

HOMEFRONT HEROES

A MEMORIAL DAY SALUTE TO
WOUNDED WARRIOR CAREGIVERS



CARING FOR
MILITARY FAMILIES

Elizabeth Dole Foundation

The
Washington
Times

A Special Report Prepared by The Washington Times Advocacy Department

How America is rallying around the 'hidden heroes' who care for our wounded warriors



By Elizabeth Dole

It's hard to believe it was just over a year ago that we released an eye-opening report from the RAND Corporation identifying the needs and gaps in support facing the "hidden heroes" of America's wars: the spouses, family members and friends who have dedicated their lives to caring for our wounded, ill and injured warriors. These brave women and men — just like the heroes they are caring for — are making a commitment of service that will stretch for decades. And yet our nation overlooked their critical role for far too long, leaving them to care for our wounded without the support they need or deserve.

I am proud to say, one year later, America is beginning to close those gaps.

While we still have a very long road ahead of us, the accomplishments we have made in support of our caregivers have been remarkable. Our response has been holistic in the issues it has addressed and the organizations that have offered support, and coordinated to establish common priorities, build partnerships and collaborate on the way ahead. We knew a societal issue of this significance would never be solved with a single donation, a newly established program or the swift stroke of a pen. Rather, it would be born from the cooperation of people from all sectors willing to break down barriers and come together to pursue a cause greater than themselves.

This week, my foundation gathered with caregivers, private and public experts, government officials, nonprofits, leaders of faith and philanthropists at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, D.C., to take stock of the progress already made and address the work that still needs to be done. We shared stories of allied groups working together, funders teaming with service providers and ideas, resources and best practices being shared across the board without pride of ownership.

Our nation's top leaders turned out to assure caregivers that they too stood at their side. First lady Michelle Obama shared how she has continued to fulfill her promise to America's caregivers through her Joining Forces initiative. Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald outlined the steps his department is

taking to simplify the tremendously busy lives of those caring for our wounded, and offer them better guidance and support. We also heard from Tom Hanks, via a special video message, that he is committed to leading a national awareness campaign to tell every American about the service and value of our military and veteran caregivers.

Our foundation began this week with a private reception for our Dole Caregiver Fellows with Donald Trump, who had asked to meet some of our caregivers after I shared their extraordinary stories with him. Donald was so moved by what he heard that he announced a generous donation to our foundation to help us continue our work to better support caregivers.

The week concluded with an inspiring interfaith and congressional prayer breakfast reception with Pastor Joel Osteen, Sen. Johnny Isakson and the co-chairs of our Hidden Heroes Congressional Caucus, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Sens. John McCain and Jack Reed and Rep. Jeff Miller. Pastor Osteen was our first faith leader to pledge his commitment to our military and veteran caregivers, and this year he brought pastors from across America to join him in supporting our mission.

We enjoyed the company of many national leaders this week, yet the stars of these events, though you may not know them by name, were the caregivers themselves. They took to the stage and to the media and to the offices of nearly 200

members of Congress to share their front-line stories of what they have gained for themselves and for their loved ones, and what they still needed.

I think back to the days when I first met these hidden heroes, anchored to the side of their loved ones yet humbly blending in with the background. I couldn't help but sit on the stage at this week's summit with a smile on my face and a tear in my eye, witnessing the progress we've made and the caregiver voices that are now heard at the highest levels of our nation.

Military families have served our nation for nearly 240 years, and it is truly inspiring to see America come together around the loved ones caring for our wounded, ill and injured warriors in the ways that they need and deserve.

As we look ahead to a weekend that honors the men and women who gave their lives for our freedom, we know that we are truly blessed to have hidden heroes comforting and caring for the warriors who are thankfully still with us.

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Elizabeth Dole is a former U.S. Senator from North Carolina, a former U.S. transportation secretary under President Ronald Reagan, a former U.S. labor secretary under President George H.W. Bush and the founder of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, which created the Caring for Military Families program.



Every day, military and veteran caregivers are serving our nation. Spouses, parents, children, and other loved ones are helping our wounded warriors live with and recover from multiple and serious wounds, illnesses, and injuries, both visible and invisible.

Five and a half million of these military and veteran caregivers are day-in and day-out providing emotional and physical support and tending to the daily lives of the men and women who have served our nation. For too long, we have overlooked the immeasurable contributions of these caregivers. They are truly our nation's hidden heroes.

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation seeks to both raise awareness of this societal crisis and strengthen the services afforded to our military and veteran caregivers through evidence-based research, innovation and collaboration.

Throughout May, as our nation commemorates Military Appreciation Month, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation is ensuring that America also pauses to honor these hidden heroes who care for those who cared for us.

At the Foundation, we are always looking for innovative ideas that will uplift military families at a time — for many of them — when they need help the most

- Senator Elizabeth Dole



**CARING FOR
MILITARY FAMILIES**
Elizabeth Dole Foundation

For more information and why we must help, please go to www.elizabethdolefoundation.org

A salute to homefront heroes

By Oliver North
and Tom Kilgannon

Hats off to The Washington Times for using Military Appreciation Month to shine a light on the war on terror's unsung heroes — military caregivers. These selfless individuals are the parents and siblings — but more often the spouses — of soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines recovering from the painful and horrific wounds of war.

As The Times' monthlong series reveals, many of these homefront heroes are forced to leave their jobs and endure lost income to serve as the primary health care advocate for the one they love. Very often a caregiver's own health deteriorates as a result of the around-the-clock attention given to their combat-wounded loved one.

