

What Memorial Day Means to Me

Under the somber sunlight of early morning on Memorial Day, as a Boy Scout and proud American, I was eager to pay my respects to the fallen heroes of our nation. Dressed in a khaki uniform decorated with neckerchiefs and badges that told stories of my achievements, I methodically walked amongst the tombstones. I paused at every burial site, carefully placing flags into the earth. Each gravesite had a unique story of a veteran with their own family and dreams. Having two cousins currently enlisted and two aunts who served in the armed forces alongside their husbands whom they met when they began their military journeys nearly three decades ago, I have gained an immense admiration for our heroes. As I placed each flag, my thoughts were captivated with the compelling stories of incredible sacrifices and admirable bravery that my aunts, Narissa and Samantha, my uncles, Colby and Mark and my cousins, Aidan and Tyler have shared over the years. For me, Memorial Day has become an emotional touchstone that highlights the importance of service, sacrifice, and selflessness.

Despite the geographic distance between us, I've always maintained a close bond with my aunts and uncles. This connection is further strengthened by my cousins who illuminate the true cost of freedom by risking their lives at a young age. Inspired by my family's commitment to American freedom and sense of duty, I have developed a profound sense of pride that has significantly deepened my appreciation for our republic and values.

As I've matured, the flags I placed have taken on a more profound significance. I've realized that our veterans are not just symbols of America but are individual lives with their own legacies and aspirations. The American flag on my desk serves as a constant reminder not just of my aunts, uncles, and cousins, but of all who have served. On Memorial Day, I pay tribute to these heroes, hoping that the magnitude of their sacrifices will resonate as deeply with others as it does with me. Without their ultimate sacrifice—defending equality, justice, and freedom—America would not exist today.

