

**Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw**  
**January 4, 2013**

As we've reached the start of a new year, I wanted to reflect for a few moments on an event from the end of last. On December 21<sup>st</sup>, the 11<sup>th</sup> annual "Support the Troops Christmas Dinner & Reception" was held at the Holy Family Parish Hall. Organized by VFW Post 2016 Amesbury/Newburyport, the dinner has become as much a part of the Holiday Season as the Santa Parade and Tree Lighting in Market Square. It's a way for community members to say "thank you" to all those who have served and are serving our great Nation. For we certainly could not live with the freedoms we enjoy without their dedication and many sacrifices.

The evening got off to a festive start with students from the Cashman Elementary School Chorus, under the direction of Mrs. Johanna Hoyt Kimball, performing a selection of holiday tunes. An Honor Guard of Amesbury Police Officers and Firefighters, under the command of Sgt. Rick Poulin, presented and posted colors. Sgt. Russ Saboo, United States Army and recently back from serving in Afghanistan, led the Pledge of Allegiance and was followed a performance of our National Anthem, by retired Sgt. Dan Cleary. Guests were then treated to a tribute to the Armed Forces as The Italian American Band of Lawrence performed a selection of military theme songs. Each Veteran and active personnel member was asked to stand when their branch was represented.

Pastor Jamie Arrison of Rock Church in Amesbury gave the invocation and VFW Post 2016 Commander Bob Smith greeted the crowd. Congressman John Tierney, who had just returned from Washington DC, said hello along with his wife Patrice and spoke about a new, exciting initiative to capture the stories of military personnel, active and retired. Amesbury Mayor and USAF Lt. Colonel, Thatcher Kezer III, spoke about the fantastic services available for veterans in this area, thanking Veteran's Agent Kristen Lucier for her dedication. Guests then enjoyed a fine meal, prepared by a crew of volunteers, led by Denis and Helen Nadeau and scouts from Troop 4 in Amesbury.

Following dinner and dessert, Henry Cross, retired from the US Navy, spoke about the tragedy of the USS Forrestal, which was heavily damaged in a series of explosions on July 26, 1967. The USS Forrestal was engaged in combat during the Vietnam War at the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of North Vietnam. The tragedy claimed the lives of 134, including Amesbury resident William B. Justin; the only Amesbury resident killed in action during the Vietnam War. Henry shared memories from the day and provided an update on the status of the Forrestal today. Special recognition was given to the family of William Justin, who were in attendance.

Past Post 2016 Commander and retired VFW Senior Director, Mike Gormalley, invited active service personnel in the crowd to the front of the Hall and recognized their dedication and service. He also mentioned the crucial role that the families of service men and women play. We live in a free society because of the tireless job these men and women do daily.

I would like to say a sincere thank you to the VFW for all they do as well as for recognizing me with a certificate of appreciation at the dinner for my community and law enforcement service. I am humbly grateful for such recognition from such a dedicated and

important group as VFW Post 2016. Although I am fortunate to be involved with a number of activities in our community, I certainly do not work alone. I'm proud to be associated with some tremendous people on efforts like the Chamber of Commerce, Youth Funding, Grad Night, Relay For Life and of course the Police Department. It's a great assignment to work together to make our city a safer and better place for everyone.

A number of community partners help Post 2016 with the dinner to welcome home our troops. Special thanks to following; Newburyport 5 Cents Savings Bank, Provident Bank, Institution For Savings, Amesbury Police Officers' Association, Eugene Twombly DAV Post 40 Newburyport, American Legion Post 187 Amesbury, Holy Family Parish, Challenge Engineering, Amesbury Polish Club and Gould Insurance. This year's dinner was also dedicated to the recently deceased members of Post 2016 and the Ladies Auxiliary; Donald Gosselin, James Haley, Frederick Hayes, Richard Maloney and Rose Horowicz.

Thanks again to VFW Post 2016 and to the many Veterans and active service personnel working to make our Nation a safer and better place, we salute you.