

Memorial Day 2020

Even though millions of Americans were under house arrest on Memorial Day 2020 many of them found ways to observe Memorial Day. Here are a few. First, read this insightful guest editorial by KWVA member Curtis M. Pilgrim:

The Mindset of a Combat Veteran

By Curtis M. Pilgrim

“War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degrading state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse! The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made so and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.” (John Locke)

Each time Memorial Day rolls around, I’m again reminded of how war changes veterans’ lives forever in painful ways. Those who have experienced combat’s physical and psychological pressure cooker know it can be like swimming with piranhas, great white sharks, and moray eels in a sea of blood. Surviving in such an atmosphere is often as easy as attempting to perform disappearing magic tricks in front of a firing squad.

When we veterans returned home, and so many of our friends and comrades did not, nagging doubts had the ability to creep into our minds about whether we really accomplished everything that we could have done. Survivor’s guilt can overwhelm a combat veteran with an emotional tsunami just because he is still alive. How quickly and easily war can destroy lives. Just the blink of an eye and their lights are extinguished forever.

A persistent voice in the back of my mind used to whisper a disturbing question: “Why did you survive when so many others did not?” I don’t know the answer to that question, and probably never will in my lifetime. I have made it a personal goal to ensure that the legacies of courage, duty and dedicated service our military members have provided through over 235 years as a nation don’t die and aren’t swept into the dustbin of history.

I celebrate my combat survival, and I know that it is important to honor all veterans—dead and alive—who have served America in time of both war and peace. Some of our fellow citizens, journalists, college professors and politicians obviously lack understanding about our warrior culture. They often fail to fully appreciate our deep loyalty to comrades, our Ramboesque competitive natures, our periodic paranoia (generated mostly by reality), and our profound sense of service. I feel obligated to help educate them, whenever possible, about this magnificent “Band of Brothers” (today known as “Band of Brothers and Sisters”).

A day seldom passes when I don’t recall bloody scenes of young men sprawled in death upon Korean soil. Most of them were barely out of high school; they were cut down defending the freedoms of others before their own lives had barely begun. I think of all the milestones they never reached, such as graduation from college, marriage, children, grandchildren—and old age—with the rest of us.

When I hear “all-knowing” critics spout comments like “war is just the unnecessary result of the failure to negotiate peace,” or “young Americans died unnecessary deaths fighting a useless unnecessary war,” or “think of all the money we could have given to Third World sick and poor children if we hadn’t wasted it on the war,” and belittling us veterans for being dumb enough to serve our country rather than burning our draft cards, fleeing to Canada, or dodging our obligations some other way, I hand them a small card from those I carry in my wallet, which is a declaration made by philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1876). He said:

“War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degrading state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse! The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made so and kept so by the exertions of better men than

himself.”

I don’t need Memorial Day to remind me of the fine, patriotic young Americans who didn’t make it back home. Every day is Memorial Day in my world, and always will be!

Dr. Hubert Lee

On this sad Memorial Day, May 25, 2020, we still pay tribute at home to those fallen soldiers during WWI, WWII, the Korean War, and other wars. COVID-19 is changing the beautiful history of human civilization. Coronavirus already killed several hundred thousand people and forced us to do stay-at-home operations.



A familiar sight: the patrol at the Korean War Veterans Memorial

Everything is on-line because we are prevented from assembling at any meetings. However, we are honoring at home all those men and women who have served in our armed forces and who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom. Freedom is not free.

Today we enjoy freedom on the farms, in the shops, in the stores, and the offices because those brave soldiers shed their precious blood on Omaha Beach, at the 38th Parallel in Korea, on the Ho Chi Minh trail, in Baghdad

Remembering your selfless service during the Korean War, we Koreans, home and abroad, thank you for the fruits of democracy, economic prosperity, and for the freedom and happiness we are enjoying in America. We are proud of your sacrifice and your sense of duty and patriotism.



Dr. Hubert Lee, who celebrated Memorial Day at home

I still remember times in the past thirty years when the late Congressman Ben Gilman and I had been guest speakers on Memorial Day and Veterans Day at the Camp Shank Memorial Park, Tappan, Rockland County, New York. May God bless us, as we remember our soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend America and our freedom. On this sad Memorial Day, I salute those brave soldiers as we observe Memorial Day at home.

Coronavirus is killing democracy, capitalism, and our happy social lives. To honor the freedom I planted fifty hibiscus trees in my backyard in the spirit of honoring the fallen soldiers, and I will wait for the blossoming of those national flowers in the future.

God bless America and Korea!

Dr. Hubert Hojae Lee, a veteran and member of Ch. 202, Orange County, NY, drhl@frontier.com

Just before they closed

Chet King managed to salute his dad at Arlington National Cemetery just before it was closed for the holiday.

Chet King, chetfking@gmail.com



Triumph monument in the city. The observance was held at 11 am Saturday, May 30, 2020.

Pelkey reports that they had a crowd of 40+ loyal vets/families, who always have always held the traditional ceremony May 30, instead of the 'politicians' 3-day week-end' a week before.



Eighty-eight-year-old Wayne Pelkey of Barre, VT standing tall at Memorial Day observance

There were one WW2 vet, two Korean

Chet King salutes his dad, John (Big John) King

War vets (survivors getting rather thin), and vets from wars up to current Iraq/Afghanistan.

One of his Korean War veteran friends, who was drafted in 1952 with him and underwent 16 weeks of infantry training at Ft. Jackson, SC, stood beside Pelkey and made him feel grateful for their survival from the trench warfare of 67 years ago.

"The 'Taps' gave us both somber thoughts of our lost buddies while thinking "Why them and not me?" he wondered.

"This event made my day!" Pelkey said.

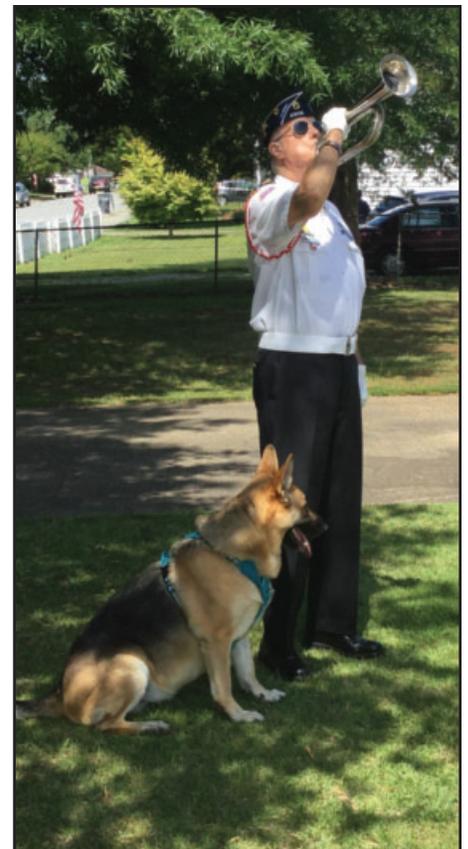
It is nice that patriotism is alive and well in Barre.

Wayne Pelkey, wppelkey@charter.net

John Edwards and friend observe Memorial Day

John Edwards and a faithful companion observed Memorial Day at their VFW Post in Smithfield, VA. The canine with John is owned by a retired U.S. Army Colonel and member of the post.

John Edwards, kvetedwards@yahoo.com



John Edwards and dog observe Memorial Day