

## The True Meaning of Memorial Day

“Secure the blessings of liberty, for ourselves and our posterity...” (Preamble We the People) This is precisely what all of our soldiers have been doing for America; protecting and sustaining our freedom. However, prior to 1968, citizens had no way of recognizing this. Thus, Memorial Day was born.

Memorial Day is currently being taken for granted, as if it is just a day off to sleep in and have barbecues. What American citizens don't realize is that those few extra hours of sleep or that hot dog eaten on Memorial Day is actually worth thousands of lives. For this reason, people need to learn the true meaning of Memorial Day.

Memorial Day began as something other than just a day of memory, but rather a day of decoration. On May 5, 1868, the Grand Army of the Republic established “Decoration Day” - a day dedicated to decorating the graves of fallen soldiers with flowers. General John Logan made this official with his Order NO. 11. This declared Memorial Day with the official date of May 30, when flowers would be in bloom “for the purpose of strewing flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country.”

He hoped this order would be kept up from year to year with the desire that “the public press call attention to this order, and lend its friendly aid in bringing it to the notice of comrades...” (Logan)

In 1971, Memorial Day was declared a federal holiday, changing it to the last Monday in May to honor America's fallen heroes. Year by year Logan's wish slowly began to die. To revive Logan's order, Congress passed “The National Remembrance Act” in December of 2000 to

**“encourage the people of the United States to give something back to their country, which provides them so much freedom and opportunity.” (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs) This act also encouraged Americans to pause wherever they are at 3 p.m. for one minute of silence to honor and remember those who have died in service.**

**I had the honor to interview Chief Master Sergeant Kenneth Koyles over his views on Memorial Day. This is what he had to say;**

**“It is also the soldier's family that sacrifices, so I think they appreciate it when [civilians] take the time to thank them for their sacrifices as well... I don't begrudge anyone for celebrating their own way... I think that they just don't understand the meaning like veterans do. It's like trying to explain what it is like to skydive to someone who has never skydived... Just if we could explain it better then they will understand it better.”**

**Seventeen years after the last attempt to fix Memorial Day, citizens still have not changed. I now share Logan's dream with hope that this essay reaches the public, where they can learn the true meaning of Memorial Day. Whether it be through decoration, or moments of silence, however you wish to celebrate does not matter, as long as you remember that it is to show appreciation for those who died for our freedom.**

## Bibliography

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