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Death and the Civil War

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, March 4, 2017, 11:08 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Death and the Civil War topic.
To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

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BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post that focuses on the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Death and the Civil War

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Re: Death and the Civil War

by Stanley Cates - Tuesday, March 7, 2017, 2:41 PM

Without doubt the most significant thing to me in this documentary that bolstered my knowledge of the impact of the war was the death toll adjusted to modern population sizes. I had never thought of it in that way. 750,000 dead in a 4-year conflict is terrible in its own right, indeed the largest casualty count of all American wars combined, but thinking about it from a 21st century point of view even that 750K figure gets watered down a little. 7,000,000 dead however is a rather unsettling concept to say the least, as I said, I've never thought to put it in that sort of perspective, but my first thought upon hearing that was that that number exceeds the population of the entire state of Oregon by nearly 3,000,000; and almost matches the population of the state of Washington.(Washington/Oregon) In the documentary, Drew Faust asks "What would we a nation today be like if we faced the loss of 7 million individuals?" It's a question that is difficult to even ponder because the notion that such a thing could happen at all is nearly inconceivable, let alone that it could happen at the hands of fellow human beings and not some calamitous act of nature. Yet, to scale, it did happen. I was just old enough to really grasp the national mood and sense of grief that followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks; if the deaths of just under 3,000 people (Seth), .0000105% of the population(Populationpyramid.net), can cause that, then the sense of anguish in the 19th century must still truly be unimaginable by a 21st century observer.

"Washington – Google Search." *Washington - Google Search*. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Mar. 2017. <<https://www.google.com/#q=Washington+state&>>.

"Oregon - Google Search." *Oregon - Google Search*. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Mar. 2017. <<https://www.google.com/search?q=oregon&oq=oregon%2B&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i60j69i61j69i60j69i61j69i59.1023j0j8>>.

"PopulationPyramid.net." *PopulationPyramid.net*. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Mar. 2017. <<https://populationpyramid.net/united-states-of-america/2001/>>.

Seth. "9/11 Death Statistics." *Statistic Brain*. Statistic Brain, 25 Aug. 2016. Web. 07 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.statisticbrain.com/911-death-statistics/>>.

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Re: Death and the Civil War

by Randi Carlton - Saturday, March 11, 2017, 6:56 PM

I agree, this deep dive that put the numbers into perspective really highlighted for me just how significant the death toll on its own was. When thinking about the Civil War before this, it has always been the same general assumptions one would make about any war, of course the death is there but when talking about the history of it we're usually thinking of the politics behind it and the ultimate outcome and how it impacts us today. Hearing the question "What would we a nation today be like if we faced the loss of 7 million individuals?" and getting a full understanding of the percentage of the population that was lost and just how many people were impacted by death in some way or another gives a much netter sense of the emotional and psychological toll inflicted on our population in the not-so-distant past. I know it's an entirely impossible task, but it would be interesting to know how much emotional trauma has been inherited by such an overwhelming death toll -- there has to have been some grief that was passed down. Families disrupted or torn apart, then impacting the children either raised by single parents or losing both parents and being raised by family members, or being raised by a bitter or completely emotionally lost parent. What kind of inheritance psychologically has the Civil War given us, just in terms of death (because obviously there are many many other threads to follow of the long lasting impacts of the war) and is something so intangible as grief able to be traced at all?

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Re: Death and the Civil War

by Stanley Cates - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 11:19 PM

Sounds like a Phd thesis to me.

The short answer however is probably quite a bit. And not just because of single parent homes. Severe trauma can quite literally alter your DNA; trauma can be inherited. Most work related to your idea has centered around the holocaust but the principles are the same.

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Dirty Salty Dog Tags

by Nicholas Esser - Wednesday, March 8, 2017, 3:23 PM

As a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, I have witnessed many of the Government's changes with dealing with soldiers firsthand. It really is fascinating to compare what I have experienced with what was covered in the material, specifically this week's section on death. To add to what was covered on identification in "Then and Now," the military today requires two dog tags around one's neck, while a third laced in one's boot lace in case of dismemberment. These tags include name, social security number, blood type and religious preference. The first three items of the tags seem pretty obvious, but religious preference links directly to what is being discussed this week. With an increasingly diverse military, compared to what one might expect during the civil war, these preferences aim to give a fallen soldier, of any religious background, the death and funeral services they desire. In the military today, or possibly just my specific unit, we were often frustrated by our dirty, salty, dog tags. We were reprimanded when not wearing them, and even poked fun at those that chose to wear theirs off duty when home on leave. The realities of burying an unknown soldier may be something today's military takes for granted.

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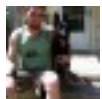


Re: Dirty Salty Dog Tags

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, March 11, 2017, 2:25 PM

I'm curious; what exactly did you find so frustrating about them? Was it a physical discomfort thing? Or did the notion of wearing something intended for post-mortem identification feel unnerving? Or maybe something else? Also, why do you refer to them as salty?

