

We Must Never Forget

Memorial Day is a legal holiday, observed annually on the last Monday in May to honor our nation's armed forces who served gallantly in too many campaigns. The holiday, originally called Decoration Day, is traditionally marked by parades, speeches, ceremonies and the decoration of graves with flowers and flags, hence the original name. Memorial Day was first observed on May 30, 1868, on the order of Major General John Alexander Logan for the purpose of decorating graves of the American Civil War dead.

The significance of this day is sometimes confused or distorted. The true meaning of Memorial Day becomes, at times, distant or vague, lost to commercialism. Sometimes there is a failure to recognize the magnitude of the deeds of the men and women who held true to their beliefs that freedom must prevail. Our nation needs to pause and perceive the flags and flowers on our Veterans' graves on this consecrated holiday.

Many souls young and old were sacrificed in war, in duty to America. Many tomorrows were forfeited, given up so our nation could aspire to freedom. Those who lost their lives, gave us freedom. Those are the souls we remember and commemorate on Memorial Day. Our remembering is witness to those who gave more than anyone should be required to give. They gave up their lives, no matter what the cause; for a flag, for a country, for our freedom!

Americans take things for granted. We have so much freedom and so many endless choices. Our American fighting men and women killed in battle, whose souls we remember, made available to us choices and freedoms that we are blessed with everyday.

Memorial Day should also be a day that we rededicate ourselves to our country, to America's living veterans, and, to their families in tribute to the sacrifices they have made. To properly honor our dead, we must honor our living. The defenders of this nation have fulfilled their obligations to us. It is now our duty to honor the obligations owed to all veterans.

Memorial Day offers each of us the opportunity to express a moment of thankful prayer. Let us all stop for a moment to remember the true meaning of Memorial Day; to recognize how much we cherish the sacrifices made for our freedoms, and in a very simple word, and let that word, simply stated be "Thank you."

As President Ronald Reagan said on May 26, 1983, "Memorial Day is a time to take stock of the present, reflect on the past, and renew our commitment to the future of America."