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Memorial Day tribute in Deer Isle not somber despite soggy weather

May 28, 2026

BY JACK BEAUDOIN



U.S. Army Veteran Richard Eaton welcomes a crowd of more than 60 attendees to the 2026 Memorial Day Observance in Deer Isle Village. Behind him, Lee Fay, another U.S. Army veteran, and resident Marnie Crowell, collect their thoughts before participating in the ceremony. BY JACK BEAUDOIN

DEER ISLE—More than 60 residents and visitors paid their respects to islanders who perished in the line of duty at the annual Memorial Day Observance at the Deer Isle Mill Dam Veterans Memorial on May 25.

The large crowd, huddling beneath umbrellas and garbed out in rain slickers, made an impressive semicircle at the veterans memorial monument. "I'd like to thank you all for attending this ceremony today, and keeping alive the memory of all those who sacrifice their lives," said American Legion Rodney Stinson Post 102 Commander Richard Eaton, an Army veteran. "I know it was a little troublesome to get out on a rainy day like this. But we appreciate everybody coming out."

The observance began at 10 a.m. with a prayer-in-the-form-of-a-poem, written and read by Stuart Kestenbaum. He introduced the poem, "Holding the Light," by observing the vast toll of war on communities, adding that "as humans we have to repair whatever we can that has been broken."

The poem urged listeners to gather up "whatever has tumbled in the waves or fallen in flames out of the sky, for it's not only our hearts that are broken, but the heart of the world as well."

Deer Isle poet and naturalist Marnie Crowell then read "In Flanders Field," a poem by John McCrae that has become a traditional staple of remembrance ceremonies. "In Flanders fields the poppies blow / Between the crosses, row on row, / That mark our place; and in the sky / The larks, still bravely singing, fly / Scarce heard amid the guns below."

Lee Fay, a Stonington resident who retired from the Army in 1996, then began to read the names of the 41 islanders who died defending their country, starting with the Civil War and proceeding through the first World War. Eaton then read the names of those who perished in World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Veteran Arthur Billings concluded the short ceremony playing "Taps" while those assembled saluted the flag.

Banners

This was the first Memorial Day Observation taking place beneath newly installed banners that recognize the men and women of the island who have served in the nation's armed services. On the telephone poll next to the Stars and Stripes, two of the first ten banners raised recognized Vietnam war veterans Captain David Bayley, who served in the U.S. Air Force from 1970-1974,

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and Sargent Ernest Sittig, Jr., who served in the U.S. Army in 1969-1970. "This is a project that we've taken on, for anybody who wants to sponsor a veteran, either living or dead," Eaton said. "We got our first 10 so we've put them up in Deer Isle and Stonington.

They will stay up until Veterans Day, and then we'll come and take them down, and then put them back up again next year on Memorial Day weekend."

Eaton, who first joined the Legion back in 1972, said he was grateful to see so many neighbors and friends coming out despite the weather, especially now that the ceremony itself is a lot shorter and smaller than it once was. "The whole thing isn't as big as it used to be back in the old days, but we've lost a lot of veterans over the years," he said. "You know, we'd have a big parade school band and all that stuff, you know?"

The Island's fallen servicemen Civil War: Charles Gray, Albion P. Stinson, Alfred Robbins, John Harris, Henry Robbins, Farnum Haskell, Solomon Gray, Alexander Henderson, John Henderson, Benjamin Spaulding, George Spaulding, Solomon Stinson, Hezekiah Robbins, Caleb Harris, William Toothaker, Nathaniel Robbins, Otis Greenlaw, Alva Emerson, Harlon Powers and Abiather Merithew, John S. Gray and Isaiah V. Eaton.

World War I: Rodney P. Stinson, Calvin Sturdee, Roy Joyce and Newell Robbins.

World War II: George Torrey Sr., Walter Hutchinson, Allen Smith, John Willard, Cecil Hardy Jr., Leroy Eaton, Norman Joyce, Hosea Parker, Elwood Knight, Delwyn Greenlaw and Wilbur Weed.

Korean War: Richard Nash.

Vietnam War: Donald Bartlett, Leslie Hicks and Gilbert Bell.

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