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Re: Dirty Salty Dog Tags

by Nicholas Esser - Saturday, March 11, 2017, 6:14 PM

Your assumptions are quite correct. Physical discomfort was the key complaint, as they often dug into our collarbones from a combination of the steel plates we wore in our Kevlar vests as well as our back-pack shoulder straps. The post-mortem identification was certainly not popular, especially those placed in boot laces. The idea that dog tags were used to symbolize government ownership was not a chief complaint of mine, but certainly was held by many personnel comparing them to dog collars. Imagine my popularity had I the knowledge to have educated my unit the struggles of Civil War families spending years after the war trying to find out, often in vain, what happened to their sons and fathers, and the small price we had to pay for the luxury of being known to the world.

-Marines (at least in my unit stationed in the Mojave Desert) refer to everything as “salty” because of the cycle of sweat and evaporation that left all our gear dusty white. Pleasant stuff!

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Re: Dirty Salty Dog Tags

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, March 11, 2017, 6:27 PM

Yeah, popularity, I'm sure that's what you would have gotten. That's a good point, I didn't really put two and two together that you would be wearing them in addition to your plates; I can see how that would get uncomfortable.

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Re: Dirty Salty Dog Tags

by Bailey Tillotson - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 11:52 PM

My dad is a Marine Veteran as well, so much respect to you and thank you. Anyways, I didn't actually know about the third tag laced into your boots or having your blood type on it.

It is interesting for me to talk about the military now with my dad and tell him what I learn from this class. I feel that some things never change, such as how you are treated over all. But for sure the death rate of military personnel is substantially less than during the civil war, we have all heard the huge amounts of death from single battles alone like Gettysburg with about 51,000 or Chickamauga at 34,000+. That's not something we hear about now-a-days, it's similar to a unit or few men, which is still very sad to hear but obviously a positive when you compare to the death rate back then.

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The sheer loss

by Jordan Okoniewski - Wednesday, March 8, 2017, 6:59 PM

It's always interesting, when looking back at history, to think about the things we live with today and take for granted, that people didn't have back in the day. A lot of times when doing this, it's easy to focus on inventions and technology; things like air travel and electricity and smart phones. However, what we consider much less are the social programs and policies in place today that we didn't used to have. A lot of these seem rather obvious today, but when you look back on the context that necessitated their formation, you see how much of a mess the world was at times. I

believe that R. Burns' Death And The Civil War did a good job of illustrating that. As they talk discuss at the 7:53 mark of the documentary, before the Civil War there were no national cemeteries in America, no provisions for identifying the dead or notifying next of kin, or for providing aid to the suffering families of dead veterans, no federal relief organizations, no ambulance corps, no adequate federal hospital, no federal provisions for burying the dead, no Arlington cemetery, and no Memorial Day. It's insane to think about how crippling the loss of a family member now, let alone without these provisions, and at a time when the deceased was almost guaranteed to be a principal breadwinner in a family. Then to consider that about 2.5% of the US population died in this conflict, and the aftermath is baffling. They literally didn't even know what to do with all the bodies. This is why the war brought about so much social reform, and also why the period of time after is referred to as The Reconstruction.

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Re: The sheer loss

by Jordan Okoniewski - Wednesday, March 8, 2017, 7:07 PM

The other thing about this subject that isn't really addressed in the documentary is how the devastation of this loss was compounded by the physical and economic damage the country endured. You had the North's campaign of total warfare, a generation of labor force left dead or disabled, railroad ties cut up everywhere, and the tearing down of an economic and social system in the South that saw a group of people with a very unequal distribution of wealth forced to completely change their businesses. (Note, I am NOT sympathizing with the plantation system there, nor am I disregarding how sharecropping was very similar in design to slavery, but that doesn't mean we should ignore how much of a regional economic and cultural shock that its demise must have been).

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Re: The sheer loss

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, March 11, 2017, 3:26 PM

In reference to your second paragraph; it is a bit like trashing your own house, isn't it? I can only imagine a 19th century southerner looking around after the surrender and just being baffled as to where one even starts to clean this mess up. The economic and cultural shock you mention is even greater when you consider its long term affects. Jim crow laws and segregation are arguably left over consequences of matters that weren't quite settled by the war.

Economically speaking all of the former confederate states rank in the lower half of state domestic product per capita, the same is true about education attainment rates. Shelby Foote even mentioned in The Civil War that Forrests'

granddaughter still harbored a little resentment toward Lincoln, and with the recent stirring of confederate flag issues last year it's arguable that we're still running on the fumes of reconstruction. To add to the devastation of losing your main breadwinner of the family that you mentioned I wonder what sort of access there was to private life insurance at the time. I'll see if I can dig up some information.

