

# Poppy Day



**Poppy Day is this Thursday, May 24. Three veterans organizations, and their auxiliaries, will be selling the poppies. They are the American Legion, the VFW, and the Canadian Legion.**

**The monies collected are used to aid disabled veterans and other projects of a similar nature.**

**You are requested to be generous.**

**The crepe paper poppies are replicas of the wild poppies of western Europe which bloomed in the French battlefields of World War I and II, despite shells, war-torn trenches and trampling armies.**

**The American soldier especially of World War I, soon adopted it as a symbol of the triumph of life over destruction and death.**

**After World War I, the poppy was adopted as a memorial flower.**

# Buddy Poppy: A Flower For All Seasons

From Flanders fields to Main Street U.S.A., the poppy has become the symbol of the fallen soldier.

In April of 1915, a battle-weary Canadian soldier stood in sadness as he viewed the grievous aftermath of the second Battle of Ypres in Belgium. Despondently he contemplated the rows of hastily dug graves, each marked by a white cross, that served as the final resting place for thousands of fallen soldiers.

In a sudden revelation, he heard the singing of larks in the sky, and amid the graves he saw gay patches of red — wild poppies, struggling through the battle-scarred soil and clay grave mounds to bring a message of life among death.

Inspired, Col. John McCrae penned the three poignant verses of his famous poem "In Flanders Fields." Published in *Punch* magazine a few months later, the poem brought a message of confidence to millions of people in the dark hours of World War I. It became a symbol of faith and hope in a war-torn world.

Although Col. McCrae never lived to see the end of World War I, his poem has survived in print and in the minds and hearts of generations to whom the bloody war is mere history. The poppies which provided his inspiration still bloom in Flanders fields, and their message of hope is transmitted via the VFW Buddy Poppy.

This year the Buddy Poppy has a new look: it is being manufactured from a red silk-like material, giving it a more natural appearance. For the last ten years the poppy flower has been made of cello, heavy paper laminated with cellophane.

The first poppies, inspired by John McCrae's poem, were made in France of silk and were marketed to raise funds to benefit children of post-war France and Belgium. A French woman, Madame Guerin, organized the manufacture and sale of poppies to finance the Franco-American Children's League. When the organization was dissolved in 1922,

Madame Guerin received cooperation from the VFW to coordinate a nation-wide poppy sale prior to Memorial Day.

But the following year, the VFW encountered difficulty in obtaining the French-made poppies. For its second annual sale, the organization used its surplus of French poppies and contracted for additional ones from an artificial flower manufacturer in New York City. It was during the 1923 sale that the idea was conceived to have the poppies made by needy and disabled veterans.

At the 1923 Encampment (convention) of the VFW in Norfolk, Va., members presented a plan to have the poppies made by veterans who would receive financial assistance for their work. A poppy factory was established in Pittsburgh, Pa., where all the poppies for the 1924 sale were made by disabled veterans. It was in Pittsburgh that the name "Buddy Poppy" was conceived. The men who gathered to make the poppies referred to each other as "buddies" — thus the name "Buddy Poppy."

Early in 1924 the VFW registered the name "Buddy Poppy" with the U.S. patent office. Following the 1924 sale, many of the larger Departments believed that local sales of the poppies would increase if the poppies were made by disabled veterans in hospitals within their own jurisdiction, rather than confining the poppy manufacturing to the Pittsburgh area.

Although the VFW is the only veterans organization selling the Buddy Poppy, the American Legion also sells poppies to benefit veterans. The Legion's first poppy sale was launched in 1923, the year after the VFW conducted its first sale.

Although the material used to make the Buddy Poppy has changed during the last 63 years, the purpose of marketing the Poppies, to "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living," remains. The sale is conducted exclusively by volunteers with profits aiding disabled and needy veterans, and the widows and orphans of deceased veterans.

