees who return to State service, whether they were gone five-months, five-years or any other length of time.

Classified and Non-Classified Service – Now Treated the Same

Historically, state employees who have worked for the State, but outside of the personnel system, (such as legislative or judicial employees) were not allowed to include those non-classified years when calculating their accrual rates, once they entered into the state personnel system. As of July 1, 2005, I promulgated a new rule that allows those employees to include *all* the years worked for the State, whether they were within the classified system or not, and regardless of whether the prior service was continuous. The new accrual rules will only be adjusted from July 1, 2005 forward, so leave will not be restored retroactively.

Please see LEAVE, p. 4



REFERENDUM C PROVIDES ECONOMIC RELIEF, NOT WINDFALL

BY GOVERNOR BILL OWENS

“Where is the pile of loot for lawmakers to shovel out to their favorite constituencies?”

That was the Rocky Mountain News editorial page response to the proposed budget that I submitted to the Joint Budget Committee in November. And the News got it right – there is no “pile of loot.”

Referendum C was a bail-out, not a windfall. Had the measure failed the State would have been looking at cuts this year in the neighborhood of \$400 million. Thanks to the voters’ passage of the referendum, not only are those anticipated cuts avoided, but we estimate there will be an additional \$440 million in the 2005-06 state budget.

Is the \$440 million available to *shovel out* to lawmakers’ favorite constituencies? No.

Of that \$440 million, state statutes require the State repay \$117 million that was spent from the State’s required reserve. Another \$216 million must go to transportation funding under Senate Bill 97-1. And \$13 million must be used to pay back cash funds the State borrowed from in prior years.

Because of some additional revenue, that leaves about \$113 million in discretionary dollars for the legislature to work with in 2005-06 Fiscal Year.

In my budget proposal, I’ve recommended that \$80 million be used for roads and bridges. It is important to note that under Referendum C, \$55 million was set aside this year and \$95 million next year to begin the payments for transportation bonding had Referendum D passed. Further, it is clear from the title of Referendum C that some of the revenue would indeed be used for roads and bridges. And I think that is appropriate since transportation was one of the agencies hardest hit by budget cuts – 41 percent – over the last four years.

As I deliberated on the various items in the budget, one principal was paramount: the trust the voters placed in us with the passage of Referendum C cannot be violated. We must be clear in how we allocate these funds – and restoration of cuts must take first priority. The budget proposal I submitted in November strikes a balance between restoring cuts and a modest increase in spending in 2005-06.

There will be much discussion and debate about how the state divides its budget dollars in 2005-06. We can thank the voters we are not debating budget *cuts*, but how to invest a modest increase in the 2005-06 budget.

The budget proposal I submitted was really the 2006-07 budget, but most of the discussion so far has been about the \$440 million in the 2005-06 budget as I outlined above. That focus will shift as legislative discussions begin in January. It is projected that in 2006-07, the State will retain \$505 million under Referendum C.

You may find it interesting that just two areas of the budget – K-12 education and Medicaid – will require **increases** of \$187 million next year. Those increases are mandated either by the state Constitution (K-12 education) or federal requirements (Medicaid).

In keeping faith with the voters, for FY 2006-07 I propose that the proceeds from Referendum C be divided among the required spending areas as outlined in the text of the measure: per-pupil funding in K-12 education, Medicaid, and the College Opportunity Fund stipends, transportation, and fire and police pensions. Considering the requirements driving K-12 education Medicaid, I suspect there will be little debate about those two parts of the equation. I also believe that there will be general consensus on increasing state support for higher education. Overall, I propose increasing General Fund support for higher education by 10.2 percent. In turn, we should limit tuition increases next year to 2.5 percent. Keeping a college education affordable has to be one of our State’s priorities.

This process will allow us to start refilling the fiscal bucket that was drained during the past recession. It will be a slow process, but gradually we can start restoring the cuts to state services that occurred over the last few years. Again it is important to stress that because of Referendum C, additional, even harsher cuts will not be necessary.

So, indeed, Referendum C was not a “windfall” but rather a lifeline to the future of Colorado.