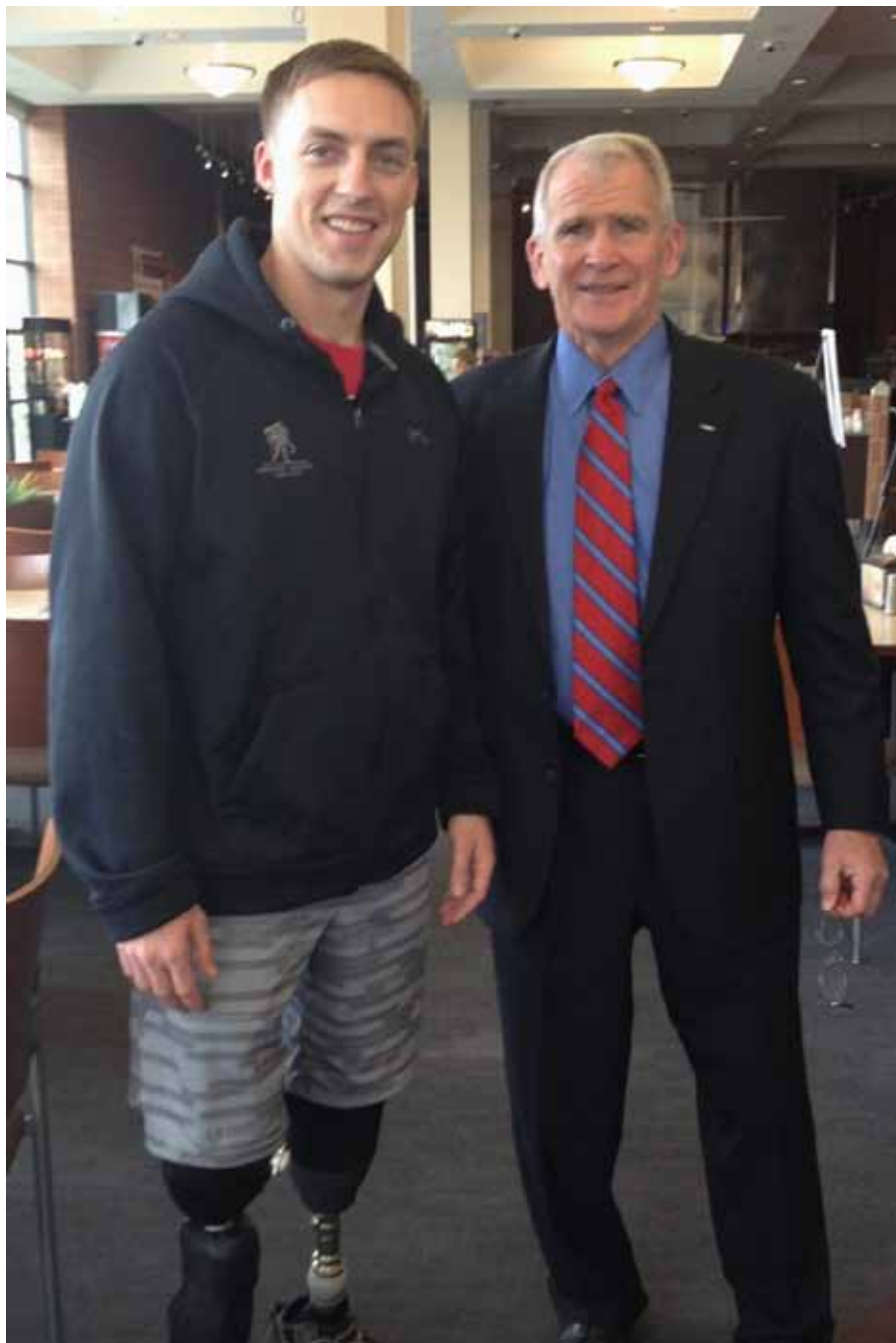
Like too many women in our society, they don't get the recognition they deserve. Because of the incompetence in the Veterans Affairs Department, the astronomical cost of health care, and the complexity of navigating the bureaucracy of military medicine, wives of the wounded perform not only the role of devoted spouse, but they also take on responsibilities of various medical professionals.

Her roles are not limited to that of wife and best friend. She is also a counselor, nurse, therapist, encourager and enforcer. She often acts as the traffic cop who adjudicates conflicting advice from multiple doctors and spots the dangers presented by prescribed, but incompatible, medicines. She's on call 24/7. There is no shift change and no overtime. She performs these roles with love and care and compassion. She exercises diplomacy and patience and still finds time to pen a thank-you note to those who help her out.

If Hollywood wanted to inspire us, they would capture these stories in a series called "The Real Housewives of Recovering Heroes."

At Freedom Alliance, we've met these amazing individuals through the programs we offer to recovering service members and their spouses.

For example, our Hero Hunts are a popular respite for rehabilitating troops. A few days in God's beautiful outdoors can lift the soul and rejuvenate the spirit. Service members who join us on these outings benefit from the mentorship and informal counseling of fellow veterans. On more than a few occasions, wounded troops were invited to attend an activity after our team received a phone call from their caregiver-spouse. Recognizing the increased levels of anxiety associated with post-traumatic stress, they tell us their husband could benefit from the



tranquility of a few days on the river. Other times they realize their own stress levels inhibit them from giving the best care and call us to confess, "I just need a few days to myself — do you have a hunting trip he can attend?"

Under different circumstances, it's not time apart — but quality time together — that is most beneficial for their relationship. We're not about to let terrorists break up another American family, and that's why Freedom Alliance gives military caregivers and their husbands vacations and marriage retreats.

When Deane Messex came home from Afghanistan, he was badly wounded. His injuries were obvious, and hard work was needed to rehabilitate his battered body. But Deane had other problems. His marriage was strained and being tested.

Deane is married to Stacy — a beautiful and devoted wife and a wonderful mom to their two young

children. Deane and Stacy love each other very much, but the wounds of war can threaten even the strongest relationships.

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Deane felt called to serve his country. He went to see a recruiter and enlisted in the Army Reserves. Before that he was working as a heating and air conditioning contractor. He was making a good living and providing for his family. But the attacks on American soil angered him, and he wanted to serve.

As a Reservist, Deane deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan. While fighting in Operation Enduring Freedom, he fell from a Chinook helicopter and suffered injuries to his back and legs that left him physically disabled and confined to a hospital bed.

We met Deane and Stacy while Deane was recovering at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. Freedom Alliance helped with some

expenses they incurred while in the hospital. After Deane was cleared to travel, Freedom Alliance sent them to the beach in Florida for a much-needed respite.

