

Memorial Day

A Special Publication of the
Addison Independent

Thursday
May 21, 2026



Memorial Day celebration honors those who served

By MARIN HOWELL

STARKSBORO — A Memorial Day gathering at Sentinel Farms will honor those who have served our country, including the parents of local farmer Kerry Kurt, who runs the Starksboro farm.

Kurt's parents both served in World War II — her father, Karl Kurt, was in the Navy and her mother, Margaret Hargrave Kurt, trained as a nurse during the war.

The lessons in service she learned from her parents are ones Kurt looks to carry on, in part through her work at Sentinel Farms, a beef operation that's also home to the nonprofit Kurt founded in 2007, Unbound Grace.

"My life is a dedication to my parents, really," she said.

Kurt noted her parents didn't meet until after the war. Margaret had married a childhood friend, Hank Pimm, who was killed when a Kamikaze pilot struck the boat he was on while serving in the Pacific theater of World War II. Following his death, Margaret began pursuing her nursing degree as a member of the Women's Army Corps.

Karl completed torpedo school at the U.S. Naval Training Station in Newport, R.I., in 1943. He served on a repair boat

and was injured during his time doing so.

The pair met while attending New York University, later marrying and eventually moving to Vermont. Margaret was among those to complete the first nurse practitioner's licensure course at the University of Vermont, going on to run the infirmary at UVM for many years.

Karl spent time in the minor league baseball system and also worked as a police officer and road builder, Kurt said. He went on to get his doctorate in education and joined UVM's development team. Karl died in 1990.

Karl and Margaret's acts of service continued well after World War II. Both were active in their community and dedicated time to volunteering. Kurt noted her mother was still serving at a local senior center and for the Salvation Army in her

80s. Margaret died in 2023 — her birthday coincides with Memorial Day this year.

"Them having to make it through the Depression as children and then serve in World War II gave them a strong foundational, love-centered, faith base and service orientation that they passed on to their four kids," Kurt said. "So, there's nothing more joyful for me than to utilize

(See Kurt, Page 3)

"Them having ... served in World War II gave them a strong foundational, love-centered, faith base and service orientation that they passed on to their kids. So, there's nothing more joyful for me than to utilize the gifts I've been passed along to serve a sense of healing."

— Kerry Kurt



KERRY KURT OF Starksboro's Sentinel Farms stands in front of the entrance to a new Phoenix Rising Mechanical Arts & Welding Studio in the works at the farm. Sentinel Farms is home to Unbound Grace, a nonprofit founded by Kurt in 2007 that offers a variety of farm-based educational programs for youth.

Independent photo/Marin Howell



IN MEMORY OF OUR HEROES

Today, we pause to honor and remember the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. We are forever grateful for their courage, service, and unwavering dedication to protecting our freedoms.

Their legacy lives on through the communities, families, and country they helped protect, and their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

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MARGARET HARGRAVE KURT, mother of Starksboro farmer Kerry Kurt, is pictured with other women training to become nurses during World War II. After the war, Margaret was among those to complete the first nurse practitioner's licensure course at the University of Vermont and ran the infirmary at UVM for many years.

Photo courtesy of Kerry Kur

Kurt

(Continued from Page 2)

the gifts I've been passed along to serve a sense of healing."

That's something Kurt aims to do at Sentinel Farms. At the beef operation, Kurt uses a method she calls retro-regenerational farming — a blend of "retro" farming practices without the use of hormones or herbicides and with the use of "regenerative" practices that work with nature rather than adding to or damaging it.

The farm also hosts several farm-based educational programs for youth, including a week-long horse and farm arts camp that runs in July and August. Unbound Grace is in the process of completing the Phoenix Rising Mechanical Arts & Welding Studio, a four-season trades classroom at the farm.

The studio was first envisioned 21 years ago and will offer a space for youth to learn entry-level trade skills, Kurt said.

"I have kids who were here with me at 5 and 6 years old ... who are now 15, who are trying to figure out what it is that they want to do," she said. "Regardless of their socioeconomic background, people are called to different gifts and arts, and the trades are arts and skills that we all need."

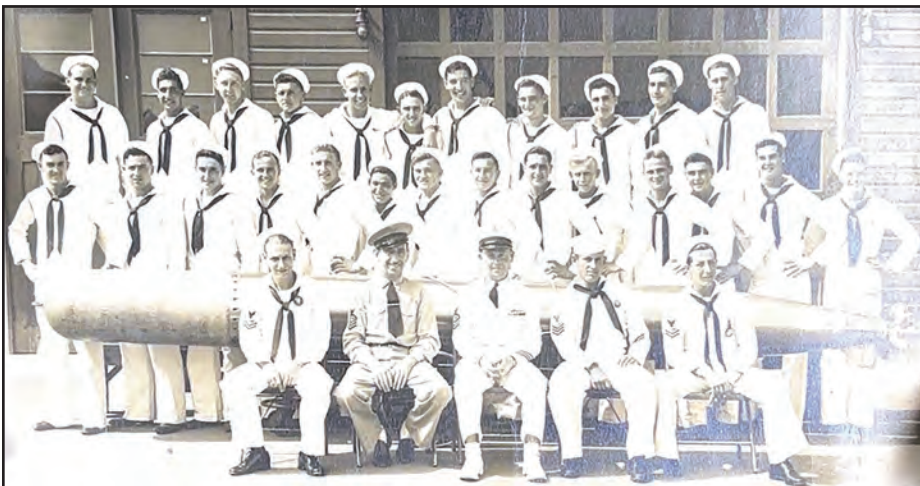
As of last week, the team at was working to finish insulating the ceiling of the studio. A shop door had recently been installed, and Kurt credited Pomerleau Real Estate and Limoge & Sons Garage Doors with helping button up the studio's north wall.

