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Virginia Beach 2268 Flag Day Publicized in Local Navy Paper



Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana Commanding Officer Capt. Kit Chope speaks at a Flag Day ceremony hosted by Virginia Beach Elks Lodge #2268 at the Flame of Hope POW/MIA Memorial on NAS Oceana.

Flag Day was celebrated June 8 at Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana with a commemoration ceremony, hosted by the local Elks Lodge at the Flame of Hope Memorial.

Flag Day, normally observed June 14, honors the adoption of the stars and stripes as the official flag of the United States. Members of the Elks Lodge began with opening remarks and introduced the Princess Anne Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) who presented the colors, followed by guests reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

“The purpose of this service is to honor our country’s flag, to celebrate the anniversary of its birth and to recall the achievements attained beneath its folds,” said Joel Marquez, exalted ruler of Elks Lodge 2268 in Virginia Beach.

During the ceremony, each of the nine flags that have represented the United States were presented by a veteran, as a description of its history was read by Bonnie Shoemaker, an Elks Lodge member.

“The evolution of the American flag marks the progression of the government of the American people,” Shoemaker said. “In a response to a general demand of a banner to be more representative of our country, Congress, June 14, 1777, provided that the flag of the United States be 13 stripes of alternating red and white and that the union be 13 stars, white on blue field, representing a new constellation,” Shoemaker explained, as the first American flag representing the stars and stripes, also known as the Betsy Ross flag, was presented. Guests stood and saluted as the current U.S. flag with 50 stars was presented. Marquez then explained that the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks is the first and only fraternal body to require formal observance of Flag Day, which began in 1908, when their grand lodge made it mandatory for each of the subordinate lodges.

Virginia Beach Mayor Will Sessoms was a guest speaker at the event for his fourth consecutive year. After thanking the Virginia Beach Elks for all they’ve done to “quicken the spirit of American patriotism,” Sessoms spoke of our flag’s importance.

“Over the years our American flag has changed in appearance but the principles for which it stands remain the



Joel Marquez, Exalted Ruler of Virginia Beach Elks Lodge #2268 presents Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana Commanding Officer Capt. Kit Chope with an honorary Elks Lodge membership during a Flag Day ceremony at the Flame of Hope POW/MIA Memorial on NAS Oceana.



The Betsy Ross flag is presented by AWFC Angie Martel during a Flag Day ceremony at the Flame of Hope POW/MIA Memorial.

same. Dedication to individual liberty, respect for god given rights of all men and commitment to the belief that all men are created equal,” Sessoms said.

“Our respect for the flag is a measure of the respect for the men and women who devoted their lives to upholding the freedoms it represents. When we honor our flag, we give honor to the bravery and loyalty of veterans over the years who endured the rigors of battle ... to win and preserve the freedom we all enjoy, that is why we’re here today,” he added.

In closing, Sessoms said, “It is our responsibility to ensure that our flag continues to be a symbol of a land that is free. Today as we celebrate, let’s each rededicate ourselves to the dreams of our forefathers so that our children and our grandchildren can look to the flag as the standard for one nation under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all.”

“Although he himself is new to this ceremony, it would not be the same without having the commanding officer of the Master Jet Base continuing the tradition of speaking on the Elk’s Flag Day ceremony,” Marquez said, as he introduced the final guest speaker, NAS Oceana Commanding Officer Capt. Kit Chope.

Chope spoke of the importance of the American flag.

“Whenever our flag is raised, as we do every single day at this air station and at military installations, schools and businesses across the nation, Americans are reminded of our unity in this great cause of liberty and justice for all,” Chope said.

“Our nation’s flag is hung proudly in schools and homes, honored in parades and stadiums and flown in the field of battle and ultimately folded at the graves of our heroes. It is the absolute symbol of freedom, hope and personal sacrifice,” Chope added. Marquez then presented Chope with a certificate, making him an honorary member of the Elks Lodge.

“In conclusion of this observance of Flag Day, let us rededicate ourselves to the United States of America and may the principles of charity, justice, brotherly love and fidelity ever increase in each one of us,” Marquez said. He then thanked everyone who organized this year’s ceremony and presented the Princess Anne NJROTC with a donation.



NJROTC members from Princess Anne High School parade the colors at a Flag Day ceremony hosted by Virginia Beach Elks Lodge #2268 at the Flame of Hope POW/MIA Memorial

Source: http://www.norfolknavyflagship.com/oceana/news/top_stories/elks-lodge-hosts-flag-day-ceremony-at-oceana/article_8a438526-f7b8-11e3-abef-001a4bcf887a.html. Photos by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Alysia R. Hernandez