

Memorial Day Wreath Laying and Red Poppies

Each year at 0700 on Memorial Day, Moorhead Veterans' organizations hold a ceremony on the Veterans Memorial bridge to honor soldiers who lost their lives serving our country. A flower wreath is dropped from the bridge symbolizing the lost soldiers, a 21 gun salute is presented and it a time to reflect on those who died serving our country. The gift of flowers at a memorial site is a ritual that occurs around the world, understood in every culture. The flowers represent both the beauty and the brevity of life and evoke memories of other days and lost comrades. The Moorhead American Legion and Moorhead/Dilworth VFW jointly sponsor the event. Part of the ceremony is:

We are here assembled today to pay lasting tribute to our departed Comrades
When the call of our Country was heard, Many Comrades answered; self was forgotten in the
cause of the greater good. As brave Women and men marched away with an abiding faith in
their God, their Country and their Flag.

THE RED of our country's flag was made redder still by their heroism;

THE WHITE more stainlessly pure by the motives which impelled them, and in the starry field
of our Nation's glorious banner;

THE BLUE has been glorified by the service they have given for American ideals.

In 1915, inspired by the poem "In Flanders Fields," Moina Michael replied with her own poem:

We cherish too, the Poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led,
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies.

She then conceived of an idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day in honor of those who died serving the nation during war. Shortly before Memorial Day in 1922 the VFW became the first veterans' organization to nationally sell poppies. Two years later their "Buddy" Poppy program was selling artificial poppies made by disabled veterans. In 1948 the US Post Office honored Ms. Michael for her role in founding the National Poppy movement by issuing a red 3 cent postage stamp with her likeness on it.

According to the VFW national website "In February 1924, the VFW registered the name Buddy Poppy with the U.S. Patent Office. A certificate was issued on May 20, 1924, granting the VFW all trademark rights in the name of Buddy under the classification of artificial flowers. The VFW has made that trademark a guarantee that all poppies bearing that name and the VFW label are genuine products of the work of disabled and needy veterans. No other organization, firm or individual can legally use the name Buddy Poppy. Today, VFW Buddy Poppies are still assembled by disabled and needy veterans in VA Hospitals. The VFW Buddy Poppy program provides compensation to the veterans who assemble the poppies, provides financial assistance in maintaining state and national veterans' rehabilitation and service programs and partially supports the VFW National Home for Children."