The Veteran’s Creed
1. I am an American Veteran
2. I proudly served my country
3. I live the values I learned in the military
4. I continue to serve my community, my country and my fellow veterans
5. I maintain my physical and mental discipline
6. I continue to lead and improve
7. I make a difference
8. I honor and remember my fallen comrades

This issue of the listserv includes Origins of Memorial Day; The General’s D-Day Letter; Navy Scandal; Suicide Help; Vietnam War Activist Barry Romo Dies
Korean War Bodies Recovered, WW1 Poet Alan Seeger

Origins of Memorial Day
Memorial Day honors the fallen in battle while Veterans Day honors all veterans. Its origins date from the Civil War with some 25 sites in the U.S. claiming to be a progenitor and it is also similar to ceremonies in ancient Greece and Rome. Called “Decoration Day” for many years, it was not officially designated a federal holiday until 1971.

Here are some of the birth stories reprinted from the May 2017 Listserv #9.

On April 25, 1866, a group of women in Columbus MS honored both Union and Confederate graves with flowers. They had meant only to honor the Confederates but were disturbed by the sight of bare Union graves.

On May 1, 1865, former slaves held a ceremony in Charleston, SC to honor and remember Union soldiers, called the “Martyrs of the Race Course” because they had died at a race track that had been converted into a military prison camp.

On May 5, 1866 Gen. John B. Murray, responding to an idea by local druggist Henry Welles who ed a march in 3 local cemeteries in Waterloo, NY where graves of Civil War veterans had been “decorated”. The entire village “was decorated with flags at half mast, draped with evergreens and mourning black. Veterans, civic societies, and residents, led by General Murray, marched to the strains of martial music to the three village cemeteries.”

On May 5, 1868, Maj. Gen. John A. Logan in his capacity as leader of the Grand Army of the Republic, a Union army veterans’ group, declared that a “Decoration Day” should be observed on May 30. It is believed he chose this date because flowers are in bloom all over the country by the end of May and the date does not commemorate any individual Civil War battle. Logan, after whom Washington’s
Logan Circle is named, had been a Civil War general, and during his career also a member of the House and Senate and unsuccessful Republican candidate for Vice President. His proclamation initiated a large observance at Arlington National Cemetery on May 30 1868 to include speeches by Gen. U.S. Grant and others, children from the Soldiers and Sailors Home and a procession through the cemetery by Grand Army of the Republic members strewing flowers on Union and Confederate graves, reciting prayers and singing hymns.

Observance of “Decoration Day” grew up in many places and then coalesced into the holiday of today. By 1890, every state has adopted it as an official holiday. The term Memorial Day” had also moved into the parlance over the century after the Civil War. The wearing of red poppies was later inspired by the World War I poem “In Flanders Fields” by John McRae.

This type of remembrance, in fact, goes back much further. The ancient Greeks and Romans had public ceremonies and feasts in which graves of the war dead were festooned with flowers. In Athens, fallen soldiers were buried at Kerameikos with prestigious ceremonies. Pericles made the first known public tribute in 431 BC honoring those who died in the Peloponnesian War. It works just as well today “Not only are they commemorated by columns and inscriptions, but there dwells also an unwritten memorial of them, graven not on stone but in the hearts of men.”

On March 7, 1966, New York’s governor Nelson Rockefeller recognized Waterloo NY as Memorial Day’s birthplace by official designation as did a Congressional resolution and a proclamation by President Lyndon B. Johnson on May 26 of that year.

In 1968 the Uniform Monday Holiday Act changed Memorial Day’s date from May 30 to the last Monday in May, the start of another controversy. For years until his death in 2012, Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye a decorated and injured World War II veteran, introduced Bills to return the holiday to May 30 but failed. The purpose was to bring it back more to the fallen and away from barbecues and the Indy 500. This feeling was embodied in the National Moment of Remembrance Act of 2000 which urges Americans to pause at 3 PM local time on Memorial Day and establishes a White House Commission on the National Moment of Remembrance. This body has a charter to “encourage the people of the United States to give something back to their country, which provides them so much freedom and opportunity” via commemorations of Memorial Day and the National Moment of Remembrance.

**The General’s D-Day Letter**

We are approaching June 6, 2024, the 80th anniversary of D-Day. It still ranks as the most ambitious amphibious landing in history and a formidable success amidst its casualties. We all know the story and last year I had the opportunity to visit the battlefield sites, an incredible experience. I remember viewing the beach with our guide and watching the children playing. The guide was asked why did they allow
that, shouldn't the site be sacred? The guide then quoted a previous D-Day anniversary speaker who was also a veteran of the battle. He ended his speech with (paraphrasing) “Why we fought was so our children and grandchildren could play on the beach.”

Here is Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower's letter to the troops on that day.

From the National Museum of American History
**Navy Scandal**

It is a scandal that has everything - secret documents, compromised intelligence officers at the highest levels, sexual favors, and a comic book bad guy nicknamed Fat Leonard. As described in a new book, *Fat Leonard: How One Man Bribed, Bilked, and Seduced the U.S. Navy* it is also called the most extensive corruption scandal in U.S. military history. Since 2015, naval officers including 2 Admirals were compromised over 7 years when naval intelligence finally caught up with them.

A total of 10 officers have admitted to turning over classified material to a Malaysian con man called “Fat Leonard” (real name Leonard Glenn Francis). The nefarious handler, who bribed the officers with expensive meals, prostitutes and other illicit gifts, is a Malaysian defense contractor with a history of arrests on bribery charges.

