

Memorial Day 2012 Comment Mike Goldsby, May 24, 2012

We have a three-day weekend coming up and, for many it marks the unofficial beginning of summer. In the middle of the camping, barbeques, beer drinking and Kinetic Sculpture races, it is important to remember that this is about Memorial Day.

Memorial Day falls on the last Monday in May but there has been legislation offered to make Memorial Day May 30<sup>th</sup> period. The sponsors of the bill said this would put focus on honoring our war dead and take the focus off of family trips, Memorial Day Weekend sales and the Indy 500. So far, this change has not received much support.

Apparently, in the United States, there has been a long tradition of Decoration Day; events when people would clean up cemeteries, honor their deceased ancestors, even have a picnic on the cemetery lawns. The idea of focusing on those who lost their lives in armed combat came about following the Civil War.

Many people today still use Memorial Day to honor all deceased. But the reason for the holiday is our veterans. As a child, I remember the parades and the red poppies. My Dad and my uncle would banter about the Army and the Navy, respectively. Their service came right at the end of World War II.

This station is a big promoter of Honor Flight, a program to get World War Two vets to Washington DC to see the Memorial. That is a very worthwhile program. I was fortunate to get to go to the capitol and see the Memorial in 2005. It is very impressive and thought provoking. 56 tall granite pillars, two huge arches around a semicircle plaza, mostly water and landscaping. There are bronze eagles and wreaths.

The names of the forty eight states are engraved on the bases of the pillars. Half of the monument depicts the Pacific Front and the other half the European front. Hidden in the monument are two engravings of "Kilroy was here."

It is grand, an accurate depiction of that global conflict, and a fitting monument to those who served and to the 400 thousand who lost their lives.

The memorial does an excellent job of portraying America's role in that conflict. But, so do the Vietnam Memorial and the Korean War Memorial.

The Vietnam Memorial is also known as The Wall; A long black granite surface that is almost mirrored. The memorial was planned with 4 objectives. To be reflective and contemplative in nature. To harmonize with the surroundings. To contain the names of the dead and missing in action. And to make no political statement about the war, but to honor all who served, living and dead. When I was there, people were very quiet, searching the long lists of names for friends or family members.

The Korean War memorial is equally impressive yet so different. 19 larger than life bronze statues of soldiers on patrol are placed in a landscape of juniper and hibiscus, to reflect the rugged Korean terrain. You get a sense of their situation and their sacrifice.

Locally, there are events in Ferndale, Arcata, Trinidad, Ocean View Cemetery and other places as well. And no matter where you are, 3:00 on Monday is established as a moment of remembrance.

This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment.