

**TAPS**  
*by*  
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Next Monday is Memorial Day. Originally known as "Decoration Day," it is a national holiday set aside for honoring and mourning US military personnel who died while serving in our nation's military forces.

For many of us, we have lost our will to honor those who gave their lives for our freedoms, and instead have selfishly turned the Memorial Day weekend into a celebration for the unofficial beginning of summer. We celebrate with family gatherings, picnics, weekend trips without thought for those who have fought for your freedoms.

We have all heard the haunting melody of "Taps." It's the song that gives us that lump in our throats and usually tears in our eyes. But do you know the story behind the song?

There are multiple stories of how the music came about. Regardless, though, the music had its humble beginnings with each story. One such story follows. Reportedly, it all began in 1862 during the Civil War, when Union Army Captain Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing, Virginia.

The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land. During the night, Captain Ellisombe heard the moans of a soldier who was severely wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the Captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, the Captain reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him toward the encampment.

When the Captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead. The Captain lit a lantern and suddenly caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim light he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son.

The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, the boy enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission to give his son a full military burial despite his enemy status. His request was only partially granted. The Captain had asked if he could have a group of Army band members play a funeral dirge for his son at the funeral.

The request was denied since the soldier was Confederate. But, out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him one musician. The Captain chose

a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform. This wish was granted.

This haunting melody, which we call "Taps" is used on US military bases to signal the end of day, and at military, law enforcement, firefighter, and emergency personnel funerals. (<https://youtu.be/WChTqYIDjtl> )

Born originally as a melody, lyrics have been written to accompany the music. There are no official lyrics for "Taps," but the most popular seems to be these three verses:

Day is done, Gone the sun.  
From the lakes, From the hills, From the sky.  
All is well, safely rest. God is nigh.

Fading light, Dims the sight  
And a star gems the sky, Gleaming bright  
From afar, drawing nigh,  
Falls the night.

Thanks and praise, For our days,  
Neath the sun, Neath the stars, Neath the sky,  
As we go, This we know,  
God is nigh.

Another popular version is:

Day is done, gone the sun,  
From the hills, from the lake, from the skies.  
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.

Go to sleep, peaceful sleep, may the soldier  
or sailor, God keep. On the land or the deep, Safe in sleep.

Love, good night, must thou go,  
when the day, and the night need thee so?  
All is well. Speedeth all To their rest.

Fades the light;  
And afar Goeth day,  
And the stars Shineth bright,  
Fare thee well;  
Day has gone, night is on.

Thanks and praise, for our days,  
'Neath the sun, Neath the stars, 'Neath the sky,  
As we go, this we know, God is nigh.

Remember, Memorial Day is a day for honoring  
those who gave their life for us, you and me.