


home > loudoun > loudoun friday times > memorial day

- Regional News
- Loudoun
- Fairfax
- Fauquier
- Clarke
- Rappahannock
- Prince William
- Classifieds
- Marketplace

Clear 55°
5 Day Forecast 

- Loudoun News Home
- Top Stories
- Up Close
- Police/Courts
- Government
- Columnists
- Editorial/Opinion
- Youth
- Sports
- Business
- People
- Obituaries
- Real Estate
- Weekender

Loudoun Friday Times

- Top Stories
- Memorial Day
- Art
- Beauty
- Community
- Entertainment
- Family
- Food
- Garden
- Health
- Home
- Travel
- Money

- 2005 Calendar
- Email Us



Search Archives
 Go
Advanced Search

Remembering the Sacrifice of Others

By Pete Peterson
05/26/2005

This is not the same as my usual column, "Cruising Along," as I wanted to take this time to pay my respects on this Memorial Day.

Last year, at this time, I was getting ready for my first motorcycle ride in the Memorial Day Rolling Thunder parade. This is an annual event in Washington, D.C. to honor our fallen comrades and promote awareness of the MIA/POW movement. It was quite an honor to be riding as one of over 400,000 bikers in this overwhelming spectacle. I dedicated my ride to my friend and mentor who was killed in Vietnam when we were in a firefight in Cambodia on June 26, 1970. Needless to say, it was an extremely emotional and powerful event in my life.

This year marks my second entry into Rolling Thunder and I have been looking forward to this with great anticipation. It is truly an exciting yet moving experience because of the massive number of motorcyclists dedicating themselves to such a worthwhile cause.

This year, I am dedicating my ride in memory and honor of my father, Dean S. Peterson. Not knowing how this dedication thing worked, my wife asked me if I registered this dedication on some Web site to make it official. I only smiled and told her that there's no formality to such a dedication, it's only within my heart and sole that I carry his memory with me during my ride.

But it got me to thinking that, as I did last year, I should share this dedication with our family and friends so perhaps it will help others remember a veteran who made unselfish sacrifices.

So, I would like to tell you a story about one pretty incredible American soldier - my father.

Dean Sherman Peterson was born on Jan. 29, 1918. He attended the Iowa School for the Deaf because he was deaf in one ear and could hardly hear out of the other. This was assisted with the use of a hearing aid, but he learned sign language and was very good at reading lips. At the age of 23, he was feeling left out because all of his friends, neighbors, and even his brother were all going into the service during World War II. So, in January 1941 he enlisted in the Army for a one year hitch. He finagled his way in and no one was the wiser. Well, we all know what happened in December 1941, so his one-year hitch was now turned into a hitch for the duration. All he had to do was tell the Army of his hearing impairment and he would have been immediately discharged. But being the proud American he was, he chose to keep his mouth shut and stay in the Army. He eventually made corporal and was sent to fight in the South Pacific where he was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge. While there, he also contracted malaria.

After the war, he wanted to continue to serve his country and decided to move from California to Washington, D.C. to work for the Federal government. Being a carpenter by trade, they immediately put him to work at the Naval Research Lab in their carpentry department.

He and my mom bought a small new house in Clinton, which at the time was way out in the country. It turned out that he could not have children and eventually they decided in 1950 to adopt a little boy, yours truly, when I was only 10 days old. In 1956, they adopted my sister and our family of four was living the typical post-WWII life. He joined the VFW and worked his way up to be the Commander of Post 9376 in Clinton in 1960. It was the typical all-American family in a small town with great neighbors.

In November 1960, right around Thanksgiving, my dad and I were watching our black and white TV and having a nice father and son evening at home. The next morning, my mom woke me up and told me I needed to help my neighbor carry my father to the car as he



was sick and she had to take him to the hospital. It was the last time I would see him alive.

He spent about 8 weeks in the hospital in a coma. Back in those days, you had to be at least 12 years old to go into the rooms and since I was only 10, they would not let me see him. I remember Christmas that year was very special because of all the toys and things the members of the VFW had collected for us, but at the same time it was rough not sharing it with my father.

He died on Jan. 9, 1961, only 8 days before my 11th birthday and only 20 days before his 43rd birthday. The cause of death was encephalitis, which was precipitated by the malaria he contracted while in combat in the South Pacific.

He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery and I can still remember the details; the 21-gun salute, the bugler playing taps, and the honor guard folding the flag. For a young boy, this was very impressionable.

We were lucky in that my mom found another wonderful husband who became a great dad to me and my sister. He had served in the Air Force in Korea and also worked for the government, so it only seemed a natural fit.

Years later, I would be proud to continue the tradition and serve in the Navy in Vietnam on River Patrol Boats, where I earned my Combat Action Ribbon and the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V" for valor. And now, my youngest son and my daughter are studying to take the test to enter the Air Force. Needless to say, I could not be more proud of them for wanting to serve their country.

On this Memorial Day, like thousands of others, I will remember my American heritage and the sacrifice of my forefathers. I will remember my father for his unselfish devotion to the American spirit. I will remember my step-father for his service to America and his dedication to our family. I will remember my friend and brother, Bill Cariveau, for giving his life to the American dream. I will remember our troops and the unwavering support shown by every American during our current strife. And I will remember with pride my children's appreciation and respect for those who have given so much so they may enjoy the American way of life.

So, I dedicate my ride in Rolling Thunder on this Memorial Day to my father and the American spirit he placed within me. I will ride with my head held high in solemn respect, my chest out large with abounding pride, and a tear in my eye for the sacrifices he made.

Please take a minute during your busy weekend to bow your head and give thanks to those who gave of themselves so we may enjoy our American way of life.

"There is no greater love than to give your life for another."

Pete Peterson is a Cruise Specialist with Cruise Planners Inc. To contact Pete, e-mail him at dreams@storybookcruises.com, or call 703-858-9898 or 866-786-7926.

©Times Community Newspapers 2005

[Back to top](#) | [Email story](#) | [Post your opinion](#)

[Regional News](#) | [Loudoun](#) | [Fairfax](#) | [Fauquier](#) | [Clarke](#) | [Rappahannock](#) | [Prince William](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Marketplace](#)

Copyright © 1995 - 2005 **PowerOne Media, Inc.** All Rights Reserved.

Copyright © 1995 - 2005 [PowerOne Media, Inc.](#) All Rights Reserved.