The team is also busy readying for the return of Love Hamburger Wednesdays — an offering that will serve up burgers made with Sentinel Farms beef for the community starting at noon. The gatherings will continue throughout the summer and fall, with donations collected through the events supporting completion of the welding studio.

Eventually, Kurt hopes to introduce "Sentinel Saturdays," which will welcome community members to the farm's arena to enjoy burgers and see what youth are working on.

Though it will take place on a Monday, the Memorial Day celebration will help kickoff the Wednesday gatherings to come at Sentinel Farms, as well as offer community members an opportunity to commemorate those who have served. Kurt noted hamburgers will be offered at the farm from noon-3 p.m. on Memorial Day.

"The event is definitely dedicated to my parents and everyone from the Greatest Generation and to all of our parents who do their best to provide the best opportunities for skill building experiential learning for their children," Kurt said of the event. "Especially to all Americans who have served our country to protect our constitution, our freedoms and our God gifted inalienable rights. May we never forget or take them for granted."



STARSBORO FARMER KERRY Kurt's father, Karl Kurt, served in the Navy during World War II. He is pictured here, fifth from the left in the back row, along with other men serving in the Navy. A Memorial Day celebration at Kurt's farm will honor those who have served our country, including Kurt's father and mother.

Photo courtesy of Kerry Kurt



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Remembering our war dead: Two minutes with Abraham Lincoln changed our young nation forever

By LANCE CPL. VIRGIL P. RICHARDSON

At dawn on July 4, 1863, a mist cleared over a small field in Pennsylvania. Bodies of soldiers and horses lay scattered on a grassy pasture now crimson with the blood of the 51,000 casualties amassed during three days of fighting. The small city named Gettysburg was forever immortalized as the site of the bloodiest battle in American history.

For weeks after the battle, many of the Gettysburg dead were dug up from their temporary shallow graves and shipped home. By August, the idea of a permanent national cemetery was being discussed, and Pennsylvania Gov. Andrew Curtin charged David Wills to clean up the city and employ a land architect to lay out the cemetery. By mid-August, Wills had purchased 17 acres of land adjacent to the regular cemetery. The transfer of bodies began with black laborers digging up partially decomposed corpses and transferring them to boxes for \$1.59 per body.

On Nov. 19, the dedication ceremony for the cemetery took place with skeletons of horses and confederate bodies still littering the landscape. The three months prior had not been enough time to rid the grounds of the thousands of unburied bodies.

When Wills added President Abraham

Lincoln's name to those who were to receive an official invitation to the cemetery's dedication, it was assumed he would not attend. He was invited not as an afterthought by the planning committee, but as a courtesy. What amazed the planners was Lincoln's earnest desire not only to attend, but also to speak. He was finally asked to add a "few, appropriate remarks" to the main oration by the renowned speaker Edward Everett. This was unusual because, during his presidency, Lincoln rarely left Washington, staying away from home only 50 nights during his term of office.

Many thought Lincoln had hardly ever been out of the backwoods settlements of Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois before leaving for Washington. Of the 34 states in the Union at the time of his nomination, he had visited 23 and spoken in 17. There were only nine cities in the country with a population of 100,000 or more and Lincoln had been to all of them. He did, however, travel considerably less while in office. By far his most famous excursion while president was to speak at Gettysburg.

Before leaving for Pennsylvania, Lincoln attended a production of "The Marble Heart" at Ford's Theater, a play that featured a young, flamboyant and tempestuous actor Lincoln was extremely impressed with named John Wilkes Booth. Lincoln almost didn't make the trip due to



THE ABOVE PHOTO is a reprint of a small detail of a photo showing the crowd gathered for the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Penn., where President Abraham Lincoln gave his now famous speech, the Gettysburg Address. Lincoln is visible facing the crowd, not wearing a hat, about an inch below the third flag from the left. Josephine Cobb first found Lincoln's face while working with a glass plate negative at the National Archives in 1952.

