

Good morning

Distinguished guests, North Caldwell Mayor Joseph Alessi, the North Caldwell Borough Council, Essex Fells veterans, Neighbors and Friends, welcome to our Memorial Day Remembrance at Essex Fells Borough Hall.

Thank you all for attending. I would like to very publically thank my friend Roger Kerr, our Superintendent of our Department of Public Works for always arranging for our gathering here – it's been a long time Roger and you have always done a Herculean job and always been at my side and I thank you my friend. I would also like to thank my brothers of the Essex Fells Fire Department for their presence here this day and at every Memorial Day Remembrance. It means the world to me.

In a drizzling rain on November 17, 1946, the Borough of Essex Fells conducted its first ceremony remembering its war dead. An honor guard stood at attention while thirty veterans in uniform flanked the group. More than 100 people attended the ceremony, including Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Austin Hanau, Sr, parents of Nathaniel Austin Hanau, Jr., Mrs. John Kremer, Jr., widow of Commander Kremer, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas L. Stanley, parents of David Stanley. Then-Mayor Holton told the gathering:

“The citizens of our community have gathered here to dedicate the tablets which you see to the members of your respective families who gave their lives.... . We want you to feel by its very simplicity our ceremony is intensely personal and respectful.”

Mayor Holton continued:

“From our little community, [many] individuals left in the various services of our country. Why it was ordained that [these] individuals should not return we do not know – But what we do know [is that each soldier] answered the call because he believed it was their duty. In their own thoughts nothing less would have satisfied them.”

He concluded:

“We want the families of these men to whom we make this dedication to realize that the citizens of this Borough honor and respect them for the sacrifice each of them has made.”

Mayor Holton dedicated the tablets, “to the[ir] everlasting memor[ies], [so] that the present and future generations may realize, appreciate and respect what they have done for the world, for this country, for this borough.”

Sixteen years ago, I received a letter from a woman who, when she was just a little girl, lost her father during World War II. She told me about how she had recently come to Essex Fells with her family to view the tablet that contained his name, but could not locate it. She asked several people where she might find it, but no one knew where it was. She eventually located the flagpole, cleared away the greenery, and found his name. She told me how disappointed she was, writing, “Please tell [Essex Fells] that [the] events of over 50 years may not be relevant to [the town], but hold a significant importance for the families of those killed in action, especially those buried overseas as we have no other place to visit.”

I immediately wrote her back and promised her that we as a town would do a better job of remembering her father, our other war dead, and all of our veterans. So, sixteen years ago, we began our journey to learn more about our fallen and to properly pay them the respect and honor that is rightfully theirs. For you see, I had made a promise.

Our journey took us many thousands of miles – from the jungles of Vietnam, to the seas of the South Pacific, to the Mediterranean Sea and Gibraltar, to the deserts of North Africa, to the fields of France and the hills of Italy, to the Atlantic Ocean, and to China, India, and foothills of the Himalayas. Over the last 16 years, we have recounted acts of heroism, acts of unselfishness and bravery, and acts of courage that we will forever admire, remember, and respect. We have listened to their stories, as told by their families who had to endure the unendurable, by our government, in several instances, by those who served side by side with them, and in one instance, personally by a Medal of Honor recipient who held one of our boys in his arms as he lay dying in a jungle in a far away land. We have read the accounts of their heroic deeds, and read too many telegrams that began with the words, “It is with deep regret that I inform you of the death of your son...”. And we have mourned and we have cried. By revisiting and documenting the acts of valor that these soldiers and airmen performed in the service to their country, we have brought them home once again to Essex Fells. And it is here, that they will be forever remembered and revered.

