

# MEMORIAL DAY



BEACH LANDING: D-DAY INVASION



KOREAN WAR: FIGHTING AT INCHON

**SACRIFICE AND  
DUTY**

**A REFLECTION  
ON HONOR,**



MONUMENT: IWO JIMA



On Monday, May 28, 2007 Americans across this nation and citizens located around the world will pause throughout the day to observe Memorial Day. Since its first official observation on 5 May, 1868, when it was called Declaration Day, it has been a day of remembrance for those who sacrificed and died in our nation's service. And while it was originally dedicated to honor Civil War soldiers, we know it today as a celebration in memory of all who have fought for and defended our right to freedom.

In 1968 the observation of this day was established to be the last Monday in May. Today it remains a time of observation to honor and to respect those who fought to protect the liberties that our Founding Fathers proclaimed with certainty in the Declaration of Independence and that were thoughtfully and carefully framed in the Constitution of the United States. In his proclamation to set aside this day in 1868, General Logan instructed there to be thoughts to ***"...cherish tenderly the memories of our heroic dead who made their breast a barricade between our country and its foes"***.

To those who died securing peace and freedom; To those who served in conflict to protect our land, and sacrificed their dreams of the day to preserve the hope of our nation -keeping America the land of the free for over two centuries - we owe our thanks and our honor. It is important to not only recognize their service but to respect their devotion to duty and to ensure that the purpose for which they fought will never be forgotten.

From the soldiers who fought bravely during the American Revolution to the men and women of today's Armed Forces, America's fighting forces, have responded bravely to this nation's call to duty. Both on the battlefield and in their assurance of readiness, members of the nation's military remain bound to their duty. For more than 200 years, America's Armed Forces have been the surest guarantee that Freedom will continue to ring across this land –



### **From Sea to Shining Sea!**

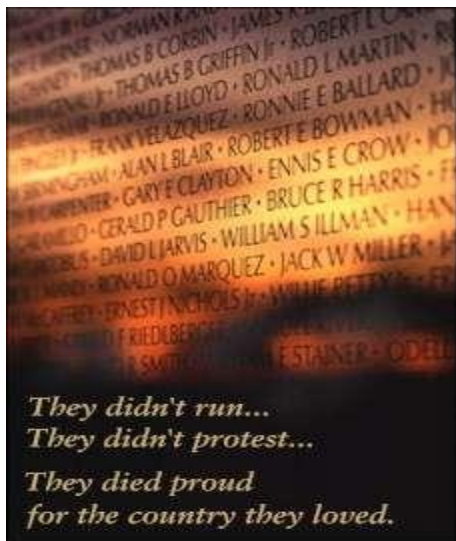
**"WHEN YOU GO HOME,  
TELL THEM OF US AND  
SAY,  
FOR THEIR TOMORROW,  
WE GAVE OUR TODAY.**

**-The Kohima Epitaph**

The lives of the men and women who fought in America's battles, and who served their country in support of the military, made significant sacrifice in fighting for the freedom and liberty that we enjoy today. Too often we fail to remember those who gave their life, or those whose life today bears the scars as a lasting memory of that sacrifice and commitment. But there are many who remember vividly as the lives affected were sons, daughters, friends, co-workers and neighbors – and that their unselfish sacrifice was made with the assurance that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness required the ultimate service to their nation.

In a very moving letter, Abraham Lincoln expressed the respect and consolation of a nation and his own compassion to Mrs. Bixby, who lost five sons in combat during the Civil War. Mr. Lincoln's letter expressed the compassion that he felt with the honor due the fallen soldiers:

Dear Madam: I have been shown in the files....that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom. A. Lincoln



In the Revolutionary War more than 25,000 lost their life in this initial pursuit of freedom that they believed in but could not have fully comprehended at that time. In the Civil War almost 600,000 gave their lives as the very foundation of this nation was challenged from within its own boundaries; WWII claimed the lives of more than 400,000; and scores of others gave their life in wars in Korea and in Vietnam. And America continues to realize the never-ending sense of duty that our Armed forces have as they serve our nation throughout the world. In each instance, without regard to politics or the popular opinion of the moment, soldiers have picked up their arms to begin the awesome task of fighting for our freedom and to push back the threat to those freedoms when made by others throughout the world.

