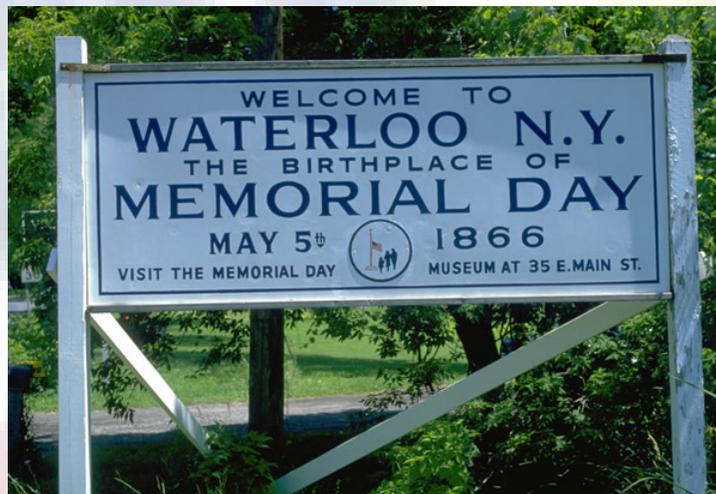


Memorial Day Thoughts & Prayers



In Memory of our Honored Dead

Memorial Day was originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service.



Birthplace of Memorial Day: The village of Waterloo, New York first celebrated Memorial Day in 1866. (Photo Credit: Joseph Sohm/Visions of America/Corbis)

There are many stories as to its actual beginnings, with over two dozen cities and towns laying claim to being the birthplace of Memorial Day.

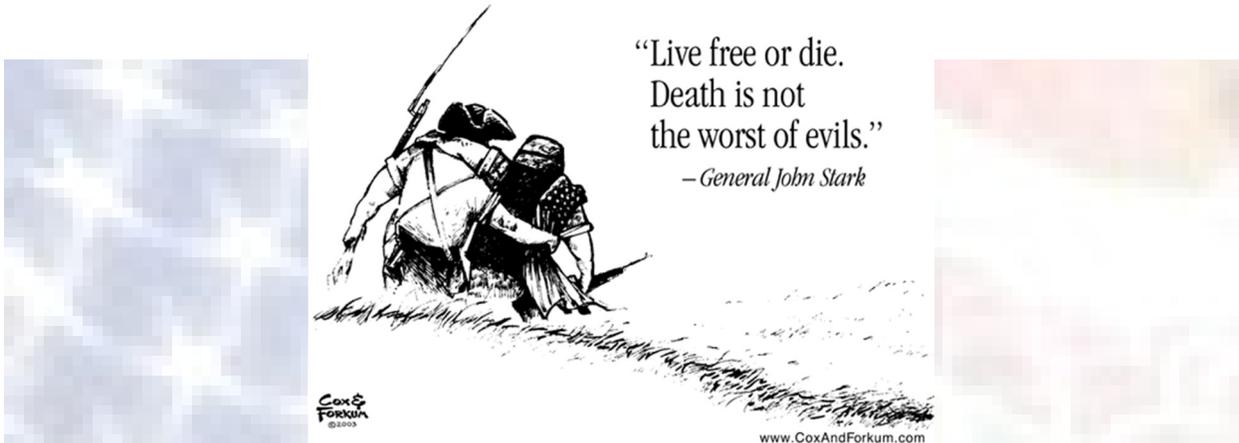


**THERE ARE ONLY TWO WORDS
THAT DESCRIBE THE MEANING
OF MEMORIAL DAY.
"THANK YOU"**

There is also evidence that organized women's groups in the South were decorating graves before the end of the Civil War: a hymn published in 1867, "Kneel Where Our Loves are Sleeping" by Nella L. Sweet carried the dedication "To The Ladies of the South who are Decorating the Graves of the Confederate Dead" (Source: Duke University's Historic American Sheet Music, 1850-1920).



While Waterloo N.Y. was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966, it's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day. It is more likely that it had many separate beginnings; each of those towns and every planned or spontaneous gathering of people to honor the war dead in the 1860's tapped into the general human need to honor our dead, each contributed honorably to the growing movement that culminated in Gen Logan giving his official proclamation in 1868.



It is not important who was the very first, what is important is that Memorial Day was established. Memorial Day is not about division. It is about reconciliation; it is about coming together to honor those who gave their all.



Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11, and was first observed on 30 May 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.



The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890 it was recognized by all of the northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war).



