

The Importance of Memorial Day

In honor of the soldiers that sacrificed their freedoms for mine, I have composed this essay. I hope that all who read this can see the holiday through the same lense as I do. And for any veterans or family members of veterans, I hope that all can relate to the experiences and emotions that I feel for this distinguished holiday.

Memorial Day is a day of remembrance of the soldiers that have fallen. Although most of my friends and neighbors saw this as a 3-day weekend off school or work. There were a few people I knew that spent their day remembering the men and women that sacrificed their lives.

When I was very young, I would spend Memorial Day with my grandfather listening to stories about his time in the U.S. Military. I would ask many questions about what war was like, and what role he played in the army. Grandfather and my uncle were both World War II veterans. One story that my uncle told me, was about how he felt he had abandoned his unit after getting captured by the Italians. He said that he was the only one that made it out and always expressed how he considered himself extremely fortunate.

Years later, after they both passed away, I would spend the Memorial Day holiday remembering them. I would often share the stories that I had heard from my Grandfather and uncle with my friends. And slowly over the years, the holiday became about remembering them. When I was twelve years old, I met a friend's brother who was in the marines. He was an overly cheerful guy that wouldn't raise his voice at anything. He would answer my questions about the military and what he did as a medic. Through his stories,

we got to see what Memorial Day meant for him. His stories honored the friends he lost during Operation Desert Storm. He told me of a time when they were ambushed in Baghdad, under fire from all angles. He was lucky enough to find cover in an alleyway until reinforcements came, unlike the others in his unit.

For years, I would go to visit him to help him get through the day, listening to him reminisce about his unit. After about two years, I referred to him as my uncle. He became the family that I didn't have. He set a good example for me and my friends, in hopes of changing my situation for the better. Thankfully, we would spend the Memorial Day together to keep each other in check and to remember the family we shared by choice.

I am forever grateful for the experiences and lessons of these great people. I hope to honor them by the person I am becoming today. I would like to emphasize the importance of remembering these valiant soldiers and spending time with those we hold close to us.