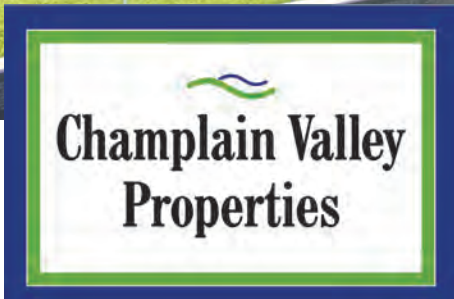
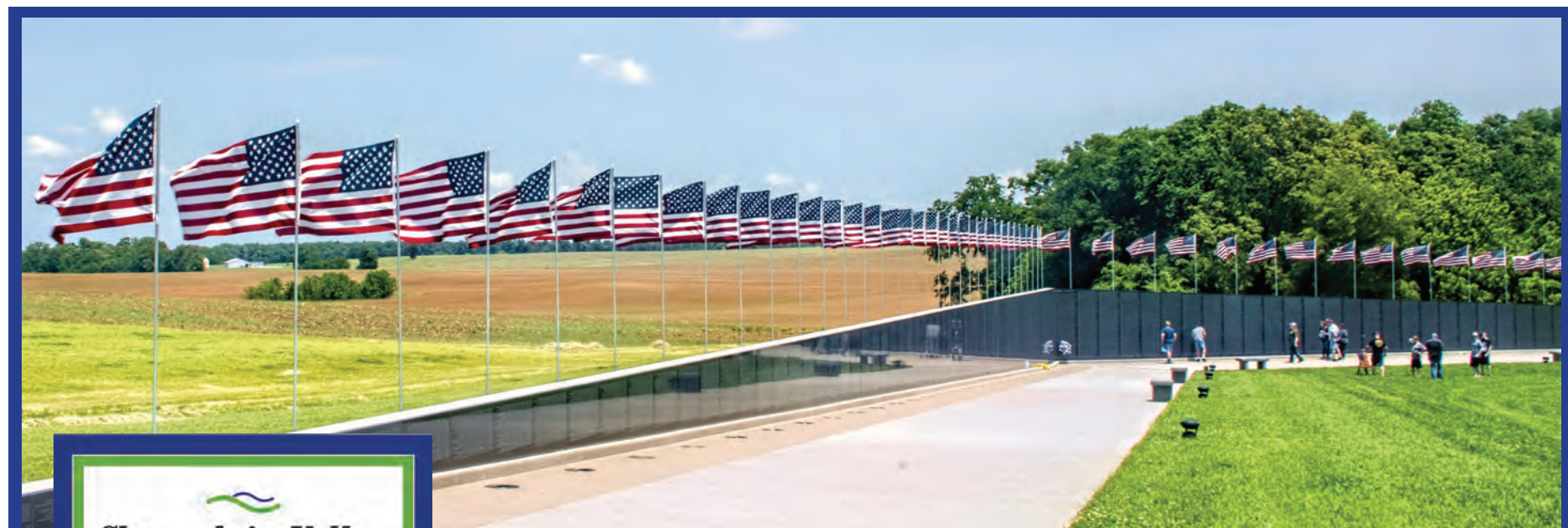
Source: NARA, Rare Photo of Lincoln at Gettysburg

his son Tad's severe illness. Nonetheless, he left Washington for Pennsylvania to make a speech he promised would be "short, short, short."

A crude stage had been erected, and a private tent stood in the distance for the elderly, nervous Everett, who had a severe

urinary ailment. An enormous crowd spilled over the hillside causing those who had witnessed the fighting four months earlier to remark, "Twice now our city has been overcome by a drove of humanity. Fancy this time they come peacefully."

(See Gettysburg, Page 5)



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Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

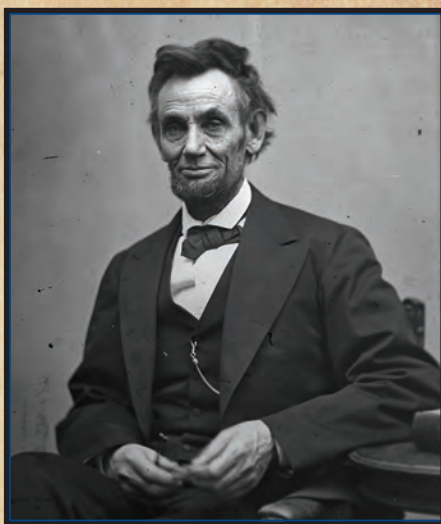
This is that speech that President Abraham Lincoln delivered on Nov. 19, 1863, at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It includes the idiosyncratic spelling of the era.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle field of that war. We come to dedicate a portion of it, as a final resting place for those who died here, that the nation might live. This we may, in all propriety do.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate we can not consecrate we can not hallow, this ground The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here.

It is rather for us, the living, we here be dedicated to the great task remaining before us that, from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here, gave the last full measure of devotion that we here highly resolve these dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.



Gettysburg

(Continued from Page 4)

Benjamin B. French, a government official, introduced the chief speaker. "Mr. Everett then arose," French wrote in his diary, "and without notes of any kind, pronounced an oration — two full hours in the delivery."

Then Lincoln rose. The restless crowd, unmoved by Everett's forgettable speech, stirred causing a cloud of dust to haze in the afternoon sun. The patrons pressed closer and closer to Lincoln, who spoke without benefit of any kind of amplification. One teen, determined to get as close to Lincoln as possible, hid himself during the early morning inside the hollow stage and sat feet from the leather-faced President, staring intently through the planks of the stage.

Up until then, except for his inaugural address in 1861, the great orator of the still-famous debates with Stephen A. Douglas had done no public speaking as president. It made no difference to Lincoln that he was to be the secondary speaker that day. The committee was of the notion that Lincoln was unable to deliver a dignified, heartfelt dedication address without politics or humor.

