

Celebrating America — Past, Present, and Future

# THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

Founded A.D. 1728 by Benjamin Franklin

**ALL ABOARD!**  
*Passenger Rail:  
Back on Track?*



**TRAVEL:**  
**5** Classic  
Train Trips

**HEALTH:** Stroke News  
**PLUS:** Charles Osgood  
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# Honoring Our Heroes

Memorial Day is more than the official start of summer barbecue season—it's the time to remember those we've loved and lost.

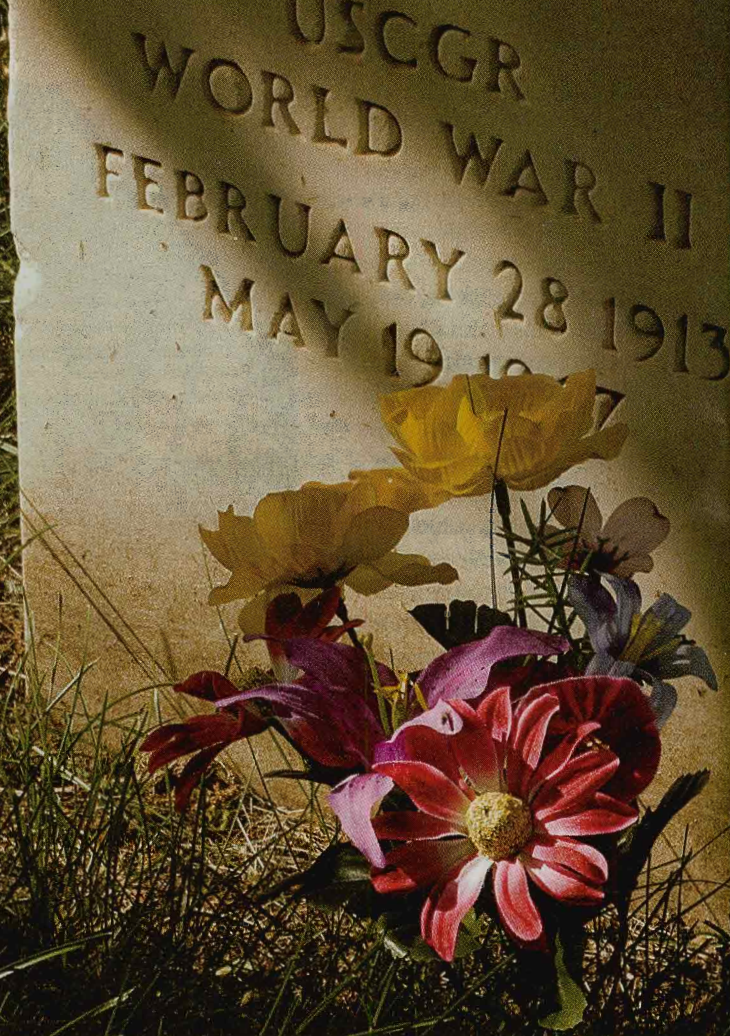
BY Pamela V. Krol

Last Memorial Day, tens of thousands of Americans took the time to mourn and to recall the lives of fallen heroes and lost loved ones. Among these was Carla Sizer of Falcon, Colorado, whose 19-year-old son, Army Specialist Dane Balcon, was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2007.

"Dane, tomorrow is Memorial Day, and it is Bittersweet," Sizer wrote. "Bittersweet in that we miss you and love you ... but so proud that you died in an honorable manner. It is my mission to ensure that you and others like you are never forgotten. Your legacy will live on forever; I promise ... they won't forget."

Her sentiment was posted on Legacy.com, the largest of a growing number of Web sites that commemorate the men and women who give their lives in defense of the country. The Legacy.com page in Dane's honor includes several obituaries, more than 200 photos, and a guest book with around 1,500 messages from relatives, friends, neighbors, and even strangers paying tribute to his service and sacrifice.

Like gravestones and monuments, virtual memorials are accessible year-round, but are positively thronged over the Memorial Day weekend—indicating just how important the day still is to Americans, notes John Metzler, superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. "Memorial services and cemeteries won't disappear, but how we remember someone, how we tell the story of a life—that's changing fast, and is no longer limited to what can be carved on a gravestone or inked on newsprint," he says.



**IN REMEMBRANCE**

**ACROSS THE U.S.**

**Sgt. Jeremy McQueary**  
Columbus, IN  
Jeremy Ryan McQueary, of Nashville, Indiana ...  
Full profile | Guest Book

**Gregory Stultz**  
Brazil, IN  
Cpl. Gregory Scott Stultz of Brazil, Indiana ...  
Full profile | Guest Book

**Spc. Lakeshia M. Bailey**  
Columbus  
Sgt. Lakeshia Meshia "Sha" Bailey, 23, of Ft. Mitchell ...  
Full profile | Guest Book

**SEARCH**  
FOR AMERICAN SERVICE  
Currently, 5,384 service members for individual profiles and all of those lost, please g

First Name (optional)

**BROWSE**  
FULL LISTINGS

- Alphabetically
- By State
- By Rank

A sign of the times: Today even memorial tributes are high-tech. Some people utilize Web sites like Legacy.com to share stories and photos about their loved ones with family and friends across the world.