Above, the Capitol is decked out in wreaths, garlands, and bows to celebrate the holiday season.



WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT HIGH ENERGY COSTS

BY GREGORY E. SOPKIN
CHAIRMAN, PUC

I can recall a time in the early 1990's, and then again in 2001, when energy prices were low. Gasoline was around \$1-1.25 per gallon, and natural gas was in the \$2-3 per million cubic feet range. Decisions were made in reliance on cheap energy: people bought larger cars, and utilities relied on natural gas to fuel virtually all new electric generation plants. In hindsight, the result was predictable: demand for oil and natural gas spiked, and prices went up – way up. Oil prices doubled, while natural gas prices tripled.

This is a classic supply and demand problem. When supply is relatively fixed and demand is variable, prices become volatile. The price of oil is dependent on the international market, and has risen largely because of increased demand from developing countries (like China). In contrast, natural gas supply is based almost exclusively on North America production, which makes natural gas prices even more volatile than oil in response to cold weather or supply disruption. This year's hurricanes affected natural gas rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, and decreased domestic production by about five percent for all of 2005. This makes for higher heating bills - for Xcel Energy customers, thirty percent higher this winter than last.

Natural gas is an unregulated commodity, and Colorado law requires the PUC to allow utilities to recover costs that they incur from the competitive wholesale natural gas market on a dollar-for dollar basis. Thus the PUC has little control over natural gas commodity rates.

What can be done? On the demand side, now is the time to better insulate your home, replace the windows, replace that inefficient furnace or boiler, and buy a programmable thermostat. For those with more limited resources, using plastic insulation for windows and sealing cracks in your doors and windows, as well as turning down the thermostat, can save substantial energy. For more tips, go to the PUC's web site at www.dora.state.co.us/puc, and click on "Take control of your home heating costs."

On the supply side, the federal government and producers will attempt to restore short-term production as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, not much relief will occur except on a long-term basis: building liquefied natural gas terminals (for importation) and increasing domestic production will take years. At the state level, the PUC recently approved a coal generation plant in Pueblo because coal prices are more

stable than natural gas. Also, hundreds of megawatts of wind power should be added to the system over the next several years, which help to reduce reliance on natural gas-fired electric plants. With respect to heating bills, we encourage utilities to lower the risk of retail price spikes by hedging on natural gas – through physical storage, long-term contracts, and various financial tools. While this should dampen the effect of wholesale price increases, it will not eliminate them. Everyone (including those served by REAs and municipalities) should expect higher heating prices this winter.

The PUC is certainly aware of the hardships caused by high heating bills. We will continue to monitor the natural gas industry, to the extent of our authority, to ensure that utilities are making prudent purchasing decisions on behalf of their customers. We encourage support for Energy Outreach Colorado and other local charities that provide heating bill assistance.

Shortly after the hurricanes, President Bush suggested that, for the next several months, Americans should not buy gasoline unless it is needed. Likewise, we should all try to reduce our usage of natural gas to the extent we can do so. For too many, this will be necessary just to afford their monthly heating bill.

STATELINE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU
If you have a subject you would like addressed the "Know Your Rights Column" or just have something your would like to see reported in *Stateline*, send us an email at Stateline@state.co.us

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LEAVE, from p. 1

not be restored retroactively.

In some cases the new rules could increase an employee's leave accrual rate from eight hours a month, up to as much as fourteen hours a month. Current accrual rates are as follows:

Years of Service	Hours Earned Each Month	Maximum Accrual
1-5	8 hours	192 hours (24 days)
6-10	10 hours	240 hours (30 days)
11-15	12 hours	288 hours (36 days)
16 - on	14 hours	336 hours (42 days)

Use It or Lose It

As you can see, the number of hours employees are allowed to accrue is increased with years of service. However, should you go over your maximum annual leave accrual amount, those hours *must* be used before the close of the current fiscal year, or they will be lost. For example, if you have worked for the State for seven years and you reach your maximum accrual of 240 hours in February, you must use any additional annual leave earned during the remainder of the fiscal year, by the end of the year (June 30) or lose those hours.

