

The True Meaning of Memorial Day

The term Memorial Day brings different thoughts, and emotions to everyone who hears those words. Some envision picnics, and float trips. While others see flags and parades. But what is Memorial Day? The online Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Memorial Day as

"1. May 30 formerly observed as a legal holiday in most states of the US in remembrance of war dead.

2. The last Monday in May observed as a legal holiday in most states of the US"

("Memorial Day").

But what is Memorial Day really?

To understand Memorial Day, you have to know the history. There are accounts of a mother of a Confederate soldier that while placing flowers on her sons grave, she also placed flowers on a Union soldier's grave,. This seems to have grown into a group of women, and then eventually into a national holiday. Civil War General John A. Logan, ordered May 30, 1868, to be a day to remember soldiers killed in the Civil War. This day was originally called Decoration Day (Cella), but later changed to Memorial Day. Congress officially moved the holiday to the last Monday of May in 1971 (Carr). When one understands the history, one can create their own idea of the meaning of this holiday. /

To me, the true meaning of Memorial day is to remember US soldiers who have died in War and honor their families. This includes my Uncle Johnathan W. Buffett, CW2, who died in Korea in 2011. Most people think that it is a day to remember all US soldiers dead or alive, but it is to remember only the US soldiers who died in active duty and show respect to their family members. Every fallen soldier has a history. Every death leaves a hole. Even their commanding officers can be affected by their sacrifice.

In a personal interview with Army veteran, Darrel Holt, I asked him questions concerning his perception of Memorial Day. He stated that as a boy he didn't care about it, it was just a day out of school. But as he went through the army and lost comrades, it changed his view on Memorial Day. Today he observes Memorial Day as a time to be grateful for those who sacrificed for all our freedoms, but he also uses Memorial Day as a day to remember his lost loved ones who didn't serve. When questioned about decorating the stones of those who did not serve, Mr. Holt stated that he thought Memorial Day had evolved to include everyone regardless of service. Therefore, the present day actions of visiting all Cemeteries and graves of those we have lost does not offend him (Holt).

What is the definition of Memorial Day? History records that it was intended for fallen US soldiers that died during action, beginning with the Civil War, and now including every US war. Individuality indicates that Memorial Day can be interrupted many different ways. Some remember the fallen soldiers, while others remember all their lost loved ones. Future observances of Memorial Day may evolve even more, but the underlying definition of Memorial Day will always be Remembrance.