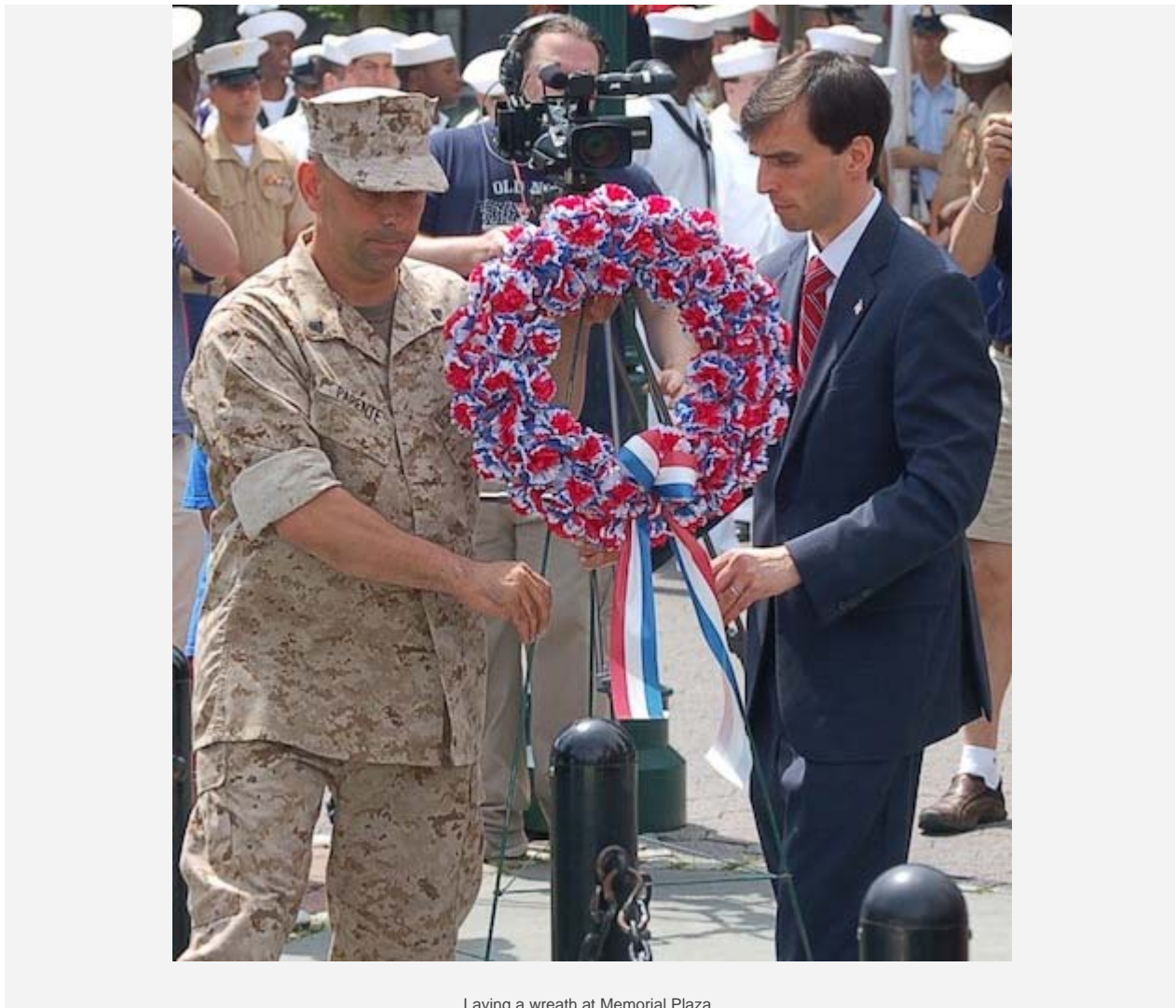


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## • Noam's News **New Rochelle Observes Memorial Day**

### Commemoration & Parade Draw Large Crowds

May 31, 2011



Laying a wreath at Memorial Plaza.

Yesterday, residents of New Rochelle turned out in great numbers to enjoy our annual Memorial Day parade and, more importantly, to honor the men and women who gave their lives in service to our nation. This year's events paid special tribute to veterans of the War in Vietnam.

I am very grateful to the United Veterans Memorial & Patriotic Association for once again taking the lead in organizing our ceremony, parade and celebration. I extend thanks also to the many businesses that lent support and to Monroe College, which served this year as the parade's chief financial sponsor. I was privileged to deliver the following Memorial Day remarks:

### **Remarks of Mayor Noam Bramson — Memorial Day 2011**

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Let me begin by offering thanks to the United Veterans Memorial and Patriotic Association for the hard work of organizing New Rochelle's commemoration and parade.

I'd also like to thank the many community groups and businesses that have supported today's events, especially Monroe College, which serves this year as our parade's chief sponsor.

We are honored by the presence of so many men and women in uniform — Police officers, Fire Fighters, members of the armed forces — and we express our appreciation for their great service.

And we can always count on the New Rochelle High School band to make an occasion special. Let's give them a big round of applause.

There's one other person I'd like to introduce to you. He's a student at Ward named Jake Gallin. And after I read a passage from a letter Jake sent me a few weeks ago, you'll understand why I invited him to join us. These are Jake's words:

"I love New Rochelle ... I love my school ... I like my church ... I like it because my church helps people in need and because Sister Connie and Sister Christina are awesome! I am trying to spread the word about "Blue and Gold Star" families ... A Blue Star means that their loved one is away at war. A Gold Star means that their loved one died at war. As a community, we should remember. We should make every day like it is Veterans Day or Memorial Day. We should think of them and everything that involves the soldiers all the time, because they are fighting for America."

That's just one small piece of Jake's letter, which details all the good work he's doing for this cause, in his school, and parish, and beyond.

It's sometimes said that the younger generation doesn't have the same sense of patriotism or duty as their elders. Well if anyone feels that way in New Rochelle, I invite them to come meet Jake and have their faith in the future restored.

The simple and powerful message of Jake's words — one of appreciation and respect — is especially appropriate on this Memorial Day as we pay special tribute to Vietnam Veterans.

The War in Vietnam divided Americans as no other. That conflict is still debated, and history may never reach a firm conclusion about its wisdom. There is no shame in that debate, because to question one's government in peace or war is every American's birthright, and dissent can be as patriotic as approval.

But there is shame of another sort. The shame — our shame — that in too many cases and for too many years, our fighting men and women were forced to carry the burden of a divided nation. The shame that so many returned to find their countrymen indifferent to their sacrifice or hostile to their purpose, and were denied the full honor and thanks they had earned.

This is more than an injustice. It is an act of cowardice that shifts the moral weight of war from all of our shoulders, where it should always rest in a free nation, and onto the shoulders only of those few who served in harm's way and already sacrificed the most.

And so today, together, we say to all who served honorably and to whom gratitude is long overdue: thank you. Thank you. Thank you for wearing the uniform of the greatest nation in the history of the world. We honor you. We salute you. And when Vietnam is mentioned, we say hold your head up high.

And let us do more.

Let us resolve, as Jake urges, to care for the veteran and the families of veterans, for the widow and the widower, for the orphan.

Let us commit, as all free men and women must, to accept full responsibility for the wars fought on our behalf, and never again to impose this duty only upon those who take up arms.

And let us remember always that those who now rest in the ground or at the bottom of the sea, many hardly more than children, whatever the policies for which they fought and died, these Americans are, have been, and will always be the hope of mankind.

May God bless our nation and all who serve her cause.

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