Lincoln then began to speak. He was, as he predicted, "short." His two-minute, 270-word speech was a humble statement of a great man's heartfelt concerns.

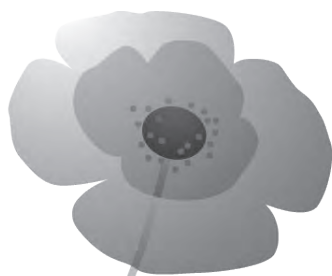
The Gettysburg Address, as it has become known, called several serious issues of the day to the fore-front of society of the time: how a country at war over slavery would test a new nation's ability to bounce back from dire adversity; how, despite the present conflict, a new and great destiny lay before a blossoming democracy; and how, if the country must war with itself, it must have a reason for doing so.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about Lincoln's address was the humility with which he delivered it. It was, after all, the humility with which he did most things in his life. He said in his speech, "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what [the soldiers] did here."

Editor's note: This piece was originally published by the U.S. Marine Corps Training and Education Command.



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What families can do to honor fallen veterans

The freedoms people living in the United States are afforded would not have been possible to provide if not for the brave efforts and undying commitment of the many individuals who have served in the nation's armed forces. American military personnel have played vital roles in securing freedoms for their fellow citizens as well as individuals overseas.

Each year on the final Monday in May, the United States commemorates military personnel who lost their lives while serving in the armed forces. Those individuals made the ultimate sacrifice, and Memorial Day is a way to honor them and thank their families for their selfless acts. This Memorial Day, families can embrace various measures to honor fallen veterans.

• **Visit a local veterans cemetery.** The United Service Organization (USO) notes that most states have national veterans cemeteries. Though some veterans cemeteries are open only to family members of service personnel, others are open to the general public. Visiting a veterans cemetery is a great way to honor fallen military members and ensure the memory of their service and sacrifice is not forgotten on Memorial Day.

• **Celebrate veterans over Memorial Day weekend.** Memorial Day weekend is now synonymous with getaways and backyard barbecues. By taking time out during the weekend to honor fallen veterans, families can ensure the meaning behind the holiday is not lost in the midst of celebrations with family and friends.

Take time out during a family barbecue to discuss a family member who served or, if traveling, make an effort to visit a veterans memorial along your travel route.

• **Help raise funds for veterans organizations.** Fun runs or community Memorial Day walks may benefit local veterans organizations that help service members in need. Many service members may need help dealing with the deaths of friends or family members who died while serving in the armed forces, and veterans organizations may provide such

help or direct funds to groups that do. That makes participation in events that benefit veterans organizations a great way to honor current military personnel and those who have served in the past, including those who died in service of their country.

• **Teach youngsters about the role of the armed forces.** There's a lot competing for the attention of today's young people, and that can make it easy to overlook the very freedoms that make the United States such a unique country throughout

world history. Parents and guardians can emphasize the role the armed forces play in procuring and protecting freedoms in the United States and emphasize the significance of the sacrifices of those who gave their lives to ensure a higher quality of life for all U.S. residents.

Memorial Day commemorates military personnel who died while serving in the armed forces. There is much families can do to ensure those sacrifices are never forgotten or taken for granted.

— Metro Creative



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Armell, Scribner to show leadership at city parade

VERGENNES — American Legion Post No. 14 in Vergennes has selected dignitaries for its annual Memorial Day Parade — one of the largest in the state.

The May 25 parade will begin near Vergennes Union High School at 11 a.m. and wind its way through the city to the city green, where there will be a ceremony honoring our service men and women.



Following the parade, a chicken barbeque will be held at the American Legion at noon.

The parade marshal for this year's parade is Travis Scribner of Vergennes, and the guest speaker at the ceremony held in the park will be Dennis Armell of Ferrisburgh.

Speaker Dennis Armell served in the Vermont Army National Guard for 44 years from January 1972 to August 2015, retiring with the rank of Master Sergeant (E-8). Armell served both in field artillery and logistics with deployments to Canada and Kuwait.

A member of American Legion Post No. 14 in Vergennes for the past 36 years, Armell has held the positions of Chaplin, Adjutant, Sergeant at Arms and Historian. In addition, he has been involved with the Vergennes Memorial Day Parade since 2015 and annually coordinates the placement of 1,100 flags on the graves of service men and women in the five town region.

What did the military give Armell? "Discipline," he said, adding that he "hopes that all who attend the parade remember the commitment of time, service and devotion that our service men and women have given this country."

Armell and his wife Nancy live in Ferrisburgh and their daughter Felicia currently serves in the Vermont Air National Guard in the 158 Fighter Wing and is overseas.

Parade Marshall Travis Scribner served

in both the Army and Air National Guard. He served in the Army National Guard from 1998-2006 attaining the rank of sergeant. He was a 62 E Heavy Equipment Operator with the 131st Engineers in Colchester.

In 2010, Scribner enlisted in the 158th Fighter Wing as a Munitions Systems Technician and was deployed in 2013 in Djibouti and in 2016 to Kuwait. Scribner was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal and retired in 2024 as a Master Sergeant with 22 years of service.

