

Memorial Day 2012

Thank you everyone for joining us here today as we pay tribute to all those who have served our great nation.

In preparing to come here today, as always, I struggle with my thoughts on what to say. I'm caught between the pressures of family life, with my wife Carlene and my children, my parents, extended family and friends and my job as First Selectman for our beautiful town.

This year, more than ever, I'm amazed at the speed in which we live our lives. Even in our small town, the pace is amazing. Baseball games, barbeques, pool parties and picnics, The Race Around The Lake and talk of summer vacation plans. Northwestern Regional's upcoming graduation, college decisions being made, and even some wedding plans in the not too distant future. As the little tikes run around the yard, most all of the news is good and I'm thankful for all that we have.

Sometimes for me, the pace of holiday weekends seems a bit too much to handle. More so, as I get older, because I pause to reflect on the speed in which people come and go in our lives. This year I'm happy to say, my family spent time with both old friends and new that made this weekend something I'll remember for a long, long time.

Along the way, I paused to remember three of my uncles, Tom, Ned and Jack Vail. My mother's brothers, all who served our country during the Korean War era. All three have left us now. Their families remain proud, as do I of their service to our country. So much so, that my younger son Jack is named for his great uncle who served in the Army in an armored division, returned home safely, married, was the father of three children, graduated college and went on to become a successful lawyer. He left us in 1999. His life was distinguished.

My three uncles, like the proud veterans we have with us today fought for the wonderful rights of freedom we all enjoy today. The right to choose whatever wonderful life we all want to enjoy. Perhaps in the 1970's the pace moved a little slower than it does today, or maybe not? Back then, I was the one running around, and they were doing the chasing. But as time passes, I believe, it's not really so much about the picnic itself, as those that we choose to spend them with, our loved ones, and the constant recognition of the fact that we all just don't have enough time to share with each other.

Of course back then, my uncles knew what was important just as these proud men and women standing before us knew. They knew then, like they know now that freedom, like our very lives, and that of our children, is fragile and must be tended to, watched after, and protected, if need be with their lives. It's a profoundly patriotic vision typically made by those that are so very young in age. I'm amazed by it and grateful for it. For all that I have, the life that we all share, has been provided by the hearts and souls of our veterans and today we thank them.

My hope for today, for all those in our great land is that we take just a moment of time from our busy schedules to honor those that gave so much, our Veterans, and thank them with all our hearts. Those here with us today, those that have passed on and those that were left behind, but not forgotten. We remember you! We also pause for a moment and remember those that remain in harm's way, as we celebrate this weekend, they stand guard in the ever present realization that freedom and democracy remains fragile and must be protected. We remember you!

This year, I'm especially proud of my newly enlisted niece, Ensign Allison H. Jerram and her husband Ryan both of whom continue to serve. Allison recent graduated from OCS in Newport, one of many new service men and women dedicated to protecting our country. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

My dream for tomorrow is peaceful world for all to enjoy. I hope and pray that our younger veterans that serve our country can return home to a grateful nation of opportunity where work is plentiful and dreams abound. I pray that those that have been wounded in service find care and healing. For the families of those who serve, I pray for a speedy return of your loved ones and in quieter times of uncertainty, I pray that you find serenity in knowing that God watches over those who serve and know now that we pray with you for their safe and speedy return.

I thank you all for joining us here today to thank our Veterans and members the American Legion. I ask that you join me in a round of applause to thank them. Have a safe and happy holiday weekend!

Daniel V. Jerram
First Selectman