



May 28, 2010

Watco Team:

As we begin the first unofficial weekend of summer, I would like to ask each of you to remember the real reason for our extended Memorial Day weekend. Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on May 5, 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11, and was first observed on May 30, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890 it was recognized by all of 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 celebrated in every State on the last Monday in May.

During my travels I encounter many military men and women in uniform. I take every opportunity to walk up to them and say "thank you for the job you do." Every time I get a thank you in return and a smile of gratitude for the acknowledgment of their dedication and unselfish service to our country. Our heroes in uniform have chosen either to put their careers on hold or to dedicate their working life towards protecting our wonderful country and our way of life. They do this while knowing that they may have to put their lives on the line to ensure that you and I, complete strangers, continue to live safely and freely. For their willingness to trade their future for mine, I am and will always be most grateful.

I recently read something I would like to share with you, and I hope you will remember these words next time you hear of a fallen soldier or see someone in uniform.

*It is the VETERAN, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.
It is the VETERAN, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.
It is the VETERAN, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.
It is the VETERAN, not the community organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.
It is the VETERAN, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.
It is the VETERAN, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.
It is the VETERAN, who salutes the Flag.
It is the VETERAN, who serves under the Flag.*

Please be proud and give thanks for the honorable men and women who have defended, and continue to defend, us each and every day. Please take my advice and never miss an opportunity to tell our men and women in uniform thanks for all they do. What you get back in return will be worth it.

So this Memorial Day remember the words of General George S. Patton, "It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived."

Have a safe weekend and keep making great things happen.

Rick