Sick Leave

All employees hired after July 1, 1988 receive 6.66 hours of sick leave, each month, and are limited to a maximum of 45 days (360 hours). Employees hired prior to July 1, 1988 have individual maximums, based upon the amount of sick leave they had accrued prior the change in sick leave accrual rates. This accrual rate is not affected by years of service and is set in statute.

Any sick leave hours earned over the maximum limit of 360 hours, or your personal limit, if hired before July 1, 1988, are converted to annual leave at a ratio of five to one. So, if you have 370 hours of sick leave at the end of the fiscal year you will receive two hours of annual leave and your sick leave balance will be returned to 360.

Fun Personnel Facts

Average age of State Employees: 45.7 years

Average age of New Hires: 39.2 years

Average age of State service: 9.8 years

Average length of actual service upon retirement 19.7 years (this means most employees buy at least .3 years of service credits)

Average annual salary \$46,567

Percent eligible to retire in 5 years: 34.2%

This is general guidance only and should not be considered legal advice. For any legal advice you should always consult an attorney.

STATE PERSONNEL BOARD VACANCY - BOARD ELECTION
BY KRISTIN F. ROZANSKY, DIRECTOR

The term of Board member Elizabeth Salkind will expire on June 30, 2006. Elizabeth has ably and faithfully served the state classified system as an elected member of the Board since July 2001. Now it is time for someone else to step up to the plate and represent members of the state classified system.

Nominating petitions are due **February 15, 2006**, for the State Personnel Board election scheduled in May. **The new five-year term will begin on July 1, 2006.** The five-member Board's duties include resolving appeals arising in the state personnel system, adopting rules, considering petitions for hearing and declaratory orders, and participating in the development of personnel policy for the State. Members serve overlapping five-year terms and may succeed themselves in office. Three Board members are appointed by the governor; two Board members are elected by certified employees. In addition to Ms.

Salkind, the other four Board members are: John Zakhem, Diedra Garcia, and Troy Eid, who are gubernatorial appointees, and Don Mares, who was elected to the Board in 2005.

All Board members must be qualified state electors in the state of Colorado. Each elected member represents certified employees, but may not be an officer or employee of the state or of any employee organization. The Board regularly meets on the third Tuesday of every month for an average of two hours. Visit the Board's website for more information at: <http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/spb/>.

Nominating petitions may be obtained from the Board's office at 633 - 17th Street, Suite 1320, Denver, Colorado 80202. The Board's phone number is **303-866-3300**; the fax number is **303-866-5038**. Nominating petitions require supporting signatures of 100 certified state employees, which will be verified according to procedure.

NOMINATING PETITIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY KRISTIN F. ROZANSKY, DIRECTOR, STATE PERSONNEL BOARD, ON OR BEFORE THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS ON FEBRUARY 15, 2006.

OEDIT LAUNCHES “ADVANCING COLORADO” INITIATIVE

BY STEPHANIE DALGAR

OEDIT DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Governor’s Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) is spearheading an innovative branding program that will mark a significant new step in creating a stronger strategic alliance between the public and private sectors, across various industries and within every region of the State.

OEDIT enlisted a group of marketing professionals to build a stronger brand for Colorado, resulting in the creation of a volunteer branding team that hit the ground running. The team created a branding program that is about the images and emotion that are evoked by the word “Colorado.”

Three key initiatives will be implemented over the next 12 months. First, the Colorado.gov web site will take on a consistent look and feel, developed by members of the Branding Team. Second, to build the Colorado brand and engage citizens and businesses alike, OEDIT is launching the Advancing Colorado initiative, whereby all of Colorado will have the opportunity to participate in branding the State. They can purchase Advancing Colorado gear, display decals and use Advancing Colorado design elements. Third, OEDIT will begin to garner exposure for the Colorado brand in key markets within the U.S and internationally.

Advancing Colorado Initiative

OEDIT intends to build a culture within Colorado that is locally-driven, individually-owned and imbued with a spirit of contribution and teamwork. The approach creates a vehicle to build a stronger sense of personal responsibility throughout the state and to infuse the Colorado brand. The future will be created by our collective intention. Everyone has something to contribute. Everyone has a place at the table. Everyone can advance Colorado.

