

A Few Minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Memorial Day

This May 30th, as is our custom, we as a nation celebrate Memorial Day. First originated by US Civil War soldiers after that great war in 1868, it was called Decoration Day — a day to decorate the graves of the dead with flowers. Later, soldiers of the North and the South merged and it became Memorial Day. It differs from Veteran's Day in that Memorial Day honors those who died in war, where Veteran's Day celebrates all those who served in the military.

I recently was sent an e-mail which featured a seven minute plus video from the Gary Sinese Foundation, WWII Museum and American Airlines honoring our WWII vets. Pull it up and be grateful to all who served in that brutal war. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3P15s4zWNQ>

There is much to say about the valor of our heroes who served and died, and those who came back and silently made America what is it today. Tom Brokaw was spot on when he said these people were our greatest generation.

It brought tears to my eyes as I remembered my dad, who served in the US Coast Guard. At 16 years of age he enlisted, as many immigrant Italian families had nothing and saw a chance to serve this great country. He later saw "action" in the Pacific Theatre at Okinawa. As a survivor he came back home and lived a life of normalcy. Or so we the sons and daughters of WWII vets thought.

It was only in his late 70s, early 80s where he told stories — only to me, his oldest — of his war years. His dislike was not of Japanese people but of Emperor Hideki Tojo, who was closely associated with the attack on Pearl Harbor and conductor of Japanese POW camps.

Take a look at the book Unbroken by Laura Hildebrand to learn more of these camps and the misery Americans in these camps went through. Tojo was captured after the war; charged and tried for his war crimes. He was subsequently hanged.

My dad, like many never forgot what his fellow Americans went through. I could see the torture on his face and watched as he fought back tears — something I'd never seen before.

Later, Alzheimer's robbed him of his memories but the war lingered. Memorial Day was popular with my dad. I missed these barbeques after he passed and our discussions later in the evening, just him and me killing off some primo scotch.

It also reminded me of the friends I lost in Viet Nam. Wayward fellows, like me, who fought and died, friends who treated me nicer than most people I have ever met.

So while the day has passed, we can remember these heroes, always. And speaking of heroes, Gary Sinese is mine.

Vita é bella