

Wreaths Across America 2020 style: Honoring Revolutionary War vets in Riga

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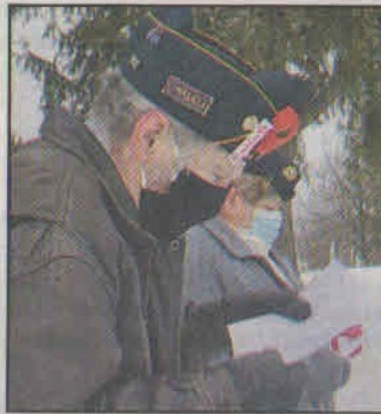
Like everything else, the pandemic affected National Wreaths Across America (WAA) Day. At Arlington National Cemetery, the place where WAA began in 1992, the event was changed and scaled back. The same was true in Riga/Churchville. Laying over 500 wreaths and the public ceremony were put on pause until December of 2021.

That said, as with Memorial Day, the Harvey C. Noone Legion Family Post 954 in Churchville was not satisfied letting the day pass by without notice. After assessing the situation, we developed plans to allow the community to join with us to accomplish the WAA mission of "Remembering those who have fallen, Honoring those who serve and Teaching our Children the value of freedom," but in a different manner.

A list of ideas and opportunities for individual participation, at the time and place of your choice, was published. We also solicited pictures to post on our website showing different ways individual community members chose to



Shaun Smith, SAR, telling the story of patriot Joshua Clark.



Gilbert Budd, Legion Commander, Mary Martin, Auxiliary, and Betty Vinch, DAR, reading veteran's names.



fulfill the WAA mission, thus transforming our scheduled public event into a participatory virtual event.

Members of the Legion Family were not the only ones with heavy hearts that the large scale public portions of the event were on pause. Shaun Smith, a resident of Williamsville and a member of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), felt likewise. He had learned that there were Revolutionary War patriots buried in Riga Cemetery, and he contacted us to ask if there was any way that he, along with the local Society of the Children of American Revolution (CAR) covering Monroe and surrounding counties and the Daughters of the American Revolution, could work together, within the pandemic restrictions, to honor patriots buried in Riga Cemetery who served in the Revolutionary War. Since 1923, the Harvey C. Noone Legion Post # 954 has proudly served our community and our veterans. We



Shaun Smith rang a bell as each name was read.

were honored to be asked to partner with three other national organizations also dedicated to promoting patriotism and teaching children about our history and the patriots who have fought to preserve our freedoms. Our answer was a resounding, "Yes."

On Saturday, December 19, representatives of the Harvey C. Noone Legion Family with representatives of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Children of the American Revolution, and the Daughters of the American Revolution met in Riga Cemetery at the grave of Revolutionary War patriot Joshua Clark. As part of the ceremony, Shaun Smith told the story of Joshua Clark - from his birth in Rochester, Massachusetts, to his service during the Revolutionary War, to his move to Riga as one of its early settlers. Next, the names of veterans of all wars and conflicts buried in the cemetery were read by Hilton resident and DAR member Betty Vinch, and Legion Family Members Pamela Moore, Gilbert Budd, and Mary Martin. A bell was rung after each name was read. CAR member Macey Smith concluded the ceremony by playing taps.



Macey Smith, CAR, playing taps to conclude the ceremony.

Although small, it was a moving and inspiring ceremony. Thanks to Cayley Smith, daughter of Shaun Smith, the entire ceremony was recorded and is available on YouTube. Go to www.harveycnoonepost954.org for a link to view the video and to hear the full story of Joshua Clark. Work is already underway to partner with the Children, Sons, and Daughters of the American Revolution again next year to expand the WAA ceremony by honoring Riga's first pioneers and patriots, as well as all others who have selflessly served our nation in times of war and peace. We invite you to participate by sponsoring a wreath, volunteering, or, hopefully, attending a public ceremony.