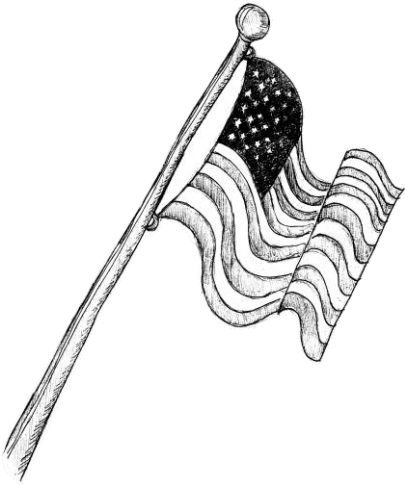


# Add a little on a Memorial Day

By D. A. Chase, illustrated by Ryan Francis Peirce



“Parades!” Dawn couldn’t help herself. Every town big and small celebrates the men and women who served.

“Celebrations,” Darcy shouted as the world seemed to burst with pride and expectations of the day.

“First the pancake breakfast,” Mom called to the two youngest sisters who had fled into the backyard. “And Darcy do you have your part of the speech ready? My goodness, why don’t you give it a try one more time before we leave.” She closed the screen door calling for the others to gather the supplies and her jars of homemade jellies to be given away.

“I’ll listen,” Dawn said dutifully sitting cross-legged on the grass of the backyard bordered by the concrete driveway, turned magnificent stage.

“Ah...hem,” Darcy said clearing her throat and gazing across every blade of grass as if they were an audience.

“1865,” she started. Rolling her eyes up envisioning the freshly typed version of her winning class assignment.

“It was the end of the Civil War here in America. Times were radically changing, and our beliefs were openly proclaimed and quietly whispered throughout the country. Our country was splintered, and tired. Memorial Days in many cities began in 1866, for those who gave their lives, some as young as 12-years-old, never to be forgotten.

But Hope was forever in our sights.

At that time, families were on average much bigger than today. In our own family, our great-great-grandfather was the youngest of nine, and on another branch, our ancestor was one of thirteen children. The average number of children for every mom in those years was five-plus children each. One hundred years later, in 1965, the average was barely over three. With families that big, there were bound to be different ideas and reasons for what each one chose to do next.

Some were farmers. Because the eldest were the ones who would inherit the family farm, the younger ones had to find their own way sometimes to take a burden and another mouth to feed off the shoulders of their siblings.

Others felt the call to lead, have a say in the direction of our country, determined to have themselves and their beliefs heard. And others were swept up in the times and away to war.

Some found direction, purpose, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> home joining the troops and making a difference in the way our government was to take shape. There are as many different reasons as there are people who joined. protect our freedom. I learned, not only did the soldiers fight and die, but the families suffered from their sacrifice, as well.

A little over 60 years later, families of those who died while serving are called Gold Star Families. Originally, approved by President Woodrow Wilson in 1918, it started as a gold star on a black armband, worn by people 'in mourning' for someone close to them who had died, during World War 1. Families would hang banners outside their homes, with a blue star for each member who was serving, and a gold star for those who had died. The grief felt by the families and learning to live without their loved one, is terrible and extreme from what I have read.

Maybe you have someone on your tree who died while serving, and can honor them every Memorial Day, too.

No matter what the reason, every one of them made a difference in what our lives look like today.

So today, we honor their sacrifice and remember them, thanking them for their service and all those who have served since. Without them, we wouldn't know the freedom we enjoy every day, and the possibilities of tomorrow, here in the United States of America. "

"Darcy, how brave you are, to stand up in front of all the people at the park today. We need to know important things like that," Dawn said patting her older sister on the back as they made their way back into the chaos in the house.

"I didn't know this stuff before the school project. I had to write letters to find some of this out. I hope it helps other kids too. So much given up for us," Darcy said shaking her head. "I am so glad I get to tell people about this little part of it."

"Me too," Dawn said. "I can't wait for next year when it will be my turn to write about what I learn about Memorial Day." We should all remember, be hopeful... and be thankful!"

"Come on girls. Time to go!" Mom called. "Time to celebrate! Plenty to hope for because of all of those who served."

"Exactly!" both girls said in unison!

## Happy Memorial Day!

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