

TIMOTHY M. HERBST
MEMORIAL DAY ADDRESS, 2011
TRUMBULL TOWN HALL GREEN
MAY 30, 2011

Good afternoon:

It is an honor and indeed a privilege to deliver my second Memorial Day address as First Selectman of the Town of Trumbull.

As most of you know, Memorial Day was originally called Decoration Day . . . a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. Officially proclaimed on May 5, 1868, Memorial Day was first observed on May 30, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

Memorial Day is a time to reflect on the past, and renew our commitment to the future of this great country. Perhaps it is coincidence or even fate that our Town's motto is, "pride in our past and faith in our future." Our Town's motto is emblematic of the very purpose of Memorial Day. It is a time when we honor the sacrifice of the men and women who wore the uniform to defend our nation, while looking forward with hope towards the future. We all hope that one day the world will be at peace, free of tyranny and evil.

Over the years and through countless military conflicts, many of our servicemen and women returned home and others did not. Patrick Gasparrini, a fourth grader at Frenchtown Elementary School appropriately chose the theme of this year's Memorial Day Parade in three simple words - - "Honor the Sacrifice." Today, as we honor those that served the nation during war, we also honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their life in defense of this great nation.

Today, we are graced to have Walter Mallin serve as Grand Marshal of our Memorial Day Parade. Walter is a survivor of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Walter was an eye witness to history, surviving one of the worst attacks against the United States, second only to 9-11.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a surprise military strike conducted by the Japanese Navy against the United States on the morning of December 7, 1941. Pearl Harbor was attacked by 353 Japanese fighters, bombers and torpedo planes in two waves. Four U.S. Navy battleships were sunk and four others sustained serious damage. 188 U.S. aircraft were destroyed; 2,402 men were killed and 1,282 wounded.

Despite this attack and the setback it posed to our nation, the United States of America and its mighty military rose to the challenge, defending freedom and winning the second World War.

My grandfather, a World War II veteran who is here today, has often reminded me that our nation is at its greatest when responding to challenge and adversity.

Imagine the world we would have lived in today, had we not prevailed in World War II.

Walter Mallin and my grandfather were part of what Tom Brokaw called, "the Greatest Generation."

Who are these men and women? They are a group of people that were "the greatest generation any society has ever produced." These men and women, as Tom Brokaw noted, did not fight for fame or recognition. They stood up for their nation because it was simply the right thing to do. When these brave men and women came back from war, they came back and rebuilt our nation. In the process, they stood for the fundamental principle that freedom is the highest aspiration of all civilized people and that the United States of America is the greatest nation on the face of the earth.

And as Walter Malin and so many other brave men and women reclaimed America's greatness after Pearl Harbor to win World War II, a new generation has reclaimed America's greatness in the fight against terror. Almost ten years ago, this nation suffered the worst terrorist attack on our nation's soil.

Following in the footsteps of generations before us who defeated evil and protected freedom more than half a century

ago, last month, the men and women who serve this nation in uniform made our nation proud and ended the reign of the world's most notorious terrorist leader. Whether it be winning World War II, or winning the fight against Al Qaeda, one thing is certain. The words spoken by Abraham Lincoln nearly 148 years ago on a field in Gettysburg remain true today:

"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

May God Bless the United States of America and all that serve to defend our nation.

Thank you.