"Like so many other veterans, Memorial Day is special to me because it is a time for reflection to honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice due to their military service," Scribner said. "In particular, I take the time to remember my late friend Chris Gelineau, who lost his life in service in Mosul, Iraq, in 2004. I think about him very frequently. I also like to honor those who came home, but are no longer with us. It is a way to remember their legacy and sacrifices that helped make our country what it is today."

"We are fortunate that even with the obstacles that the United States faces to live in such a free and privileged society."

Scribner lives in Vergennes with his family and serves as the Scoutmaster of Troop 539 and as head coach of the VUHS wrestling program.

Monday's parade honors all men and women who have served our country during times of conflict.



TRAVIS SCRIBNER



DENNIS ARMELL

MEMORIAL DAY 2026



LEGION.ORG



The American Legion - Middlebury Post 27

REMEMBER THAT FREEDOM IS NOT FREE.



WREATHS REST ON the graves of John and Rebecca Rockwell in Central Cemetery in Cornwall this past December. John and Rebecca were married barely a month when they and their respective fathers joined forces at the Battle of Bennington on Aug. 16, 1777. All four survived, and Rebecca Rockwell tended the wounded.

Fallen veterans honored with wreaths in Cornwall

CORNWALL — Volunteers gathered at the DAR Samson Memorial on this past Dec. 13 to prepare for a day of service to veterans. Past DAR Regent Barbara Foote-Hennessy and her husband, Michael, launched the event with a generous inaugural donation of 75 wreaths. In total, 130 wreaths were placed in four Cornwall cemeteries to honor American veterans, 78 of whom served in the Revolutionary War.

The DAR in 2025 was designated a national site for Wreaths Across America, whose mission is to remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach the next generations the value of freedom. The event was a collaboration between the Cornwall Cemetery Commission, which oversees South and West cemeteries, and Fair and Central cemetery associations.

The celebration began with fortifying treats including slices of pie warm from the ovens of Anne Collins, DAR member

and author of “Vintage Pies,” a treasure trove of recipes popular in the 18th and 19th centuries that have withstood the test of time. DAR Regent Paula Sargent and Chaplain Janet Franklin conducted a commemorative service to honor veterans and thank the many who made the event possible, including Tim and Lorraine Hescocock of Vermont Trade Winds Farm.

It is said that a person is not forgotten as long as their name is remembered. Volunteers, including family and friends of the soldiers honored, braved the snow and cold to lovingly place the handcrafted wreaths on the headstones while saying each veteran’s name and giving special thanks for their service.

In Vermont alone, 10,000 wreaths were placed to remember and honor our state’s freedom fighters in what has become an annual tradition.

Editor’s note: This story was submitted by Carolyn Bausch



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Good deed

ON SUNDAY, A group from Scout Troop 539 of Vergennes replaced around 400 worn flags on veterans memorials at Prospect Cemetery ahead of Memorial Day. Picture, from left, are Scouts Mary, Morgan, Ally, Tess, Atticus, Wilder, Emerson, Jackson, Ozzy, Wesley, Kiran, Andrew and Blake.

Photo courtesy of Kylie Felton of Troop 539



Post 19 meets at 7pm the 4th Wednesday of every month

Brick forms for the Memorial are still available.



Bristol American Legion, Inc. Post 19

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How to honor vets on Memorial Day

Memorial Day often is celebrated with the excitement of a long weekend and the prospect of firing up the grill for a backyard barbecue. But Memorial Day also is a time to reflect on the men and women who gave their lives to defend American freedom.

Memorial Day was established to honor individuals who died while serving the United States in the Armed Forces. Memorial Day is a time to reflect on the sacrifices of the fallen heroes who dedicated and lost their lives in the pursuit of service. The following are some ways to honor those sacrifices this Memorial Day.

- **Observe the National Moment of Remembrance.** The National Moment of Remembrance is an annual one-minute moment of silence that takes place at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day. Established by Congress in 2000, this unifying moment encourages Americans to pause their activities and reflect on the high cost of freedom. The time is significant, as it is a period when most people are enjoying Memorial Day festivities that were made possible by the sacrifices of Armed Forces personnel.

- **Honor the American flag.** Memorial Day features a unique flag protocol. To properly honor the fallen, the flag should be flown at half-staff until noon. Afterwards, it should be raised to the top

of the staff for the remainder of the day, according to the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization. The transition marks the nation's mourning in the morning hours and then the legacy of fallen veterans later in the afternoon.

- **Coordinate flag placement for cemeteries.** Organizations like Flags for Fallen Vets and scouting groups make an effort to place small American flags at the grave sites of deceased veterans. Many cemeteries feature sections exclusively for veterans. Similarly, families can visit cemeteries and leave a penny or a stone on the headstone of a veteran, which shows others that someone visited to pay their respects.

- **Talk to the next generation.** To ensure that the memories of fallen soldiers do not fade into obscurity, living veterans can speak with youth about their service experiences and those of their fallen friends. Schools or local municipalities can organize speaking engagements.

Memorial Day is much more than sales at the furniture store or a day spent manning the grill. It is a day to remember and honor service members who never made it home to see their great country again. Ensuring that their efforts are remembered, and giving thanks to all veterans, is a great way to commemorate Memorial Day.

