

Memorial Day
by
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As we reflect on Memorial Day, let us remember the first celebration on May 30, 1868. On that day, flowers were placed on the graves of Union AND Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. It is also fitting that New York was the first state officially to recognize the holiday, in 1873 - - when, I might add, Adelphi was just ten years old and 56 years from moving to Garden City.

At a time of great divisions in our nation, with Red States and Blue States, of incivility in our deliberative bodies and rancor for tv fare, it is good to remember that Memorial Day was declared by General John Logan, National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, as a day of reconciliation, a "coming together to honor those who gave their all."

In 1915, inspired by the poem "In Flanders Field," Moina Mitchell replied with her own verse:

We cherish, too, the Poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led,
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies.

I believe that this line, "That blood of heroes never dies" applies not only to those who died in battle, but also to those who battled for the rights we now cherish. If, indeed, Memorial Day is about reconciliation, not about division, then those words must apply equally to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr., among others, as well as to fallen soldiers.

This is my hope for this day, and this time, that we can disagree without being disagreeable, that we can see beyond today's tactical gain to view tomorrow's hopeful plain, and that we can be as large of heart and as agile of mind as Abraham Lincoln, General Logan, and Moina Mitchell were in their time.