"The whole trip was amazing," Stacy told us. She said they enjoyed their favorite activities and shared some overdue laughs. But the best part came later in the week.

A baby-sitter was arranged so Deane and Stacy could spend time alone. It was the first time Stacy and her husband enjoyed a dinner together — just the two of them — in years. After dinner, they went for a walk on the beach. They walked and talked. They were relaxed and uninterrupted and able to enjoy each other's company.

They found a dock in a quiet spot, sat down in the moonlight and continued their conversation. Stacy explained it this way:

"Magic happened out there that night. You have to understand that Deane had been through so much [during his deployments and injuries] and I didn't understand it. But that night was picturesque — we just sat on the dock and talked. We reconnected."

For the first time since he returned home, Deane told Stacy some of what he had experienced in war. They talked for hours under the stars. They confided in one another and confronted their fears. They recommitted themselves to each other.

By the time they headed home, their relationship was on a better path. Their love for one another was as strong as ever. Deane — a man of few words — explained it this way: "That trip saved my marriage!"

When young men like Deane choose to serve our country, they face the possibility of losing life or limb. But it shouldn't mean losing their families, too. That's why Freedom Alliance is doing all we can to keep military families together.

Stacy's role as a caregiver began long before Deane was wounded. She took care of the house, the chores, and the kids by herself. There were things she had to do — yard work and small repairs — which Deane normally handled when he was home. She never complained. Her husband was doing his duty and she was proud of him.

Military wives like Stacy are underappreciated. They are women of immense character and courage and an important reason why America's military is the greatest in the world.

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Oliver North is the founder and honorary chairman of Freedom Alliance and the host of "War Stories" on the Fox News Channel. Tom Kilgannon is the president of Freedom Alliance.

What caregivers need: A plea from one hidden hero

By Emery A. Popoloski

There are 5.5 million Americans who have stepped up to become caregivers for wounded warriors, saving our nation \$13.6 billion yearly in health care costs. These hidden heroes are simultaneously losing \$5.9 billion in their own productivity by putting their careers, education and life as they knew it on hold when their loved one was injured or suffered from a medical illness due to serving in the military.

Some care for a service member who was injured in a training accident, others care for someone who was injured by an IED or lost a limb many years ago in Vietnam. These 5.5 million spouses, siblings, parents and friends are our nation's unsung heroes. It is time that we as a nation step up to support our military caregivers — so that they in turn can successfully support our nation's wounded warriors.

I became a military caregiver before I even knew what my "role" was called. When my husband first returned home from a deployment to Iraq, I noticed he would stop breathing for long periods during his sleep. Other medical symptoms emerged, which I now know are related to his post-traumatic stress (PTS) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). I originally thought that these were normal symptoms for someone who just came home from war.



Since moving back home, my husband began to receive treatment for his TBI, PTS, seizures and other physical ailments. I have had to put off furthering my education, reconfigure my professional goals and organize our family's schedule and structure so that it is conducive to my husband's recovery, as well as the general well-being for our family. My life's motto has become: "God doesn't give you only what you can handle, you're given the tools to handle any situation that you're in."

Last year, I became the Massachusetts Caregiver Fellow for the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and am now also employed by the foundation as their Caregiver Community Program coordinator. The foundation commissioned the RAND Corp. to do the first comprehensive

empirical nationwide study of military caregivers in a report called "Hidden Heroes: Military Caregiving in the United States." The findings in this report are most recently being used to support federal legislation titled "The Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act," which will be the focus of the next blog.

The RAND report, whose statistics are cited in the piece, helped to identify seven main areas in which military caregivers are in need of support:

- Financial and Legal Issues
- Education and Training
- Community Support at Home
- Interfaith Action and Ministry
- Mental and Physical Health
- Respite Care
- Employment

• Workplace Support

Why support military caregivers? Because, quite frankly, we need your help. More than 80 percent who have served since 9/11 are under the age of 60, which makes them ineligible for many already-established programs such as the National Caregiver Family Support Program. Twenty percent of pre-9/11 military caregivers and 40 percent of post-9/11 caregivers are without health care coverage. Like myself, many of the post-9/11 caregivers are younger, without the long-term established support of a more traditionally viewed role of a caregiver, such as a child caring for their aging parent. I was 25 when my husband was hospitalized; a friend of mine was 23 when her husband, injured in Iraq, was admitted to Walter Reed.

Our older, pre-9/11 caregivers are struggling as well. For example, by not having access to the VA Caregiver Program, they are left without basic support for their roles as military caregivers. It is imperative that this program be expanded to include them as well.

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Emery A. Popoloski, a mom, resides in the Boston area with her husband, Charles, who served in Iraq. She is the Massachusetts Caregiver Fellow and the Caregiver Community Program coordinator for the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. She has started a blog at The Washington Times for military caregivers.

For soldiers, man's best friend is a great healer

By JENNIFER HARPER
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

There was a noble tribute this week for hero humans and hero dogs just a block from the U.S. Capitol. The famous, powerful and political gathered to celebrate K9s for Warriors, a nonprofit that pairs rescue dogs with military veterans who must deal with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. Among the many who attended was retired USMC Captain Jason Haag and Axel, a splendid German Shepherd who was there for him in some very dark moments.

Captain Haag was deployed to Iraq twice and Afghanistan once; he was wounded and survived both small arms fire and an improvised explosive device. Coming home was a challenge: The vet was on multiple anxiety medications when he finally reached out to K9s for Warriors. It was a timely moment for the dog too as Axel was only days away from being put down.

And about those pups — Bo, Liberty, Maverick, Justice and all the rest — they are, by nature, service dogs, carefully trained to help with recovery and provide steadfast companionship to their vet partners. About 95 percent are rescue or shelter dogs. "We rescue the dogs, they rescue the warriors," notes the group, which has paired up 160 warrior-canine teams so far. The program itself brings the vets to train with their dogs in Florida for three weeks, complete with free accommodations and meals. A wish list is particularly compelling: Donations cover such things as service dog vests and hands-free leashes, dog bowls and toys, welcome boxes, plus new bedding for arriving warriors.

The program has created some permanent bonds.