— Metro Creative



Our most recent fallen service members

Below is a list of the U.S. military casualties in Operation Epic Fury, otherwise known as the Iran War. This is a list of those who have died as of May 15, 2026, according to the Defense Casualty Analysis System.

Sgt. Declan Joseph Coady, 20, West Des Moines, Iowa, Army Reserve, died March 1

Cpt. Cody Aaron Khork, 35, Winter Haven, Fla., Army Reserve, died March 1

Maj. Jeffrey Robert O'Brien, 45, Indianola, Iowa, Army Reserve, died March 1

Master Sgt. Noah Lee Tietjens, 42, Bellevue, Neb., Army Reserve, died March 1

Chief Warrant Officer Robert Macabenta Marzan, 54, Sacramento, Calif., Army Reserve, died March 1

Msg. Nicole Marie Amor, 39, White Bear Lake, Minn., Army Reserve, died March 1

Staff Sgt. Benjamin Noah Pennington, 26, of Glendale, Ky., active duty Army, died March 8

Maj. John Alexander Klinner, 33, of Auburn, Ala., active duty Air Force, died March 12

Master Sgt. Tyler Hanani Simmons, 28, of Columbus, Ohio, Air Force National Guard, died March 12

Technical Sgt. Ashley Brooke Pruitt, 34 of Nelson, Ky., active duty Air Force, died March 12



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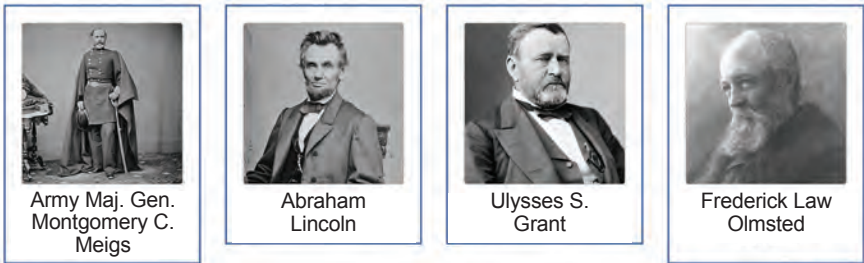
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ADDISON COUNTY
INDEPENDENT

How much do you know about Arlington National Cemetery?

Since its creation during the Civil War, Arlington National Cemetery has become the final resting place for some of America's greatest military and civilian heroes. Let's find out how much you know about one of the nation's most renowned cemeteries.

Q1: Arlington National Cemetery was established on the grounds of the Arlington Estate during the later stages of the Civil War. Seized by the Union Army, it was eventually turned into a burial ground for Union soldiers in 1864. Who directed the establishment of Arlington National Cemetery?



- One
- Two
- Three
- Four



Q2: Two presidents are buried at Arlington National Cemetery. One is John F. Kennedy. Who is the other?



Q3: The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is Arlington National Cemetery's most famous memorial. Since it was built in 1921, it has symbolized the supreme sacrifice of America's fallen warriors. How many unknowns are interred at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?

- Section 1
- Section 7A
- Section 26
- Section 27



(Quiz continued on Page 13)

What can be left on a veteran's grave?

Some former members of the armed services are buried in special military cemeteries here in the United State. In Vermont, the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery is located in Randolph.

These cemeteries have special rules about what families and friends can be left on graves:

- Fresh cut flowers may be placed on graves at any time. Artificial flowers are not allowed.
- Potted plants are permitted on graves immediately following interment and then only during the period of 10 days before and 10 days after Memorial Day only. Planting are not permitted at any time. Floral items will be removed from graves as soon as they become faded and unsightly. During the mowing season, all floral items will be removed from the graves every two weeks.
- Natural wreaths may be placed on graves from November through February. Wreaths must be freestanding and not attached to grave markers.
- Statues, vigil lights, breakable objects of any nature and similar commemorative items are not permitted on the graves at any time.



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Flying Revolutionary War flags can inspire patriotism

By DAVID VERGUN
Pentagon News

The American flag is a symbol of freedom and patriotism, but before the Continental Congress adopted the first official flag in 1777, many other flags were flown.

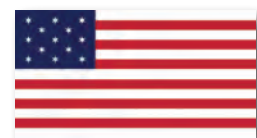
As America celebrates 250 years of freedom, here's a look at a few of the various United States flags flown during combat by soldiers, sailors, Marines and militia during the American Revolutionary War.

Flags were a significant part of the war, as they served to instill esprit de corps in the men and also aided in rallying the troops, as the flag carrier led from the front. They expressed liberty and national identity, as well as a means to assert sovereignty against British rule.

The use of colors — the term for the banners and flags — dates back to the Middle Ages in Europe, when knights displayed their distinctive symbols and colors on their shields to identify one another on the battlefield. The ancient Romans and Greeks also carried banners with symbols of their leaders into battle.

Today, the American flag, also known as the Stars and Stripes and Old Glory, serves to unite the nation and inspire patriotism. Although military units have their own colors, all fly the American flag higher, giving it the most prominent position.

THE HOPKINSON FLAG



Most historians agree that Francis Hopkinson was the designer of the first official American flag. On June 14, 1777, the Second Continental Congress adopted the Hopkinson flag, calling it the Stars and Stripes.

