

# **Mayor Morrow, Retired Colonel, Keynote Speaker: Grafton Again Has Annual Memorial Day Ceremony**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**GRAFTON** - Whalen-Hill American Legion Post #648 hosted Grafton's Third Annual Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony at noon on Monday, May 29, 2023, at the Post's WWI Monument overlooking the cemetery and it was once again a captivating experience with Mike Morrow, a retired Army Colonel, as the keynote speaker.

Post Commander John Hughes introduced CW4 (Ret.) Terry Day who emceed the ceremony. Father Marty Smith, a former member of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and an Iraqi Freedom Veteran gave the invocation.

This was Mayor Morrow's Memorial Day Speech:

“On Memorial Day we remember those who lost their lives in the service of our nation. It is a day set aside to honor those military men and women who paid for our freedom with their lives.

The Honor Guard of this post, the Whalen-Hill American Legion Post #648 assembled early this morning, put on their uniforms, gathered their gear, and traveled to each of the local cemeteries in our region.

At each stop they stood at attention in formation and rendered military honors at the gravesites of the fallen with a three-volley rifle salute and the playing of Taps. The local families and friends of military members gathered to watch and remember as their loved ones were honored.

Here this afternoon, at the WWI memorial overlooking the Grafton Cemetery is the last stop of the day for the Honor Guard from Post #648. The ceremony they will perform this afternoon is the military's highest form of military honor.

The three-volley rifle salute the honor guard will render is a ceremonial act performed at [military funerals](#). The honor guard fires three volleys in memory of the fallen.

The original history of this tradition comes from the Roman era. At the end of the day of battle, when the battlefield was cleared, if the soldier removing a slain soldier knew the name of the soldier, he would call his name three times into the night, as a form of remembering their sacrifice.

The custom transformed during European dynastic wars. At certain times during the battle, a cease fire would be called so that the dead and wounded could be removed from the battlefield. After this was accomplished, three shots were fired into the air to signal that the battle could resume.

Today, the honor guard will carry on this tradition of remembering the fallen by firing their rifles in three volleys. After the honor guard renders the three-volley salute, a lone bugler standing off afar, will play “Taps”.

"Taps" is an American call, composed during the Civil War.

During the Pen-in-su-lar Campaign in 1862, a soldier of Battery A of the 2nd Artillery was buried at a time when the battery occupied an advanced position, close to the enemy concealed in the woods.

Because of the proximity of the enemy soldiers, it was unsafe to fire their rifles for the customary three volleys over the grave. The artillery commander decided to have a bugler play the newly written Taps, as it would be the most appropriate ceremony that could be safely substituted.

The custom thus originated, was taken up throughout the Army of the Potomac and is today played at all military funerals and gatherings where honors to the fallen are rendered.

This afternoon, the Whalen-Hill American Legion Post #648 honor guard continues these time-honored traditions of remembering the fallen. They represent the best of us, and we support them and their service here today, honoring our fallen.

God bless our veterans and their families, and God bless the United States of America.”

**Col (Ret.) Michael R. Morrow, Mayor**

*Photos courtesy of Dave Sanford, city photographer*