



In Bounds: Memorial Day

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God bless America. Indeed, God bless America, land of the free and home to the brave. And God bless those who put themselves into harms way to allow me the opportunity to prosper in a safe environment that I often take for granted. Thank you to all the soldiers in our country and abroad. My future is bright due in part to your courageousness and self sacrifice. And my past is built upon those whose heroism paved a road of liberty and freedom upon which I travel.

Memorial Day will soon be here.

As a youth I marched down Mahtomedi Avenue surrounded by my Boy Scout peers and carried the flag of the United States of America. That Memorial Day in 1971 was long ago but I remember the enthusiasm of the moment well. Smiling gaily for our "moment in time" many of my gang were attired in oversized military garb handed down from their fathers, toting BB guns and acting proud for the onlookers. It was thrilling to be a participant, have my picture taken and carry a blister from the wooden staff, but sadly I was utterly clueless about the cause I was parading to.

Memorial Day, the day we honor those who have died for our liberty, our freedom, our American way of life.

On a ride back to college my father and I listened to the reports of a failed hostage rescue attempt in Iraq. With contempt for our country I remarked how terrible it was that we were always forcing ourselves upon the will of other nations and that the crisis in the Middle East was retribution for our stupidity and cavalier attitude. Then I made a grave mistake and announced I would, "never serve in the military and would rather spend time in Canada than fight for our way of life."

On that day in 1980 I was fortunate to have been wearing a seatbelt or I surely would have been propelled through the wind shield as my father, a decorated Korean War veteran, brought the car to an immediate stop. The look on his face, one of shock then bitterness and finally just plain sorrow eroded my postulation and silenced me for the rest of our drive to school.

Since that time I have grown up. My eyes have been opened by real life, oh so much better than reality shows; graduation, marriage, children, travel, employment, vacations, tragedies and happiness. The experiences I have enjoyed allowed me to appreciate the freedoms I so often take for granted. Speech, ideology, religion, politics and the ability to pursue my desires uninhibited by a repressive government are not universal freedoms.

However in our country they have been purchased and continue to be paid for by gallant volunteers who continue to be

placed into harms way in order for us to enjoy our comfortable lifestyle.

Memorial Day, a day that I now celebrate as I understand it; for those who died for my freedom, Jack MacKenzie's. However, on this day I also think about those who are still alive and who have lost friends and relatives through conflicts in a self-sacrificing effort to make our United States the wonderful country it is today.

Listen up Conley! My father-in-law adjusted his identification papers so he could sign up for the Navy at the tender age of 17. His transportation into the theater of war in 1945 was the USS Bunker Hill, cutting her way across the Pacific Ocean to deliver the death blow to Japan in an effort to end World War II.

Thanks to you Con and your fellow crewmen for being my heroes and fighting for my freedom. I know through our visits you often think of friends and relatives who did not return back to the country whose freedom they fought so hard for.

Hey 'Big Guy,' a name that has stuck upon my father for many years, thanks for your participation in providing me with the finest life possible. I am sorry about your friends who lost their lives upon that mountain in Korea during your deployment. And it

breaks my heart when I think about the memories you have and will always carry for the rest of your life created by many months in close combat. Your valor and that of your fellow Marines entitle you to be my heroes. I appreciate all you have done for me and the lifestyle you helped to maintain.

The Air Force sponsored my brother-in-law Jim during the Vietnam War. As a jet jockey he spent many hours protecting those on the ground and flying special missions. Regardless of the politics involved in this fight, Jim, you and your flyboys deserve kudos for putting it on the line for me. It saddens me your welcome home was limited by a confused country, one that didn't understand that although they may not support the cause, the freedom fighters who were willing to give their lives must be carried high upon their shoulders. Thank you Jim, your heroism is noted and very much respected.

In more recent years we have all been impacted directly or indirectly by the war in Iraq. And regardless of the argument Americans have whether for or against the war, the real heroes, my heroes, are the ones who have voluntarily put themselves on the line for me. Over four thousand Americans have died for my freedom and hundreds of thousands have sacrificed a part of their lives in exchange for the American way of life.

On this Memorial Day I will do more than commemorate those who have died. I will pray for those who survived and will live with the memories of war, the death of their comrades and loss of time at home. Unfortunately, my words are inadequate for the sacrifice you and many others have made. I am thankful that through your valiant deeds we can all share together the bounty our country has to offer.

I wish for each of you prosperity as you see it. God bless you and the country you have helped to create, our United States of America, the home of the free and the brave.