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Re: The sheer loss

by Jordan Okoniewski - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 2:33 PM

I was also curious about insurance and pension benefits for Civil War soldiers. I kind of assumed they were pretty much non-existent, or very sparse, based upon all the things I mentioned above that didn't come into fruition until after or during the war. However, I was surprised to learn that a system of Federal pensions did exist (and had in some incarnation since the Revolution), although provided coverage for *Union* soldiers. It seems, however, that it was a good system for the time, with **Vice** reporting "After the Civil War, when vets made up 5 percent of the population and were well represented in politics, veterans spending made up about a fifth of the national budget."

I also learned that, with the massive surge of veterans crowding a lot of hospitals, in 1865 Lincoln appealed to Congress to create a system of veterans hospitals in the US. "Lincoln's efforts resulted in creation of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS) in March 1865, which established a national government home for Veterans of the Union's volunteer forces. The National Asylum was overseen by a Board of 12 managers. Eventually there were 11 National Homes." Richardson said. "In 1873, they [the board] renamed it the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers because the word asylum was starting to have negative connotations." (VA.gov)

All of these are good things, because when I looked up life insurance at the time, I found that "most policies contained clauses that voided them in the case of military service," (eh.net)

So yeah, it looks like you could be taken care of post war, as long as you were a Union soldier, or their widow.

Sources - <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/life-insurance-in-the-united-states-through-world-war-i/>

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/america-has-been-screwing-over-its-veterans-since-the-revolutionary-war

<https://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/20110413a.asp>



Re: The sheer loss

by Jordan Okoniewski - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 2:49 PM

Apparently, some Southern legislators actually attempted get federal benefits for Confederate veterans/widows. Surprisingly, a large part of the opposition came from other Southerners. "Proponents justified such a move by noting that Southerners had contributed to Federal pensions through indirect taxes since the end of the war. These proposals met with mixed responses in both North and the South, but overwhelmingly, opposition came from those financially comfortable Confederate veterans and southern politicians who regarded such dependency on Federal assistance a dishonor to the Lost Cause. It should be noted that impoverished Southern veterans frequently were not averse to the prospect of receiving Federal pensions." (Civilwarhome.com) I found this incredibly frustrating, especially when you consider the percentages of Southerners who actually owned slaves prior to the war. It just seems like the very rich screwing over the poor once again.

I mentioned above that Confederate veterans/widows, didn't receive any *Federal* pensions. They did after a while, however, receive state based benefits. "Although U.S. Civil War veterans had received pensions since 1862 and Southern state governments had provided their veterans with artificial limbs and veteran retirement homes since the end of the war, it was not until the 1880s and early 1890s that the eleven states of the former Confederacy enacted what can accurately be called pension systems. The economic devastation of the war and the political upheaval of Reconstruction best explain this long delay. When Southern pension systems did finally emerge, they generally resembled the pre-1890 U.S. system: eligibility depended upon service-related disability or death and indigence, and widows as well as other dependents of deceased soldiers could receive pensions. Despite these similarities, however, there were striking differences. First, in the South widows collected pensions set at a specific rate for widows of deceased soldiers. These rates were generally lower than those to which their husbands would have been entitled should they have survived. Under the Federal system, there was no separate category for widows. Second, most Southern pension laws determined stipend amounts based only on the degree of disability. No regard was given to military rank. Third, there was never a Confederate equivalent to the 1890 U.S. Dependent Act. Although over time Confederate pension requirements became more liberalized, there was always an income and poverty limit-pensions were never given simply for service. Fourth, whereas indirect taxes funded Federal pensions, most Southern states financed their pension through a direct tax. And fifth, because Southern

pension systems were on the state level only, they varied as to method and amount and were much less financially generous than U.S. pensions." (Civilwarhome.com)

So Confederate veterans and widows did receive *some* assistance, but it could have been more, especially if not for the stubbornness of the elite.

source - <http://www.civilwarhome.com/pensions.html>

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Time and Death

by Kamron Bratlie - Wednesday, March 8, 2017, 8:42 PM

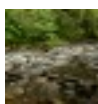
Having this documentary focus on death in a way unlike the previous materials has added a somber but realistic perspective on the death of so many in the Civil War. The amount of death in other documentaries and textbooks can be looked over so easily, to the point of losing impact on the reader or viewer. I have experienced this myself watching WWII documentaries. The most significant part of this newer documentary that added to my knowledge of the war was the concept of the "good death" and how it changed for those on the battlefield. The idea of soldiers surrounding themselves with pictures of loved ones is tragic in a truly profound way. These young men wanted the "good death" and modeled their last moments after it, if injury allowed them the time.

The decline in religious devotion in our modern culture in the context of death and war has changed drastically. Naturally, this has changed in that religion is a much more personal choice than a societal norm, especially in the armed services. Speaking from experience, religion is something you wear on your dog tags and rarely discuss.

