

Virginia Beach 2268 Flag Day 2013



NAS Oceana Commanding Officer Capt. Bob Geis and Virginia Beach Mayor William Sessoms Jr. joined members of Virginia Beach Elks Lodge for the annual Flag Day observance June 9. For the past five years, the Virginia Beach Elks Lodge 2268 hosted the event at the POW/MIA Park on Oceana Boulevard.

Photo by AD3 Phurtura Brazier

Flag Day, observed annually on June 14, holds special significance for NAS Oceana Commanding Officer Capt. Bob Geis. While serving as the commanding officer of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 211, Geis carried with him an American flag in his helmet bag during every combat mission he flew over Iraq and Afghanistan, while deployed aboard USS Enterprise (CVN 65) for seven months. At the end of his tour with the "Checkmates," he presented that folded and encased flag to his family.

"I think it's impossible to be patriotic and not love our flag," said Geis, who brought that same flag with him to the annual Flag Day Ceremony June 9 at the POW/MIA Park on Oceana Boulevard.



Geis was joined by Virginia Beach Mayor William Sessoms Jr. and military veterans for the annual Flag Day ceremony, that also included nearly 30 members of local Elks lodges from Virginia Beach, Portsmouth-Chesapeake, and Suffolk, the Princess Anne High School Junior ROTC and Boy Scout Troop 7. Mayor William Sessoms Jr. also honored the veterans attending, as well as those who have paid the ultimate price in defense of freedom. "Our respect for the flag is a measure of our respect for the men and women who have devoted their lives to upholding the freedoms it represents. When we honor the flag, we give honor to the bravery and loyalty to veterans, who over the years have endured the rigors of battle in places like Valley Forge, Yorktown, Midway Island, Pearl Harbor, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, to win and preserve the freedom we all enjoy, "It is our responsibility to ensure our flag continues to be a symbol of a land that is free. Today as we celebrate let each of us rededicate ourselves to the dreams of our forefathers so that our children and grandchildren can look at our flag as the standard for 'one nation, under God, invisible with liberty and justice for all,'" concluded the mayor.



Veterans from the Navy, Air Force and Army, including retired SEAL's Robert "Doc" Clark and Rudy Boesch, presented the American flags from various times in history, including the Pine Tree Flag, Grand Union Flag, 15 and 20 star flags, the POW/MIA Flag and today's 50 star flag, as the history of each one was explained. There was also a reading of the poem "Ragged Old Flag."



The Elks honored Geis and Sessoms with the 2012 -2013 Special Citizen for the Year, for their support of the Elks' community endeavors. The Elks also presented a check to the Princess Anne High School Junior ROTC color guard.

"We are the holders of our liberty, whether you're holding the flag or have it in your heart. Keep that, honor it and protect it because we have to continue to be on guard ... Be ready, be prepared, be ready to honor the flag," said Geis.

Full story can be read at www.oceanajetobserver.com

