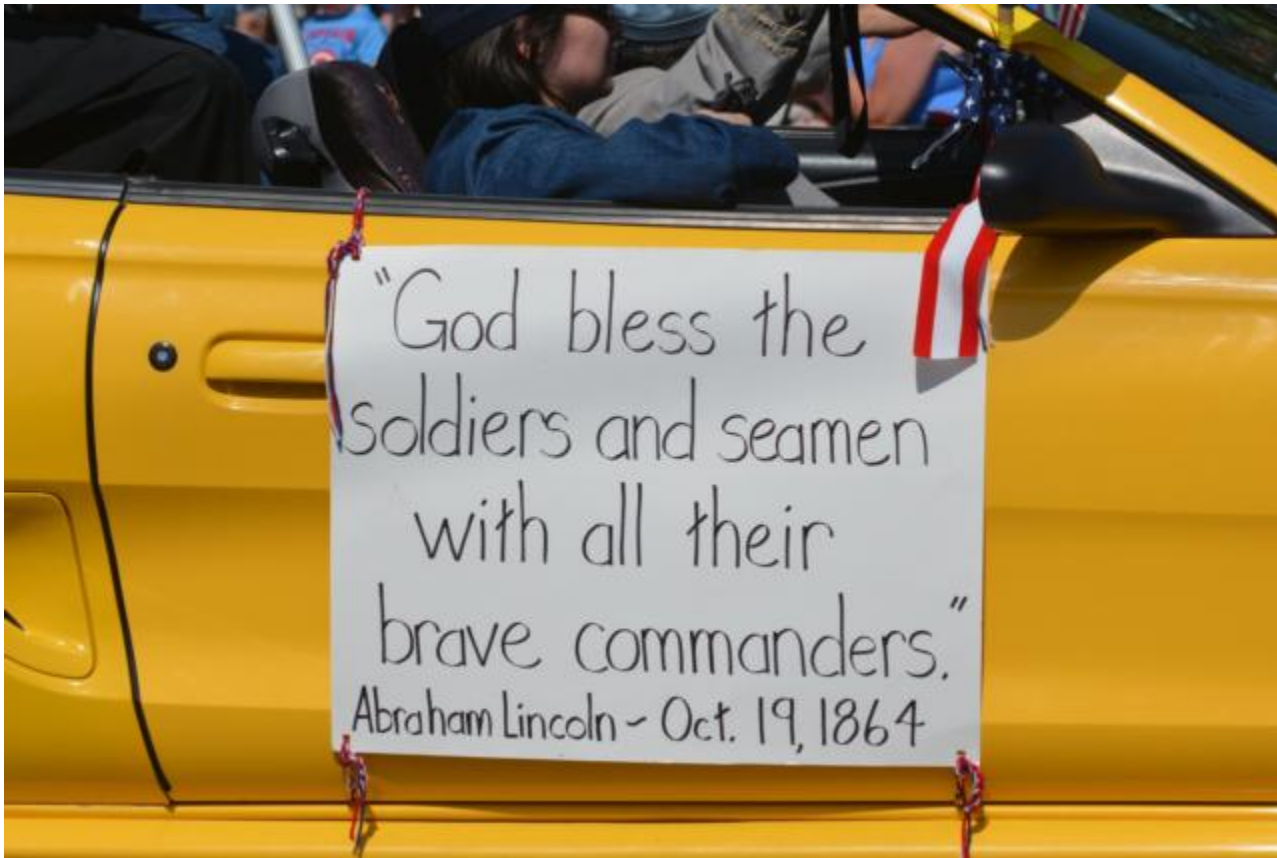


# Alton Memorial Day Parade today at 10 a.m., Pie Town Flower Guard seeks fresh flowers

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**ALTON** - Today, Alton will host its 150th Memorial Day Parade at 10 a.m. in Upper Alton.

As usual, the parade will start at 10 a.m. this Monday from its staging area at Alton Middle School, located at 2200 College Ave., and it will continue east toward

Washington before turning south onto Edwards, back east toward Main, onto College again and ultimately to the Alton City Cemetery by way of Elizabeth Street.

Once the parade reaches its conclusion, a ceremony for the fallen will be held at the cemetery.

For 37 years, Connie Markley of Alton has helped organize the Pie Town Flower Guard in the parade. Young to older girls walk in the parade with the Flower Guard with hopes of obtaining flowers to place on the graves of veterans at a nearby cemetery.

The group needs fresh flowers and Markley encourages residents to provide them Monday morning. Only fresh flowers can be displayed on the graves in Upper Alton Cemetery. She said many bring artificial flowers, but those can't be used.

Following the parade, there is always a brief memorial service at the north end of the Upper Alton Cemetery, 2090 Oakwood Road. Markley said the Flower Guard collects flowers to decorate veterans' graves. She said this tradition began at one of the first Alton Memorial Day services. Markley, one of the founders of the Pie Town Flower Guard, has helped organize the group and make this happen over the years.

"You now have to have fresh flowers," Markley said for decorating veteran graves at Upper Alton Cemetery. "We have girls all the way from ages 10 to 20 walking with the Pie Town Flower Guard. I just think this is a wonderful way to honor veterans with the parade then placing the fresh flowers on their graves. It is nice the community gets together to honor them."

For about 15 years, Julie Yates has helped Markley and has become a a staple with the Flower Guard. Previously, Betty Boyd helped Markley organize the event and was also always a catalyst.

"We are fortunate that local florists give us quite a few flowers to place on graves, but we want to receive more from the citizens of the Alton area," Markley said. "We want this tradition to continue and hope to continue to get more girls to participate and people to donate flowers."