

REMEMBERING MEMORIAL DAY

Recently, Jesse Meeks, a Marine veteran of WWII, let this old timer, an Army veteran of WWII share in a classic tale called "The War"(a concise history 1939-1945)put together by Louis L. Snyder, a former Professor of History at the City College of New York. Snyder's work-the best I have read-was published in 1960 and was presciently introduced by famed correspondent, Eric Sevareid. It was a reminder of the idiocy futilely and irrationality of war. Yet it must be said, it becomes necessary, as in our fight to halt the tentacles of such as Nazi Germany, and Japanese militarism or suffer the consequences. If any war has a righteous deliverance, WWII earned the sobriquet.

Memorial Day was coincidental but appropriate to the story and is remembered in origin-the laying of flowers on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers in the Civil War, first by southern ladies, then others. Now a national day of remembrance of the fallen in all of our wars. So the end of May becomes the moment at Arlington and the many other military cemeteries.

We who went to war in WWII were sustained by music, memories, patriotism and those we left behind. Many recall it as the defining moment of our lives, and still believe this. Time is running out for WW II veterans, and the opportunity to participate in the locally sponsored Honor flights to visit the WWII Memorial and other memorials displayed in Washington-Arlington is a Godsend...to kneel, bow and pray for those who died in this great conflagration: of the 16 million who served, 400,000 died. We thank them as they thank us.

Snyder has written something amazing, sans footnotes and extraneous asides, choosing appendices: reading list of references, chronology of main events, and the major conferences of the war, and index. Narrative of the history some 500 pages with about 70 more of the

aforementioned documentation. Recently, Ken Burns, his book, TV series and other publicity surfaced also titled: 'The War' depicting the life and times of 4 towns one of which was Mobile during WWII. It had quality yet because of many errors of units and weapons lost some of its historical validity. Too many of us left to critique, perhaps.

War is a kaleidoscope of constantly changing patterns and tells of the heroes, cowards, the sounds, smells and the terrible trauma of life and death. Savareid tells of "black, white or yellow, the war altered the lives and minds of every man, woman and child who directly experienced its impact."

Let me take you back when I was young (when we were young) and sought answers to my life and posterity. Like Stephen Crane's young lad (Red Badge of Courage) I wished to serve the cause and country. Feared I would not be worthy and perhaps fail. And like Crane's young man I had moments of hesitation, and early on had great trepidation of life and limb. In first brush with the enemy we both fell to the earth and clutched it as if it were our mother's breast. Failure appeared in ghost-like aura. His baptism was a civil war field and mine was Normandy.

Jesse Meeks and I are glad we can reminisce and recall moments of our youth. "Thanks Jesse, for a good read and nostalgic memories." Those were the days, my friend.

Lest we forget, a moment of silence, war and remembrance, for the fallen on Memorial Day.