Memorial Day a time for voicing thanks

Marco Island observes holiday with ceremony

By Lindsey Kaiser
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On a day when saying thank you wasn't always an easy task, Marco Island residents turned out at the cemetery on Elkcam Circle to do just that. With the help of the island's Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6370, veterans and grateful citizens honored those soldiers who died while serving the country

in war.

"I just wanted to thank everyone," said Mary Wilkins, whose cousin is serving in Iraq. "It's important. It should be important to all young people. It shouldn't be sad, but it is."

Seeing her cousin off to the Middle East is Wilkins' first time having family serve during wartime, and the experience has brought the significance of the sacrifice closer to home. She was teary-eyed while explaining her cousin's service and has difficulty holding back tears when thinking of other veterans who served.

Recently, while watching a television program about D-Day, "I sat there crying for all those old men," she said. "They still can't forget."

During Monday's service on Marco, which featured patriotic songs, prayer, speeches and a fly-over, it was estimated that about 719,000 soldiers died in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

"Does anyone think the price of freedom is cheap?" asked speaker Fred Burnham.

Arlene Silberstein arrived with her family to honor her husband, Victor Silberstein, who after retiring from the Navy served Marco Island as a physician for about 15 years before his death in 1990. Every year, their children travel to the island to participate in the service.

Solemn salute

FRANK OTTO BARTELS
CAPT US ARMY
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BELOVED HUSBAND & FATHER

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"We gave a great deal of our lives to the Navy and we had a great deal of pride that we had the part of supporting the country in a time of war," Arlene Silberstein said. While serving, her husband gained his specialty in prosthetics at Bethesda Naval Hospital and Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Memorial Day was first celebrated on May 30, 1868 to recognize Union and Confederate soldiers who had fallen in the Civil War. Since then, the day is traditionally celebrated on the last Monday of May, though several Southern states, Florida included, also recognize fallen Confederate soldiers on a different day