David James Stanley – United States Maritime Service - David was born on April 29, 1922. When he was about three years old, the Stanley's moved to 77 Oak Lane, naming their house, "Stancroft." David went to the Kingsley School and the Essex Fells Elementary School. He then attended The Avon Old Farms School in Avon, Connecticut, where he did so well as a student-athlete that he was awarded the school's highest award, The Order of the Old Farms. It was during his senior year, in 1943, that David enlisted into the United States Merchant Marines. David was so anxious to answer his nation's call that, upon completing his senior studies – and before graduation – David took his commission and was assigned to the SS John Morgan, a newly built Liberty Ship. On the night of June 1, 1943, during her maiden voyage from Philadelphia to what was to be Banday Shahpour, Iran, while off the coast of Newport News, Virginia, the John Morgan, fully loaded with munitions for the war effort, collided with an outbound ship, the SS Montana which was laden with high octane gas. The explosion was so great that the Morgan was split in two, killing 67 sailors. Lem Andrus, a fellow Kingsley schoolmate of David's and neighbor, told me that he remembered when the telegram arrived at Stancroft and the heartbreak and anguish of Mr. Stanley whom he heard uncontrollably sobbing throughout the night. Because David was lost at sea, the Stanley family neither had a gravesite at which to mourn, nor a tombstone upon which to place flowers. This plaque is all that the family has at which to mourn this remarkable young man.

Nathan Austin Hanau – United States Army Air Corps – "Tod," as he was called, was born on March 3, 1921. Seven years later, the Hanau's moved to 9 Inwood Road. Tod had quite a talent as a writer and poet. In 1943, Tod left his studies at John Carroll University in Ohio to answer the nation's call and joined the United States Army Air Corps. He received his flight training in Lubbock, Texas and became a talented and well respected B-25 bomber pilot. Between October 29, 1943 and June 1, 1944, Lieutenant Hanau flew thirty-one (31) bombing missions over hostile forces in Italy, Southern France, Yugoslavia, India, and Burma. On June 1, 1944, Lieutenant Hanau was on a bombing run over enemy forces in Burma. Despite dense cloud coverage – and flying on instruments alone – Lieutenant Hanau and his crew successfully completed their mission. Minutes later, while making their way back to base, the squadron commander received a radio transmission from Lieutenant Hanau's plane: "We're in trouble! Our compass is out!" And then silence. The United States War Department listed the crew as Missing in Action until 1946, when a presumption of death order changed their status

to Killed In Action. None of the governments involved have any records of any trace of these airmen or their plane. To this day, Lieutenant Hanau's remains, along with his crew, lay somewhere in the foothills at the base of the Himalayas. This tablet bearing his name is the place that the Hanaus mourn the loss of this airman.

John Kremer – Lieutenant Commander, United States Naval Reserve – John Kremer was born in Philadelphia in 1898 and served in both world wars in the United States Navy. The Kremers lived at 93 Wootton Road and John's passion was music – he was an amateur composer and a member and first president of the New Jersey Chamber Music Society. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Lt. Commander Kremer attended the Naval Mine School in Virginia where he became an expert in mine warfare, then went on to utilize that expertise against the Japanese forces in the Fiji Islands in May, 1942 and the German and Italian forces off Gibraltar and Tunis in May, 1943. Becoming a vital member of “the Beach Jumpers,” Lt. Commander Kremer became involved in the planning of the invasion of Sicily. During his assignment as one of the Beach Jumpers, John Kremer was awarded the Silver Star for leading two PT boats in an attack on a German convoy, an action for which he was recommended to receive the Navy Cross, the Navy's equivalent to the Medal of Honor. Later, Lt. Commander Kremer was involved in the landings at Normandy and intelligence work for the Office of Strategic Services. He was then reassigned to the Pacific and was instrumental in leading strikes against the Japanese forces on the island of Mindoro, in the Philippines. On December 30, 1944, Lt. Commander died as a result of a kamakazi attack on his ship, the USS Orestes. John Steinbeck, the author of “The Grapes of Wrath” and “Of Mice and Men”, who had been working as a war correspondent at the time and who personally knew John, wrote to Mrs. Kremer upon learning of her husband's death, “There is nothing whatsoever to say except I wish, very profoundly, that I had been with him. I am so sorry.” Lieutenant Commander Kremer is buried at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, in the Philippines.