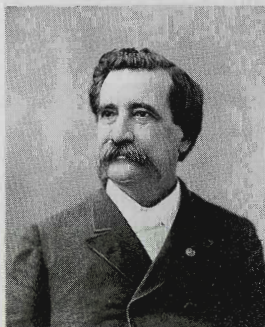
## It began with decorations

Memorial Day, our official holiday for the remembrance of those who die in military service, has been celebrated for nearly 150 years. But each new generation observes the day a little differently—based on the character of the era. Today the holiday has expanded beyond its official origins: Americans often use the day to remember not just servicemen and women, but all friends and family who have passed away. Watching parades and air shows, attending memorial

ceremonies, placing flowers on graves, and even the basic practice of sharing memories with others are all part of this celebratory yet solemn day.

Originally known as Decoration Day, the official

Civil War veteran John Logan led the charge to establish Memorial Day.



## Memorial First?

There are many possible first Memorial Days spread across our young nation during the heartache of the Civil War. But one of the most interesting tales of remembering our U.S. heroes took place in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1865—just days before the city's official surrender to Union forces, asserts David Blight, a professor of American History at Yale University.

According to Blight, roughly 260 captured Union soldiers had died in a makeshift, open-air prison at the city's Washington Race Course and had been carelessly interred in a mass grave. The city's black residents, mostly newly freed slaves, worked for two weeks to bury the bodies in individual graves, and then on May 1, they honored the soldiers' sacrifice with a solemn ceremony.

"On that day in May, 10,000 of the city's black residents, including five preachers and 2,800 children, entered the race course grounds softly singing 'John Brown's Body,'" says Blight. "The mourners then conducted a formal ceremony which included songs and scriptural readings in honor of those soldiers who had helped to achieve their freedom."

The event, which is the subject of a book by Blight, titled *Race and Reunion* published by Harvard University Press, was described in the *Charleston Daily Courier*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, *Harper's Weekly*, and several other publications at the time, but since then has disappeared from mention. "I came across some documents describing the event while doing research at the Harvard University Library," explains Blight. "That was the first time I had encountered the story, but by checking several newspaper records from that date, I was able to verify the validity of the occurrence."

On May 31, 2010, the city of Charleston will commemorate the gesture of those mourners with a bronze plaque in recognition of the occurrence. "It has been a long time in coming," says Blight. But finally that memorial observance will become a part of recorded history.

holiday was proclaimed by General John Logan, national commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, on May 5, 1868, in response to national grief over the tremendous loss of life in the American Civil War. It was first observed on May 30 of that year with the decoration of grave sites at Arlington National Cemetery.

By 1890, all of the Northern states observed Decoration Day. However, due to lingering Civil War hostility, the South refused to take part until after World War I, when the holiday's meaning was changed from honoring the Civil War dead, to honoring all Americans who had died in military service. Still, despite the change, several southern states, including Texas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Tennessee, continue to observe a separate day of mourning known as Confederate Memorial Day or Confederate Heroes Day.

In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson officially changed the name of Decoration Day to Memorial Day and declared the city of Waterloo, New York, to be the original birthplace of the idea, but it is more likely that the practice evolved broadly. Today more than two dozen cities claim to be the real place of origin, but the genuine roots of the holiday may in fact remain in a page of history that up until recently had been forgotten. (See box for the full story.)

## Continuing to remember

Today there are some who believe that the actual meaning of Memorial Day has been lost and that the holiday has become little more than a day for picnics, barbecues, and trips to the beach. "Of course I am aware of the true meaning of Memorial Day," says Florida resident Juan Gomez, "but we usually use the long weekend to visit with friends and family. Our activities rarely involve any formal remembrance of the soldiers who have died in battle."

Senator Daniel Inouye (Hawaii) worries that too many Americans have lost sight of Memorial Day's significance. He blames the holiday's subdued celebration on the fact that its observance was moved from May 30 to the last Monday in May in 1971, in compliance with the National Holiday Act requiring all Federal holidays to provide three-day weekends. "Instead of recognizing Memorial Day as a time to honor and reflect on the sacrifices made by Americans in combat, many celebrate the day as the beginning of summer," explains Sen. Inouye. "We must look on the day as one of remembrance as well as education. The youth of our nation have much to learn from our great patriots. Lessons about duty, honor, and sacrifice will guide them as they become our nation's future leaders." In an effort to redirect attention to the holiday's original meaning, Sen. Inouye has introduced bills—in every session of Congress since 1989—that would restore observance of Memorial Day to May 30.

However, some assert other reasons that Memorial Day celebrations are not as robust as they once were. Says Terrell Upson, who served as a lieutenant in the Navy during the Bay of Pigs conflict: "World War II was a great triumph for the Allied Forces. As Americans, we entered the conflict united, and we all made sacrifices for the good of the cause.