Medical care for men and women of the armed forces is better than it has ever been, even more so when compared to the Civil War. While there are definite problems with the medical side of the Veterans Affairs, it is serving a great purpose. Without it, many veterans would be doomed to pain, whether it be physical or mental. A huge leap forward in medical care has been the basic medical training taught to all service members as part of their overall training. This training mitigates injury and in some cases death, allowing medical personnel to treat effectively and efficiently. Compare that to the basic or non-existent medical training for Civil War soldiers, and one can see just how far we have come.

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Always Room For Improvement

by Joseph Miller - Wednesday, March 8, 2017, 11:08 PM

I know this may seem like I'm picking this thing out, but Kevin Levin's article *A Worthy Death: How Civil War Families Made Sense of Suffering* has a little bit of a flaw. I know for the sake of drama you tend to embellish things, but to say in paragraph five that we hear the voice of the soldiers as they write home to their families is a little bit much. I say we keep it real Levin. I know he mentioned in paragraph 4 that he had narrative voices, but we never get to hear the actual soldier. This whole thing has been about narrative's. He brought up some interesting things. I do remember the flags that he was referencing. I realize I was around then and aware of what was going on because it was a decision I had to make coming from a military family on whether to join or not, but it seems to me Levin just want's some media hype, so he mentions Colbert in the beginning and end to make sure Colbert's people might make light. I felt like I could have skipped that article all together.

I graduated high school in 1989 when most of my friends were going in to the services to unknowingly go start the fight in the Gulf War. I went to work instead. I remember seeing the pictures of flag draped caskets. Most recently the picture of the Green Beret whose casket was seen coming off the plane's cargo hold to meet his wife who got off the plane first. Very touching story. Although I didn't join right after high school, I did join and honorably served my country.

I'm not trying to be all knowing, but in the back of my head, I always wondered how they kept record of all these soldiers. Some jumped lines, lied about who they were, didn't have ID tags, nothing. People were blown to bits. They always talk about how they kept good records when it came to politics and such, but death. That did surprise me a bit.

What this week did to bolster my knowledge was the lack of care the soldiers got. I know we've touched on this many times but so far everything's seemed to glorify the battles and pick apart how whoever lost, lost. We've always knew from the start many men lost their lives, but it just seemed too easy of a task to come up with numbers. Now the death toll upwards of 750,000. Staggering when you think in today's standards that would be 7 million dead. More than we have in the armed forces today. Approximately 3 times the number we have today and that includes Active duty, National Guard, and the reserves. That's what I learned. What if we went to war today and every one of our soldiers came back in a coffin, and we had to come up with replacements, along with another set of replacements after them, and then another after them. Mind Blowing, to say the least. I'm in awe, I really am.

I'm not so sure I'm on bored with our culture losing anything to the decline of religion. I'm with John Lennon. I like to imagine nothing to kill or die for, and no religion too, imagine all the people living life in peace. I know it's a fairy tale.

Going to Basic Training, the Army was aware of religion and people's religious beliefs. I had no idea, come Sunday when we were all able to rest for the day, they brought busses to take you, if you wanted, to just about any religious ceremony you liked.

And that included Islam, Catholics, Christians, Wiccan, Judaism, and many more. I see it about individuality now.

In the Civil War, it had more meaning. We were fighting ourselves and killing our own brothers and father's and innocent civilians. Our Own. Back then the meaning of life was much different. You were even still considered a child until you moved out of your house and took on your own family. Religion and family was all you had to fall back on. Religion gave you answer's, you just had faith. You had something to believe in, that your loved one would be ok in heaven. Religion served a good purpose back then. I'm not saying it's a bad thing. It's good for some.

Half my friends are religious and half aren't. The best thing about this day and age compared to then, is that we can all be in the same room friends and comrades, without someone wanting to put a stake in our heart because we don't believe in religion. Can you imagine back in the Civil War if you said you didn't believe in God. They would look at you like you were crazy and you probably would get an ass whooping, I'm sure. Thankfully we don't live with that pressure anymore.

As far as the federal government and how they are doing now versus then and now. I can go to personal experience for now. I was unfortunately injured in the Army. Crushed my vertebrae, hurt my back. I have pain daily, I have a special back brace when I do work. What I want to make clear first is that it wasn't in deployment, I got injured in our motor pool, from equipment being pushed over on me and basically squishing me, pulling me to the ground. My injury was no were near the horrific injuries or deaths of those in battle and I don't want to make claim to anything like that. I always make this clear because when I tell people I got hurt in the Army they automatically assume it was from deployment. Having said that, The Army has done nothing but right to me. I hear stories all the time about how veterans are being mistreated. They fought for our country. I know some are. With the VA (Veteran's Administration) you must do exactly what they tell you. That's the problem. There's not much for variation. If you can follow that, you may do ok. Writing this makes me saddened that not all have been treated as fairly as me. I feel guilty in some way. I know change must start somewhere, as far as the wars have gone, my step dad, prisoner of war for 18 months in Germany. He was a pilot and got shot down and captured by the German army, He's 96 and still kicking today. The story's he tells me are fascinating. My biological father, Navy, honorably discharged as well. I mention them because them along with me have been treated and cared for all by the government for our services in the military. Although, sometimes there are inconveniences of driving somewhere a little far out of the way, we are getting taken care of. We're not thrown to the hogs as in The Battle of Shiloh where they were just to unprepared for the dead that the wild hogs would come out after them. We've obviously came a long way. Our family isn't wondering what happened to us.