"Did you know you were made just for me, by a God whose work is mighty and ever so powerful? He did not miss one detail when He chose YOU to heal my hurts!" wrote one veteran, in an open



letter to a canine companion. "Did you know your unique personality, demeanor, character and your gentle spirit would heal wounds that were believed by me to never heal? Did you know you would be this loved, cared for and adored; and did you know your faithful endurance would

be recognized by the people who love me the most in this life?"

Another vet credits his dog for saving him from suicide.

"I went to grab my pistol, and before my hand even touched it, my service dog started barking nonstop, which is not like him. He was jumping in my face and wrapping his head around the arm I was going to grab the gun with. When I finally pulled away, he stopped barking and just stared at me," the vet recalls.

Find information about the organization here: K9sforWarriors.org.

And among those who came to honor the pups and their partners: Republican Reps. Gus M. Bilirakis, Mike Coffman, Ryan K. Zinke and Martha McSally; CBS chief White House correspondent Major Garrett; the inimitable Irish tenor Anthony Kearns; and retired USAF Brigadier General Steve Ritchie, an ace fighter pilot who flew 800 combat hours and 339 missions in the Vietnam War.

This Memorial Day, The Elizabeth Dole Foundation honors those who gave their lives in service to our country, and salutes the hidden heroes caring for those who returned home wounded, ill and injured. The Dole Caregiver Fellows represent almost every state in the nation and Puerto Rico. In addition to their very demanding roles as caregivers, they provide information, expertise, resources, and wise counsel to the Foundation and to their fellow caregivers. They are the heart and soul of the Foundation's mission. We thank them for their service to our nation by caring for those who cared for us.

Alabama Kathleen Causey Brannan Vines* Kevin Polosky*	Idaho Jeanette McKinney	Missouri Melody Slusher	South Dakota Tobian Kills In Water Melissa Johnson*
Alaska Maria Davis	Illinois Sami Anderson Alexandra Wilhelm*	Montana Ariana Del Negro	Tennessee Jessica Allen Cheryl Gasner*
Arizona Izabelle Meda-Gibson	Indiana Glenda Leary Jennifer Mackinday	Nebraska Sara Lease	Texas Julio & Sonia Alvarado Alain & Rosalinda Babin Roxana Delgado Deidre Blascyk Brenda Machacek Renee Ayres* JaNelle Casson* Betty Easley* Debra Schulz* Ivonne Thompson*
Arkansas Natalie Tarte	Iowa Trish Simester	Nevada Heidi Woodring Amber Linder	Utah Amber Edelman Jennifer Henkel*
California Danny & Faun O'Neel Nikki Stephens Melissa Comeau Debbie Sprague	Kansas Tiffany Prowant Allyson Bowers*	New Hampshire Jennifer McNail	Virginia Tammie Gillums Patty Horan Joe Briseno* Shannon Maxwell* Andrea Sawyer*
Colorado Elizabeth Huddleston	Kentucky Chasity Tuggle	New Jersey Ann Marie Pacciano	Washington Liz Hunt
Connecticut Megan Swanson Blair Hughes*	Louisiana Christie Girard Sandra Touchet*	New Mexico Christine Schei	West Virginia Kristi Williams-Dumas Sandra Ownbey*
Delaware Paulette Mason	Maine Ora Freeman	New York Valence Scott Teresa Henning	Wisconsin Carrie Fisher Cara Folkers
DC Nodira Murodkhujaeva	Maryland Rebecca Porges Elizabeth Rotenberry Michael Marrocco Jessica Klein	North Carolina Sarah Verardo	Wyoming Jordyn Hatfield
Florida Patti Katter Brian Vines Precious Goodson Lauren Levin Shannon Tuimaleali'ifano	Massachusetts Emery Popoloski	North Dakota ShelleAberle	Puerto Rico Edna Dumas
Georgia Stephanie Smith Pam Busenius	Michigan Joey Caswell Megan Stewart	Ohio Jenny Jeffery	
Hawaii Emily Emmons	Minnesota Kimberly Dub	Oklahoma Seneca Hart	
	Mississippi Sue Kirk	Oregon Kelli Landis	
		Pennsylvania Theresa Ditto	
		South Carolina Virginia Peacock	

* Emeritus Fellows

A Month-Long Celebration of Wounded Warrior Caregivers



First lady Michelle Obama speaks at the Hidden Heroes Coalition Summit this week as Elizabeth Dole and Veteran Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald look on. Credit: AP.



Donald Trump wrote a \$100,000 check to the Elizabeth Dole Foundation after meeting with Mrs. Dole and wounded warrior caregivers. Credit: Lynn Dykstra, Focused Images



Pastor Joel Osteen shares some inspiration at the Elizabeth Dole Foundation Focus on Faith prayer breakfast on Capitol Hill. Credit: Lynn Dykstra, Focused Images



House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi addresses wounded warrior caregivers. She is co-chair of the Hidden Heroes Congressional Caucus. Credit: Lynn Dykstra, Focused Images



Country star Sunny Sweeney performs for wounded warriors and their caregivers at a private concert held at The Washington Times. Credit: Khalid Naji-Allah/Washington Times.

