



DENNIS J. BECKER POST 205

AMERICAN LEGION

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY

MONDAY

MAY 28, 2018

COMMANDER - DAVID A. LEITE

AUXILIARY PRESIDENT - GERTRUDE STERLING

History of Memorial Day

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in service of the United States of America. Over two dozen cities and towns claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day. While Waterloo N.Y. was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966, it's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day.

Regardless of the exact date or location of its origins, one thing is clear – Memorial Day was borne out of the Civil War and a desire to honor our dead. It 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. “The 30th of May 1868, is designated for strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land,” he proclaimed. The date of Decoration Day, as he called it, was chosen because it wasn't the anniversary of any battle.

On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, and 5,000 participants decorated the graves of the 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried there.

The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890 it was recognized by all the northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war).

It is now observed in almost every state on the last Monday in May with Congressional passage of the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 – 363). This helped ensure a three-day weekend for Federal holidays, though several southern states have an additional separate day for honoring the Confederate war dead: January 19th in Texas; April 26th in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10th in South Carolina; and June 3rd (Jefferson Davis' birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee

Program

Master of Ceremony-----1st Vice Commander Robert (Bro) Kitty

Acknowledgement of Dignitaries-----1st Vice Commander Robert (Bro) Kitty

Sgt at Arms Presentation of Colors – Steve Robillard

Bagpiper - Greg McCulloch

Presentation of the Colors

Bluffton Fire & Police Department's Color Guard

Troop 241 Color Guard

National Anthem-----Katie McAllister

Invocation-----Rev. Dr. Jon R. Black, Pastor

Lt. Commander Naval Chaplain Retired

Chaplain, Campbell Chapel A.M.E. Church

History ----- Sgt Major Ron Kirby

Boys Scout Memorial Day Poem ----- Tim Boggs

Introduction of Speaker-----1st Vice Commander Robert (Bro) Kitty

America the Beautiful----- Katie McAllister

Speaker-----Bluffton Councilman Larry Toomer

Placing of the Wreath-----Commander Leite and President Gertrude Sterling

Reading of Memorial Day Poem-----David Hahn

Raising of the Flags-----Past Commander Sterling & Kay Ranta

Taps by -----Samuel Winn

Amazing Grace – Greg McCulloch

Retiring of the Colors

Bluffton Fire & Police Department's Color Guard

Remarks-----Commander Leite

Benediction-----Rev. Dr. Jon R. Black



Mayor Pro Tempore Larry Toomer

Larry Toomer was elected to Town Council in 2012 and elected as Mayor Pro Tempore in 2016. While this is Toomer's first elected term, he has lived Bluffton's "State of Mind," for more than five decades.

He personifies both sides of Bluffton's personality; laid-back yet a fierce defender of Bluffton's culture and character.

His livelihood and his family history are deeply rooted in Bluffton being the last true coastal village in the South.

As a fourth-generation fisherman and May River Mariculture farmer, he owns the Bluffton Oyster Factory, which is the last hand-shucking oyster house in South Carolina. Located on the banks of the May River, the Bluffton Oyster Factory has continuously harvested local oysters since 1899 and is recognized as a historic structure.

The love of the Lowcountry's natural resources and the ability to make a living on them has been a part of Toomer's family for generations. His grandfather opened an oyster business on Hilton Head Island in 1913.

Toomer and his family also own Bluffton Oyster Company, a seafood restaurant in Bluffton's Old Town.

Growing up in an oyster factory and fishing since he was eight years old are among the main reasons why protecting the May River's pristine waters is Toomer's top priority as a councilmember.

"I have saltwater in my blood," Toomer said. "The water is my office; it's where I got my education and where I continue to gain a lifetime of experience. It continues to be a never-ending stream of learning and we must protect it for ourselves and for everyone who will enjoy the River after us."

Toomer is a graduate of Bluffton's H.E. McCracken High School. Toomer said, ironically, the building which is now Town Hall was also Toomer's elementary school in the mid-60s.

Toomer lives in the Old Town Historic District with his wife, Tina. They have five children and six grandchildren. The family tradition continues, for many of his family members, still work in the oyster and restaurant business.

Toomer is involved in the South Carolina Seafood Alliance and the South Carolina Shrimpers Association. He is also an advisor and frequent speaker for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Health and Environmental Controls and the Sea Grant Consortium.

Toomer attends and volunteers at Bluffton's Lowcountry Community Church.

Memorial Day Poem

Read by David Hahn

We walked among the crosses Where our fallen soldiers lay.
And listened to the bugle As TAPS began to play.

The Chaplin led a prayer We stood with heads bowed low.
And I thought of fallen comrades I had known so long ago.

They came from every city Across this fertile land.
That we might live in freedom. They lie here 'neath the sand.

I felt a little guilty My sacrifice was small.
I only lost a little time, but these men lost their all.

Now the services are over for this Memorial Day.
To the names upon these crosses I just want to say.

Thanks for what you've given No one could ask for more.
May you rest with God in heaven from now through evermore. `

By C. W. Johnson



We Will Never Forget