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## **Darien Observes Memorial Day 2017 as Planned (Mostly)**

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**Categories :** [Holidays](#)

**Tagged as :** [Memorial Day 2017](#)

**Date :** May 30, 2017

Darien's Memorial Day Parade, as announced, wasn't canceled because of a little rain (and as it turned out, it hardly sprinkled), but the traditional ceremony and speech honoring those who died for our country took place indoors at Darien Library for the second year in a row.

The parade consisted of town officials, uniformed firefighters and police, lines of fire trucks (including at least one with a horn that seemed like it could pierce an ear drum, especially when it was let loose under the Interstate 95 overpass), mothers waving with their Girl Scout daughters, fathers in headdresses with their children in the YMCA Indian Guides and Princesses program, veterans, children dance studio dancers, karate practitioners, and Connecticut National Guard members — who pitched in at one point to provide a little service to the town.

Phil Kraft, chairman of the town Monuments and Ceremonies Commission, gave the Memorial Day speech, talking about not just the sacrifice of warriors, but the history of inadequate care the country has given its veterans.

As far back as the American Revolution, he said, veterans went home after serving in the Continental Army to find their homes had been seized for nonpayment of taxes.

After World War I, veterans who demanded the benefits that had been promised to them marched on Washington, their protest forcefully broken up by Generals McArthur, Eisenhower and Patton, who would lead the next generation of soldiers in World War II.

Kraft asked people in the Darien Library Community Room to stand if they had been in uniform during various wars. There were less than a handful for nearly every war he mentioned, from World War II on.

One of them, World War II veteran Ned Goodnow, was this year's parade marshal. He didn't speak, but he attended the ceremony, and the later ceremony in front of wreaths displayed at Spring Grove Cemetery.

For the second year in a row, Darien Library Director Alan Gray, opened up the library so the ceremony could take place indoors. Kraft thanked him in front of the audience and mentioned that Gray had served as a marine in the Vietnam War. This year, Kraft said, they gave Gray a day's notice that they were requesting use of the library. Last year, Kraft said, it was pretty much at the last minute, with about two hours' notice. Gray came through each time.

Some other noteworthy assistance for the day's observance was even more last-minute. When one of the antique vehicles in the parade broke down for some reason, it remained by the side of the road in front of the Bank of America as the parade passed.

The marchers were using the other three lanes on the roadway, so the vehicle didn't impede anyone's progress, but it needed to be off the street for when regular traffic returned downtown. A woman in the car had said the parade authorities had been informed of the mishap.

To the rescue went some of the Connecticut National Guard soldiers who had just marched past in their tan camouflage uniforms. A group of them came running back, and about five of them pushed the car into the bank's driveway, getting applause from spectators as thanks for their (additional) service. (They'd already received some cheers from the bystanders during their march.)

Not long afterward, when firefighters were marching past Shake Shack, close to the end of the parade route, several of the Guardsmen were seated outdoors at the restaurant. For some reason — perhaps a particular flag

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or piece of music being played — the soldiers scrambled up, ran to the sidewalk curb and stood at attention, saluting. After a short time, they broke ranks and headed back to their table.