A Month-Long Celebration of Wounded Warrior Caregivers



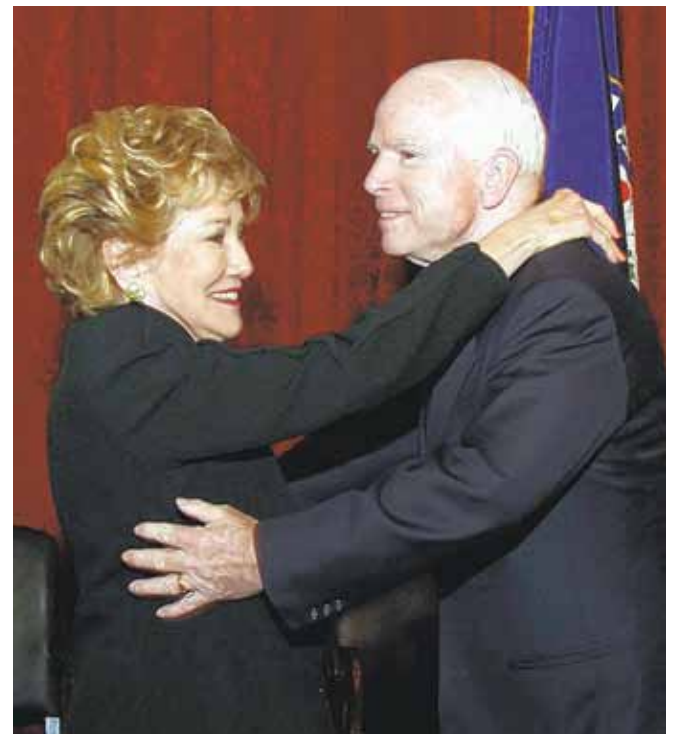
Sen. Dole updates attendees at the Hidden Heroes Coalition Summit : Progress and Promise. Credit: LynnDykstra, Focused Image



Group shot of the Dole Caregiver Fellows, joined by Sen. Dole and Donald Trump, during a welcome reception co-hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Credit: Lynn Dykstra, Focused Images



Sen. Dole with Dole Caregiver Fellows participating in Summit program. Credit: Lynn Dykstra, Focused Images.



Sen. John McCain, a war hero himself, hugs Mrs. Dole after meeting with caregivers. Sen. McCain is a co-chair of the Hidden Heroes Congressional Caucus. Credit: Lynn Dykstra, Focused Images



The Honor Roll of Caregivers



Shelle Aberle
Bismark, N.D.
Shelle is caregiver for
her husband, Michael.



Jessica Allen
Clarksville, Tenn.
Jessica is caregiver for
her husband, Chaz.



Deidre Blascyk
Fort Hood, Texas
Deidre is caregiver
for her friend.



Pam Busenius
Columbus, Ga.
Pam is caregiver for
her husband, Joe.



Melissa Comeau
Flagstaff, Ariz.
Melissa is caregiver for
her husband, Stephen.

**A special salute to 34 Dole
Caregiver Fellows who have joined
in the effort to raise awareness
about the needs of families
supporting wounded warriors.**



Ariana Del Negro
Missoula, Mont.
Ariana is caregiver for
her husband, Char.



Theresia Ditto
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Theresia is caregiver for
her husband, Michael.



Kimberly Dub
Owatonna, Minn.
Kimberly is caregiver for
her husband, Rob.



Cara Folkers
Pewaukee, Wis.
Cara is caregiver
for her friend.



Ora Freeman
Gorham, Maine
Ora is caregiver for
her husband, Harold, Jr.

PHOTO CREDIT: LYNN DYKSTRA, FOCUSED IMAGES

The Honor Roll of Caregivers



Izabelle Gibson
Phoenix, Ariz.
Izabelle is caregiver for
her husband, Alexandre.



Teresa Henning
Fort Drum, N.Y.
Teresa is caregiver for
her husband, Michael.



Patty Horan
McLean, Va.
Patty is caregiver for
her husband, Pat.



Jennifer Jeffery
Harrison, Ohio
Jennifer is caregiver for
her husband, Mark.



Sue Kirk
Grenada, Miss.
Sue is caregiver for her son, Jim.



Jessica Klein
Bethesda, Md.
Jessica is caregiver for
her husband, Flip.



Kelli Landis
Beaverton, Ore.
Kelli is caregiver for
her husband, Chris.



Glenda Leary
Charlestown, Ind.
Glenda is caregiver for her husband,
Joshua.



Sara Lease
Omaha, Neb.
Sara is caregiver for
her husband, David.



Lauren Levin
Miami, Fla.
Laura is caregiver for
her husband, William.



Amber Linder
Henderson, Nev.
Amber is caregiver for
her husband, Wesley.



Brenda Machacek
Wheatland, Wyo.
Brenda is caregiver for
her husband, Richard.

PHOTO CREDIT: LYNN DYKSTRA, FOCUSED IMAGES



The Honor Roll of Caregivers



Jennifer Mackinday
Bloomington, Ind.
Jennifer is caregiver for
her brother, James.



Jeanette McKinney
Idaho Falls, Idaho
Jeanette is caregiver for
her husband, Hugh.



Emery Popoloski
Woburn, Mass.
Emery is caregiver for
her husband, Charles.



Tiffany Prowant
Stockton, Mo.
Tiffany is caregiver for
her husband, Jeff.



Christine Schei
Rio Rancho, N.M.
Christine is caregiver for
her son, Erik.



Trish Simester
Muscatine, Iowa
Trish is caregiver for
her husband, Michael.



Stephanie Smith
Columbus, Ga.
Stephanie is caregiver for
her husband, Tom.



Debbie Sprague
Redding, Calif.
Debbie is caregiver for
her husband, Randall.



Megan Stewart
Coloma, Mich.
Megan is caregiver for
her husband, Tim.



Natalie Tarte
Dardanelle, Ark.
Natalie is caregiver for
her husband, Chris.



Ivonne Thompson
Houston, Texas
Ivonne is caregiver for
her husband, Anthony.



Shannon Tuimaleliifano
Kapolei, Hawaii
Shannon is caregiver for her
husband, Sualauvi Malua.

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THE BEST OF
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The Memorial Day Parade: A tradition of honor that stretches back 150 years

By Tim Holbert

A single shot rang out in Washington at 9 a.m. on May 23, 1865. With that, 80,000 men of the Army of the Potomac, led by Gen. George Meade, marched from Capitol Hill toward the White House.

There would be no battle, however. The Civil War had finally come to an end, with Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender a month earlier and the armed rebellion nearly extinguished. Rather, the procession was to be a great parade saluting those who had served and honoring those who had died.

"The Grand Review of the Armies," as it was called, was conceived by President Johnson as a way to honor those who had fought so hard, for so long.

Yet the two-day procession, which was reviewed by Johnson and General-in-Chief Ulysses S. Grant, was not a gleeful celebration. How could it be? More than 620,000 Americans — Union and Confederate — had died in four years of fighting.