Lieutenant Robert H. Crum, Jr. – Second Lieutenant, United States Army – Robbie Crum was born on April 20, 1941 and grew up at 55 Rensselaer Road. His passion was to play ice hockey on The Pond. In the Essex Fells Elementary School yearbook, it states, “Boy, this guy has some future, ... we know he'll do us proud.” Robbie graduated from Wake Forest College, and joined the United States Army in 1965, and on June 22, 1965, married Olivia at the Chapel in Fort Benning, Georgia. Lt. Crum went on to serve

with the “Jumping Mustangs” – Company B, 1st Battalion (Airborne) 8th Cavalry, United States Army in Vietnam. On May 22, 1966, during Operation Crazy Horse, while leading his platoon on a dangerous mission, Lt. Crum’s platoon was ambushed in a horrific killing zone in an assault that lasted for hours. Despite his sustaining a massive shoulder wound, he continued to direct his men to cover the personnel in the area who had become casualties, and rallied his troops for a second assault. It was during this gallant effort, that Lt. Crum was fatally wounded. As he lay dying in the arms of Sergeant David Dolby, Lieutenant Crum’s only concern was for his men. Sergeant Dolby told us, “He was my officer. I was his machine gunner. As I held him, face to face, his last words were, ‘How are my men?’ I did not want him to die alone.” For his actions that day, Lieutenant Robert H. Crum was posthumously awarded the Silver Star with Gallantry Cross and Palm, the third highest honor that our nation can bestow for gallantry in combat. As the Essex Fells yearbook predicted, Robbie did us proud. Second Lieutenant Robert H. Crum is buried in Houston, Texas.

William Brent Bell - First Lieutenant, United States Army – Brent was born on September 7, 1943 and grew up at 16 Holly Lane. Brent attended the Essex Fells School and graduated from the Cheshire Academy in Connecticut in 1962. Brent’s passion was volunteer work with organizations like the Essex Fells Fire Department, the Essex Fells Police Department and Mountainside Hospital. He, like his father, attended the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia, and graduated in 1967, taking a commission in the United States Army, first as a paratrooper in the 82d Airborne, then the 101st Airborne, and then a member of the 75th Infantry Regiment – United States Rangers, 1st Cavalry Division. Brent was sent to Vietnam in the Fall of 1968, and became involved in the “LURPS” – Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols – a group of heroic and courageous soldiers who engaged in dangerous missions behind enemy lines using helicopter to either insert or extricate combat/intelligence personnel troops or go on intelligence missions of their own. On March 27, 1969, immediately after a textbook perfect platoon insertion behind enemy lines, Lieutenant Bell’s Huey helicopter was attacked and repeatedly raked by North Vietnamese .51 caliber machine-gun fire, instantly killing everyone on board. For his actions that day, Lieutenant Bell was posthumously awarded, by the United States, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the Air Medal for more than 25 missions over enemy territory, and by The Republic of Vietnam, the National Order of Vietnam and the Gallantry Cross with Palm. First

Lieutenant Bell's funeral was held at St. Peter's Church, and he is buried at Mount Hebron Cemetery, in Montclair, with full military honors.

Distant and far off lands - Dying in the service of their country because they answered their nation's call – Giving up their tomorrow's so we could have our todays – but what really hits home is just that – Essex Fells was their home.

These are our soldiers and airmen whose blood was spilled in the noble cause of freedom and democracy. These are boys from our hometown. And these men rightly deserve our undying respect and the installation in this place of honor and at this, our hallowed ground.

Today, we remember that these five men are our heroes of freedom, and all that they would ask of us is to remember them, and to remember that the cost of liberty and freedom is very dear.

Over the last sixteen years, I have often cited two passages from the King James Bible that are truly applicable to these American soldiers and airmen.

- John, Chapter 15, Verse 13 – Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
- Isaiah, Chapter 6, Verse 8 – Also, I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said; send me.

These five men represent a brotherhood of Honor of the highest order – for they have shown the greatest love for their comrades and their country; and they unflinchingly did so by saying, “Send me.”