The program kicks off in December, with several tactics that include television commercials (developed through a partnership with 9News), print ads, Colorado gear and Advancing Colorado decals. It all begins to fit together, as local shops display a window decal declaring that they are advancing Colorado. Individuals can do the same thing by placing the decal in the car and/or wearing a bracelet, a cap, hoodie or shirt.

How it works:

OEDIT will promote the program statewide through TV commercials, print ads, eNewsletters and public relations to drive recognition of the brand. OEDIT will

also provide Advancing Colorado decals for all Colorado businesses through the chambers, publish a regular Advancing Colorado eNewsletter and provide statewide recognition for individuals and businesses involved in the program.

Chambers of commerce are the frontline in the Advancing Colorado initiative. Each chamber has the opportunity to coordinate activities, communications, and brand awareness in their own community. In addition, a portion of the sales from the gear will go back to the local communities.

Advancing Colorado Gear:

The chambers designate a recipient (either the chamber itself or a qualified non-profit organization) to receive proceeds from the sales of Advancing Colorado gear. They also encourage purchases of Advancing Colorado gear in their communications to members and the community, distribute decals to area businesses, help with the pro bono placement of advertisements for the program in local publications, use the Advancing Colorado logo as they deem appropriate in their own publications and organize activities to encourage and recognize individuals and businesses that Advance Colorado. Purchasers of the Advancing Colorado gear will designate the recipient of the proceeds for each sale.

To learn more, visit www.AdvancingColorado.com (gear will be available for purchase as of Dec. 12).

For more information, contact: Stefanie Dalgard, OEDIT director of communications at 303-892-3840 or sdalgard@state.co.us.

ANNUAL CSMA LEGISLATIVE LUNCHEON

The Colorado State Managers Association (CSMA) will hold its Annual Legislative Luncheon at the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver on Thursday, January 12, 2006. The luncheon will begin immediately following the Governor’s State of the State Address.

This year’s theme is, “The ABCs of Referendum C.” Invited speakers from the Colorado House and Senate will address concerns and questions about the passage of Referendum C and how those funds may be allocated within the state budget. State employees and managers can attend, ask questions, and learn more about what to expect during the 2006 Legislative session.

For information contact the CSMA Office at **303-922-3736** or www.csma.info, click on the events tab.

CSU AND DPA TEAM UP IN A NEW TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

BY BOB MONZEL, EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES, DPA

Colorado State University's offices in downtown Denver are now host to a new partnership created to provide training opportunities for Colorado state government employees.

The Department of Personnel & Administration and CSU signed an interagency agreement that will make the learning resources of CSU widely available to support the State's professional development needs. Classes for state employees began in September and include computer skills, supervision, conflict management, mediation and project management.

A range of on-line training programs is also available from CSU. These include Certified Business Manager, Governance and Ethics, Payroll Practice and Management, Records Management, and many others.

Under the agreement, CSU's Division of Continuing Education, located at 17th and Tremont, (just across the street from the Brown Palace Hotel) will be able to provide a wide variety of classes in a comfortable and professional learning environment. In addition to on-line classes and regularly scheduled programs, suggestions for needed training programs are encouraged as part of the effort to improve training for Colorado State employees. CSU and DPA training consultants Karima Bounini and Brad Mallon can create customized training

programs specifically to fit the training priorities of any state agency.

The partnership provides that the Professional Development Center will continue to teach classes closely tied to state government operations, such as performance management, state rules, state contracting and procurement. Most of these classes are offered on a regular basis in Room 220, of the Centennial Building at 1313 Sherman, but may also be delivered at any state agency by advance arrangement.

The partnership is part of a larger vision to expand training opportunities for state employees across Colorado. In addition to tapping the resources of CSU to develop and offer training programs, DPA will work with existing training programs in state agencies to share training resources and better utilize available programs. On-line training opportunities are also planned for expansion. Discussions are underway with producers of computer-based training programs that are applicable to state government operations, such as preventing discrimination and sexual harassment.