One month earlier, just a few blocks from the parade route, President Lincoln had been assassinated. The tribute to those who had served was also an occasion to remember those who had, in Lincoln's words, given "the last full measure of devotion."

In the years that followed, the tradition of adorning graves of the fallen coalesced around a single holiday in May that initially was called Decoration Day. We know it today as Memorial Day.

In a sense, the Grand Review of May 23-24, 1865, can be called our nation's first Memorial Day parade.

Eighty years later, Memorial Day 1945 in the nation's capital had a similar mood. Germany surrendered a few weeks earlier, ending the war in Europe. Though the end was in sight in the Pacific, battle still raged on Okinawa and in the skies over Japan. With the Japanese surrender that summer, World War II came to a close at the cost of more than 400,000 American lives. The jubilation of war's end masked a melancholy of mourning for those lost.

Parades across the country marked the end of World War II. In Washington, the men of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team marched along Constitution Avenue to the Ellipse in July 1946 to be reviewed by President Truman. The 442nd consisted of Americans of Japanese ancestry who fought in Europe to prove that they were proud and loyal to their country. Twenty-one



men of the 442nd were presented with the Medal of Honor, and nearly 9,500 Purple Hearts were awarded to those killed and wounded in battle.

Among the men marching with the 442nd in that parade was Terry Shima. This year, Mr. Shima will return to Constitution Avenue with dozens of surviving World War II veterans to serve as grand marshals of the National Memorial Day Parade, participating in honor of the 16 million who served and in memory of those who died.

The parade was inaugurated by the

American Veterans Center in 2005 after several decades without a parade in Washington to commemorate the armed forces' most sacred day.

Those of us who planned that first parade also made note that, across the country, many small-town parades were fading away along with the World War II generation that organized them. The parade in Washington was intended to create a truly national event, calling attention to the true meaning of the holiday in the tradition of the Grand Review and the parades that

closed World War II.

On Monday, as the National Memorial Day Parade celebrates its 10th anniversary starting at 2 p.m. along Constitution Avenue, we also commemorate other moments that shaped our country's history: the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War and the Grand Review, and the 70th anniversary of the victory in World War II.

A moving timeline of American military history, the parade seeks to capture the dignity of the day while creating a family-friendly environment to pay tribute to our fallen heroes across the generations. Privately funded and organized by the American Veterans Center, the National Memorial Day Parade is a continuing example of Americans' desire to ensure that our heroes are always honored, never forgotten. We welcome your attendance Monday afternoon at this special tribute.

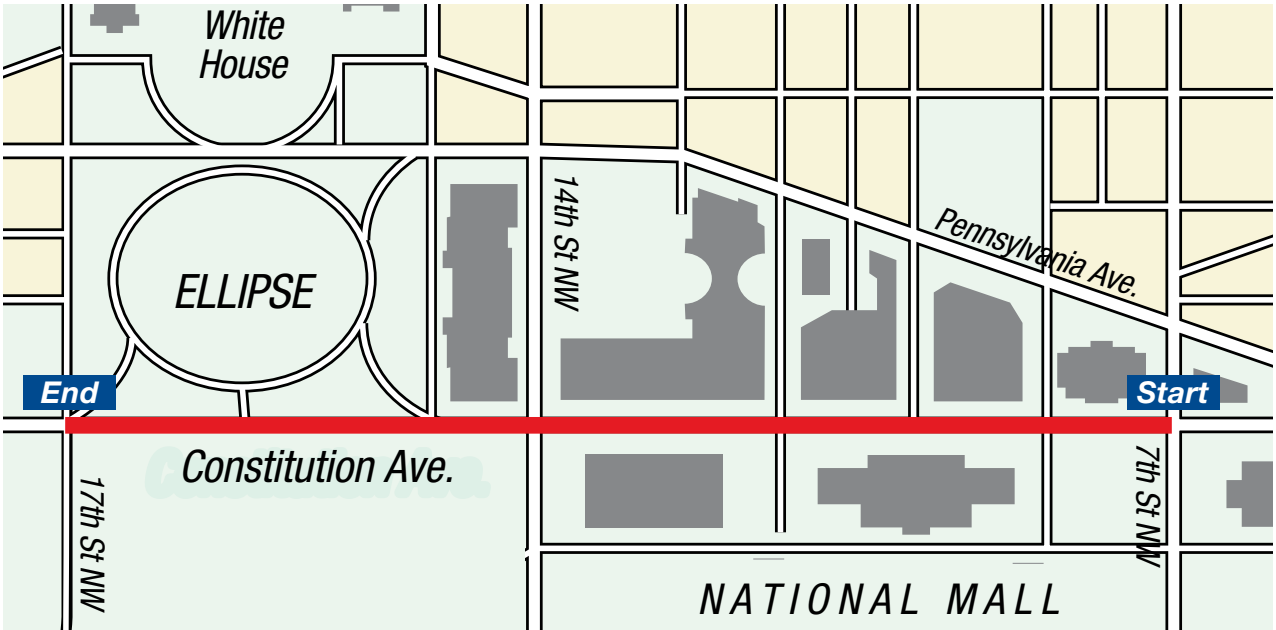
.....
Tim Holbert is executive director of the American Veterans Center, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation that produces the National Memorial Day Parade. To learn more about the parade, visit www.NationalMemorialDayParade.com.



THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY PARADE

MAY 25, 2015 • 2PM

2015 Parade Route



2015 Parade Participants



Grand Marshals: The Veterans of World War II
Commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, dozens of surviving veterans will serve as Grand Marshals, representing the 16 million who served and more than 400,000 who made the ultimate sacrifice.



Gary Sinise
Best known for his role as Lt. Dan in *Forrest Gump* and his starring role during *CSI: New York's* nine-season run. His band, the Lt. Dan Band, has also played for American service members around the world.



Joe Mantegna
Tony Award-winning actor of stage, screen, and television, currently starring in the CBS series *Criminal Minds*.



The Smashing Pumpkins
The Smashing Pumpkins have been a sensation in the alternative rock world, with 20 million albums sold in the U.S. alone. The Smashing Pumpkins' latest track "Drum and Fife" raises public awareness about veterans suffering from PTSD.