In 1776, America's Founding Fathers declared the intent for this new nation to be independent and free – ***WE hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with ...rights... (of) Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...*** And, to this day whether out of commitment to this Declaration or to their duty to defend these rights from encroachment, our Armed Forces fight to preserve this nation for all that call it home.

Early in the War for Independence, Captain Nathan Hale was captured by the British and executed as a spy. His dying words - "***I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country***" - echo the sentiment that seems to exemplify the resolve of America's soldiers who go forward into battle to protect and to defend the rights and freedoms that each of us enjoy today. Nathan Hale held strongly to a vision of America as free and strong – and thankfully so do the men and women who continue to serve in American's Armed Forces.



During the Revolutionary war the Stars and Stripes flew high as a symbol of freedom and provided inspiration as Francis Scott Key inscribed the words to the Star Spangled Banner. And, while we remember so vividly the first verse, it is the third verse that I believe honors the soldiers who fought so bravely for that flag and who stand ready to defend it today should the nation call for their service.

***O thus be it ever, when free men shall stand;  
Between their loved homes and war's desolation;  
Blessed vict'ry and peace, may the heaven rescued land;  
Praise the power that hath made and preserved as a nation;  
Then conquer we must when our cause is just;  
And this be our motto, In God is our Trust.....***



Our flag is truly a symbol of the freedoms that we fight so diligently to protect. From Key's vision of bombs bursting through the morning air to the courageous memory of Marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima - The American Flag is a symbol of freedom that we celebrate and hold sacred. Let it also remind each of us of the sacrifice made by men and women throughout our nation so that this flag could stand tall. And, let us not forget that we will ever see it wave as a nation of free people because of the lives that we honor each Memorial Day.

In his speech at Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln's words focused on the loss of life during the Civil War and the higher cause for which the lives were given, but they ring true as a reminder for today... ***that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion...that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people....should not perish from this earth.*** Lincoln's charge was to ensure that the cause to which each soldier gave their life would not be lost, and that this Union, which he himself had given an oath to preserve, protect and defend, would grow ever stronger.

During the Civil War, Walt Whitman observed soldiers on both sides as they fought for their beliefs and suffered the pain, tragedy and death of war. Whitman's observations regarding the real mechanics and loss in War express truth that many of us can not truly realize today as no one except the soldier can really know the pain and agony that our fighting forces experience during battle. ***"Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of...the ...War. The real war will never get in the books."***







During WWII, as soldiers were preparing to land at beaches around France and to begin the push necessary to stop the threat of Nazi control, these words echo the hope that the world placed in the defenders of our freedom – then and now:

***“... on these craft hang the future of Europe and the course of history. In the hands of these men, free men everywhere have placed their hope for today and prayer for tomorrow.”***

Theodore Roosevelt conveyed the thoughts of the world in his words to the nation during a time of concern and uncertainty about the future: ***“..with confidence in our armed forces, with the unbridled determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph – so help us God.”*** And with the uncertainty of battle ahead, and with doubts of whether they would live to see tomorrow, America’s military remained committed to their duty and to the battle that had to be fought to achieve the desired victory.

The D-Day invasion claimed the lives of many American and other Allied fighting forces. A memorial at the American Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach contains this inscription:

**These Endured All And Gave All That Justice Among Nations Might Prevail and That Mankind Might Enjoy Freedom and Inherit Peace.**



Further into the cemetery, an inscription dedicated to the memory of those who fought to control the beaches of Normandy serves as a permanent reminder of the gratitude and respect for the Allied soldiers. These words also provide a lasting memory to the sacrifice made by Americans throughout this nation’s history to preserve and protect our Freedom. It reads:

**This Embattled Shore, Portal of Freedom, Is Forever Hallowed by the Ideals, Valor, Sacrifices of Our Fellow Countrymen.**

During the Korean War, soldiers fought to defend a country and a people that they did not know. These soldiers answered the call of duty and defended, for all of us, the rights of Freedom against an enemy that is represented today by those who want to tear down our liberty and to destroy the freedom that has been preserved to this day by those who have fought to defend it.

