

## MEMORIAL DAY 2008

I am Ralph Button, Sr.

Now why am I up here? Well we have an excellent president of the Dryden Senior Citizen and she is a good sales person.

What are we here for?

I used to see it as a birthday time for my grandmother who's birthday was the 30th of May. As I grew older I realized it was in honor of those men who didn't come from the Civil War it was called then Decoration Day as of 5/30/1868. The first Decoration Day General James Garfield spoke at Arlington National Cemetery.

In 1968 President Lyndon Johnson declared Waterloo, NY as the official birth place mainly because the town had made Memorial Day an annual event which businesses close and residents decorated graves of soldiers with flowers and flags. In 1971 congress declared Memorial Day a National Holiday to be celebrated the last Monday of May.

War isn't a picnic, that can be shown by knowing just how many servicemen and women it cost,

The Revolutionary War 4,435.

The War of 1812 2,260

Mexican War 1846-1848 13,283

Civil War Union 646,512

Confederate 133,821

Spanish American 1898 2,446

WWI 116,708

WWII 407,316.

Korea 36,512

Vietnam 58,193.

Iraq 4,000.

I, personally, lost several close friends in both WWII and Korea. I am sure that there are those out there listening that also have lost close friends and that is why we are here to remember and honor them for their lives given for us so we can have Freedom to meet as we are now, Freedom to worship the way we wish, Freedom to vote for our leaders, and yes even the Freedom to protest. No this isn't perfect, but tell me where it's better.

As an individual I am proud to have been in the service for my country. I must tell you that my first wife while under the effects of Alzheimer's one day decide that she was going to get back at the army for taking me away for the Korean War and burned my uniform with all service connected items, pictures, medals, everything she could find that connected me to the service she burned. I remember getting home and saw that she had the burn barrel going I asked what she was doing her answer was "Getting even with the Army for taking you away from me, they won't do it again". I also remember telling her as I hugged her "you've done a god job I'm sure they won't call on me again" Oh well the uniform wouldn't fit me anyway and I could get a cup of coffee without the medals and service ribbons for \$1.50, some places anyway.

Now with this little story I am going to close, (I heard that sigh of relief). Today in Texas there is a ceremony for Caleb Christopher, my sisters grandson. He was killed in Iraq by one of the road side bombs some time ago. There was a service for him in his home town, just outside of Phoenix, AZ And as he was brought from the airport by a caravan of police and service vehicles. The street he grew up on was lined with American Flags placed there by the boy scouts. As the hearse turned the corner the flags that were at rest, unfurled, suddenly as gust of wind came and all of the flags as the hearse went by opened up and seemly saluted a full attention, a salute to Caleb. In honor to a fallen soldier.

And that is why we are here today to salute the fallen comrades that gave their all for us to have Freedom.

And yes I am proud to have had a small part in seeing this freedom continue.

Thank you for your attention.