



**Memorial Day Remarks  
Mayor Jennifer Gregerson  
May 29, 2017**

As we gather this Memorial Day, a day reserved to honor those brave women and men who have given their last full measure of devotion in protection of our precious freedoms, I cannot help but think about the terrible violence we have seen in the last year.

From the sadness of losing Jake Long, Jordan Ebner and Anna Bui, to the shock we all experienced at the savage attack on innocent women and girls in Manchester—the violence and depravity in our world today can seem overwhelming.

But it is in these moments of grief and sadness that we must remember those brave souls who go to work each day in defense of our country and our way of life. In its own way, Memorial Day is a reminder that everything we hold dear is only possible because of the men and women we remember and honor today.

And here in Mukilteo, we have a proud tradition of City employees who wear multiple hats, they serve our community and they serve as citizen soldiers. I was proud to name one of these amazing public servants to be our new Police Chief. Cheol Kang rose



through the ranks in Mukilteo, working at all levels of our Police Department for a decade, all the while serving our country in the Naval Reserve.

Chief Kang is not just a dedicated father, exceptional law enforcement officer, and Naval Reserve officer—he is also our first Korean-American police chief. 1 in 6 of our residents are Asian-American, and the majority of those are from our tight-knit Korean community. Chief Kang has been a vital link to this part of our City, helping to bring us all together to celebrate the diversity in Mukilteo.

This year marks the centennial of America’s entry into World War I. Over 100,000 Americans perished in just 31 months of combat, another 200,000 were wounded. Hailed as the “War to End all Wars”, it did not live up to that noble intention, and just two decades later, our nation would be at war again.

Many Washingtonians gave their lives in that conflict, but this Memorial Day, I would like to honor one—Private Nick Beltman. Private Beltman was killed in action 99 years ago yesterday, participating in the first major campaign led by American forces—the Battle of Cantigny. As a soldier in the 1st Division, 28th



Infantry Regiment, Private Beltman helped liberate a small French village in northern France.

The historical record is scant on details about Nick, but we know one important thing—he was a proud American who gave it all for his country. It is a powerful thought that a young man from Whatcom County would cross an ocean to liberate people he had never met. Today, Private Beltman lies in rest on a gentle slope in the open, rolling Picardy countryside. And we here in Mukilteo, pause for a moment to reflect on his service and the tens of thousands more who gave their all. (PAUSE)

One hundred years ago, Americans gathered to commemorate Memorial Day just like we are today. Our soldiers were headed to foreign lands to protect and defend the human dignity of strangers. President Woodrow Wilson said these words to the nation, “My friends, the real fruition of life is to do the thing we have said we wished to do. There are times when words seem empty and only action seems great. Such a time has come, and in the providence of God, America will once more have an opportunity to show the world that she was born to serve mankind.”



It is my hope that we can take the memories of those who have fallen in service to our country—like Private Nick Beltman—and channel them into action today. Chief Kang has doubly answered that call, as a public servant and as a citizen soldier. How can we all answer that call in our own way?

Here in Mukilteo, we will host a gathering next Saturday at City Hall to plan for a Peace Park to honor those we have lost here, and create a place where all of us can find hope and strength. This is one way we can try and build a better future in our own community.

There are still unanswered challenges in our world today, from preventing unnecessary violence to preserving our beloved planet from the dangers of climate change. On this Memorial Day, in this pivotal moment, it is time for our indispensable nation to show once more that we were born to serve humanity and lead the way to a more peaceful and more sustainable future.