It is now celebrated in almost every State on the last Monday in May (passed by Congress with the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 - 363) to ensure a three day weekend for Federal holidays), though several southern states have an additional separate day for honoring the Confederate war dead: January 19 in Texas, April 26 in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10 in South Carolina; and June 3 (Jefferson Davis' birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee.



In 1915, inspired by the poem "In Flanders Fields," Moina Michael replied with her own poem:

**We cherish too, the Poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led,
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies.**



She then conceived of an idea to wear red poppies on Memorial day in honor of those who died serving the nation during war. She was the first to wear one, and sold poppies to her friends and co-workers with the money going to benefit servicemen in need.



Later a Madam Guerin from France was visiting the United States and learned of this new custom started by Ms. Michael and when she returned to France, made artificial red poppies to raise money for war orphaned children and widowed women. This tradition spread to other countries. In 1921, the

Franco-American Children's League sold poppies nationally to benefit war orphans of France and Belgium.



The League disbanded a year later and Madam Guerin approached the VFW for help. Shortly before Memorial Day in 1922 the VFW became the first veterans' organization to nationally sell poppies. Two years later their "Buddy" Poppy program was selling artificial poppies made by disabled veterans. In 1948 the US Post Office honored Ms Michael for her role in founding the National Poppy movement by issuing a red 3 cent postage stamp with her likeness on it.

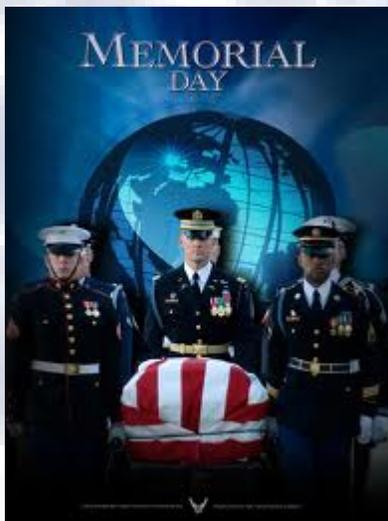


Traditional observance of Memorial day has diminished over the years. Many Americans nowadays have forgotten the meaning and traditions of Memorial Day. At many cemeteries, the graves of the fallen are increasingly ignored, neglected. Most people no longer remember the proper flag etiquette for the day. While there are towns and cities that still hold Memorial Day parades, many have not held a parade in decades. Some people think the day is for honoring any and all dead, and not just those fallen in service to our country.

Memorial Day Thoughts & Prayers - Continued



There are a few notable exceptions. Since the late 50's on the Thursday before Memorial Day, the 1,200 soldiers of the 3d U.S. Infantry place small American flags at each of the more than 260,000 gravestones at Arlington National Cemetery. They then patrol 24 hours a day during the weekend to ensure that each flag remains standing.



In 1951, the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts of St. Louis began placing flags on the 150,000 graves at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery as an annual Good Turn, a practice that continues to this day.



More recently, beginning in 1998, on the Saturday before the observed day for Memorial Day, the Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts place a candle at each of approximately 15,300 grave sites of soldiers buried at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park on Marye's Heights (the Luminaria Program).



And in 2004, Washington D.C. held its first Memorial Day parade in over 60 years.



The Rolling Thunder: Every Memorial Day, bikers enter Washington D.C. to honor veterans, POWs, and MIAs. (Photo Credit: Brendan Smialowski/epa/Corbis)

To help re-educate and remind Americans of the true meaning of Memorial Day, the "National Moment of Remembrance" resolution was passed on Dec 2000 which asks that at 3 p.m. local time, for all Americans "To voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a Moment of remembrance and respect, pausing from whatever they are doing for a moment of silence or listening to 'Taps.'"



The *Moment of Remembrance* is a step in the right direction to returning the meaning back to the day.



Yet it seems most Americans are too “engrossed” and “busy” with today’s day to day trials and tribulations to think of Memorial Day as anything but a 3-day weekend. This is very sad for we seem to have forgotten that in order for us to have this 3-day weekend to indulge in bliss and (dare I say) Freedom - is because others paid and are paying, the ultimate price!

*Remembering those
who paid for our
freedom.*



We should be humble and honored enough to set aside one day out of the entire year for our nation to get together to remember; to reflect and honor those who have given and are currently giving their all in service to our country – just so we can remain free!



Did You Know?



On January 19, 1999 Senator Inouye introduced bill S 189 to the Senate which proposes to restore the traditional day of observance of Memorial Day back to May 30th instead of "the last Monday in May". On April 19, 1999 Representative Gibbons introduced the bill to the House (H.R. 1474). The bills were referred the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Government Reform.



