

Commander's Call Topics



May 15, 2014

"We must expect reverses, even defeats. They are sent to teach us wisdom and prudence, to call forth greater energies, and to prevent our falling into greater disasters."

Gen. Robert E. Lee
(1807-1870)

May is
[Mental Health Awareness](#)
[Month](#)

What's on your mind?

Arlington Cemetery is the Scene of Harmony, Reconciliation

This week, as Arlington National Cemetery marks the 150th anniversary of its first burial, it is a scene of harmony and reconciliation. It didn't start that way.

Before the Civil War, the property overlooking the Potomac River -- called the Custis-Lee Mansion or Arlington House -- was the home of the Robert E. Lee family, the house and grounds having been brought into their marriage by Lee's wife, Mary Custis. By 1861, the Lees had called Arlington home for 30 years.

Lee was at Arlington when he received word that Virginia had seceded from the Union, April 1861. On April 20, Lee submitted his resignation from the Union Army, left Arlington, and ultimately rose to command the Confederate army.

Across the river in Washington, another West Point graduate came to a different decision. Montgomery C. Meigs was an officer of the Corps of Engineers and had built many of the major projects of the day. Meigs considered his oath to "support and defend the Constitution" paramount, and when his home state of Georgia seceded, he stayed with the Union.

Meigs rose to be quartermaster general of Union forces. He was one of the first officers anywhere to understand the importance of logistics in military operations, welding together a system that capitalized on the Union's manufacturing and transportation expertise.

For Arlington House, whether Lee stayed with the Union or went with Virginia didn't really matter, because the property was so strategically important, Arlington National Cemetery historian Stephen Carney said. The property included high ground and dominated two bridges into the district. If Confederate forces placed artillery units on the heights, they would have had everything from the White House to the Capitol and more in range. In one of the first movements of the Civil War, Union forces occupied Arlington and built two forts on the heights as defenses for Washington.

Lee's family lost the land for failure to pay tax on the land. Mary Lee had attempted to pay the tax -- a total of \$92.07. Wheelchair-bound, she did not appear personally, and her agent—possibly her cousin—was not recognized by the federal government, and the payment was refused.

The first military burial at Arlington was Pvt. William Henry Christman on May 13, 1864. The 67th Pennsylvania Infantry soldier was buried a good distance north of Arlington House. Meigs saw this and ordered the next burials to be in what was Mary Lee's rose garden, feet from the door to Arlington House, Carney said.

Meigs formally declared the cemetery open in June 1864, and thousands of burials followed. At the end of the war, Meigs gathered the bones of thousands of Union soldiers that had been hastily buried at Virginia battlefields, and placed them in a burial vault in the rose garden.

The cemetery became a focal point during the first Decoration Day in 1868. Thousands of Americans journeyed to Arlington to place tributes on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers buried at Arlington. Today, it is the only national cemetery to hold servicemen from every war in U.S. history.

► TRENDING...

"I think the key for all of us is to stay connected," [Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James A. Cody](#) said during his [most recent CHIEFchat](#). "It's a challenge at times. It affects people differently and we have to help each other through it. It takes all four of those components (active, reserve, guard and civilians) to be the great Air Force that we are ... it really does."

► RESOURCES

Website access to the following resources can be gained by clicking on the name.

[AF.mil](#)

[Airman magazine](#)

[Military OneSource/HomeFront](#)

[Air Force Personnel Center](#)

[Air Reserve Personnel Center](#)

[Department of Defense News](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

[TRICARE](#)

[U.S. Government Website](#)

[Air Force Association Scholarships](#)

[Air Force Safety Center](#)

[Civil Service Employment Opportunities](#)

[NAF Employment Opportunities](#)

[Air Force Bands/Outreach](#)

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

May 15-16, 1951 - Communist forces launched the second phase of their spring offensive against Republic of Korea Corps in the east in a last attempt to drive UN forces from the Korean peninsula. FEAF day-time aerial attacks limited the enemy's tactical assaults to night.

May 16, 1940 - President Roosevelt asked for the production of 50,000 planes a year.

May 17, 1998 - An AFFTC pilot, Lt Col Steven M. Rainey, became the first USAF pilot to fly the F-22 *Raptor*.

May 18, 1953 - Jacqueline Cochran, flying a Canadian-built F-86 Sabre at Edwards AFB, Calif., became the first woman to fly faster than sound. She averaged 652,337 mph on a 100-kilometer closed-course to earn the women's jet speed record.

May 19, 1961 - First Titan I arrived at Lowry AFB.

May 20, 1970—An FB-111 launched a short-range attack missile successfully for the first time at the White Sands Missile Range.

May 21, 1927 - Charles A. Lindbergh, a captain in the Missouri National Guard's 110th Observation Squadron, landed his Ryan Monoplane, the "Spirit of St. Louis," in Paris after the first nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic. He set a 3,609-mile FAI record for straight-line distance in his 33-hour, 39-minute flight. For this feat, President Calvin Coolidge presented Capt. Lindbergh with a Medal of Honor.

► CURRENT ISSUES

[Sallie Mae ordered to pay \\$96.6M for violating troops' rights](#)

The nation's largest servicer of federal and private student loans, Sallie Mae (also known as Sallie Mae Bank and Navient Solutions) was ordered to pay \$96.6 million in restitution and penalties for systematically violating the legal rights of U. S. servicemembers under the [Servicemembers Civil Relief Act](#).

► FAMILY, HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Morale, welfare, recreation customer survey rolls out](#)

Starting May 14, Department of Defense MWR customer satisfaction surveys provide service members with the opportunity to tell decision-makers what's needed.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[AF implements DOS rollback phase II](#)

Eligibility criteria, monetary incentives and other information have been announced for the second phase of this program of force management.

► ENVIRONMENT, SPACE, TECHNOLOGY

[Air Force official testifies on dangers of "space junk"](#)

The commander of the 14th Air Force, Air Force Space Command and U.S. Strategic Command's Joint Force Component Command for Space, [Lt. Gen. John W. "Jay" Raymond](#) testified before the House Science, Space and Technology Committee in early May. He said that "JFCC Space is the world's premier provider of space situational awareness, data and products," and that it collaborates internationally to monitor key orbits. This effort is necessary to effectively manage space transportation, clear debris from orbit and protect the planet from strikes by near-Earth objects.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit <http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil>

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