

# The History of Mother's Day

Although others claim they started Mother's Day, Frank E. Hering, a Past Grand Worthy President of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, made the first known public plea for "a national day to honor our mothers" in 1904. Twenty-one years later, the "Society of War Mothers" invited Hering to participate in a special Mother's Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery.

There, at the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier," before a large audience including many congressmen and senators, Hering was introduced as "the Father of Mother's Day." That was 11 years after President Woodrow Wilson by Proclamation officially made Mother's Day the second Sunday in May.

## Idea originates at Notre Dame

The idea of Mother's Day came to Hering when he was a faculty member at the University Of Notre Dame. Walking into the classroom of a fellow instructor, Hering found his colleague distributing penny postcards to students. Each student addressed his or her card and scribbled a message on it.

"What are they writing?" Hering inquired.

"Anything," his colleague replied. "Anything at all as long as it's to their mothers."

A light bulb went on in Hering's head and the idea of a SPECIAL DAY that would provide FORMAL RECOGNITION FOR MOTHERS began to form. About the same time, Hering was actively involved in an organization that was started a few years earlier on the Seattle waterfront and was quickly gaining popularity — the Fraternal Order of Eagles. By 1904, Hering was a past officer of the South Bend Aerie.

On February 7, 1904, Hering was invited to serve as the main speaker at a memorial sponsored by the Indianapolis Aerie #211 at the English Opera House. It was there that he first publicly verbalized his idea of a "national day of honor for Mothers."

## Eagles Carry Torch for Mother's Day

In 1914, legislation in the U.S. Congress requested a presidential proclamation that would designate the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

Hering served as Grand Worthy President in 1909 and again in 1911. As he traveled across the country, his plea for a national Mother's Day became a standard topic during his appearances at Eagles functions. In 1912, he recommended to the Grand Aerie that every local aerie be presented the opportunity to hold Mother's Day exercises "on any Sunday during the year." The proposal was approved and Aeries throughout the nation began to carry the torch for Mother's Day.

This date was encouraged by Anna Jarvis, another crusader for a memorial day for mothers. President Woodrow Wilson signed the proclamation and May 10, 1914 became the first official Mother's Day.

## **Question of Who Originated Mother's Day is Settled**

As the popularity of Mother's Day continued to grow, many organizations claimed the idea originated with them. The Society of American War Mothers, a national women's organization dedicated to the ideals exemplified by Mother's Day, decided to conduct its own impartial investigation.

After sifting through divergent claims and information, the group's findings were published in the February, 1925 issue of "The American War Mother."

"We have been thoroughly convinced by documented evidence that the inspiration for the present Mother's Day came from a man-Frank E. Hering of South Bend, Indiana-and that the medium through which he carried his campaign over the number of years was the Fraternal Order of Eagles."

The article traced the F.O.E.'s efforts to Hering's first public speeches about on the topic in 1904 and 1905 and concluded that "Mr. Hering's activities and addresses in favor of Mother's Day antedated by three years the first observance of Mother's Day in the city of Philadelphia, which was in May 1908."

The piece also quoted Hering's presentations to the Kansas City Eagles and their guests: "The Fraternal Order of Eagles is an organization of men bound together very largely by sentimental ties. Now, the finest sentiments are those woven around the home. The keystone of the home is the Mother. The Eagles to meet their fullest obligation must do everything in their power to keep the family intact, and to aid mothers and children, especially in times of sickness and want."

During an interview with "The American War Mother," Hering explained, "The observance of Mother's Day is only part of a logical and consistent social welfare philosophy that for a quarter of a century has been intelligently followed by the Eagles. The fundamental proposition is: "Protect the home." The mother is the keystone of the problem. Today this powerful Order has the assets of \$30 million and 600,000 members. And the rallying cry is, "For Mother and Home."