Since there were only 13 states then, the design featured 13 stripes and 13 six-pointed stars arranged in rows on the field of blue. He also designed a very similar flag for the Navy, which looks similar to today's flag because the red stripes are located at the top and bottom.

The Hopkinson flag was first carried into combat during the Battle of Brandywine, Sept. 11, 1777, just outside Philadelphia.

Hopkinson also helped design the Great Seal of the United States and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence; many consider him a Founding Father.

THE SERAPIS FLAG



Featuring 13 blue, red and white stripes and 13 stars, the Serapis flag design is similar to the Hopkinson flag except for the arrangement of stars and the blue stripes.

(See *Flags*, Page 15)

Q5: Pictured here is James Parks, who has a unique claim to fame in the cemetery's history. What is it?

- He is the only Black Medal of Honor recipient from the Civil War buried at Arlington.
- He was the first Black sentinel to guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.
- He is the only person buried at the cemetery who was also born as property.
- He is the only freed former slave buried at the cemetery



Q6: True or false: Section 60 is reserved for service members who served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

- True
- False



Q7: Arlington is one of only a handful of cemeteries to attain status as a Level III arboretum under the ArbNet accreditation program. This means Arlington's grounds are home to at least how many kinds of trees and woody plants?

- 200
- 300
- 400
- 500



Answers on page 15



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U.S. Active Duty Military Deaths by Year and Manner

Between 1980 and May 15, 2026, the U.S. active duty military saw 63,674 deaths. Nearly half of them were killed in accidents. Almost 9% of those deaths occurred in wartime by attacks from enemies. Sadly, a substantial number of deaths were attributed to self-inflicted.

Detailed record-keeping on active-duty military deaths began in 1980. Historical records from The Department of Veterans Affairs show approximately 1.2 million fatalities between 1775 and 1991, according to USAFacts.

Which US war had the most casualties?

In terms of overall casualties, World War II resulted in 1,076,245 dead and wounded Americans during the nation's four-year involvement, making it the deadliest conflict in both U.S. history. This war accounts for approximately 41% of U.S. military casualties across the major conflicts recorded by the Department of Veterans Affairs between 1775 and 1991.

The American Civil War holds the record for the highest casualty rate of any major American conflict, with 498,332 deaths and 281,881 wounded – 23.9% of the 3.3 million people who served in the military between 1861 and 1865.

Accidental deaths

In the past 46 years, 29,948 soldiers and other service people died in accidents, including vehicle crashes and incidents related to alcohol or substance abuse. By 2025, the most recent year with complete data, annual accidental deaths had decreased by 85.5%, from 1,556 in 1980 to 225.

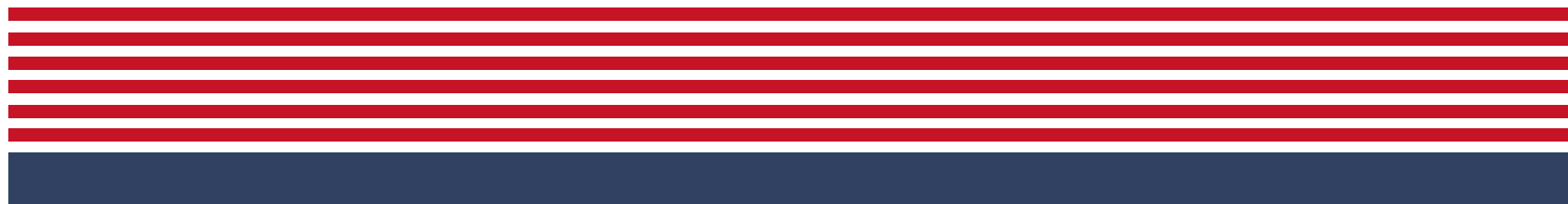
Suicide or self-inflicted injuries

Since more thorough data collection began, the prevalence of military deaths caused by suicide or self-inflicted injuries has increased nearly 40%, from 231 deaths in 1980 to 322 in 2025. These incidents have become the most common cause of death in the military.

Homicide, illness, and other deaths

Since 1980, more than 14,000 active-duty military members have died from illness (11,485) or homicide (2,802), with an additional 1,225 deaths classified as pending or undetermined.