My worry today as I see nursing homes fill up their rooms with veteran's we may not be able to handle the sheer numbers in the future because the wars we've been in since WWII. Especially Vietnam, Korean, Gulf War, Libyan Civil War, War on ISIL, Pakistan, The Iraq War from 2003-2011, and the War in Afghanistan, all together have

produced some casualties. Between Korea, Vietnam, Gulf war, Afghanistan and Iraq were upwards of 400,000 casualties. WWII over a million. We can't count them now, but even with the 400,000 there's lots of work to be done, and that's not counting any new wars coming up.

As mentioned, I think it was a matter of poor timing as well to have the civil war when they did. You can't really pick the time, when the country has already been strained for two decades prior over the issues of slavery, but they had no knowledge of the causes of disease. The illness alone, if only they invented an antibiotic before the 20th century, the war could have been a lot different. How would we view it if we were able to treat all the sick and wounded? The Civil War would no longer have more deaths than all the other's combined. Would we think differently? What I don't get, as well, is that we knew as well that during the cholera pandemic of 1816-1851, kind of a long time to not remember it, especially when the Civil War was right after, did we not think about diseases when we brought all these people together. I mean the United States blamed it on the immigrants, mostly the Irish. That went on for over 35 years. I know there was dysentery, typhoid and malaria, but they really dropped the ball on that one. The government really failed the soldiers. They used their bodies, their temples, the only thing a person has that's theirs, and they disgraced it. Thankfully, they realized their mistakes and changed it, they embraced it, death. With it came national cemeteries, federal hospitals, Memorial Day, next of kin, disability services, education, vocational rehabilitation, so many things. There's always room for improvement, but they're doing an all right job by me.

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Re: Always Room For Improvement

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, March 11, 2017, 3:50 PM

First of all, kudos for being the thorough in your analysis, your personal experience adds a nice touch. However, I can't help but feel like you might be a little over critical regarding the "voice of the soldiers"; I'm quite certain Levin was not being literal and was simply attempting to convey that the amount of empathy imposed on the viewer is significant.

That being said, and I hate to be combative, but I couldn't help but notice a problem with one of your arguments. If I'm understanding correctly your implicit argument is that today's military is more inclusive that the military of the Civil War era. However, your sixth paragraph reads:

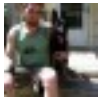
"Going to Basic Training, the Army was aware of religion and people's religious beliefs. I had no idea, come Sunday when we were all able to rest for the day, they brought busses to take you, if you wanted, to just about any religious ceremony

you liked. And that included Islam, Catholics, Christians, Wiccan, Judaism, and many more. I see it about individuality now."

On the surface that certainly seems nice, but isn't there a de facto bias built in there? I'm a Nazaritic Jew, if I was only afforded the opportunity to go to religious services on Sunday I would essentially be excluded from attending religious services; because Jews worship and observe the day of rest on Saturday. Similarly Muslims observe the day of rest to be on Friday. Suddenly I can't see eye to eye with your individuality statement. Is there something I'm missing that might strengthen your argument?

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Re: Always Room For Improvement

by Nicholas Esser - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 10:07 PM

I think the point here is that the opportunity is available, which has come along way in the last couple decades. Starting basic training in 2008, I was completely surprised when our first Sunday came up and we had a free day after a 24/6 week of non-stop chaos. Obviously making the day Sunday is completely aimed towards Christianity, and your argument of equality is valid, but I would stress the fact that presenting the opportunity is certainly still beneficial.

-

Having been raised strictly Christian until my military service shook my faith, I intended to stay out of this portion of this week's forum. I must say I was a slightly surprised to read the sentence "What has our modern culture lost by the decline in religious devotion and our understanding and experience with death from the time of the Civil War until now" I immediately disagreed with what the question implied. Firstly, I don't think religious devotion has declined, just that the population has increased so drastically of both religious and non-religious backgrounds making the later more apparent than the 1860's. I think it's like comparing the loss of the Civil War to an inflated number of America's population today except, in religion's case, were not talking about hypotheticals. Forgive me as I use my military background in most my posts, but I am unable to realize how much has changed in regards to death, even after the articles and portion of Ric Burns documentary. In my military experience, I see numerous parallels to the soldiers now and then. Military members often carry photos of loved ones into battle, just as Civil War soldiers. Many military members have letters written before deployment to loved ones in case of death. Some Marines I knew also carried pocket Bibles into battle. I have not been able to grasp the religious difference of "now and then" other than the idea that religion was more of a social norm than it is today. Maybe as a reader I failed to interpret what could impress upon me these ideas

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Re: Always Room For Improvement

by Joseph Miller - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 11:49 PM

Sorry it took me so long to get back to you. You're not combative, no problem. I see your point. The remark about the voice over. Not needed.

