

Memorial Day Remarks
Mayor Jennifer Gregerson
May 26, 2014

On Memorial Day, we remember the servicemen and women who sacrifice their time and lives for their country, who fight and die, and who, significantly, serve.

Our nation chooses this day to mark the sacrifices and service that our veterans have made. For me, preparing for today gave me a chance to reflect first on the service of my grandparents.

My grandpa Byrle Hanika served in World War II, heading off just a few weeks after he met my grandmother Pat at a coffee shop in rural Nebraska. He was a 22 year old farmboy, getting ready to go overseas. He walked her home, and they chatted. She told him she was 18, but she was really 15 years old and about to finish school so she could become a teacher--which she did a year later.

He was excited to meet this energetic, sassy young woman, but barely had time to begin dating her. Today, they might have texted afterwards, or friended each other on Facebook. He would have taken her out, perhaps for dinner or to the movies. He would have had the time enjoy a young romance. Instead, he had a duty to his country to fulfill, and a few weeks later, he left, serving as an army nurse around the world, including time in Burma.

Luckily, that conversation on the way home from the coffee shop sparked a series of letters, and a romance that flourished despite the distance, and continued once he returned home! He didn't talk much about his years in the army. It wasn't a big deal to Grandpa Byrle, it was just a fact of his history.

My grandparents always believed in service, and my grandma gave back, too. She led her peers- the chefs, waiters and cooks of her culinary union in the 1960s--representing their interests and defending their rights. She served her family--by making some excellent holiday dinners including an amazing chocolate pie. They each served in their own way, and are a great example that reminds me to give back. I think of that service today, but also throughout the year as I do my best to serve my community and family.

I also think today of many city staff who have given their time and skills to serve in the military. Among them, Sergeant Cheol Kang in the police department supports our country through his time in the army reserve, and through his service to Mukilteo--keeping us safe every day.

Public Works Director Rob McGaughey just recently retired after 20 years of service in the National Guard. Today, Rob helps plan and engineer our sidewalk locations, stormwater improvements and street preservation planning. Over the years, Rob lent his expertise to the Guard and countries around the world, working on big projects that made those

communities better places to live. We are fortunate--both for Mukilteo and for our world--that these good people, and others, help serve and make our world a better place.

Thinking back to the 1940's, on my dad's side, my Grandpa Bill Gregerson was also a veteran, a Marine in his case. His family had homesteaded in Monroe, but when he was 15, he set out to see the world. He took a train into North Dakota, and lived on a tribal reservation for a time. I think this cemented his commitment to Native American spirituality.

When he was 18 years old, he joined the Marines, and traveled to the Far East with other young men. After his return, he eventually married my Grandma Donna and made a home in what is now Mukilteo, on Beverly Park Road. I understood his service much better after he had passed, thumbing through photo albums from his time overseas, photos of himself and other Marines in the prime of their lives, following orders, fighting, serving.

Today, I hope you might think back on examples from your life of those who have served. In Mukilteo, a number of young men and women have left our small town for distant shores over the years. Their service brings honor back to our city, and is a service for our country. Mukilteo's founders, Fowler and Frost, were businessmen and pioneers, but they also served- in seeking to develop the infrastructure of a town, selling supplies to visitors and even founding the county government. There are many more examples throughout the years, as our small town has grown and prospered.

Each of us can be grateful on this day for those who serve in the military and the sacrifices that they have made. I hope we can also use those examples as inspiration for how we might serve--our country, our community, our family.

Any small thing can make the world better. Whether it's volunteering in your church, at a school or just to help make the lives of your immediate family members better, we can all serve in some way. Consider taking time to make dinner for a friend, to volunteer for one of Mukilteo's many community events or to clean up our wonderful parks.

Honor the men and women who have sacrificed for our country, and think of them as you serve others, as well.