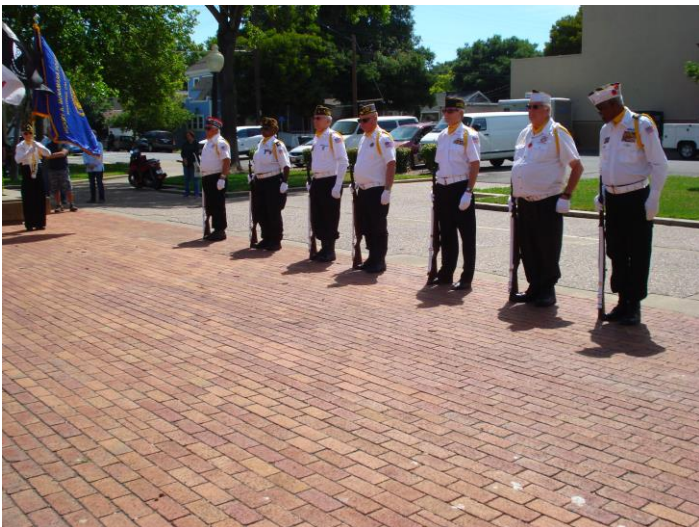


VFW Post 1351 Memorial Day Events

Ceremony at Pioneer Cemetery



Ceremony at City Hall



Community Breakfast at Veterans Hall



David E. Fraser, Chief of Staff
Office of Supervisor Federal Glover
Contra Costa County, District V

The Difference Remembering Makes
Memorial Day Remarks
Martinez, California
May 29, 2017

I bring you greetings on behalf of the Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors of Contra Costa County, Federal D. Glover. He asked that I convey his warmest regards to the veterans, active duty personnel, reservists, Gold Star families, elected officials, and members of the community at large who are gathered here today in reflection. I also greet you as a parent - a proud parent - of a United States Marine, Lance Corporal Bryan Fraser, who is currently stationed at the Marine Corps base in Okinawa, Japan. Yesterday, as the sun rose in the Asia Pacific region, ushering in Memorial Day some 16 hours ahead of us on the US Pacific Coast, he sent me a message telling me of his plans to visit battle sites as he reflected on the sacrifice of those who fell in battle. Then he asked, "will you send me that (your presentation to the group gathered in Martinez)?" Of course such moments bring a sense of pride to my heart. I am proud of his service. And I am proud that he still finds value in the words I offer from time to time.

Today, I ask that you indulge me for just a few minutes as I share some thoughts that I have been entertaining for the past several weeks. I was very much aware that this Memorial Day, as with many others over the past years, I would gather with like-minded Americans to reflect on the lives of those marines, and soldiers, and sailors, and airmen, and coastguardsmen, who surrendered their lives so that the Star Spangled Banner yet waves, o'er the land of the free and home of the brave. And while gatherings like this stir our passion, and in some ways even affirm our patriotism, are they enough? Is it enough that we've set aside a day - Memorial Day - to think about those whom we lost? Is it enough that we erect monuments which reach to the sky and proclaim our regard for the fallen? Is it enough that the bugler somberly blows the riveting strains of TAPS? Is it enough that the color guard posts the colors, and we watch with a renewed sense of awe as the red, white, and blue ripples in the wind? Or should there be something more?

Our English word "memorial" has roots in the Latin, *memoria*, which simply means a record, a memory, or a monument. But our English word *remember*, has its roots in a Latin variant, *memor*, which means to call to mind or to be mindful. The former focuses on artifacts, monuments, and ceremonies. The latter focuses on actively calling to mind, and "giving mindful thought" to something or someone of value.

Why, you may ask, does this even matter? Well, as we gather on occasions like this from year to year, there is a risk that we will become consumed by the ceremonies, awestruck by our artifacts, and mesmerized by our monuments, and yet fail to call to mind that men and women surrendered everything to secure and preserve the liberties we embrace. It is not enough to memorialize. We must remember. We must remember by compassionately caring for the families who are left behind, often stripped of their bread winner. We must remember by insisting that our legislators and those in the executive branch of government stop making excuses and allow our veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and myriads of other maladies, to secure proper medical care, and be treated with the dignity they've earned. We must remember by placing our veterans who are able-bodied in productive employment opportunities.

It is ok to memorialize. It is ok to build our monuments. It is ok to discharge 21 rounds to honor our fallen. But if all we do is memorialize, then we have failed our fallen. Today, I call upon you, once this memorial is over, to go from this place and be mindful - call to mind - all that it takes to honor those who have passed, and to affirm the value of those who survived. Remember - call to mind - all our service men and women and their families. Memor! Remember!