Both Admirals were indicted. Charges against Rear Admiral Bruce Loveless, were dropped when a jury deadlocked over whether he was guilty of a federal crime. The other was Vice Admiral “twig” Ted Branch. Among his accomplishments had been leading a humanitarian relief mission to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. He was promoted to Director of Naval Intelligence in 2013 and a few years later the investigation into his criminal activity began. He had accepted dinners and admitted to going to “members only” sex clubs along with Admiral Lovelace. Lovelace was said to particularly like Mongolian prostitutes to one of whom he showed a business card IDing him as a naval intelligence officer. Lower-level officers were also involved and indicted for similar offenses.

The investigation into Admiral Branch dragged on for more than 3 years and (this is hard to understand) he was kept in charge of naval intelligence even though he was barred from reading or hearing military secrets. The Justice Department dropped the case against Branch but did conduct a disciplinary review concluding that he had violated ethics rules by accepting a Hong Kong dinner and assorted minor gifts from Fat Leonard. He received a letter telling him not to do it again.

At first, Fat Leonard himself did not admit guilt to bribery in this case though he later pled guilty to fraud, bribery and conspiracy charges and is expected to be sentenced in the summer.

The story is long and involved and a version can be found [here](#). The fact that it took so long and did not result in convictions against the Admirals has been an embarrassment for naval investigators. In fact, both Admiral Loveless and Branch retired from the Navy with honorable discharges.

**Suicide Help**

President Biden in his 2023 State of the Union address called veterans ‘suicide “a public health and national security crisis”. The VA's suicide help program, in which former service members receive free emergency suicide prevention care, is a response to this crisis. The first-year stats on this new program by the VA came out a few months ago and in 2023, nearly 50,000 veterans were helped.
The program covers 30 days of inpatient or crisis residential care, 90 days of outpatient care and related transportation costs. Veterans are considered to be a higher risk for suicide than others and in the last available statistics from 2021, 6,392 veterans died by suicide a slight increase from the previous year. Since 2010, more than 71,000 veterans have died by suicide according to the White House. VA Secretary Denis McDonough said the expansion of this program may have saved thousands of lives “There is nothing more important to the VA than preventing veteran suicide.”

While there are more veterans to treat then reached by this program, it certainly can be considered a success.

**Vietnam War Activist Barry Romo Dies**
Barry Romo, a combat Vietnam veteran, who became famous as an antiwar activist, died on May 1st at age 76. He had started in the war as a Second Lieutenant strongly in its favor and earned a Bronze Star for heroism. He was strongly affected when his nephew, Bobby Romo, who was in the same bigrade, was killed at Dong Ha, a Vietnamese village in what was then North Vietnam. Of this shock he said “I had my ticket punched by my nephew's blood and I felt that I failed him, I failed my family. And I still feel guilty to this day.” After leaving the Army his antiwar sentiment intensified when the Ohio National Guard killed 4 students at Kent State University during a demonstration. He joined the Vietnam Veterans Against the War in 1971. Along with Joan Baez and Telford Taylor, the Chief US prosecutor at the Nazi war crimes trial in Nuremberg, Romo went to Hanoi in 1972 to deliver Christmas letters to 535 prisoners of war and bring back their letters. In 1972, he, along with many other veterans, threw their medals onto the capitol steps during a veterans’ antiwar demonstration.

After the war Romo was still active in veteran related causes including benefits for Agent Orange, homelessness, and PTSD. When another famous antiwar activist Jane Fonda won the 1972 Golden Globe Award for her performance in “Klute” Mr. Romo, in uniform, accepted the award on her behalf. He is survived by his daughter, a son and 2 grandchildren. He had been divorced from his wife Alynne Kilpatrick

**Korean War Bodies Recovered**
The remains of two 17-year-old soldiers who died in the Korean War have been identified. Thomas A Smith of Michigan was last seen when he took part in a defense action near Chinju at the southern end of the Korean Peninsula. U.S. Army Cpl Richard Seloover of Indiana went missing along South Korea’s Naktong River on September 6th 1950. Both men were 17 years old and had been declared dead December 31st, 1953, more than 3 years after they went missing. The bodies were identified by the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps which is tasked to identify Korean War bodies. Both will be buried in their hometowns of Grant MI and Rock Falls IL The remains of over 450 Americans who died in the Korean War have been identified since the war and returned to their families for burial with full military honors. More than 7000 American soldiers from the Korean War still remain unaccounted.

**WW1 Poet Alan Seeger**
Alan Seeger was a New York-born Harvard graduate (also the uncle of singer Pete Seeger) who enlisted in the French Foreign Legion to fight in WW1. He was the last of a group of formidable poets to look at WW1 heroically. Unfortunately, Seeger was killed in action in the 1916 Battle of the Somme. Later WW1 poets, such as Sigfried Sasoon and Wilfred Owen had a very different view. Here is an excerpt from Seeger’s poem *I Have a Rendezvous with Death* (eerily, a favorite of President John F. Kennedy)

God knows 'twere better to be deep  
Pillowed in silk and scented down,  
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep,  
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,  
Where hushed awakenings are dear ...  
But I've a rendezvous with Death  
At midnight in some flaming town,  
When Spring trips north again this year,  
And I to my pledged word am true,  
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

Joel Kupersmith, M.D.  
Professor of Medicine

The Listserv is available as an archive on the Georgetown University Library website under the title “Veterans Interest Newsletters.

**Stats Section**  
**Afghanistan War Costs**

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Annual and total cost of the Afghanistan War. From Statistica.