

80th Anniversary of D-Day: What Memorial Day Means to Me

By: Adeena Aijaz

Many people see Memorial Day as a time to have a long awaited rest from school, or work. It's a day to gather with family, enjoy hamburgers, and socialize. However, while enjoying a day off, we should all commemorate the men and women who have sacrificed for our country and should be given their credit for outstanding acts of service. Every time I think of Memorial Day, a sense of gratitude washes over me. I may not know any of the people who perished personally, but the fact they put their lives on the line, storming into battles bravely so we could live life comfortably is reason to care.

Every year, I spend time thinking about how I would never have enough courage, or strength to ever go through what they did. I have an unimaginable appreciation for their help to defeat a terrible dictator, especially as someone from a country who has faced similar trials. I look up to the way that they continue to make an impact even after their deaths. They motivated this generation to protect the freedoms that they gave us, and to devote time, and raw effort to this cause. They are more than just figures to look up to, they are blueprints, and definitions of dedication and care.

As this year we not only honor Memorial Day, but also the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, I reflect on how the allied soldiers must have felt during those first moments on the beach in Normandy. Were they thinking that even 80 years after their commitment, they would still be appreciated, recognized figures? They thought about us when walking into battles; therefore there is no excuse to forget them on Memorial Day, even as we enjoy our picnics.

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By: Roje Williams

"Home of the free, because of the brave." – Unknown

Memorial Day to many people means the kickoff of summer but to me it means much more than just a beach day. Memorial Day to me means a day to remember all those veterans that have passed, but specifically the ones that were with my dad in Iraq during his two tours. My dad is a combat veteran that fought during Operation Enduring Freedom and the Battle of Fallujah, code name, "Phantom Fury." This battles that lasted from November 7th to December 23rd, was one of the bloodiest battles in current war history. One hundred and ten coalition forces were killed. Normally during Memorial Day weekend it is difficult for me to talk to my dad about it because this is a difficult topic to talk about as he was there and witnessed the unbearable pain that war brings. The trauma that happened overseas is common and this is why it's important to give military families space on this weekend. It allows families to remember their loved ones that passed.

Honor and Remembrance

"Greater love hath no man to lay down his life for his brothers." – Lt. Michael Murphy

Honor and remembrance are two important components even if you do not agree with what the U.S. Military contributes to our country. Showing honor towards the fallen soldiers could be done in many ways. One way that my family, friends and I show honor and remembrance is by doing a workout every Memorial Day called the *Murph Challenge*. The *Murph Challenge* is an arduous workout. For us it is a time to suffer a bit and show respect for difficult situations. The weekend of Memorial Day is a set time to stop and think about the honor that the fallen soldiers deserve.

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By: Collette Rochedieu

Joe Lesniewski, a veteran of D-Day, recalls; “I don’t feel that I’m any kind of hero. To me, the work had to be done. I was asked to do it. So I did.” To others, like Joe, this is the sacrifice that was necessary. To some people, Memorial Day is a day to appreciate American freedom. To others, it is just a day off. However, this special day goes much deeper. First known as Decoration Day, a day to decorate the graves of dead soldiers, after World War I, Memorial Day now focuses on every soldier and veteran, not just departed soldiers. In 1971, Richard Nixon made the day a federal holiday.

For me, Memorial Day is a connection to my great-grandfather, Victor DePace, who served in the D-Day invasion. Though I never had the ability to meet him, he told my father about his experiences: “I remember seeing the beach, going off into the water and just getting stuck there.” He ended up having to stay in the water, helplessly watching the German fire their weapons from the safety of the water, unable to do anything but stay put. Thankfully, he survived to tell about his experiences, even though he watched others perish. It’s interesting to hear about these battles, showing how much people like my great-grandfather and Joe sacrificed to guarantee our country’s security.

Celebrating Memorial Day can be different for everyone. Perhaps their town holds a celebration, or a parade with a speech from a veteran. I celebrate Memorial Day by cherishing everything that soldiers have done for us, and appreciating many of my relatives that served in the military as well. Joe doesn’t see himself as a hero, but those who face death are. Without them, who knows where America would be.