
The Real Meaning of Memorial Day

On Memorial Weekend many Americans will enjoy what too often has considered another three-day holiday. Camping, cook outs, recreational activities, the Indianapolis 500, new blockbuster movies, and of course– great sales. Businesses take advantage of the official start of summer by declaring open season on consumers. Originally called Decoration Day, Memorial Day has been celebrated by parades, memorial speeches, ceremonies, and the decoration of military graves with flowers and flags. Only in recent years has Memorial Weekend become a frenzy of consumerism that has all but drowned out the original purpose and intent of this national holiday.

Memorial Day was first observed on May 30, 1868, on the order of General John Alexander Logan for the purpose of decorating the graves of the American Civil War dead. It was observed on May 30 until 1971, when most states changed to a newly established federal schedule for the observance of this holiday the last Monday in May. Charles Moskos, a noted military sociologist at Northwestern University recently noted, “Most people don’t know what Memorial Day is for. It should be a day of respect for our veterans, but for most, it’s just a long weekend.”

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Desert Storm Commander, said, “On Memorial Day, let us pause and reflect on our fallen heroes who have paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving this great Nation. Because of their courage and selfless dedication, we are able to enjoy the many freedoms we hold so dear in America today. We are eternally grateful to the families and loved ones of these true American patriots and will remember them in our thoughts and prayers. On this special day, we look back in gratitude at their achievements and forward with hope for a lasting world peace.”

Citizenship does not come without responsibility. There are many who answered the call to leave the comforts of home and family to defend our nation in far off lands. And there were far too many who made the supreme sacrifice for their country. The legacy of those who were willing to preserve, protect and defend our liberty lives on in those who serve our nation today in the Armed Forces of the United State of America. The debt we owe them can never be adequately paid and our gratitude never fully expressed, but it is fitting that we acknowledge our appreciation and pay tribute to these brave men and women.

May we never forget the depth of devotion our military personnel and their families have demonstrated by their commitment to serving our country above self. Their sacrifice has insured our freedom through the ages. We encourage you to express your heart-felt thanks to those who have served or are currently serving in our Nation’s armed forces for placing their lives on the line to defend our freedom at home and abroad.