

A Memorial To The Fallen

May 26, 2013 By **Anita Ramachandran**



Memorial Day Celebration at the Arlington National Cemetery

It is the last weekend in May and a three-day holiday weekend in the US. Known as Memorial Day, it is a day marked by parades and celebration in most US cities. It is also a time of remembrance and reflection - an occasion to honor all military personnel who laid down their lives while in the service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in a battle.

So how different is it from Veterans Day - another holiday that remembers those who died? Well, Veterans Day is the day to thank and honor ALL those who served honorably in the military – in wartime and peacetime.

Origins of Memorial Day

REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVED



ALL GAVE SOME, SOME GAVE ALL

It was May 1858. The Civil War had ended three years prior, and the Grand Army of the Republic was planning to establish Decoration Day - to decorate the graves of the war dead, with flowers. They picked May 30 that year because flowers would be abundant all over the country. A large observance marked the first celebration at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC where over 5000 people attended. That tradition has now become an annual event.

Underline what you believe to be the most important word, phrase, or sentence. You may only choose one.

Until the beginning of the 1900s, Memorial Day ceremonies were held to honor the dead in the Civil War on different dates in each of the states of the Republic and the Confederates. Soon memorials were all being held on May 30. It was not until after World War I, however, that the day was expanded to honor all those who had died in any American war. In 1971, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday by an act of Congress and placed on the last Monday in May, as were some other federal holidays.

A tale of young bravery



Charles Gilliland

Wars have many soul stirring stories of bravery. Today we remember the youngest Korean War Medal of Honor Recipient, Charles Leon Gilliland.

Gilliland died in battle in Korea decades ago, but his sister-in-law still recalls and feels guilty about his death. Gilliland was just 17 in 1951 and prior to his death, had written letters home asking for bullets for his pistol. His family did not send any ammunition, for fear of trouble. The story goes that Gilliland's last moments were spent fighting with a knife because he lacked ammunition. Gilliland's service has been memorialized in Hawaii and the USNS Gilliland was dedicated in his name.

Precious young lives have been lost to war, as they attempted to give us the freedom we take for granted today.

Do you think we could get to a future where there are no wars?