Memorial Day

**Memorial Day is held the last Monday in May. The day honors those who have lost their lives serving our country. To honor all the men and women who have served our nation, there are more than 100 special cemeteries in this country and in Europe. One of the best known is Arlington National Cemetery, where more than 285,000 service members and their family members are buried. Service members from every American war, including Iraq, are buried there. *(Betty Debnam, in Rocky Mountain News)***

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A Peaceful Memorial Day: In times of peace, the sacrifices of war fade from public memory, though families and friends never cease to grieve for those who made the ultimate sacrifice so their country could enjoy peace and liberty.

Memorial Day, celebrated since 1971 on the last Monday in May, knits together the public and private memories, especially for the majority of Americans too young to remember any time when the nation was fully mobilized for war.

The custom of setting aside a day to decorate the graves of the country’s honored dead began formally in 1868, when commander-in-chief Gen. John Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, a veterans’ organization, issued a proclamation designating May 30 for the purpose.

The practice began spontaneously in many towns even earlier, because there was no danger, in those years, that the memories of war would soon fade. Nearly half a million Americans died in the Civil War – more, in fact, than in World War II, when the population was more than four times as large.

“The comrades who died in defense of their country,” Logan wrote, “now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land.” He urged that every year their graves “be garlanded with the choicest flowers of springtime,” and fly “the dear old flag they saved from dishonor” so the cost of a free and undivided republic would never be forgotten.

For many Americans, though, Memorial Day has become more the beginning of the summer season than a solemn day of remembrance. In the past several years, in hopes of renewing the former spirit of the occasion, an organization called No Greater Love has campaigned for a National Moment of Remembrance, at 3 p.m., when Americans can pause and reflect on the true meaning of the holiday. Many radio and television stations broadcast Taps.

This year, President Clinton has endorsed the observance and it has been introduced in Congress as a joint resolution.

We wish everyone a peaceful holiday. If you should happen to hear the strains of Taps – and even if you don’t – stop for a moment and thank the brave men and women who made it possible. *(Rocky Mountain News, May 29, 2000)*

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