

# Editorial: Remember those who gave their lives for us

By The Bee Editorial Board

Visitors to Arlington National Cemetery often are stunned by the huge scale of the rolling green hills punctuated by hundreds of thousands of uniform marble gravestones.

Each small marker has a name, a rank, the war or operation in which the soldier, sailor, or airman died, with dates of his or her birth and death. These are not ornamental. They are the final resting places for heroes who died in a thousand different ways.

There are 19-year-old Marines who died at Iwo Jima. There are sailors who perished at Midway on an aircraft carrier. There are army riflemen who died at Normandy.

There are Union soldiers who fell at Antietam. There are helicopter pilots who were shot down in rice paddies in Vietnam. There are army sergeants who were killed when IEDs exploded in Iraq or Afghanistan. There are Air Force pilots who were killed in the skies of Korea.

The list of the myriad manners of sacrifice for our country, sadly, goes on.

Today, on Memorial Day, our nation pauses to remember and honor people who gave their lives for their country.

As we observe the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, and the 40th anniversary of the end of America's involvement in the Vietnam War, we should take time during our backyard barbecues to remember, precisely, why we have this day off.

Americans enjoy their day because of the sacrifice of the men and women interred in Arlington Cemetery, and many other U.S. military cemeteries here and in battlefields in far-off lands.

Without their ultimate sacrifices, nothing we enjoy today would be possible.

Nothing.

If you take a moment to consider the bravery our military has exhibited, it's mind-bending. What if they had shirked?

How many millions more would have died if American soldiers had not answered Adolf Hitler? How many millions more would have died in concentration camps? How different the world would have been if U.S. Army Rangers, willing to take the ultimate risk, hadn't climbed up the cliffs at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944?

America faces massive risks abroad today, and U.S. soldiers, sailors, and pilots stare into the abyss every single day, our defense against future tyranny.

They are our sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, wearing the uniform of our nation.

They're from Sacramento, Fresno, Miami, St. Louis, Denver, Chicago, Reno, Tulsa, and a thousand other cities and towns, suburbs and villages, wide spots in the road and one-horse towns, and they're all committed to one thing: Protecting you.

So, on this Memorial Day, honor the service of those who have fallen in the past and those who are willing to fall in the future.

Remember the fallen.