

Madalin Dant

Long Shall I Reign

Every year we celebrate Memorial Day. Memorial Day is a day to remember all of the people who have died while protecting our country. But what is the true meaning of Memorial Day? To me, Memorial Day means just that. We do not just remember these souls for giving their lives, but we also recognize them for their bravery, dedication and commitment to our country. All these soldiers knew serving this country would be challenging. They all knew the risks and potential outcomes of the service and yet they still chose to follow through. Although they left their families with only a piece of hope to hold onto, they left the rest of us with a promise to protect us. I think because of this we should definitely dedicate a day of remembrance for each and every one of those brave soldiers. "Three years after the Civil War ended, on May 5, 1868, the head of an organization of Union veterans established Decoration Day as a time for the nation to decorate graves of the war dead with flowers" (Office). In Arlington Virginia, the most well known cemetery resides. "In January 1864, the U.S. government purchased the property. It was later sold to the federal government and contained over 6,000 graves. By the third year of the Civil War, the number of fatalities had surpassed the burial capacity in Washington D.C. cemeteries. In order to meet the demand for graves, 200 acres of Arlington plantation was set aside as a military cemetery. On June 15, the War Department officially designated this burial space as a national cemetery" (Arlington). There are approximately 400,000 bodies in the cemetery today. There is even a monument that contains the remains of all the unknown soldiers. Many people come to Arlington to see these grand memorials and pay their respects to such brave men on Memorial Day. "In 1971, it became a federal holiday, with an

official National Moment of Remembrance. At 3PM local time, every American is encouraged to pause in silence for a minute to reflect on the sacrifice of the soldiers that gave their lives for the country” (Real History). Every year at my high school, we have a Memorial Day ceremony. The ceremony is about an hour long and consists of reading of the names of the soldiers, a skit to indicate the family lives that are affected, the passing of the flag, a speech and a moment of silence to pay our respects. This ceremony is open to the public, but not many people attend because they are unable to leave work. I think if the commemoration was hosted at a later time, more people would get involved and would have a better understanding of the national holiday. The ceremony could still be hosted during school hours as well, but all elementary schools should have to opportunity to attend. By getting all the elementary students there, it would help them better understand the concept as well. Memorial Day is such an important day to everyone in the country. We show our love and support to those who have lost just that. I think Memorial Day should be focused on more in school so everyone truly understands just how important all those soldiers really were to this country. By implementing more history like this into our schools, we can all be doing a part in giving back to the ones that put everything on the line for not only ourselves, but for our whole country.

Works Cited

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. "Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs." *Memorial Day History - Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs*. N.p., 18 Mar. 2006. Web. 07 May 2017.

<<https://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/memday/history.asp>>.

"The Real History of Memorial Day." *HistoryNet*. N.p., 26 May 2016. Web. 07 May 2017.

<<http://www.historynet.com/the-real-history-of-memorial-day.htm>>.

"History of Arlington National Cemetery." *Arlington National Cemetery*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 May 2017.

<<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/History/History-of-Arlington-National-Cemetery>>.