

Memorial Day Observance
Panicao Park
May 25, 2009
Remarks by Mayor Edward P. Zimmerman

Welcome,

Memorial Day is a special day in American culture. Today we honor those that have given the ultimate sacrifice for people they have never met. They are missed by their loved ones and remembered by those they served with. They are hometown heroes; our friends, our neighbors, our coworkers ...

Nowadays service in our military is voluntary...so our friends and neighbors have put down their day-to-day lives and stepped into the fire for all of our good. They defended liberty, defeated Nazis, fascists, terrorists and any other threat that would harm us. They paid with their blood so that you and I could be here today, free and living in democracy.

Last year I spoke of the history of Memorial Day and how it all began. In an effort to not read the same speech again, I googled Memorial Day Speeches to get some ideas. In doing that I found the following:

General Orders No.11, WASHINGTON, D.C., May 5, 1868

JOHN A. LOGAN,
Commander-in-Chief

- i. *The 30th day of May 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet church-yard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.*

We are organized, comrades, as our regulations tell us, for the purpose among other things, "of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors, and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion." What can aid more to assure this result than cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead, who made their breasts a barricade between our country and its foes? Their soldier lives were the reveille of freedom to a race in chains, and their deaths the tattoo of rebellious tyranny in arms. We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. All that the consecrated wealth and taste of the nation can add to their adornment and

security is but a fitting tribute to the memory of her slain defenders. Let no wanton foot tread rudely on such hallowed grounds. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, no ravages of time testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic.

If other eyes grow dull, other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain to us.

Let us, then, at the time appointed gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of spring-time; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us a sacred charge upon a nation's gratitude, the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan.

One hundred and thirty one years later some things have not changed. We stand here today to place this wreath beneath our flag to honor and show respect for those brave men and women who serve, living or deceased. We remember that soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines do not make policy or chose what war to fight, but when the call comes, they stand up, they march and sometimes they don't come back. They do it without complaint and with a desire to serve the greater good.

For all of their efforts, to those we have lost and miss and to those who stand on the front line today, we salute you and express our sincerest gratitude.

Before I close, in my research I also found a short poem written by a 3rd grader from Madison Connecticut in 2001. He wrote:

As the flowers rest on the decorated graves and the sunlight shines on the beautiful sailboats, Uncle Sam whispers in my ear about how we should care for the soldiers and remember the ones that have died. Swimming pools open, BBQs fry. Today is the day to think of what they have done for us. There are blurs of red, white and blue marching down the street and flags are lowered at half-mast. But we should always remember and never forget what set us free, from this very day on.

Thank you.