

## Memorial Day 2015

The unofficial start of summer is here. A three-day weekend: BBQs, car sales and mattress sales, and an array of leisure activities that we Americans do with an extra day.

Still it is imperative, that we, at a minimum, take a bit of time this Monday to reflect on and remember those who have died in service to the United States in our two-plus centuries of existence.

One only has to look at photos of the families of those who survive loved ones who have died in service. From every corner of our country, from the most urban environments, like Newark, to rural Appalachia, the experience of losing a human being creates a horrific hurt.

Mothers at their child's headstone.

A woman with lipstick leaving a lip mark of a kiss.

Dogtags.

Citizens holding their hands over their hearts as a soldier's hearse passes by.

Grieving fathers who lost sons much too young.

Children, little boys and girls, who will never know mommy or daddy.

All reduced to the silence of death, buried in cemeteries, to be remembered by their families.

And to be remembered by all of us this one day of the year devoted to national memory.

This day of memory was introduced to our national calendar in the aftermath of the devastating tragedy of the Civil War, a war that tore our nation in half.

Our country lost 2% of our then population, 620,000 individuals, in the Civil War.

It was a war in our homeland that required massive amounts of time, money, and emotion, to rebuild.

It was then, in 1868, three years after the Civil War's conclusion that our government instituted a national day of memorial for the fallen of all of the wars.

A war that tore our country apart, taking the lives of such a dramatic number of soldiers, made the specter of remembering that much more important.

For in remembering, contains the hope, we will not repeat. Would that would be true.

Still, memory is important.

We human beings are unique in how we have evolved. We are the species that has the highest ability to recall memories--whether we have experienced them in our own lives, as so many survivors of fallen soldiers do daily--or when they are personal memories of someone else's experience. Putting a day of memorial on our civil religious calendar reminds us that even if these memories are not a part of our daily experiences, we owe it to those who have died to pause and remember.

And it is only the living who have the ability to remember the dead.

This is our obligation.

We remember the deaths of those who were drafted into military service without choice; and those who choose to enter military service of their own volition.

In our generation, we experience the fading veterans of World War II, a war where we lost over 400,000 people. In Korea, our country lost over 54,000 lives. In Viet Nam, the loss of life exceed 58,000--each name you can see inscribed on Maya Lin's moving Vietnam memorial in Washington, DC. In our day, the long wars of Iraq and Afghanistan our country's losses grew by another 6,600 human beings.

The latest loss of military life was Petty Officer 3rd Class Devon J. Doyle, 21 of Colorado, died on May 16 in Bahrain. Petty Officer 3rd Class Doyle was assigned to the USS Farragut home ported in Mayport, FL. He was supporting Operation Inherent Resolve, the campaign against Islamic State Militants in Iraq and Syria.

"He was an outstanding shipmate who was a positive influence on all who worked with him. He will be deeply missed" said Farragut Cmdr. Cory Applebee.

Devon was a baseball player and wrestler at Alamosa High School in Colorado where he graduated in 2012.

Devon is survived by his parents and two sisters. This loss was in the combat theater but not combat related.”

Rabbi Harold Robinson, who regularly posts our country’s military losses writes: “I pray that the day will come when we will no longer hear the shrill harsh reports of war and all the nations will come together, acknowledge the unity of humanity and of humanity’s creator and join together to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the All Mighty. May this be God’s will.”

No matter what you do on Monday, let each of us use this day of memory to remember those who served our country, who died for it. No matter how our country’s fallen lost their lives, Memorial Day offers us the gift of pausing and remembering.