

Memorial Day Observance on the Web

We squint into the wind into a stiff breeze coming off the lake to the north. It's stirring up whitecaps. The flags flap violently. Gusts occasionally cause our grip on the staffs to falter. We worry our hats will blow off into the street behind us. Our colorful face masks contrast brightly against our olive drab, brown, and navy blue military garb.

The Parade Marshal orders, "Color Guard, forward march", and we step forward a few paces, halting before the memorial plaque in our little town park. The Marshal and his companion, a four generation Army vet, step forward to place the wreath and salute.

To our right, the young lady who volunteered to be the bugler -- dressed as if performing at a formal concert -- blows Taps. Taps. It gets me every darn time. Brings back names, faces, memories of 50 years ago. I got back 5 decades ago this coming July. The Marshal is also a Vietnam vet. If asked, I'll say the wetness in my eyes is from the wind.

The wreath-bearers do a right -face and walk around the low shrubbery to the flagpole by the lake, where the colors snap in the breeze at half mast. As the bugler sings the Star Spangled banner, the flag slowly rises to the top of the pole.

A cameraman stands to one side, capturing all this and hoping the sounding of Tabs and the beautiful voice singing the national anthem will be caught on the audio over the buffeting of the wind.

Memorial Day parade is the one event in Wayne that brings out the largest crowd of the year. Years ago, our older son was the bugler, and our daughter sang with the chorus. Not only are the residents here, but summer people turn out, along with family visiting from away. The parade includes the Maranacook Marching band, church groups, scouts, a few fire trucks, and a fine collection of antique cars. A Norman Rockwell scene if ever there was one. But not this year. The pandemic has driven us onto the Internet.

As the flag is raised I study the plaque, noting the names. It reminds me of what I said as I closed my address at this gathering ten years ago:

"Names are inscribed on the Rolls of Honor in villages across this land, and are often read at these observances. Pause and read them. Listen quietly -- they are whispering to us:

FREEDOM IS NOT FREE.

Today is for those who did not get to become veterans

May God grant them eternal rest."

If you are one of our regulars who can't be in Wayne this Memorial Day, you can watch it on the Town of Wayne Facebook page.

Lloyd C. Irland