I can think of no greater tribute to our five fallen soldiers and airmen than to once again call forward our Borough's veterans and to thank them and let them know how proud we are of them for their sacrifice, courage and devotion to our country. Please hold your applause and appreciation until the last soldier joins the ranks with his comrades as each comes forward and identifies himself.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, I am proud and honored to present to you, the men [and women] of Essex Fells who have honorable and proudly served their country. These are our veterans, these are our heroes, and these wonderful Americans will forever have our deepest and sincere thanks and appreciation.

Over the last 16 years, I have had the absolute privilege and honor to stand in the company of our town's veterans and remember and pay tribute to our fallen warriors. This occasion marks my last Memorial Day address. I am so humbled and grateful to the residents of Essex Fells for allowing me the opportunity to represent the town and reflect on the meaning of Memorial Day and to do so with such an outstanding group of patriot/citizens as the veterans who stand before you. There are no words of mine that can ever begin to adequately express my thanks and gratitude.

The 16-year journey to better appreciate and pay proper tribute to our fallen warriors was one that we took together – all of us: the residents of Essex Fells and particularly our beloved veterans. Over the 16 years, we looked into the beautiful eyes of a bride who lost her husband; we held the hands of a little girl who lost her daddy; we embraced an adoring sister who lost her brother; we gave sincere condolences to a brother who had lost his own brother and best friend; and we gave heartfelt respect, love and admiration to a family who lost a son and brother. We have shown that we, as a Borough, have not, and never will forget, the sacrifice that her husband, their father, their brother, their son, gave for our town, our nation, and our freedom.

As I reflect upon the 16 years, I cannot help but remember those who were with us on that journey but no longer here: David, Foster, Ted, Tim, Jeff, Lem, John, Joe, Nicholas, Bill, Norton, Cliff, Bob, Carley, and many others... For me, their absence is particularly felt this day.

You all have helped me do something that I could not have done alone. You helped me keep that promise that I made to that little girl who lost her daddy in the war.

Thank you all and our veterans for joining me on this bittersweet journey, as we, together, have learned of the acts of courage, unselfishness, and unparalleled bravery of these five Essex Fells men. If I am remembered for only having done one good thing as Mayor of this town, I pray that it be for properly remembering and paying due tribute to those who made the

supreme sacrifice. It has been my honor and privilege to be on this journey with you all.

Each year at this ceremony, I read a letter that is considered one of the most beautifully ever composed. It was written to a Mrs. Bixby in Boston:

Dear Madam:

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjunct General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic that they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

A. Lincoln

Carl Sandberg, Lincoln's best know biographer, wrote of this letter:

More darkly than the Gettysburg speech, the letter wove its awful implication that human freedom so often was paid for with agony... . In these words, Lincoln performed a rite, managing language as though he might be a ship captain at midnight by lantern light, dropping black roses in to the immemorial sea for mystic remembrance and consecration... . Here was a piece of the American Bible... .

Like Mrs. Bixby, Essex Fells lost five sons on the field of battle: Robert H. Crum, Jr., John Kremer, Jr., David James Stanley, William Brent Bell, and Nathaniel Austin Hanau, Jr. Each died gloriously and are laid upon the altar of freedom. Each displayed great courage, love of country, and steadfast dedication. They made the supreme sacrifice for us, for our Borough, and for our country. Nothing can compensate the families of these brave men for the tragic loss they suffered; but please know that they have the eternal thanks, gratitude, respect, and admiration of all of the citizens of Essex Fells.

Blessed God, let there be no more. Yet, although we always pray for peace, let us never settle for appeasement. We pray for an end to all violence and human suffering, but we also recognize that freedom is not free. We pray for our cause, for our cause is just, and we pray for the safety of the protectors of liberty and freedom. Dear Lord, please watch over our sons and daughters who serve in our armed forces for as these five heroes demonstrate, the pride of Essex Fells will always answer our Nation's call and do thy will.

Never let a day go by that, as we pass Borough Hall, we do not divert our eyes for a moment to look at this blessed plot, this hallowed ground, and remember the heroes whose names lie here. We will remember them today, tomorrow and forever.

This is a day of remembrance;
This is a day of reverence; and
This is a day that belongs to them.

God bless you all, God bless Essex Fells, and God bless these United States.