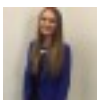
I was saying that today's army has more services available than that of the Civil War. The Civil War brought a lot of these to the table, after the fact.

As far as being nice, the good thing about the army is if you don't like it, don't join. It's much better that it was in the past. We're seeing now that they do have services for most and if they don't they make every effort they can, within reason, to make it happen. Unfortunately with training, you can't hold religious services every day. And people can be individual, still. You make that 2 month sacrifice when going in to basic training. You know what to expect when you enlist. You know there's the possibility of deployment. You're a soldier, not a civilian working in a local business. There are really no rules to what hours you're going to work or what days. It's the life.

I saw people in that worshiped that didn't need a building. they improvised. They were individual. they were themselves, and they did what they needed to do. Kudos to them for making it happen in the worst of places.

BTW, I hold no grudge or find you combative at all. You're merely asking a question. Always in writing things seem worse than they are. Have a good night.

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Death as a Huge Role in the War

by Bailey Tillotson - Wednesday, March 8, 2017, 11:22 PM

I liked watching this video, when we learn about history it's more about the event, and the generals. But we don't get into detail about the people involved in the event/battle all the time. Obviously we can't learn everything about everyone, but it was refreshing to get a personal side to Montgomery and read the last letter he wrote to his dad. I really felt like I was there sitting with him while he wrote this, and the visuals were helpful as well. Death was a huge part of the war, of course, and it was a different way to think about all we've been learning by narrowing it down to this specific area and personalizing/humanizing the war. In my opinion, death doesn't make us as students think twice, because as I said, death is a huge part of war. A lot

of men put their lives and their families live in danger or at risk by being apart of the war, but that's how it was. And if it wasn't for so many men's sacrifices, we wouldn't be where we are today.

A part of his letter that really got to me was when he expressed his wishes to be buried with his mother and sister, but that he knows it can't be that way. It reminded me of the sacrifice these men made; just the fact that he was able to write his father one last letter and have people tell him of the details of his son's death is substantially more than other men got. And then his grave wasn't marked so they weren't able to bring him home like he wished.

I found it interesting to hear that back then before the war, they didn't have national cemeteries, no way to identify the dead, no way to notify next of kin for the dead, and no type of aid to the families for the dead veterans. And when it came to a federal level, there was no type of relief organizations, no effective ambulance corporation, no decent federal hospitals, and no provided provisions to even bury the dead.

Now, we have all of those things and more. We have come a very very long ways in providing a better overall military life for the person and the family affected. Which makes me sad and proud; I say sad because it's gotten so much better through time and practice. War is a necessary evil in my opinion, and to think about all the people who have died from war saddens me. However, we have been able to develop how our military is treated and it is substantially better. When a soldier is injured or killed, almost always they are completely taken care of and the families are able to be properly notified instead of simply wondering and assuming.

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The Death Part

by Randi Carlton - Wednesday, March 8, 2017, 11:40 PM

First, I just want to go into how interesting I find that the horrors of death on such a large scale literally summoned out of nothing entire pieces of infrastructure that are totally standard and taken for granted today (and I don't mean take for granted in the sense that we don't care that we have infrastructure for health and death, but in the sense that of course we should have these things, they are kind of a given). In addition to having this sort of ritualistic view of death (having a "good death" and a "right way to die") the death itself, coming in such an overwhelming number and concentration, was like a ritualistic performance itself, summoning out of nothing but the necessity that it created that wasn't there before the ability to deal with large numbers of bodies that were no longer able to take care of themselves. With this constant reminder and constantly being touched and affected by death, I can easily see where the idea of a "good death" would come from -- being so constantly reminded that death is an inevitability, it's not as easy as it is today to ignore it, put it off, or joke it off. It was happening everywhere to everyone, and when death is beginning to seem larger than life and is something that everyone is aware of and

open about, then people are of course going to feel that some deaths are better than others, or that there is a proper way to die just as there is to live. I and everyone else living today have the tremendous privilege of not having to think that way -- I'm not constantly worried about my own death or the death of family and friends. Not being in a state of considering my own death every day grants me the comfort of not having to wonder how I die and whether it will be good or bad, if it will be a poignant and properly fitting end to my life and the way it was lived. And that has to say a lot about the strength of the beliefs of those who fought; to see death and pain around you and be resigned to the fact that that *will* be you. The only question was if, when it comes, will it be a good death.

