

Annual Memorial Day Sunset Ceremony at Alton's National Cemetery Held, But Closed To Public

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ALTON - Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the 16th Annual Memorial Day Sunset Ceremony at Alton's National Cemetery was closed to the public. In fact, a special "Wreath Laying" event occurred at 8:00 a.m.

Dale Hollenberger, from Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, provided remarks on behalf of the National Cemetery Administration. Richard Baird, organizer of the Memorial Day Sunset Ceremony at the National Shrine, helped Hollenberger lay the wreath. Baird's grandson, Elijah Baird, led the Pledge of Allegiance for the few attendees allowed to attend the activity.

VFW Post 1308 “shot” a volley and played Taps at the ceremony. Other locations receiving the same respectful attention by Post 1308, included the VFW Post, near the Clark Bridge, Milton Hill, and of course participation in the historic Memorial Day Parade.

“George Washington, stated, 99% of failures come from people who make excuses,” Baird noted in his comments. “John Adams added, Our obligations to our country never cease but with our lives. Abraham Lincoln, in his Gettysburg Address, observed, It is altogether fitting and proper that we do this,” Baird continued.

“Franklin Roosevelt, sadly reflected, December 7, 1941, is a date which will live in infamy. George Bush, following the attacks on 9/11/2001, spoke for all Americans, We pledge we will never forget this sacrifice,” Baird concluded in his references.

Baird remarked, “Sacrifice, in simple terms, is to give up something. No excuses, no failures, on the battlefields of the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, indeed, around the world where American lives ended, giving up everything resulted.”

“We must persevere and perpetuate the memories and profound attachment these heroes have to liberty and freedom,” said Baird.

“Beneath these markers, the crosses, in unmarked graves, anywhere and everywhere an American sacrificed his or her life, lies the essence and formation of America’s soul. May we never forget and may we continue to recognize Memorial Day’s significance. God Bless America as it strives to move forward with a keen eye and a legitimate understanding of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.”