The freedoms that were defined in the Declaration of Independence were made possible by those individuals who were willing to lay down their life for the pursuit of freedom and the belief that liberty was a right of all men. During the Civil War, Lincoln’s Proclamation that .....inspired those whose freedoms were stolen from them and by the end of the war more than 200,000 black soldiers and sailors had joined to fight for a future that they believed was possible. And many times since then our freedom has been guaranteed by the resolve of the armed forces who have refused to turn from the foes of liberty that would set themselves against this Nation, its Allies and the foundation of Godly principles upon which it stands.

On September 11, 2001 The United States of America was, for the second time in its history, attacked by an act of war that was unprovoked and cowardly. Our resolve was tested, and we demonstrated to the world that our passion for freedom and liberty will never be lost in the midst of a confused and misdirected plan of enemies throughout the world. Our military forces were once again called upon to protect our country from an enemy that is entrenched in hatred and bias against our country and the freedom for which it stands.



President Bush proclaimed the intent and the resolve of this nation to bring defeat to the enemy that attacked our nation with these words of assurance...

*... we're going to find those evil-doers, those barbaric people who attacked our country and we're going to hold them accountable, and we're going to hold the people who house them accountable; the people who think they can provide them safe havens will be held accountable; the people who feed them will be held accountable."*

To those who died, to all of those who fought, we owe the honor of our respect for delivering to us Freedom upon nothing less than the commitment of their life and the willingness to lose it, for that defense.

Harry Truman once said; **"I think I know the American Soldier..... He does not want gratitude or sympathy. He had a job to do. He did not like it. But he did it. And how he did it. Now he wants to come back home and start again the life he loved....."**



Ablaze, the USS Arizona slips beneath the waters

And I echo his sentiment, with respect for those who withstood the rigors and threats of battle, if for just a time, to provide each of us with the opportunity for life. And while the loss of life did not deter them, the thought of liberty and freedom was sufficient to see them march on to the fighting objective. I am sure that Mr. Truman's words describe each of the soldiers who have given their service to America for more than two-hundred years. And it is each of us who owe them the respect for what they did, the honor for their service, and the commitment to support their comrades should duty call.



So let us pause with respect and honor on this Memorial day to remember those who fought, for those who gave their life, and for those who willingly stand ready today to do the same, without question, when the defense of freedom calls on them. We owe each of them the highest regard, respect, and honor – and the assurance that their commitment to this Nation's freedom will never be forgotten.



In each instance, when called upon to defend the rights of this Nation to enjoy the liberty of freedom, the American soldier has responded courageously – whether it was WWII and rallied by support around the world, or in Vietnam during a time of disruption and confusion among the people of our nation, or even today when the war in Iraq provokes similar confusion and disagreement among the citizens. It is imperative that each of us show our respect for the soldiers who fought and to remember the sacrifice made by each for it is their dedication to duty that will ensure each call to duty is responded to with the assurance of victory over every threat to our freedom.

Our land has been truly blessed and honored with Veterans who have given their lives to ensure that we have the freedom to enjoy the blessings given to us by God and assured in Liberty by the vision of our Founding Fathers. Lee Greenwood sings a particularly sentimental song with the assurance that...he would gladly stand up and defend [America] today. God Bless the USA! And today, as we should each day, we say God Bless those who have given of their lives to make America strong and to those who remain prepared to fight for our country today.

**"No arsenal, no weapon in the arsenals of the world, is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women. - - - Ronald Reagan**

The men and women who serve, and who have served, in the Armed Forces are no less committed to protecting our nation than were the men who signed The Declaration of Independence. Their final words declare that **"... for the Support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."** Our Armed Forces continue to maintain that same standard of commitment and honor that was declared more two centuries ago.

On this Memorial Day – pause to reflect on just what has been given, and sacrificed so freely, so that Freedom could ring across this great land.



Arlington National Cemetery

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Lee Greenwood".