



MEMORIAL DAY 2023 - DAVID STRINGER, PUBLISHER

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Photo: Gravestone in Prescott's Citizens Cemetery

Memorial Day is the traditional beginning of summer which for Prescott marks the beginning of our busy tourist season. It's a time for music and events on the Courthouse square, travel plans and vacations, picnics, summer nights on the patio, and good times. Summer visitors fill our hotels and restaurants, bring crowds to our downtown and generate a third of Prescott's sales tax revenue. We welcome their return. By all means, bring on the summer.

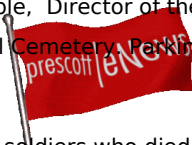
But let us not forget the sober side of Memorial Day. The one million war dead since our nations founding gives a measure of gravitas that deserves reflection. As Americans we like to think of ourselves as a free people—a beacon of human rights and dignity that sets an example for the world. But freedom is not free. What America has accomplished in the history of nations has come at a great price in blood and sacrifice.

And as we move into the 21st century, it is not at all clear that America is still the nation it once was. We still have many assets including the world's largest economy. But many of our countrymen are poor and struggling. Why are so many homeless? Why are so many uncertain of their financial future? Why are our cities in decay? Why are public schools an embarrassment of overspending and underperformance? We still have the world's biggest military and spend more on national defense than all the other nations of the world combined. But the United States hasn't won a military engagement since WWII. We can't even control our own borders.

That's worth a moment of sober thought--despite spending more of our national treasure on the most advanced military technology than any other nation or group of nations-- we have lost every military engagement since 1945. Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf Wars, Syria and Afghanistan all ended in failure. And our latest proxy war in the Ukraine has destroyed their country and created millions of refugees, with no end in sight. What's going on? What happened to America? The veterans we honor on Memorial Day didn't let us down. But the leaders of today have let us down. Why have we let them?

Prescott, with its large retiree population, is home to many veterans. Two of our historic cemeteries, Prescott's Veteran's Cemetery and Citizen's Cemetery, both founded in 1864, are the final resting place for over 3000 of our nation's veterans reaching back to the Indian Wars and the founding of Fort Whipple in the Arizona Territory. Both will feature memorial services. A Memorial Day Observance will be held at Prescott's historic Citizen's Cemetery, 815 E Sheldon Street, from 9:00am to 10:00am, on Monday, May 29th. The ceremonies will include remarks from Prescott Mayor Phil Goode and other local dignitaries. The Prescott National Cemetery, 500 Highway 89 North, will hold a Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony at 11:00am. The ceremony will include a wreath laying, taps and a musical

presentation. Remarks will be offered by Steven J. Sample, Director of the Northern VA Health Care System. Those attending are reminded that there is no parking at the Prescott National Cemetery. Parking will be in Lot R of the Veterans Hospital with shuttle service to the cemetery.



Grave site ceremonies honoring the valor and sacrifice of soldiers who died in war are deep in human history. Today's Memorial Day traces its origins to the Civil War period when women of the South began wreath laying ceremonies on the graves of the Confederate dead.

Following an upsurge in patriotism and nationalist sentiments, (at least in the North), associated with the end of the Civil War, ceremonies commemorating the war dead spread throughout the country.

The Memorial Day we celebrate today was officially designated by the federal government in 1967. The Uniform Monday Holiday Act of 1968, moved the date from May 30th to the last Monday in May. For many, Memorial Day has become just another three-day weekend. The original purpose and solemnity of the day of remembrance has given way to recreation and holiday sales.

A visit to one of our country's national cemeteries will quickly dispel any idea that Memorial Day is just another antiquated custom for veterans and aging patriots. The fresh graves from our country's wars in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan are reminders that American soldiers are still being asked to make the ultimate sacrifice. Arlington National Cemetery and many other national cemeteries across the country continue to open new burial sites for our nation's fallen. Those graves are proof, if any proof were needed, that freedom is not free. Our Constitutional Republic and democratic way of life are still being bought with the blood of our countrymen. Memorial Day is the day we have set apart to remember, honor, and to mourn those who have given their lives in battle so that our country can live in freedom.

Requiescant in pace. May they rest in peace.