To date, there has been no further developments on the bill. Please write your Representative and your Senators, urging them to support these bills.



In a 2002 Memorial Day address the VFW stated: "Changing the date merely to create three-day weekends has undermined the very meaning of the day. No doubt, this has contributed greatly to the general public's nonchalant observance of Memorial Day."



How To Observe Memorial Day

"...gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with choicest flowers of springtime....let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us as sacred charges upon the Nation's gratitude,--the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan." --General John Logan, General Order No. 11, 5 May 1868

- by visiting cemeteries and placing flags or flowers on the graves of our fallen heroes.
- by visiting memorials.
- by flying the U.S. Flag at half-staff until noon.
- by flying the 'POW/MIA Flag' as well (Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act).
- by participating in a "National Moment of Remembrance": at 3 p.m. to pause and think upon the true meaning of the day, and for Taps to be played.
- by renewing a pledge to aid the widows, widowers, and orphans of our fallen dead, and to aid the disabled veterans.

"... there are some who keep up a tradition of pride in service to the United States of America and remember all those who had fallen Let none of us ever forget what Memorial Day really is." --Kathlena Peebles, May 1996

What is Memorial Day?

by Jim Hutchinson
Mays Landing, NJ

Is Memorial Day a Hardware sale?
A good price on a garden pail ?
Did my buddies give their limbs, lives, and sinew
For chicken, stakes, and barbecue ?
For The Coward to place a wreath on sacred ground,
While my comrades are crippled and wheelchair bound
Did my buddies die in that living green hell.
For endless rows of cars to sell ?
For drunks, accidents and long traffic jams,
Did my buddies perish in Vietnam .
So while young men drool over the Memorial Day Queen
I'll remember my buddies -The Living, The Dead and The In - Between.



Whenever I See A Soldier Boy...

by Sam Miller

Whenever I see a soldier boy
No matter where it be
I give him salutation
for he means so much to me

He's not the boy we used to know
In store, at desk or plow
He's a defender of our faith

He's in the service now

He keeps Old Glory flying
on land and air and sea
He lives to make our homes secure
He dies to keep us free.



The Price

By Roger W Hancock (www.PoetPatriot.com)

There is a price for everything, nothing is easy, nothing free.
To be left without wanting, then you must pay the cost.

With little price paid and your appreciation lean, value slips away to fade.
The desired becomes ignored.

If you yearn, if necessity be, work for it to earn the worth.
Then care for it that you shall see, the appraisal shall not deflate.

Freedom comes to everyone, if the price be paid, with blood.
Sacrifice for sake of freedom, it is not easy and it is not free and remember all those
who had fallen



Freedom's Colors

Roger W Hancock (www.PoetPatriot.com)

Red is for Bravery;
blood shed in sacrifice.
Freedom came with lives the price.

White is for Liberty;
freedom's purity.
Life be free from God's decree.

Blue is for Justice;
as vast as the sky.
Over freedom's land to occupy.



The Oath of the Soldier

A Memorial Day Observance Speech
by Johnny Q. Gogue III

Memorial Day – For most it is a three-day weekend, filled with bar-b-que’s and picnics . . . A time to get away from the normal humdrum of the week. For other’s it’s the beginning of summer, a time to look towards the long lazy days and a time to plan your summer get-a-ways. Though for some, Memorial Day holds a special significance.

On May 5, 1868, an order issued by General John Logan established a day of remembrance for those soldiers who died during the Civil War. May 30, 1868, was the day designated for this observance and flowers were placed on the graves of the fallen soldiers of both the Union and Confederate Armies. New York was the first state to officially recognize this observance in 1873 and in 1971 with the passage of the National Holiday Act; Memorial Day was designated as the last Monday of May.

Now for many of us, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, WWI, WWII, and the Korean War are ancient history. The Vietnam War a fading memory. But with the recent Operations Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom we, the American people have once again been thrust into a position of remembering those who are fighting and dying today.

I, like my grandfathers, father, uncles and aunt before me, am a veteran. I am and was proud of serving in the Armed Forces. I served in the Army from 1985 to 1994. I was in Operation Desert Storm/Shield. I know what Memorial Day is about.

I have two brothers who are currently serving. One brother is serving in the Navy in Italy. My youngest brother, who is currently serving in the Army, is right now in Iraq supporting and defending his fellow soldiers. I know what Memorial Day is about.