For a complete listing of classes, or to make suggestions on new classes, please visit the Web site at Colorado.gov/DPA/DHR and follow the links to training.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE: HELP LOW-INCOME TAXPAYERS

BY JUANITA GARCIA, DIVISION OF WILDLIFE, DNR (RETIRED)

When I tell people that I *volunteer* to do other people's tax returns, they look at me like I'm crazy. But that's exactly what I did last tax season and am planning to do again this tax season.

As a volunteer tax preparer at a community-based free tax preparation site in Denver, I helped low-income individuals get their much-needed tax refunds without having to pay fees to commercial tax preparers. Last year, the program helped nearly 1,700 taxpayers claim \$2 million in refunds.

It's a volunteer opportunity that "pays big dividends." One hour of your time can mean as much as \$1,500 in extra income to a struggling family.

You don't have to be an accountant, banker or lawyer to be a volunteer. With a short training program, anyone can prepare taxes. There is also a need for translators and computer specialists. This year, taxes will be prepared at a "Super Site" in order to assist more individuals. I hope you'll consider joining me in this rewarding volunteer opportunity. For more information, go to the Denver Asset Building Coalition website at www.denverabc.org.

The primary focus of the 2005 American Indian Heritage Month Celebration was education, with a special award ceremony that acknowledged ten outstanding students who have excelled in the areas of Academics, Dual Language, Volunteerism, Culture, and School Attendance. These special students were honored during a formal reception at the Governor's executive residence in the presence of tribal leaders, CCIA Commissioners, DHHS Regional Director Joe Nunez,



Senator Paula Sandoval, Representative Mark Cloer, and other distinguished guests.

The guest speaker for the event was our nation's first American Indian Astronaut, Commander John Herrington. Herrington met privately with the students earlier in the day to discuss educational opportunities, encouraging them to learn more about the history and heritage of their tribes. During the reception at the executive residence, Commander Herrington proceeded to inspire the audience with a dynamic presentation

showcasing his experiences as a NASA astronaut, and highlighting the important role education played in his success.

In my role as the chair of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, I felt we were able to further the commissions goal to strengthen the government-to-government relationship between the State of Colorado and the two Colorado Ute Tribes by presenting a proclamation from Governor Owens officially proclaiming November 2005 as American Indian Heritage Month, as well as House Joint Resolution 03-1052 sponsored by Senator Sandoval and Representative Cloer. The proclamation and House Joint Resolution both encouraged all citizens to consider activities that recognize and promote awareness of the accomplishments, history and modern lives of American Indians of this state and throughout the nation.

Representatives from the Colorado Indigenous Games Society also attend the event to promote the *2006 North American Indigenous Games*, an exciting sport and cultural celebration that will be hosted in Denver this year running July 1 through July 9, 2006. For more information on the celebration, or to sign up for the 2006 North American Indigenous Games E-Newsletter, please visit www.naig2006.com/index.sp.

For more information on the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, who serves as the official state liaison between Colorado's two tribal nations, exploring the needs of the American Indians of this State, and making legislative recommendations on matters that affect Colorado's American Indian populations, please visit my website at www.colorado.gov/ltgovernor/, or contact **Ernest House, Jr.**, CCIA Executive Secretary at **303-866-3027**.



MY BACK PAGES: PEACE ON EARTH

BY PAUL FARLEY

In August 1914 almost all of Europe went to war. The German army quickly drove through Belgium, but bogged down outside of Paris. Both sides began to dig in, and what had been thought would be a short fight soon became the nightmare of trench warfare:

“Cold rain had muddied and even flooded many trenches, and decomposing bodies floated to the surface. Unless soldiers moved about, they would sink into the liquefying mud, and many slept erect if they could, leaning against the dripping trench walls. It was a stomach-churning atmosphere for eating one's rations. Sand-filled sacks hung from ceilings not always successfully keeping food from the reach of rats. Men deloused themselves by sizzling lice in the flame of a

candle while others not so fortunate blew on their hands, seized rifles, and ascended for sentry duty.”