Robert Irvine
Chef Robert Irvine has appeared in several Food Network programs including *Restaurant: Impossible*, helping to save struggling restaurants across America. He began his cooking career upon enlisting in the Royal Navy, cooking around the world and on the high seas. He has more than 25 years of culinary experience.



Caleb Johnson
Caleb Johnson, winner of *American Idol's* 13th season in 2014 is no stranger to the music scene. In 2010, after graduating from high school, Johnson would join a rock band called *Elijah Hooker*, of which he would become the lead vocalist. Johnson's album *Testify* was recorded in just three weeks – the quickest that any *Idol* winner has released a debut album.



Miss America 2015 Kira Kazantsev
A native of Manhattan, New York, Kira Kazantsev was crowned Miss America on September 14, 2014. Her personal platform issue is protecting women against domestic violence, with the goal of pursuing a career in international diplomacy following her reign.



Gary Sinise: An entertainer extraordinaire for veterans

By ERIC ALTHOFF

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Gary Sinise began providing free performances and dinners for Vietnam veterans — what he called “vets nights” — in the late 1970s, long before he was a household name thanks to his Oscar-nominated portrayal of the man who loses his legs in the jungles of Vietnam.

Even before he portrayed Lt. Dan Taylor, the Vietnam commander saved by Forrest Gump from certain death in the 1994 Academy Award winner for best picture, the Chicago native and co-founder of the iconic Steppenwolf Theater knew he had to do something to give back to America's heroes.

“I have lots of veterans on my side of the family and on my wife's side of the family,” Mr. Sinise told The Washington Times.

Despite a storied theater resume in Chicago and on Broadway, to say nothing of a Hollywood career encompassing 50 film and television credits, Mr. Sinise is proud that his greatest role is away from the cameras — shining a light on those who fight to keep America safe.

“I spend all my time these days working with veterans,” Mr. Sinise said.

From the ashes

After 9/11, Mr. Sinise felt a calling to support the armed forces greater than ever before. He founded the Gary Sinise Foundation, which proclaims on its website, “While we can never do enough to show gratitude to our nation's defenders, we can always do a little more.”

“I started doing USO tours right after Sept. 11 as an actor, and I would go out there and would shake hands and take pictures,” Mr. Sinise said.

With a few Chicago-area friends, Mr. Sinise even formed the Lt. Dan Band, whose initial mission was to travel the world to USO shows to entertain troops like a modern-day Bob Hope revue program.

“I just really wanted to entertain and do something,” Mr. Sinise said. “I talked the USO into letting me take the musicians with me on the tour, and that began a very, very serious effort to entertain wherever I could.”

He estimates that he has performed in over 150 USO shows at military hospitals and bases around the world. His schedule to do so opened up significantly when the TV show “CSI: New York,” on which Mr. Sinise starred, went off the air in February 2013.

Now all of his efforts, he said, in one way or another, are for the veterans.

Through Sunday, Mr. Sinise is lending his time to the ninth annual GI Film Festival at the Angelika Film Center & Cafe at Mosaic in Fairfax, Virginia. He has been



Gary Sinise arrives at the Los Angeles Dinner: What You Do Matters at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on Monday, March 16, 2015, in Beverly Hills, Calif. (Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP)

a patron of the event since its founding in 2007.

“I’m just a big, big supporter and a big fan of [festival co-founders] Laura [Law-Millett] and Brandon [Millett] and what they’ve done,” he said.

The Milletts started the festival specifically to screen films that cast active-duty service members and veterans in a positive light. “Everything over the years has evolved in such a positive way, and I’m just a big fan of theirs and a big supporter and love what they do,” Mr. Sinise said.

In the wings

Mr. Sinise knew from a young age that the stage was where he belonged. As a teen growing up in the Chicago suburbs, he was especially affected by a rendition of John Steinbeck's Depression-era novel “Of Mice and Men.”

“I didn’t know anything about Steinbeck, knew nothing about the story,” he said, “and was just completely choked up and sobbing at the end of it. I just started acting, and I thought, ‘That’s what I want to do; I want to be onstage and move people like that.’”

In 1980, Mr. Sinise and fellow Steppenwolf actor John Malkovich starred in the Terry Kinney-directed stage version of “Of Mice and Men,” with Mr. Sinise as George and Mr. Malkovich as his tragically dim-witted companion, Lenny.

Steinbeck's work continued to haunt Mr. Sinise's proscenium career. In 1990, he was Tom Joad in “The Grapes of Wrath” on Broadway — in a production blessed by no less than Steinbeck's widow, Elaine.

“I was just standing backstage with her, and we became very good friends,” Mr. Sinise recalled. “The run was about to end, and I knew I was going to go back to California and just hit the ground again

trying to pick up work.”

Recalling the impression that the summer stock production made on him at age 16 — and mindful that a working actor must think about his next meal ticket — Mr. Sinise asked for and received from Steinbeck's widow the rights to a film of “Of Mice and Men.”

Mr. Sinise returned to Los Angeles and quickly set up the production with himself as producer, director and star — with Mr. Malkovich reprising his Lenny to Mr. Sinise's George. Horton Foote wrote the screenplay, and Mark Isham penned the tender musical score. The film played at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival to a standing ovation and was a critical success when released in theaters later that year.

For Mr. Sinise, his professional acting career already had come full circle. But two years later, a supporting role in a whimsical drama about a mentally challenged but well-meaning Alabama gardener, played by Tom Hanks, would change his professional life and forever cement his focus on the cause of veterans.

Life is like ...

For his role as Lt. Dan Taylor, the career soldier who spends years recovering his soul from an internal pit of darkness, Mr. Sinise met with Vietnam veterans to get a sense of the physical and mental toll that combat takes.

“[Playing] a Vietnam veteran in ‘Forrest Gump’ got me involved with the Disabled American Veterans organization and working with our wounded and supporting them,” Mr. Sinise said. “And that’s led to the creation of the Gary Sinise Foundation [and] support[ing] the GI Film Festival each year.”

