

Memorial Day Tribute

Today we pause across our Nation and throughout the world, to honor and remember the men and women who gave their lives defending our Nation.

This is a somber day of reflection. Memorial Day is a time to remember these men and women who gave us the most precious gift of all, our freedom.

America has been blessed thanks to the men and women who gave their last full measure of devotion to our Country, and to the 19 million living American Veterans and to their families as well.

Due to their service and sacrifice we live in the land of the free and home of the brave, where we can worship God, think about and talk about God, because no one says we can't.

Our servicemen and women embrace the phrase, so well-known in the Book of John in the New Testament: "For greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Over a million Americans who have worn the uniform have died in battlefields here and on almost every continent around the world defending our way of life.

So many sacrifices have been made to keep us free. Had it not been for those who have served and by those who we have lost, America could not be what she is today.

That is why we gather here to honor and remember those who have served, those who have done their tour of duty, never asking for anything in return other than to be remembered and respected for defending our Nation.

For those here today who have lost a family member, a loved one, or a friend while serving in our military, we are humbled by your loss, but with a grateful heart we also want to say how thankful we are for their service, how proud we are of their courage, and how honored we are of their sacrifice.

As we observe Memorial Day on the last Monday in May, I believe there are important things to remember about these brave men and women who gave their last full measure of devotion for our Nation.

These were men and women, most in the prime of their life, from cities big and small from Hawaii to Virginia, North Dakota to Texas.

Strong, brave men and women full of hopes and dreams with plans to go to college, start their own business, some to get married and have a family, others to see their children grow up and spend precious time with their grandchildren.

These men and women from many walks of life and different backgrounds who left their families, their homes, and their lives not for recognition or fame or even the honor we bestow on them today.

Some of America's best and brightest have given their lives on the beaches of Normandy, in the jungles of the South Pacific, and over the skies of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.

They have fought and fallen on the icy slopes of the Korean Peninsula and the rice paddies of Vietnam. And they have fought in the deadly skies south of the Yalu River in Korea and in Vietnam's Red River Valley.

Ask a veteran who stormed Omaha Beach in World War II, who almost froze on Korea's Chosin Reservoir, who slogged through the steaming Mekong Delta, or who is still fighting Al Qaeda insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq.

More recently, they have fought and died in the mountains and caves of Afghanistan and in the deadly streets of Iraq.

Only those who have seen war firsthand can ever truly know the things they've seen, the sounds they've heard, and the things they've done in service of our Nation.

Each of them knew what their duty was, surely each of them dreamed of going home to the people they love and the life they cherished.

Each of them had families waiting eagerly to see them again. We know that they were forced to leave their hopes and dreams behind when they went off to war.

Most of them who died in defense of our Nation, were boys when they died, and they gave up two lives, the one they were living and the one they would have lived.

They gave up their chance to be husbands and fathers and grandfathers. They gave up everything for their Country, for us.

There are many stories, indeed countless heroic stories of American soldiers who've made the ultimate sacrifice and laid down their lives to save their brothers and sisters in harm's way.

Some of these stories are well known, others are known only to those who served alongside of them.

But all of them offer eloquent testimony to the courage, duty and honor and sheer determination with which our men and women carry out their duties.

We know how much we owe them, how much they have given us, and how much we can never fully repay.

The enormity of their sacrifice is beyond compare. As we express our gratitude, we must never forget the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

We need to be grateful, appreciative, and thankful to those who served our Nation and sacrificed so much for our freedom, not just on Memorial Day, but every day.

As we remember those who we lost, let us offer a "Thank You," for their service, and a thank you to their families for all they have sacrificed as well.

"Thank You:" Two words, eight letters spoke with reverence, with love, with gratitude, with humility and understanding. **Thank You!**