

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. There are many stories as to its actual beginnings, with more than two dozen cities and towns claiming to be the holiday's birthplace.

Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5, May, 1868, by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11, and was first observed on 30, May, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890, it was recognized by all of the northern states. It is now celebrated in almost every state on the last Monday in May (passed by Congress with the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 - 363) to ensure a three-day weekend for the federal holiday). Some southern states still set aside an additional day for honoring the Confederate war dead.

No matter where it started and by whom, the premise has stayed the same. We set aside the day to remember those who died fighting for their country, their flag and your and my freedoms.

This year will mark the second Memorial Day service at the Veterans Memorial Park. The park has been well-tended in the last several months.

I have witnessed the seemingly endless parade of people who come to the park to work, relax and/or remember, or all three. There have been many times, while either driving by the park or when leaving and entering the Herald parking lot, I will see a figure near one of the markers, head bent in concentration. People walking in the downtown area will detour through the park's walkways and stop to read names on the pavers or memorials before going on with their day.

The park also serves as a daily reminder of what some have given for their country. It is also a reminder that many are still sacrificing and will continue to do so through their bravery and willingness to do what many of us can't or won't.

On the web site where I got a lot of the history for Memorial Day, www.usmemorialday.org, I also found that, in general, observance of Memorial Day is on the decline. At many cemeteries,

the graves of the fallen are increasingly ignored and/or neglected.

For some reason, I don't think this will be a problem in Delphos. Those visiting the local cemeteries this weekend will see a sea of crisp new flags waving from hundreds of graves. I have a feeling that this year's local observance will be as well attended as any other here. Perhaps even more so.

Editor's note: I hope you've all enjoyed the Memories down Main Street series. I am ever grateful Roger Geise called me last fall to discuss his endeavor with me. I have also enjoyed hearing about the many places he would stop on his way home from school or during a Saturday morning ride.