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On this day of remembrance, with the nation thankfully not at war, some ask why the restoration of a Civil War monument should matter to us.

In reply, I ask that you turn your gaze to the names of the New York Regiments engraved here and the sacrifices that live in their graven names.

Among them is the 14<sup>th</sup>, a storied fighting regiment. In 1863 they marched with their beloved Col. Fowler through the cheering streets of Washington D.C. Of the 2500 men who had volunteered two years earlier, only 91 remained.

There is the 54<sup>th</sup> whose monument stands at the High Water Mark, and the 9<sup>th</sup> that stood fast on Cemetery Ridge and the 72<sup>nd</sup>, whose name will burn with fire so long as men remember.

And it was at Gettysburg, where New York put more than 80 Regiments on the field, that the legendary Fighting 69<sup>th</sup> mustered their five hundred surviving men from the hard streets of Irish New York.

“The Brigade,” one of them wrote, “knelt down together in the last moments before going forward. Father Corby raised his hand, and in a clear voice pronounced the words of absolution. Not a man moved, and not a voice was heard. Out near the Round Tops, and in the Peach Orchard, the sounds of battle supplied a terrible kind of organ music. Every man in the Brigade offered a prayer. For many it was their last prayer on earth.” And it was not long afterward that they were in the Wheatfield, where two hundred fell in a veritable whirlpool of death.

Memorials like this one are for remembering war’s terrible glory, but also what those valorous men won for us: the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment granting full citizenship to millions of enslaved Americans; and the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment whose Due Process and Equal Protection clauses became the foundation of our modern freedoms.

We must not discount the meaning of ceremonies like this one with lively music, and the flag standing out over the names of our dead. I find it hard to judge such moments, but if the wounds of those whose hearts will never heal are to know any peace at all, then it seems we must have these stones and words. It would be well, I think, if they were less proud of war and more in

the spirit of our earliest Decoration Days, when, in the first blush of peace, women brought flowers to the graves of soldiers whose names will never be known.

And what of the 25,000 New Yorkers who marched right here in 1918 after the “war to end all wars,” or the 18,000 who came in 1946 to stand in thanks as we do now – nearly all, all are gone. The inspiration of Memorial Day is not to be found in war’s red heart, in lists of victories, or the bluster of statesmen who never fought. Today was meant for the dream of peace, and for the remembrance of the fallen and the bereft, and to give thanks for the bravery and sacrifice that have granted us this day to be free and to remember.

This Memorial also stand for the sacrifices of our New York families who awaited and then mourned their beloved both then and in each of our wars since – those like my father in WWII and my husband, Cal Snyder, who is here today, in Vietnam.

West Siders have come to the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument since 1909 to renew these personal and historical memories.

It was almost 20 years ago that Dr. George Chall, a WWII veteran who turned 100 this year, started the SSMA to revive the annual ceremony and restore the Monument. Since he retired, Peter Galasinao has taken the helm of the SSMA, improved the Board, and brought new life to the ceremony.

I thank them both along with their Board Members, as well as John Herrold, the Riverside Park Administrator and Merritt Birnbaum, the President/CEO of the Riverside Park Conservancy. The Parks Department commissioned a feasibility study some years ago, showing all of us how expensive a restoration would be.

It is not a surprise to anyone that I feel very passionate about this Monument. In 2008, along with then Mayor Bloomberg, I allocated almost \$1 million to restore the plaza where you are sitting. However, the Monument itself went into disrepair and now has a fence around it. With support from Peg Breen, President of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and others, we initiated a petition to request the funds to restore the Monument. The Mayor’s Office of Veteran’s Affairs supported our efforts, as did all the elected officials in the area, particularly Congress Member Nadler, and Community Board 7.

It was approximately three years ago that we formed the coalition to support the full restoration of the Monument.

Today, it is my honor to formally announce that thanks to Mayor Eric Adams and Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue \$62.3 million has been secured in this year’s budget to restore and preserve the Monument. Please thank them with your applause, and here is Mayor Adams!

Thank you all.