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Re: The Death Part

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, March 11, 2017, 4:14 PM

"I and everyone else living today have the tremendous privilege of not having to think that way -- I'm not constantly worried about my own death or the death of family and friends."

I wouldn't be so sure about that. Perhaps the majority of people living in the United States, barring those dealing with terminal illness, enjoy this luxury; but there are places on the planet where death is a lot closer on a daily basis than it is in the United States. War torn Syria comes to mind, poverty stricken areas of Africa, poorly sanitized areas in central America. Perhaps that demonstrates even more strongly how 21st century Americans see the institutions and infrastructure that you so aptly pointed out sprang forth seemingly from nothing as a given instead of tantamount to a miracle.

I do like your observation that we and our contemporaries, in the west anyway, are much more casual about death, as you said we can "...Joke it off". But I'm hard pressed to think that we don't have our own version of what we would consider a "good death". How often have you heard expressions about not wanting to have to die in a so called nursing home? Or something along the lines of "S/He died doing what S/He loved", or "I want to die doing something I love". Advances in science might have made death a little less scary and consequently a little more casual but I don't think on a whole throughout our lives we think about it any less than any other society throughout time has; though to be sure the Civil War and events like it definitely cause a sharp rise in awareness.

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Re: The Death Part



by Randi Carlton - Saturday, March 11, 2017, 6:48 PM

You're totally right, I was definitely a bit too broad and simultaneously absolute in my observation. I guess this is also a good lesson in how I can really only know how I feel on this subject, and then also have some influence from the people immediately around me, and then even less and less input and feedback the further the source gets from me (i.e. people outside of my community, outside of my state, outside of my country, outside of my time period). I really want to make an absolute statement about this and have strong feelings and opinions, especially in order to fulfill this assignment and discuss the topic, but the truth is I have no real way of doing anything other than *trying* to even begin to understand the feeling and attitude toward death in a time and situation where it is a constantly looming inevitability rather than something hidden and put on the back-burner until we *have* to talk about it.

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Re: The Death Part

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, March 11, 2017, 8:58 PM

Perhaps a good way to do that is to attempt to talk about it when you don't have to. In my personal experience, it's constantly becoming more apparent that no matter how much I may want to make an absolute statement, they rarely exist on a significant or meaningful scale required when talking about such deep subjects as death or human conflicts.

As far as your interpretation on your ability to have input and feedback lessens the further away the source gets, you might be interested to know, or perhaps you already do know and I'm just rambling, that that is actually an established principle in communication. The idea that language defines our boundaries of thought was first proposed by Edward Sapir in the early 1900's, and then added to by Benjamin Lee Whorf nearly half a century later. This is known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or less formally as "linguistic determinism" (McCornack) That's important because there is a related theory in communication known as linguistic relativity in which cultural views also shape the way that we see the world (Kind of a given, but hey; due diligence). However, since culture and language are so intertwined, and because language evolves (McCornack), then we literally can't see the world the way 19th century Americans did, we can try really hard, and get really close, but we can't quite do it.

McCornack, Steven. "Communicating Verbally." *Reflect & Relate: An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016. 184-86. Print.

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Re: The Death Part

by Bailey Tillotson - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 10:19 PM

I agree that we do have a privilege of naturally not thinking or worrying about death constantly, when back then death was such a huge part of almost every person's life. Yes some people argue that "yes we do think about death the same", well no we simply don't. Healthcare is worlds away from how it was back then, good, sanitary hospitals were rare unlike now. Now, people live through broken spines, full body burns, being shot, or just being really sick... We have so many things available to us, even ways to get healthcare paid for, that people didn't have back then, so yes we are more privileged.

It is also interesting to think that there's a "good" and "bad" way to die, considering (as I said before) that someone could die so very easily. With the amount of death from the civil war, I can see how overwhelming it was to handle the amount of dead bodies. And it's sad to think that since federal cemeteries weren't a thing until later on, many are buried and will never be identified or honored. So even if a man died honorably, they potentially wouldn't be taken care of after death.

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Secular Death and Patriotism

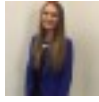
by Jacob Micheli - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 8:26 PM

What our modern culture has lost religiously over the last 152 years is debatable. From a non-theist perspective I would say that a sense of duty and patriotism was affected. Both the North and the South made use of spirituality and religion to move the public. I would argue the Civil War was the last real time our country used religion for war. WW2 and 911 are good examples but relied more on patriotism rather than religious or moral obligation. The mystical relationship of god and government has thus unwound in the last century. God has been replaced by nationalism, patriotism, and the defense of the free world. The decline in religious devotion gave rise instead to the devotion of "freedom".

