

Honoring 'Overdue' Names

Memorial Day events began a day early when a crowd of over 200 gathered Sunday outside Ashawagh Hall in Springs to rededicate the war memorial there, with a new plaque commemorating Springs residents who served in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

The ceremony began when the group, including a color guard from the Coast Guard at Montauk, marched to the memorial from the bridge on Old Stone Highway. Karl Schaefer, the vice commander and chaplain of the East Hampton Post of the American Legion, introduced the speakers, who included Clifford Hildreth, commander of the East Hampton Veterans of Foreign Wars, Joseph Ricker, the head of a newly formed Korean War Veterans Association, and State Assemblyman John Behan, himself a veteran of Vietnam. The Rev. Fredrick Schulz of the East Hampton Presbyterian Church gave the invocation, and the Springs School band played.

Both Mr. Ricker and Assemblyman Behan called the new plaque an honor

long overdue. Mr. Ricker, who served in the Seabees and the Air Force in Korea, noted sadly that nearly 40 years later there is still no national

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John L. Behan
State Assemblyman

memorial to that conflict, which took 55,000 American lives.

Forgetfulness Decried

He called the American public's forgetfulness "baffling." He and Erwin Beckwith of Springs unveiled the half of the plaque dedicated to the Korean War veterans.

Assemblyman Behan, who was seriously wounded while a Marine in Vietnam, emphasized the need to "make sure that the war, as ugly as it

was, is separated from the warrior." He told the story of a prisoner of war who had sewn a US flag from his own blood-stained pajamas, to remind the audience that the men and women who served in Vietnam "are some of the best people that this community has ever raised, and some of the bravest that America has ever seen."

Leslie Bennett of Springs then unveiled the remaining half of the new plaque, and Donald Walsh, the chaplain of the Springs Fire Department, gave a prayer of dedication.

Korean and Vietnam War veterans, as well as veterans of World War II were invited forward to place carnations at the base of the monument, a cannon whose pedestal also bears the names of local servicemen from the Civil War and World War I.

The flowers were handed to the veterans by three Springs Girl Scouts, Heather Caputo, Hilda Rubio, and Jennifer Brown. The ceremony closed with a rifle salute by a joint American Legion-VFW honor guard, and the National Anthem played by the band.



ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN BEHAN exhorts his audience at Springs Sunday to remember the courage of Americans who served in Vietnam. The war memorial at Ashawagh Hall now includes a plaque in memory of Korean War veterans and those who served in Vietnam.

Roy Tsao