

The Damascus American Legion Hosts Memorial Day Service

On Sunday, May 30th, about 100 local citizens joined Post members and families for the annual Memorial Day service at the Post Home. After a medley of inspiring music by the Browningsville Cornet Band, Post Commander Fred Mitchell called on the Band to play “We’ll Meet Again,” a beautiful British song of the World War II era, setting the tone for the ceremony. Following the presentation of colors, Mrs. Betty Bass, Regent of the Pleasant Plains Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, and the Band played the National Anthem. Then, Legion Montgomery County Chaplain Jim Serritella delivered the invocation.

Commander Mitchell introduced Past Post Commander George Bolling, who paid tribute to the memory of the nearly 630,000 Americans who have lost their lives in all wars since World War I. Bolling then read the names of the twenty-seven Post members who transferred to Post Everlasting (passed away) since Memorial Day 2019. Following a long tradition, as each deceased member’s name was read, a member of the Damascus American Legion Auxiliary Unit carried an American Flag down the center aisle and posted it at the front of the auditorium. Some were wives and daughters of those deceased members. And the Post’s Legion bell was rung following the calling of each name.

Then, Department Senior Vice Commander William “Will” Trotter led the presentation of floral arrangements by sixteen Damascus civic organizations. As Trotter read the names of the those honoring the Post’s recently deceased veterans, representatives of each those civic organizations placed wreaths at the front of the auditorium, creating a beautiful floral array.

Trotter introduced the guest speaker, Ross Simpson, anchor at WDVM in Hagerstown and a renowned newsman and author. An Air Force veteran and formerly embedded reporter with the Marine Corps in Iraq, Simpson leads WDVM's "Veterans' Voices" series which is broadcast locally at least once each month. He spoke eloquently about his experiences in combat in Iraq, the losses of men with whom he served, the impacts of those losses, his frequent interactions and interviews with veterans, and the debt we the American people owe to our brave warriors. His inspirational speech brought the audience to a standing ovation.

In closing the ceremony, the Browningsville Band played "God Bless America" and invited the audience to join in singing that beautiful hymn. Chaplain Serritella pronounced the benediction. Commander Mitchell then called for a moment of silence during which the audience stood while a Montgomery County police bagpiper played "Amazing Grace" followed by the traditional gun salute by the Rockville Legion Post 86 Honor Guard. Using a Civil War bugle, Post 171 member Mark Elrod played "Taps" as the veterans in attendance rendered the hand salute. Following the service, the attendees enjoyed a delicious light lunch provided by the Auxiliary Unit.



*Department Senior Vice Commander William
"Will" Trotter (left) shown with Post 171
Commander Frederick Mitchell*

On the day before the ceremony, members of the Post, Auxiliary Unit, Sons of the American Legion Squadron, and friends of the Post placed more than seven hundred American Flags on the graves of veterans buried in twenty-one cemeteries in the Damascus area. Following a long tradition at the Post, this meaningful part of the Memorial Day ceremonies was organized and led by Former Auxiliary Unit President Sandy Seipp, following in the footsteps of her father John Seipp who had led it for many years.

Story by: PPC George Bolling, COL U.S. Army (Retired)
Photo Courtesy of: Legionnaire Steve O'Neil