Memorial Day for all soldiers is embodied in the words of the oath that you first take when you enlist into the service of the country:

I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR (OR AFFIRM) THAT I WILL SUPPORT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES AGAINST ALL ENEMIES, FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC; THAT I WILL BEAR TRUE FAITH AND ALLEGIANCE TO THE SAME; AND THAT I WILL OBEY THE ORDERS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED

STATES AND THE ORDERS OF THE OFFICERS APPOINTED OVER ME, ACCORDING TO REGULATIONS AND THE UNIFORM CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE. SO HELP ME GOD.

This oath taken by each and every soldier exemplifies the reason why soldiers do what they do each and every day. Soldiers are defenders of the same principles that made this country great. They stand as Patriots to defend and protect the ideals and sentiments espoused in the Constitution of the United States. Soldiers bear true faith and allegiance to that document and they work, and live, within the Codes of Military Justice. Soldiers also obey the orders of the President of the United States and the Officers appointed over them. These truths are self evident in the everyday lives of soldiers.

Now, as we see our fellow citizens arrive back from a foreign land, we should not forget those words that each and every soldier spoke upon enlistment. Because when we look upon a returning soldier from conflict, a disabled veteran, or a grave marker – those words should ring in your conscience.

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic . . . streaming from the eyes of the returning soldier. That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the Officers appointed over me . . . sounding from the stumbling gait of the disabled veteran. According to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God . . . blasting from the cold stone face of a grave marker.

Remember those that gave their lives, so that we may continue to live in freedom as spelled out in the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence . . . Lest we forget.





MEMORIAL DAY

The dead soldier's silence sings our national anthem.
-Aaron Kilbourn

motifake.com

Oh Creator, hold our troops in your loving hands.

Protect them as they protect us.

*Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform
for us in our time of need.*

I humbly ask this in Your name.

Amen.

Broad stripes and bright stars.... gave proof.... ☆ ☆

that our flag was still there. ☆ ☆

Broad stripes and bright stars

gave proof that our flag was still there. ☆ ☆

Veteran

I was a proud veteran
That served my country well
To those that would listen
I had many stories to tell.

We fought for America's freedom
In far away places on foreign land.
Wherever the battle for democracy raged,
America's finest made a stand.

We fought for your future
And the right to remain free.
For we saw what freedom meant
To those not blessed with Liberty.

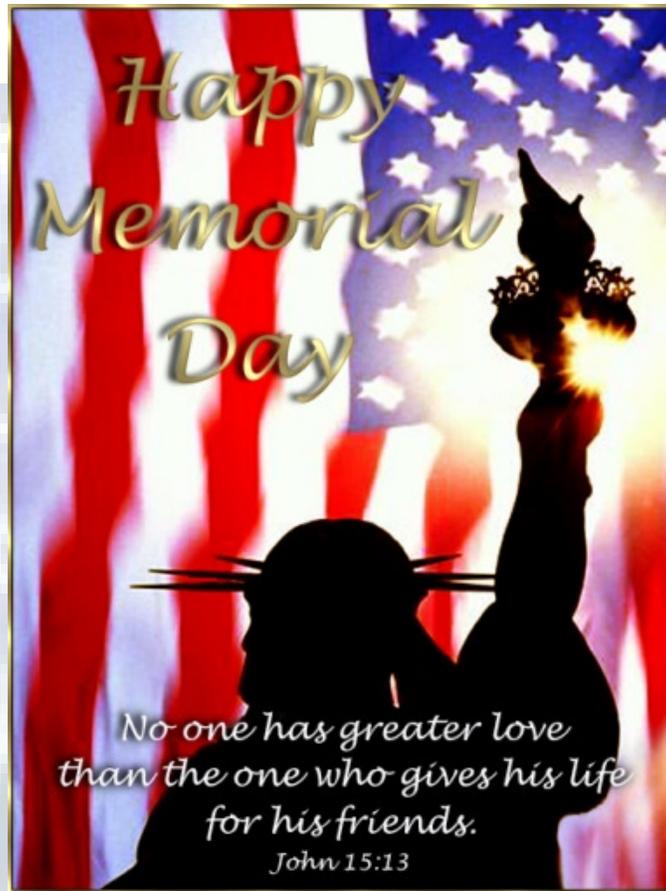
For you and yours
We would gladly have given our life.
We faced the fears and perils of battle
We braved endless turmoil and strife.

Please remember us veterans
And the sacrifices we made for you.
Please share the blessings of freedom,
Proudly wave the red, white and blue.

Lyrine Carey
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*May the truth that makes us free,
the hope that never dies,
and the love that casts out fear,
lead us forward together, till the dayspring breaks and the shadows flee
away.
Amen.*

To all who have fought: Thank You and May the Creator bless you and yours always. TNT