



## Remember the Names of Those We Lost

Editorial by Mary Kolar, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Memorial Day is dedicated to remembering those who lost their lives while serving in the U.S. military. Every citizen across this nation owes a debt to those who, in President Lincoln's words, "gave their last full measure of devotion," and taking a single day to pause and reflect on the long list of names of those honored dead is the least we can do.

Here in Wisconsin, that list of names stretches back well over 150 years, and includes thousands of Wisconsinites from every generation and every conflict. Names like Hans Heg, an immigrant killed at the Battle of Chickamauga in September 1864; he led the all-Scandinavian 15th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment during the Civil War and truly believed in the ideals of his new country. Or the name of Morris Togstad who, hit by shrapnel, was the last Madisonian killed in World War I.

Let us also recall the names of the Barber brothers of New London, WI: Malcom, Randolph and LeRoy. All three joined the Navy and were assigned to the USS Oklahoma based out of Pearl Harbor. They were aboard the Oklahoma during the infamous attack on December 7, 1941, and now rest among the many unknown graves.

For some on our honored list, their service carried on from World War II into the Korean War. Mitchell Red Cloud, Jr. of the Ho Chunk Nation was wounded during the Battle of Okinawa. Honorably discharged, Red Cloud later returned to the military and was among the first US troops sent to Korea. He was killed while raising the alarm for the rest of his company after spotting enemy forces moving to attack.

There are names of the departed forever etched in stone at the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. Among those from Wisconsin is Richard W. Fischer. While serving with the Marines, Fischer became separated from his unit. His family labored to uncover what had happened to him for decades and never truly found closure until his remains were identified in 2007, nearly 40 years after his death.

Those missing in action and presumed dead weigh heavily on the minds of those they leave behind. Harold Kamps, of Coleman, WI, served in the Air Force during the Cold War. While on a covert surveillance mission over Soviet Armenia in 1958, Kamps' aircraft was shot down with all hands lost. In 1998, 40 years after their deaths, the missing airmen, including Kamps, were identified through DNA testing and his remains were interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

As we remember these service members and others, we can honor their memory not only on a designated day, but throughout the year, with acts of kindness and citizenship -- from exercising our right to vote to sharing these stories that exemplify how we know that "freedom is not free."

-MORE-

I leave you with one last thought from a famous epitaph written by an English author at the end of World War I. For me, it captures the true message of Memorial Day:

When you go home  
Tell them of us and say  
For your tomorrow  
We gave our today

While we are unable to gather in person at our state's veterans cemeteries this Memorial Day, I am grateful for the opportunity to recognize and remember our heroes online as part of our WDVA virtual Memorial Day tribute. I invite you to join us for "Memorial Day 2020: Wisconsin's Virtual Commemoration" at [www.WisVetsMemorialDay2020.com](http://www.WisVetsMemorialDay2020.com).

-30-

*Mary Kolar is the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. Secretary Kolar was commissioned in the United States Navy in 1980, served on active duty for 28 years, and retired as a Captain (O-6). As Secretary, she is responsible for advocating for the approximately 345,000 veterans in recognition of their service and sacrifice to our state and nation.*