Who do we honor on Memorial Day and on Veterans Day?

Two national Holidays, Memorial Day and Veterans Day, honor the sacrifice of Americans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces and celebrate the people who served and the values Americans hold as a nation: duty, honor and civic responsibility. The holidays, though they commemorate the sacrifices of thousands of American service members, are distinctly different.

Memorial Day is the older of the two holidays, having its roots in the Civil War. First known as Decoration Day, it was instituted by former Union Army Maj. Gen. John A. Logan, to honor those who died in the armed forces. Logan, later a U.S. senator from Illinois, became the first commander-in-chief of the organization of Union veterans called the Grand Army of the Republic.

With General Orders No. 11, Logan designated May 30, 1868, "for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country" and conduct special services as circumstances permitted. "Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten, as a people, the cost of free and undivided republic," he declared. He also asked that the nation renew its pledge to assist the soldier's and sailor's widows and orphans.

The general said he inaugurated the observance "with the hope it will be kept up from year to year, while a survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of his departed comrades." The observance has continued, although now **Memorial Day is observed as the last Monday of May**.

Veterans Day was established as a national holiday, but had a different purpose. It stems from the armistice that ended combat in World War I, Nov. 11, 1918. It honored all who had served in the U.S. Armed Forces in World War I. The holiday was officially called "Armistice Day" in 1926 and became a national holiday 12 years later.

It would probably still be known as Armistice Day had World War I, "The War to End All Wars, lived up to that nickname. A few years after the day became a national holiday, the United States entered a war — World War II

— that called on more than 16.5 million American men and women to serve in the U.S. military. Of those, some 292,000 died in battle.

Representative Edwin K. Rees of Kansas proposed that Nov. 11 be set aside as an occasion to honor those who served America in all wars instead of only World War I. Shortly afterward, in 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the bill which officially changed the name of the holiday and broadened its purpose.

In 1968 a congressional law attempted to move Veterans Day to this forth Monday in October, but the original date of **Nov. 11 was kept because of its historic significance.**

Memorial Day and Veterans Day honor the sacrifices of innumerable individuals who sacrificed themselves to preserve the freedoms all Americans enjoy, with Memorial Day remembering those who gave their lives, and Veterans Day honoring all who served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Source-Courtesy of the U.S. Army Military District of Washington

Memorial Day:
It is appropriate when interacting with Veterans & active military to say: "Today, I am remembering those now past, who served before you".

Veterans Day:
It is appropriate when interacting with Veterans & active military to say: "Thank you for your service ".