Year	Total deaths	Accident	Hostile action	Homicide	Illness	Pending	Self-inflicted	Undetermined
1980	2392	1556	0	174	419	0	231	11
1981	2380	1524	0	145	457	0	241	13
1982	2319	1493	0	108	446	0	254	16
1983	2465	1413	18	115	419	0	218	19
1984	1999	1293	1	84	374	0	225	16
1985	2252	1476	0	111	363	0	275	22
1986	1984	1199	2	103	384	0	269	27
1987	1983	1172	37	104	383	0	260	25
1988	1819	1080	0	90	321	0	285	26
1989	1636	1000	23	58	294	0	224	37
1990	1507	880	0	74	277	0	232	43
1991	1787	931	147	112	308	0	256	33
1992	1293	676	0	109	252	0	238	17
1993	1213	632	0	86	221	0	236	9
1994	1075	544	0	83	206	0	232	10
1995	1040	538	0	67	174	0	250	4
1996	974	527	1	52	173	0	188	14
1997	817	433	0	42	170	0	159	13
1998	827	445	0	26	174	0	165	14
1999	796	439	0	38	154	0	150	15
2000	832	429	0	37	180	0	153	16
2001	943	461	12	49	197	0	153	25
2002	1051	565	17	54	213	0	174	28
2003	1399	597	312	46	231	1	190	22
2004	1847	605	735	46	256	0	197	8
2005	1929	646	739	54	280	1	182	27
2006	1883	565	769	49	260	1	213	26
2007	1952	566	847	52	237	2	216	32
2008	1442	510	353	48	246	0	260	25
2009	1516	471	358	65	283	2	309	28
2010	1490	429	456	41	247	1	297	19
2011	1450	428	395	40	252	2	299	34
2012	1309	408	239	46	246	3	347	20
2013	1034	369	91	40	215	2	293	24
2014	880	306	38	27	195	1	303	10
2015	869	321	16	23	196	1	294	18
2016	814	279	16	29	174	2	307	7
2017	907	340	21	29	174	3	318	22
2018	921	311	14	33	175	3	365	20
2019	896	284	23	32	155	5	378	19
2020	1024	327	9	38	195	9	432	14
2021	1016	334	13	32	246	4	363	24
2022	846	281	0	33	150	10	349	23
2023	939	327	0	26	162	8	390	26
2024	836	261	3	26	165	27	331	23
2025	828	226	2	22	159	65	323	31
2026	263	53	7	4	30	109	56	4
Total	63,674	29,950	5,714	2,802	11,488	153	12,080	959



Answers

A1: Army Mag. Gen. Montgomery C. Meigs was the quartermaster general for the Army during the Civil War and was charged with overseeing military burials. In 1864, he designated part of the Arlington Estate as an Army cemetery. Pvt. William Christman was the first soldier buried at Arlington on May 13, 1864.

A2: President William Howard Taft, the nation's 27th president, died on March 8, 1930, and was buried in Section 30 of Arlington National Cemetery. Taft is the only person to have served both as president of the United States and as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

A3: Three. After lying in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, unknowns from World War II and Korea were interred in crypts next to the World War I unknown on May 30, 1958.

A4: Section 27. On May 13, 1864, the Army designated a section of the Arlington Estate — the abandoned home of Mary Custis Lee and Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee — for military burials. The first two burials took place that day in what was initially known as the Lower Cemetery, and later became Section 27

A5: Born into slavery on the Custis plantation in 1843, Parks worked for the Army at the property once it became a cemetery and remained employed there until 1925. Before Parks' death four years later at age 86, the secretary of war authorized his burial at Arlington even though he was a civilian. He received full military honors at his funeral.

A6: False. While many service members buried at Arlington who deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan are in Section 60, this area contains gravesites for service members from other eras too, dating back to the Revolutionary War.

A7: 500. Institutions must meet numerous requirements to achieve this accreditation, including having a minimum of 500 species, varieties or cultivars of trees or woody plants. Arlington meets these criteria, while also maintaining tree-related research and education efforts.

Flags

(Continued from Page 13)

The flag has an unusual origin story: it was named for the Royal Navy frigate *HMS Serapis*.

The *Serapis* engaged the American warship *USS Bonhomme Richard* under the command of Continental Navy Capt. John Paul Jones in the North Sea near England on Sept. 23, 1779.

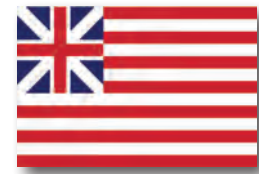
The battle resulted in the capture of the *Serapis*. Jones's ship was badly damaged and sank, so he sailed the *Serapis* to the neutral Dutch port of Texel without a flag — technically making him a pirate.

Benjamin Franklin, then an ambassador to France, was asked to provide a flag that Jones could use. Once created, the flag diffused the diplomatic tension, and Jones was released by the Dutch.

The *Serapis* flag was one of the first flags of the United States, although it was never used in an official capacity. However, it is strongly associated with Jones and his heroics as one of the great captains of the Continental Navy and his contributions to the war effort.

The flag is used to this day on the *USS John Paul Jones*, a missile destroyer commissioned in 1991 to honor the famous captain. It is sometimes called the Franklin flag in honor of the Founding Father who helped create it.

THE GRAND UNION FLAG



Also known as the Congress flag, the Cambridge flag and the Continental Union flag, the

Grand Union flag is the first national flag of the United States; it was flown from 1775 to 1776.

The Grand Union flag consisted of 13 red and white stripes with the British Union Jack located in the area now occupied by stars. The flag was first flown by Continental Navy Lt. John Paul Jones on Dec. 3, 1775, on the *USS Alfred*.

THE BETSY ROSS FLAG



Betsy Ross was a professional upholsterer in Philadelphia from the early 1770s until

she retired in 1827. While there is no historical evidence, many people believe she designed the American flag. During and after the war, Ross made a variety of military flags over the course of 50 years.

The Betsy Ross flag is similar to the other flags in that it has 13 stripes and 13 stars on a field of blue, but rather than rows, her design includes five-pointed stars arranged in a circle.

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