



A Special Memorial Day Message from Jennifer A. Smith



Human Resources



Fifty years ago, on the morning of April 30, 1975, my mother ate scrambled eggs for the first time. She had just spent the night on the USS Midway after being evacuated the day before on a Chinook helicopter from Tân Sơn Nhứt Airport. The aircraft carrier sheltered about three thousand Vietnamese refugees, rescued from a collapsing South Vietnam.

Soon after her first western meal, she and all the others onboard were summoned to the top deck where an American officer made an announcement: "As of this morning, the Vietcong have taken over Saigon. You cannot go back. We have lost the war."

In unison, everyone wailed for the loss of the war and the loss of their country. The Americans then lowered the Vietnamese flag, which, until then, had been flying alongside the American flag. On that day, though my mother lost one country, she gained another one.

Memorial Day is a holiday intended to mourn and honor America's deceased servicemen and

servicewomen. Like many Americans today whose family are of Vietnamese descent, I received the gift of American liberty before I was even born. I know, however, that though gifts may be freely given, they are not free to obtain. There were 58,220 U.S. military fatal casualties of the Vietnam War. The ultimate sacrifice of these men and women allowed for 125,000 to 130,000 Vietnamese refugees to escape and settle in the United States. And today, more than 1.3 million Vietnamese immigrants live in this country. Millions more, like me, born on American soil are the beneficiaries of those gifts, paid for with life.

On this Memorial Day, may we all remember the gifts of our servicemen and servicewomen, especially those who paid the ultimate price so that we may abide in love and friendship with one another.

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"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).



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