For the initial GI Film Festival in 2007, Mr. Sinise was invited to attend a screening

of “Forrest Gump.” He discovered that festival co-founders Laura Law-Millett and Brandon Millett had the same commitment as he did to serving active-duty service members and military veterans.

“They were right in line with a lot of the work I was doing, and I felt honored to be asked,” Mr. Sinise said. “I’ve been so impressed with what they’ve done and how they’ve built it over the years, having watched it from the beginning.”

Mr. Sinise has attended nearly every year since the festival's inception.

“I was always looking for ways to highlight the positive things that our military and veterans community was doing,” he said, “and when the festival began, it was in the midst of a time where there were films coming out of the entertainment industry that were kind of portraying the military in not such a good way. I think that was one of the catalysts for Brandon and Laura to address that issue and kind of highlight films that were celebrating our defenders and some of the things they’ve had to do.”

Additionally, his Lt. Dan Band performs at military hospitals and USO shows, bringing homegrown rock ‘n’ roll to Americans serving around the world and raising money for various military charities with every set list.

“It’s a tight group; the music is great,” he said. “The whole point is to give people a lot of fun, lift their spirits. So it’s a great joy to be out there on the stage seeing everybody have a good time.”

Laurels aren’t for resting upon

Despite his extensive credentials, his Oscar nomination for “Forrest Gump” and an Emmy win for portraying segregationist Alabama Gov. George Wallace — who eerily died the night Mr. Sinise accepted his award — Mr. Sinise is not one to relax on his heap of accolades.

After his commitment to the GI Film Festival, Mr. Sinise's busy schedule takes him to New York for a fundraiser alongside Bill O'Reilly. He will return to Washington this weekend to co-host the annual National Memorial Day Concert on the Capitol lawn alongside fellow thespian Joe Mantegna. Then it's off to Korea with his band for five scheduled concerts.

“It’s a busy time,” the actor noted in a heavy understatement, adding that he has every intention to return for the 2016 GI Film Festival.

Ever-gracious, Mr. Sinise said he doesn't mind when fans wish to run lines from “Forrest Gump” with him.

“It’s always amusing,” he said of obliging the impromptu line-readings with those who approach him on the street. “You know, it’s just one of those movies that kind of just lives on, and new generations of kids have seen that film. So I don’t mind.”

After helping vets all year, Rolling Thunder roars into DC for Memorial Day

By EMILY LESLIE

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Rolling Thunder has much more to offer than motorcycles on Memorial Day: The nonprofit group provides year-round aid to veterans and their families to help pay for meals, mortgages and other bills to prevent homelessness.

The group's officials say their charity work has become even more necessary because budget cuts in the Department of Veterans Affairs have limited the agency's resources and benefits to those who have served their country.

"We should help our own people first. You're [the VA] telling us you want to help [veterans], and then at the same time you're making them homeless [with budget cuts]," said Artie Muller, executive director of Rolling Thunder Inc. "We need to have a fund in the VA as a

resource."

Rolling Thunder, among other advocacy groups, promoted the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995, which requires military authorities to investigate the circumstances of prisoners of war and troops missing in action and allow their families to review those investigations — an outgrowth of the organization's efforts to raise awareness of POW/MIA issues since its founding in 1987.

"We never thought this event would last all these years, but we haven't gotten anyone back from Vietnam alive. The government needs to do everything they can to find out if a person is alive or dead," said Mr. Muller, himself a Vietnam War veteran.

When thousands of motorcyclists rumble into the D.C. area this weekend for Rolling Thunder's 28th annual Ride for Freedom, they will be demonstrating their commitment to help veterans and to account for missing soldiers from past

and current wars.

Though the POW/MIA group was named after a U.S. bombing campaign during the Vietnam War, motorcycles in the yearly ride create a roaring, thunderous sound, organizers say.

"When the Harleys fire up, you'd think a B-52 raid is going on," Mr. Muller said, referring to the Air Force's strategic bomber.

This year's events include a candlelight vigil Friday evening at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and a daylong barbecue Saturday at Fort Washington. Emotions typically range from joy in seeing old comrades to heartache in missing lost soldiers.

"It's not just a barbecue; it's about our veterans. This is Memorial Day," said Nancy Regg, Rolling Thunder's national spokeswoman. "I've been doing this for 19 years, and I still cry at least once. Yes, we have a good time, but there are a lot of people reuniting and getting the welcome

home they never got, especially those from Vietnam. This is a brotherhood and a sisterhood. We are family."

To complete the Memorial Day weekend of events honoring veterans, the Ride for Freedom will leave the north parking lot of the Pentagon at noon Sunday and cruise around the area to demonstrate support for troops.

A speakers program at the Reflecting Pool across from the Lincoln Memorial is scheduled shortly after the ride and will include actor Robert Patrick of the CBS-TV series "Scorpion," former Wisconsin Gov. Tommy G. Thompson and Lynn O'Shea, director of research for the National Alliance of Families.

A musical tribute after the speeches will feature Nancy Sinatra, Ben Mason, Sharon Lee Ruckle, the Sixth Generation, Rockie Lynne and the Loch Rannoch Pipes & Drums band.

ROLLING THUNDER

Memorial Day weekend

MAIN EVENT SCHEDULE

Some of the top events from the 28th anniversary Rolling Thunder rally:

Friday
9 p.m. Candlelight vigil at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Saturday
9 a.m. Thunder Alley Opens. The official vendor site for Rolling Thunder XXVIII is on 22nd Street and Constitution Avenue Northwest.

Sunday
6 a.m. Wake-up call for all riders taking part in the Rolling Thunder XXVIII Run. Bikers rally in the North and South Pentagon parking lots at 7 a.m. for a noon departure.

9 a.m. Thunder Alley Opens.
Noon Rolling Thunder XXVIII First Amendment Demonstration Run.
8 p.m. Memorial Day Concert at the Capitol.

Monday
11 a.m. Wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arlington National Cemetery.
2 p.m. The Memorial Day observance at Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
2 p.m. National Memorial Day Parade.
3 p.m. National moment of remembrance.

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

ILLUSTRATION: GREG GROESCH

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