

The True Meaning of Memorial Day

By:Noelle McGill

“A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.” That’s a quote by Joseph Campbell who was a famous American writer. Heroes are those people we remember on Memorial Day. They’re the men and women in the military who died to preserve our freedoms. I believe the true meaning of Memorial Day is remembering those heroes and what they did.

Memorial Day began after the Civil War as a way to remember and honor those who had died. However, after the first World War it became a holiday to remember all the men and women who had died in war, not just those from the Civil War. Memorial Day started off as May 30th. Now it’s always the last Monday in May. There have been several groups trying to move the holiday back to the 30th of May, but as of yet, none have succeeded. No matter when Memorial Day is, we should always take time to stop and remember those who have given their lives to keep us free.

There are many different ways to observe Memorial Day. A few of them are putting flowers on graves of fallen soldiers, putting the American flag at half-staff until noon, and visiting cemeteries and memorials. One especially common flower on this holiday is the poppy. During the first World War, John McCrae wrote a poem titled “In

Flanders Fields.” This poem mentions poppies. Inspired by this poem, Moina Michael wrote her own. After this, she had the idea to wear poppies on Memorial Day to honor people serving our nation who died in war. Obviously, her idea stuck. However you choose to observe Memorial Day, take time to stop and reflect on the true meaning of this holiday lest we forget the sacrifice of those brave men and women who serve and have served our country.

Many people in my family have served in the military, from the Civil War to the Vietnam War and to present day. When my great-grandmother was a little girl during the second World War she said that the mothers would stand on their doorsteps waiting for the mail. There was much screaming and crying if they got news that their sons had been killed. Though she was young then, she told my grandmother that it was a sound she'd never forget. These are the types of sacrifices that the heroes who protect our country make. They leave their families and homes behind to protect our freedoms. We will never forget all they do for us, and we shouldn't take for granted the freedoms we have because of them.

“And I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free. And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me.” That's a line from a song by singer Lee Greenwood, and I think it sums up the true meaning of Memorial Day perfectly. We celebrate Memorial Day to remember those courageous men and women in the military who gave their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our freedoms.

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