

ceremony on Memorial Day. That has weighed on me for a few years but I never quite figured out the right direction for us to take. This year, I thought it would be appropriate to begin a new ceremony that would incorporate elements of the historic Decoration Day tradition. For those of you unfamiliar with the moniker, "Decoration Day" was the original name of what we now call Memorial Day. It has its roots in old Appalachian traditions that were part cemetery beautification, part veneration of the dead, and part family reunion. This tradition was later adapted to honor the war dead of the American Civil War. I wrote about this in more detail back in 2021.



Activities! Residents at Bronte Health and Rehab Center recently participated in some tie-dye fun and also got outdoors for some cornhole as well.

The historic Decoration Day tradition emphasizes the stories and collective consciousness that we would call "local culture," a cornerstone Wendell Berry philosophy and something that I find very important to preserve, promote, and perpetuate locally. I told someone that if only five people showed up and we read aloud the names of the local war dead, the first ceremony would be a success.

So we met at Stamford's Highland Cemetery at 10 am on Memorial Day. We had more than five people! I shared some of the history of Decoration Day and I read Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's deeply moving poem of the same name. Then, several volunteers helped read the names of all 45 men listed as "killed in action" on Stamford's downtown war memorial monuments. We have one each from World War 1 and Vietnam, four from Korea, and 39 from World War 2. Some of these names have been lost to local history. Others have last names that are still recognizable today, living on through various relatives of the deceased.

It was personally special that my friend John Wendeborn (who was one of my Little League baseball coaches and whose daughter is a lifelong friend) agreed to read the list of World War 2 names. John's uncle L.A. Wendeborn was on that list. L.A. Wendeborn was killed on September 9, 1943 at the age of 23, at Salerno Beach, Italy. After L.A.'s death, the Wendeborn family memorialized him by assisting in the construction of a local baseball field. Even today, the Stamford Bulldog high school baseball team plays at L.A. Wendeborn Field. The surrounding city park, which also houses our city pool, is named L.A. Wendeborn Park in his memory. His memory has touched thousands of Stamford youths, whether they realized it or not.

We concluded the ceremony with "Taps" (I chose Corb Lund's beautiful version from his "Horse Soldier! Horse Soldier!" album, in case you

wondered). Then, the attendees departed to walk through the cemetery. I can't speak for others, but I spent my time reflecting on the ceremony and soaking in the stories that lie at rest with the names in the cemetery. I know much about some of the names. I visited the graves of people (both who went to war and who did not) who were my friends and from whom I learned much about life and our community. In other cases, I know only the name and story from their headstone. But each of them is part of our tapestry of local culture and that makes them special to Stamford's history.

Next year, we hope to grow this ceremony in a few ways. I want to specifically mark the graves of those heroes killed in action who are buried locally (not all of them are, but many were buried here). Eventually, I want to gather and share more about each of those 45 heroes who marched off to war but only returned to their final resting place. What was their story before they were called to fight? What was their rank and experience in their service? Where did they fall? Who are their living relatives and how are

they remembered?

Gathering that information will not happen overnight, but the work will be as meaningful as the results. Ultimately, there is no perfect way to celebrate Memorial Day. Remembrance of the war dead is the foremost requirement. The same goes for Decoration Day—a dozen different Appalachian communities might celebrate Decoration Day in a dozen different ways. Here in Stamford, our new Decoration Day tradition will be unique as well. But by remembering and sharing these stories and the people who lived them, we can ensure that they, and our local culture, will live long into the ages, even after we have joined



them at rest.

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Game Wardens See Reduction in Boating Accidents, Rise in Drownings During Memorial Day Weekend

This past Memorial Day weekend, Texas Game Wardens patrolled Texas' many waterbodies and assisted fellow

first responders with rescues and recoveries due to strong storms and extreme heat. Wardens noted a decrease in boating incidents and citations filed, but an increase in drownings and warnings issued.

Between Friday and Monday, 379 game wardens conducted 11,609 vessel checks across Texas, issuing 1,528 citations and 2,301 warnings for various boating safety law violations. Wardens arrested 37 people for boating while intoxicated (BWI) and four people for driving while intoxicated (DWI). Additionally, another 55 people were arrested for various other crimes.

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