

The Virgin Islands Consortium

We Remember: Honoring The Lives Of The Fallen On Memorial Day

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Shenneth Canegata **May 28, 2019**



ST. CROIX – The threat of rain did not deter or delay the start of this year's Memorial Day parade and ceremony. The procession -- lead by the Governor Albert Bryan, Senator Novelle Francis, Patrick Farrell, director, V.I. Office of Veteran's Affairs, Col. Kodjo Knox Limbacker, Adjutant General designee and other dignitaries -- made its way to the Frederiksted cemetery for a special graveside tribute honoring Comrade Otto Tranberg. A prayer was said, and a hymn sung as a red, white and blue wreath was placed on his gravesite.

The procession continued to the Verne I. Richards Veterans Park on the waterfront, where a seaside ceremony took place, honoring the memory of those who gave their

lives in service. Mr. Bryan, Mr. Francis, and Mr. Farrell, and Col. Limbacker tossed flowers in the ocean in honor of the fallen soldiers.

Memorial Day is observed on the last Monday of May and is set aside to honor men and women who died while serving in the U.S. Military. Mr. Limbacker honored the day's observance by thanking the families of those who made the ultimate sacrifice and shared a quote by George S. Patton: "It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather, we should thank God that such men lived."



Local dignitaries salute the fallen during a ceremony at the Verne I. Richards Veterans Park in Frederiksted (Shenneth Canegata, VIC)

This year's keynote speaker was Lieutenant Colonel Beresford Edwards. Col. Edwards is a retired decorated officer of the V.I. Army National Guard. He is chair emeritus of the V.I. Committee for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, president of the V.I. National Guard Association, and president of the board of trustees of the Apostolic Faith Mission of St. Croix.

First, Col. Edwards offered condolences to the families of Sergeant First Class (SFC) Leonard Fret and Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) Valentine Torres on behalf of the V.I. National Guard Association. He spoke of Paul Harvey, a conservative talk radio host who hosted a weekly program titled "The Rest of the Story," where he presented stories as little known facts of well-known individuals.



Credit: Media One Productions

The introduction segued into the backstory of Virgin Island hero, Jorge Scatliffe, who paid the ultimate sacrifice when he lost his life on April 3, 2011 in Iraq. Col. Edwards was very emotional as he honored Sarah Scatliffe, Jorge's mother, and told of the impact his death has had on her and her family. He told how she was widowed when her three sons were still very young, and she had to raise them to become respectable young men. All three eventually decided to serve in the military.

Col. Edwards explained that when the casualty officer and military chaplain came and informed her that Jorge had been killed in action in Iraq, Ms. Scatliffe expressed shock and disbelief. Col. Edwards relayed that she relied on her faith to get her through. "For Sarah Scatliffe, honoring her son is not a tradition, it is a way of life," he said. No one is ever prepared for news that their loved one died while serving their country and nothing can erase the pain of that loss. "Since laying Jorge to rest, Sarah proudly wears a button with his picture above her heart to memorialize him," Col. Edwards continued. "She honors him every day, and as Paul Harvey would say, now we know the rest of the story."



Governor Albert Bryan (Shenneth Canegata, VIC)

When Mr. Farrell took the podium, his humorous wit lightened the mood, but he also brought a degree of solemnity when he thanked family members who had lost a service member, for their sacrifice. He paid homage to Gold Star family members Ms. Scatliffe and Shenneth Canegata, for their loved ones' sacrifice – Jorge Scatliffe and Lieutenant Colonel David C. Canegata III. According to [Gold Star Families website](#), their purpose is to honor the legacy of fallen heroes and support their families. The Gold Star first appeared during World War I after it was placed over a service flag's blue star when a service member was killed in combat. It signified the family's pride in the loved one's sacrifice rather than the mourning of their personal loss.

Mr. Farrell continued by imparting seven rules for Memorial Day that he hoped would be shared with others: Don't wish me a Happy Memorial Day - there is absolutely nothing happy about brave men and women dying. It's not a holiday or a sale, it's a day of remembrance. If you want to know the true meaning visit your local Cemetery or a VA Hospital, not Disney land or a shopping mall. Don't tell me how great anyone in political power is; tell me about all of our other veterans that have passed on. Don't tell me I don't know what I am talking about, I have carried the burden all too many times for my warriors who now stand post for their God. Say a prayer, and then raise a glass and thank God for the men and women who are no longer here. Lastly, please do not thank a living Veteran for his or her service on Memorial Day. We will all be recognized on Veterans Day in November.



Jorge Scatliffe made the ultimate sacrifice on April 3, 2011. His mother, Sarah Scatliffe, is seen proudly wears a hat honoring her son's sacrifice (Shenneth Canegata, VIC)

Governor Bryan, who was a bit under the weather, thanked God for being an omnipotent and awesome power. He shared that he wears the eagle on his lapel every day, but he wears the eagle in his heart as well because it represents what we as a people stand for, and when he hears the Virgin Islands March, "It puts a grin on my face because it reminds me of our resilience as a people," he said. He expressed that he is a proud American because of what this country represents in the world. "I am truly, truly honored to be here to pay homage today to all those men and women that passed before, fighting to make this country free," he added. "Today, Ms. Scatliffe, we remember, Ms. Canegata, we remember. We remember the ultimate sacrifice of your son and husband."



Credit: Shenneth Canegata, VIC

Shana Brathwaite, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett's representative, brought greetings from the delegate and members of the 116th Congress. "We honor their service, pay tribute to their lives, and remember the families of those who have lost loved ones," she said.

Dignitaries placed wreaths on each memorial monument in the park and released white doves, representing each branch of the military, in honor of the fallen, as attendees and onlookers applauded loudly. It was a beautiful touch to the end of a beautiful ceremony.

Feature Image courtesy Media One Productions

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