Our modern cultures take on death was also affected by the decline in religious devotion. Perhaps the rise in war crimes, crimes against humanity and the holocaust shaped our modern view on death. Recent despotic leaders certainly helped trivialize the life of the common man. Maybe not at home but more so abroad. The process of

devaluing or categorizing life a certain way is easier today than it ever was. Especially when the media focuses on crime and endless murder in a certain country. Its not hard to think of their life (our ours) as anything less than human.

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Re: Secular Death and Patriotism

by Bailey Tillotson - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 11:29 PM

This weeks forum reminded me of a paper I wrote last year, it was about marriage and divorce in today's society, with my Christian views/input. I mentioned how the amount of people that are marrying age, and that are actually married is barely over 50% now. And at least half of those marriages end in divorce. I personally was raised in an accepting house, but strongly Christian. I have a close relationship with God and I strongly believe that because of that, it has been easy for me to follow my religion faithfully. I mention this for a reason I promise I'm not trying to ramble about nonsense.

The birth of America was included with mostly Protestants, and Catholics later on. Back then, religion was taken way more seriously and respected (pretty much within one's own religion sadly). Even though 70.6% of Americans claim to be Christian, it's the nature of people's faith I'm concerned with. Sure I agree that things change with time, and some things should change. Such as racial issues and equality. However, I also believe that religious strength in our country for Christians isn't something that should change. However, that's my Christian opinion. America was built for everyone and I do believe that everyone should be accepted no matter what religion. It's the people who claim a religion and don't follow it or are awful people all around. This is a constant struggle for me when I say I am Christian, people go off about how twisted and hypocritical "we all" are. I just think that when everyone back then thought more seriously about religion, the dead and families were respected more.

The war did boil down to religion and everyone's views. That is perhaps another reason why the North was seen as the "good guy" usually. But yes I would agree that this was more about patriotism at this point, a matter of who was even considered a person or property, and who was right or wrong. I would argue that the nations religion has gone downward since.

I agreed especially when you said "God has been replaced by nationalism, patriotism, and the defense of the free world. The decline in religious devotion gave rise instead to the devotion of "freedom"." So it was nice to get your non-theist opinion and I appreciate the new outlook on this week's subject.

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Re: Secular Death and Patriotism

by Jacob Micheli - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 11:54 PM

Great response! The North was definitely consider "the good guy" but don't winners usually write history? At least thats what someone told me once. I admire your Christian perspective on God in this country. Especially given the fact that Eugene is a secular bubble. It's nice to get a non-theist view from a human being rather than a unoriginal sound bite. The ability to share different ideas is really what makes this country great.

I agree with you about religion being taken more seriously back then. It also glorified death and gave life a specific purpose. It may all be well wishing but its certainly romantic. After watching the documentary I could definitely see the different viewpoints on death. Our modern culture vs. the past. It seems today we are at war with old age and nature. The quest for immortality is a constant daydream.

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Christian Majority

by Jacob Micheli - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 11:03 PM

After watching the documentery it gave me time to reflect on Americas religious roots. Its amazing for far we've come since the civil war. I didn't know that the majority of the U.S. at the start of tho Civil War was Christian. I was aware of our countries religious history but didn't know it was so overwhelming. I find this fact extremely interesting and can almost picture the entire war from a biblical perspective. Such as the African slaves and their plight from bondage. The Souths almost holy crusade to establish a new nation. Not to mention the near canonization of Robert E .Lee. If the bible is the greatest story every told than the Civil War in the second. One can't help but wonder what our American ancestors would think of our religious culture today. I would say we've progressed a long way. Others would say we've regressed. For the most part I think we can all agree things are not the same as they once were.

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Slavery is Bondage

by Jacob Micheli - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 11:21 PM

The documentrary states that America was a Christian majority. I wonder if Lincoln made use of this fact. Not being able to argue racial equality but instead spiritual equality. Maybe he advocated emancipation since slavery was biblical bondage. This makes sense given the population and views on race. I wouldn't put this past Lincoln.

He knew who his audience was and who was listening. I don't ever recall him stating explicitly that whites and blacks were equal. For that matter I don't recall any white abolitionist stating whites and blacks were equal. Instead, that slavery was wrong and based on sin. I think the most strategic argument for emancipation would have been a religious one. Even the most progressive and able minded Abolitionist was subject to racial pseudo-science. Emancipation was one thing but equality and worth was another.

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Federal Side

by Bailey Tillotson - Sunday, March 12, 2017, 11:53 PM

I read off a website called the economist, and it spoke about the wounded soldiers that are forgotten in today's society. I personally have met veterans who were not able to obtain the services that the government provides, and he was practically homeless. Broke my heart to know that he served our country and was in this state. A statement was made saying "the system responsible for helping these men and women as they find their ways back into civilian life has been overwhelmed.", and that's the hard to swallow truth about how our military personnel are sometimes treated. So sometimes I honestly wonder if our federal government is really doing all that they can do, and if it's THAT much better compared to how it was before.

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◀ Death and the Civil War

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