



TOP

# Memorial Day: Do We Know The Meaning?

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## Memorial Day: Do We Know The Meaning?

*By Annabeth Miller,  
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Amid the chatter about the baseball game, the 'secre' barbecue recipe, the crops and plans for the summer, a new poll commissioned by The National WWII Museum in New Orleans also reveals the nation is in danger of forgetting the real meaning of Memorial Day.

Eighty percent of Americans surveyed confess to having “little” or only “some” knowledge of the military holiday. Just 20 percent of respondents claim to be “very familiar” with the day and its purpose.

In response, The National WWII Museum has unveiled a new website [www.mymemorialday.org](http://www.mymemorialday.org) featuring 10 ways to honor those who have fallen in the service of their country.

“The site offers ideas for all,” said The National WWII Museum President and CEO Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller. “A family can visit a military site, or an individual can read a book about WWII history. It’s a way to honor, remind and remember why this day is important.”

Concerned that Americans were forgetting Memorial Day’s meaning, The Museum asked

New Orleans-based Market Dynamics Research Group, Inc., (MDRG) to conduct the national survey. The firm polled more than 1000 people and discovered an eye-opening lack of knowledge about the holiday:

- 20 percent of those surveyed said they knew “a lot” about Memorial Day
- 46 percent said they knew “something”
- 31 percent said they knew “little”
- 3 percent said they knew “nothing”

If you're in the 80 percent: Memorial Day is a federal holiday the last Monday of May honoring those who have died in military service.

Not just a day to get the garden planted or an excuse to grill steak.

Begun in 1868 to remember Civil War soldiers, the remembrance grew to include all Americans who have died in all of the nation's wars.

While there are differing historical opinions on how Memorial Day originated, it is known that the practice of decorating graves was widespread in both the North and the South following the Civil War. The name gradually changed from Decoration Day to Memorial Day and it became a day for honoring all of the nation's fallen. Observance of Memorial Day increased after World War II, but was not declared a holiday by Federal law until 1967. In 1971, a law was passed moving the date from May 30 to the last Monday in May. In December 2000, the National Moment of Remembrance, observed by a moment of silence at 3:00 pm, was passed into law.

The poll result is a bummer for Gordon “Nick” Mueller, president and CEO of the National WWII Museum in New Orleans.

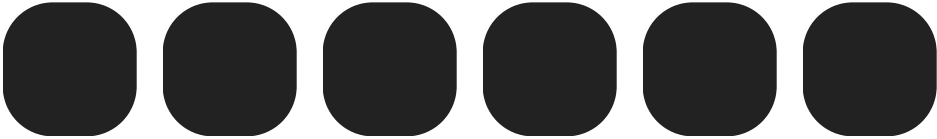
This Memorial Day, let's take a break from your beach party, backyard barbecue or deck-building project for a national moment of silence to honor the fallen and remember those who served so that we can enjoy this day.

It's the least we can do.

*By the way, if you head south to New Orleans, take a break for the fun in the French Quarter and the cemetery tours, and visit the National WWII Museum - it's well worth the time!*

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