

—Slug:.....COMM-0867.bratt.Mem\_Day\_service  
—Contributor.....  
—Contributor email.....  
—For section..... News  
—Format..... News - byline and dateline  
—Dateline..... Brattleboro  
—Article Number:..... 43674



**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 On Memorial Day, a plea to not forget the fallen

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 'They each have their stories to tell,' former Vermont  
3 Legion commander Catherine Tester says at a ceremony in  
4 Brattleboro

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 It's estimated that 558 million Americans have lived in  
7 this country since its founding 250 years ago.

8 According to Catherine Tester, past Department of  
9 Vermont Commander of the American Legion, more than 1.1  
10 million Americans have died defending the nation in wars and  
11 combat actions since 1776.

12 "They each have their stories to tell," said Tester, an  
13 Orwell resident who served in the Marine Corps and Marine  
14 Corps Reserve from 1980 to 1995. "The crosses at Normandy, the  
15 graves at Arlington, the markers at Punchbowl [national cemetery  
16 in Hawaii], the fallen heroes who rest in places unknown, and  
17 the countless local cemeteries around this country like ones we  
18 visited this morning in Brattleboro. We are here for them."

19 Tester was the featured speaker at Brattleboro's annual  
20 Memorial Day service at American Legion Post 5 on May 25. The  
21 service moved from its traditional spot on the common, next to  
22 the town's war memorials, due to rain.

23 She spoke of the need to remember the fallen, and  
24 families and friends they left behind.

25 "We do not forget," Tester said.

26 "How can we not be lifted by the breathtaking sacrifices  
27 made, and continue to be made, on our behalf," she continued.  
28 "We're here for 2,341 service members who lost their lives in the  
29 attack on Pearl Harbor, 85 years ago. We're here for the 3,100  
30 combat deaths and the thousands more who succumbed to  
31 elements at Korea's 'Frozen Chosin' reservoir in 1950. We're here  
32 for the men and women who lost their lives, and continue to lose  
33 their lives, in operations in the Middle East.

34 "From Bunker Hill to Baghdad, Americans from  
35 communities from throughout the United States have answered  
36 their nation's call and made the ultimate sacrifice," Tester said this  
37 ethos of service and sacrifice is shared by millions of Americans  
38 who served in all the nation's wars.

39 "We take this day to reflect on ordinary Americans  
40 exhibiting extraordinary valor," she said. "To honor the legacy of  
41 the fallen, we should all commit to the freedoms offered by the  
42 greatest nation on Earth, a land where patriotism eclipses politics,  
43 where the American flag is displayed proudly and frequently, and  
44 where military veterans are society's true celebrities.

45 "Long after the battlefield guns are silenced and the  
46 bombs stop exploding, the children of our fallen warriors will be

47 still be missing a parent," Tester continued. "Spouses will without  
48 their life partners. Parents will continue to grieve for their heroic  
49 sons and daughters that died way too early."

50         Tester said that our society "needs to be present for them,  
51 not just members of the American Legion family, but as American  
52 citizens."

53         "No one can replace those fallen heroes, especially in  
54 the eyes of the families, but we can offer shoulders to cry on,  
55 assistance with educational expenses, and assurances that their  
56 loved one's sacrifice was not be forgot," she said.

57         Memorial Day, Tester said, is a day "to remember the  
58 price paid for us to enjoy our American way of life," and that  
59 remembering and honoring the legacies of those who did not  
60 make it back "is the true meaning of Memorial Day."

61         "Let us remember that totalitarian regimes have been  
62 toppled and genocides stopped because Americans sacrificed life  
63 and limb," she said. "Let us remember that terrorist plots were  
64 foiled and killers brought to justice because Americans were  
65 willing to pay a high price. Let us remember that without  
66 America's military, the world would be much more oppressive  
67 and darker place."

## 68         **A lifetime of service**

69         Tester joined the Marine Corps when she was 17, and  
70 most of her Marine career served as an administrator in  
71 Washington, D.C., at Camp H.M. Smith in Hawaii, and at the  
72 former Marine Corps Air Station Tustin in California before  
73 finishing her service as a gunnery sergeant in a reserve unit in  
74 San Jose, California.

75         She came to Vermont in 2004 and joined American  
76 Legion Post 50 in Castleton as a way to get involved in the  
77 community. She was elected as Department of Vermont  
78 Commander in 2021 and served a one-year term, the fourth  
79 woman to hold that position in Vermont.

80 Her husband, John, was the first male veteran in Vermont  
81 to join the American Legion Auxiliary. Two of her six children  
82 also served in the military.

83 Her family operates JDW Mechanical, a plumbing and  
84 electrical contractor in Orwell.

## 85 Helping out Post 5

86 Post 5 Past Commander Tom Costello, a Marine officer  
87 and combat veteran during the Vietnam War, had much praise for  
88 Tester for being instrumental in helping the local post get out of  
89 some organizational and financial difficulties three years ago.

90 Part of that help was getting a \$50,000 line of credit from  
91 Brattleboro Savings & Loan (BS&L). Now, Costello said, Post 5 is  
92 seeking to pay off that debt through a "Burn the Mortgage"  
93 fundraiser that seeks to raise \$50,000 by the end of this year.

94 BS&L is administering the campaign. Tax-deductible  
95 donations may be sent to BS & L in care of Dawn Jackson, Post 5  
96 "Burn the Mortgage" Fund, P.O. Box 1010, Brattleboro, VT  
97 05302.

98 "All of us have memories of those no longer here," said  
99 Costello. "The families who came together put us in this place  
100 where we can honor those who have served."

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

101

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

102

0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

103

####BEGIN LINKS####

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

104

####BEGIN VIDEO####

####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

105

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

####END LOGLINE####