In most places the opposing lines were only 100 to 200 feet apart – close enough that insults as well as shots could be hurled across the “no man's land” in between. As fall turned to winter, the mud gave way to ice and snow which, aside from the bitter cold, was actually something of an improvement.

The British, French, and German governments each tried to provide some Christmas cheer to their troops. Each British soldier received a small brass box containing tobacco and a greeting card, along with plum pudding and candies. French troops received a wide array of gifts resulting from a government-sponsored donation drive. The German government sent their men cigars – and thousands of small fir trees.

As evening fell on December 24, soldiers on both sides attended Christmas eve services, sometimes improvising altars in the rubble of destroyed churches and monasteries. Later that night, Allied troops noticed that the Germans had begun putting small fir trees atop their trenches, and illuminating them with candles and lanterns. And then they could hear through the crisp air German soldiers singing "Silent Night," sometimes in German, sometimes in English. Moved by this, the British soldiers began singing back. The back-and-forth went on for some time, interrupted by applause, laughter – but not by gunfire.

There was a heavy overnight frost, and in the early dawn of December 25, Allied soldiers peering through the cold mist covering the battlefield could see crude signs that the Germans had put up: "Merry Christmas" and "You no shoot,



we no shoot." Then, slowly, brave and trusting German soldiers began climbing out of their trenches and walking across the no man's land armed only with wine, chocolates, and cigarettes. Cautiously, Allied soldiers did the same, and before long hundreds of men from both sides were standing together talking (mainly in English). They agreed upon a short cease-fire so that each side could bury their dead scattered across the battlefield, some of whom had fallen days or even weeks earlier. The two armies began to intermingle, helping each other recover bodies and dig graves. This gruesome work took most of the morning. At the same time, they chatted, traded various items of smoke, drink, and uniform insignia, and shared family pictures.

Around noon, a Scottish chaplain approached the German lines and suggested they conduct a joint memorial service for all of those killed. Joined by a German soldier who had been studying at a seminary before the war, the chaplain opened with Psalm 23, and prayers followed in both languages. Afterwards, the good-natured exchanges continued with British troops offering plum puddings and other sweets, and the Germans at one point rolling barrels of beer across to their erstwhile enemies. Later in the afternoon, friendly soccer matches occurred spontaneously all along the front. Most of the front-line officers on both sides either pretended not to notice what was going on, or even participated in it. Unsurprisingly, when the generals at the high command heard about it, word came down that any soldier "found guilty of holding a conversation with the enemy would be court-martialed and shot for

treason." Angry orders were issued for fighting to resume immediately.

And it did – sort of. The next day was a British holiday closely related to Christmas (Boxing Day, see below), as well as a major religious observance in Germany (St. Stephen's Day), so in many places men on both sides deliberately shot high over the heads of opposing troops, or even warned them to keep down. The weather also turned bad for about a week, making it difficult to mount any kind of attack. However, combat units were routinely rotated in and out of the front lines, and by New Year's Day, many of the troops who had participated in the truce had been reassigned. Any hope of a permanent cease-fire vanished, and military commanders on both sides made sure there was no repeat of the Christmas Truce of 1914.

In his book, *Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce*, author Stanley Weintraub speculates on the many "what ifs" that might have occurred had the truce held. Certainly the some eight million soldiers who lost their lives over the next four years would have lived. Quite likely, the Russian Empire would not have been weakened and destroyed, and there would have been no communist revolution, no Stalinist purges, no Cold War. And Germany, not crippled by the war, probably would have retained its economy and monarchy, meaning a psychotic failed painter named Adolf Hitler would likely have remained obscure and powerless. All because opposing troops, sharing a common bond and faith, spontaneously decided to lay down their arms. It would have been a Christmas miracle unlike any seen in nineteen centuries.

THIS AND THAT:

The British holiday "Boxing Day" is a by-product of the English class system. In the 1840s, the upper class family Christmas had become so crowded with churchgoing, feasting, visiting, and gift-giving that it was not possible for their servants to have a holiday. And so they created a second, lesser "Christmas" for service workers, who each received a "Christmas Box" for the day.