

Memorial Day Thoughts

Spring 2000

Ronald P. Bernardi, President

"All who shall hereafter live in freedom will be here remembered that to these men and their comrades we owe a debt to be paid with grateful remembrance of their sacrifice and with the high resolve that the cause for which they died shall live eternally"

- DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

The above inscription is etched into a beautiful stone terrace overlooking the Luxembourg American Cemetery in Luxembourg City. There are over 5000 U.S. Third Army soldiers honored here, including General George S. Patton, Jr.

Last summer I returned to visit this hallowed place that had made an indelible impression in my mind many years before when my parents brought me here. Now, 30 years later I returned with my wife and three sons hoping to leave a similar impression on their youthful minds.

It was a beautiful sunny day. We arrived just as the keeper was about to close for the day. He kindly agreed to allow us to visit. There was no one else present. As we walked onto the perfectly manicured, velvety green lawn I marveled at the vast number of men buried here so far from their homes. I felt a high degree of angst as I reflected upon the valor and sacrifice of these men now so perfectly enshrined in this place fifty years later.

Americans all: from the most famous General Patton to the unknown soldiers remembered today only by their families. Thousands upon thousands whose names we don't know. Men who gave their lives defending our liberties on a battlefield so far from home. I wondered what our world today would be like if not for these patriots. We owe these true patriots a great

deal but I wonder if today's society understands what men like these did for all of us so many years ago.

No one is born patriotic. Patriotism must be instilled through constant introduction to the subject just as we are introduced to and taught religion. It is for this very reason I stopped to visit the graves of our soldiers with my boys. I wanted to tell them about the accomplishments and sacrifices of these men. I wanted them to leave with a higher sense of pride in our country. I wanted them to experience greater thankfulness for the men and women who have died for our country. This visit accomplished a great deal in this regard.

However, past sacrifices and accomplishments cannot be bottled and placed on a shelf to be re-opened once a year or once each decade. They must be shared with our youth on an ongoing basis otherwise their importance will be diminished and even forgotten. It is up to us to continually remind our youth of the debt we owe these patriots. It is up to us to tell our children that these men knew the difference between right and wrong. It is up to us to tell our children that these soldiers fought for what was right and that they paid the dearest price for their victory. All of us living in this great nation must be forever grateful for their sacrifices.