

Celebrate but remember

By David Bailey

You've probably already started making plans for the long Memorial Day holiday. Maybe you have a beach trip in the works or even plans for a family cookout. To many, Memorial Day is just a three-day weekend and the official start to summer. However, I urge you to take the time to think about the real meaning of the day. Memorial Day was originally created as a day of remembrance for those who were killed fighting the Civil War. After the U.S. became involved with World War I, Memorial Day was expanded to honor the fallen from any conflict.

I've met so many of you who have strong ties to the military. Either your family members have served, or you yourself serve. I'm truly humbled when I think about your willingness to sacrifice for others. The Americans who have died in combat have done so, so we can live in a world where our freedoms are valued and we are safe in our homes.

Growing up as an Army brat provided me with special insight on the sacrifices our military personnel and family make to protect the freedoms we enjoy in our great country. My father served 33 years in the U.S. Army. Later in his career, he was stationed in Washington DC at the Pentagon. Our nation's capital is rich in history and a joy to visit. My favorite historical site to visit is Arlington National Cemetery. It's hallowed ground and demands respect. Every visit I've made to the cemetery includes time at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The exact precision of the Honor Guard fills my heart with American pride. The tomb faces the east waiting for the return of our Saviour. Inscribed on the back of the tomb are the words: **HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN BUT TO GOD.**

The tomb humbles me to the core every time I visit. Every American should have the opportunity to visit Arlington National Cemetery to see the price our countrymen and women paid for true freedom. It's an awe inspiring experience. This Memorial Day, while you are flipping burgers on the grill or sitting on the beach enjoying a sunset, I urge you to think about how you will honor the sacrifices of those who have fought for our freedoms. While we might not all be called to join the military, we can each use our freedom to make an impact in our communities. If each of us would make the decision to do one thing that would better our communities, just think of what we could accomplish. Pick a charity to support. If you are a retired teacher, tutor a child who is struggling in your neighborhood. Work with your church youth group. Visit a senior center. Volunteer as a coach or in some other capacity. That same concept is how this cooperative came to be. In the 1930's, nine out of 10 rural homes didn't have electricity. In 1936, a group of people, concerned about their community, banded together to form South Alabama Electric Cooperative.

While the poles and wires may be the backbone of our electric system, without members there is no lifeblood. By working together we can accomplish great things. I'll leave you with this quote from a gentleman named Albert Pine. He said, "What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others and the world remains and is immortal." And on this Memorial Day I ask that you consider starting a new tradition. Take a moment and remember all those who have sacrificed for

the freedoms we enjoy. If you see a soldier, tell them “Thank You” for their service. Then pick one small action you can do to make your community even stronger.