



# ALL EARS!!

THE LITCHFIELD FUND WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

**"OUR EARS SPAN ALL FIELDS"**



**LITCHFIELD**

**IF YOU HAVE SEEN IT**, it is hard to forget. Taps play. The flag is folded. An officer then turns to a spouse, parent or child. The long side of the folded flag is toward the recipient. The officer bows slightly & says, *"On behalf of the United States Army & a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's honorable & faithful service."* These words never seem to be enough to express to someone the deep gratitude we have for the sacrifice their loved one made for the freedom of others. There remain so many words unspoken, that can be felt only in our hearts & souls. Yet, perhaps that gratitude can be expressed in a few words, maybe just 271.

*(As is our All Ears!! custom, we step aside from the weekly news to pay tribute to the men & women who have served our country to protect our precious, sacred freedom.)*

**UNFINISHED WORK:** The practice of decorating the graves of fallen soldiers has been a custom in many cultures for thousands of years. Many USA counties, towns & villages lay a claim to the origin of Memorial Day, their traditions beginning in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In May, 1868, General John A. Logan called for one national Decoration Day, combining holidays held in hundreds of towns across the country. Decoration Day, as it was originally called (my family always did), became known as Memorial Day as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed. It was observed on May 30 until 1970, when it moved to always be the last Monday in May. We set aside this day to honor the fallen & perhaps, reflect on what that means to us as we live our lives today. Unfortunately for most people, Memorial Day simply means the start to summer, a day off of work, barbecues & pools.

Honoring fallen soldiers has been a custom for many years because sadly, wars have been with us for many years. Wars have been fought for many reasons: power & conquest, religious & ethnic intolerance, feudal & tribal affronts, simple economics of 'haves' versus 'have-nots' & most importantly, for the freedom of belief, thought & speech. As much as current history lessons might proclaim that wars were caused by Europeans exploring & colonizing the world, the truth & reality is that there were violent, bloody wars in Africa, the Americas, Asia & South Pacific long before European sails appeared on these continents' coasts. And while each of us likely prays desperately for a John Lennon/Jackie DeShannon/Dionne Warwick utopian world, that may never become a reality - the same reasons for war still exist today & may always exist.

The letters or other writings from young American men (& today young women) of what they thought as they headed off to war are interesting. Whether a volunteer or draftee, these people had both the courage & the willingness to sacrifice for our country, perhaps simply for believing the ideals that were written in our founding documents. There are many reasons why a war begins, some obvious causes & some that are less obvious. Often, the reasons for war are much clearer to the politicians & generals than to those who do the fighting. A prudent study of unbiased history, with the added benefit of hindsight, helps the inquisitive mind understand those causes. Thankfully, at a time of need, whether or not they understood those causes, young Americans found it in their heads, hearts & souls to step forward & do their duty. We admire each & every one of them.

Certainly, the reasons for the American Revolution were clear. America was a nation of hardy, rugged individuals who had experienced prosperity through entrepreneurial capitalism, self-determination & self-rule. They had built strong communities with local governments. They saw the benefits of equality & meritocracy. They believed the path to success was through their own hard work & abilities. They were not going to be ruled by a far-off monarch, who claimed a divine right to rule over them, & the lords he appointed. They saw their own rights, their *sacred freedoms*, being eroded & seized. They understood what they had built & what was at risk. Everything they believed & worked for was being taken away.

There were many different reasons America went to war during the 19<sup>th</sup> century: to stop Muslim piracy & the enslavement of our sailors on the Barbary Coast; to support the freedom seeking Texans & in response to a media induced fervor against Spain. The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought clearer, though in some ways, more complicated reasons for America to go to war. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the European powers were still imperialistic, seemingly unaware of what was happening to the people they ruled. Technology was changing people's lifestyles, bringing convenience, mobility, new jobs & professions. The middle class

expanded; workers fought for more rights; the bourgeoisie grew in power & influence. Europe's empirical rulers found themselves out-of-date & out-of-touch. Old treaties & rivalries still abounded between nations & ethnicities. Europe was a powder-keg, set off when Gavrilo Princip assassinated Austrian-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand & his wife Sophie on 28 June, 1914. Six weeks later, *The Guns of August* roared. America tried to remain neutral & isolated. German U-boat activity (including the sinking of the Lusitania) & the Zimmerman letter (an intercepted telegram that indicated Mexico would side with Germany, then attack the USA) raised public anger. Isolationist media tried claiming the letter was fake, but the public had had enough. America's doughboys went *Over There*, their sheer numbers & acts of heroism & bravery bringing about an end to the *War to End all Wars*. When I was about 10, I asked my Nono about his going to war. He had only been in the USA a few years in 1917 & was not yet a citizen. His answer was simple: It was because he was an American. His new country needed him.

My Dad went to the South Pacific in 1942 knowing little about why he was going or even where. Yes, his unawareness was certainly due to his 4<sup>th</sup> grade education & rural upbringing, but few high school graduates at the time had ever heard of the names of the South Pacific islands or the mountains, villages & regions in Europe where they would fight and die. Few understood the issues that had led to the rise of Nazi Germany or the jingoistic imperial desires of Japan. The many atrocities being committed by the Germans & Japanese were not well-known & were definitely not well-covered by that era's media. But much in the way that today's social media shares news that traditional outlets ignore, refugees told their stories of what was happening in Europe & brave broadcasters aired stories from Indo-China. Some Americans did understand what was happening - American pilots were recruited & headed to China to fight off the Japanese advances. General Claire Chennault's *Flying Tigers* arrived in China in April, 1941, 7 months before the USA entered the war. Like WWII, the remaining wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were fought to protect innocents from tyrannical rulers who sought to enslave people & usurp countries. The American soldier has always been called upon to set things right, to reset the balance & ultimately, to restore the peace.

As we mentioned earlier, Decoration Day was declared a few years after the Civil War ended. The Civil War accounted for almost 50% of all the Americans who ever died in war. While the reason for the Civil War was to end slavery, there were many other causes that led to war, that are often overlooked. The North & South had drifted apart. The North was industrial, teaming with commerce, employing immigrants, building canals & railways to move goods between burgeoning urban areas. The South was rural & agricultural, raising & exporting cotton, sugar, beans & nuts. The North was reaping the benefit of a strong central government whose regulations & policies sparked commerce, banking & transportation. The South believed in what the founders had written in the 10<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution, *that rights not explicitly given to the federal government were retained by the state & individual*. In 1861, Americans were realizing what De Tocqueville, Burke, Smith, Voltaire & Descartes had warned: *there is a moral responsibility & inherent dilemma in a free society of free people with a free will*. The Civil War was the great test for our republic - can we respect the rights of all our people while retaining our own individual rights.

As a people we believe everyone, American or not, has a right to be free & exercise their own free will. The American military has always been & likely always will be called upon to defend & perhaps die for the cause of freedom. They do this for us & for others. It is difficult to find words strong enough not just to show our gratitude, but to tell them that we will honor & preserve, in their memory, the cause & *unfinished work* for which they fought. But with these words, a mere 271, can say just that:

*Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on 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 have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.*

*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 consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, 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.*

## **SEEDS, SPROUTS, GROW, HARVEST!**

**THE LITCHFIELD FUND** – *Tom Malenka*

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