

Damascus American Legion Retires Nearly 800 American Flags

Since the Covid pandemic began, hundreds of Damascus area citizens and friends of American Legion Post 171 entrusted their unserviceable American Flags to the Post for proper retirement. The ceremony for accomplishing that was held at 6:00 PM on Flag Day, June 14th, at the Post Home. Legionnaire Jim Serritella chaired the event.

Post Commander Fred Mitchell opened the ceremony, welcoming the several attendees. The Post Color Guard presented the Colors, and Commander Mitchell cited the presence of the empty chair honoring the approximately 82,000 servicemen and women who are Prisoners of War and/or Missing In Action. Following the Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem, Mitchell summarized the history of the Flag retirement ceremony and read Ruth Apperson Rous' famous and inspirational poem, "I Am the Flag."

Post Sergeant-at-Arms Bill Green and Legionnaire Brownie Chichester presented the nearly 800 Flags for inspection and proper disposal. In his remarks, Commander Mitchell approved the proper retirement of the Flags, saying that the Flags are "...a precious symbol of all we and our comrades have worked for and lived for and died for." Post Chaplain Larry Matthews offered a prayer, committing "these Flags, worn out in worthy service, to a clean and purging flame." Following a moment of silence, Sergeant-at-Arms Green ignited the flame to the bier and "Taps" was played.

Damascus Boy Scout Troop 1397 and Damascus Station 14 of Montgomery County Fire and Rescue provided support for the ceremony.



Members of Damascus Boy Scout Troop 1397 salute the bier of nearly 800 American Flags before the Damascus American Legion Flag retirement ceremony began on Flag Day, June 14th, at the Post Home.



Damascus American Legion Post Commander Fred Mitchell, left, and Montgomery County Legion Chaplain Jim Serritella, salute the American Flag at the beginning of the Flag retirement ceremony on Flag Day, June 14th, at the Post Home. Serritella chaired the annual event.



Damascus American Legion Post 171 retired nearly 800 American Flags at the ceremony held at the Post Home on Flag Day, June 14th.

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Photos courtesy of: Legionnaire Steve O'Neil**