

Rotarian Pat Mulvihill serving country and community

BY MARY WANSER
Resident Community News

Padraic E. “Pat” Mulvihill, a 42-year Jacksonville resident, is a former infantry officer and paratrooper with the United States Army Reserve. He served our country in the 19th and 20th Special Forces Groups, and he continues to serve well our community.

Mulvihill, an advisor to the National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum at Cecil Field, has been a Rotarian for over two decades. As a servant leader and the immediate past president of the Rotary Club & Charities of North Jacksonville, one of 71 clubs from district 6970 of Rotary International, Mulvihill is making sure that fallen veterans are not forgotten. As Chairman and Public Information Officer of the Support Committee of the Jacksonville National Cemetery (JNC), Mulvihill hosted this year’s Memorial Day observances there. “I am truly humbled and honored,” he said of the opportunity to have participated.

The occasion began on May 26 with the Flags In tradition under the direction of Mulvihill and Willy Rothrock of Fleming Island Rotary, both of whom are members of the Special Forces Association Green Beret Chapter 88 NE FL. Volunteers from various schools and military installations throughout Northeast Florida, referred to as Friends of Rotary, placed in a uniform manner 22,000 U.S. flags into the serene and hallowed ground, in front of each headstone and elsewhere throughout the cemetery. Those interred there include several killed-in-action personnel who served in various conflicts such as WWII, Vietnam, and the Global War on Terrorism.

Memorial ceremonies continued two days later with a formal service that included chaplain prayers, guest speakers, and colors presentation. CPO Rich Possert, USN, Retired, who is on the cemetery support committee, acted as master of the ceremonies that remembered and honored military personnel who served the nation and are now buried at JNC. Wreaths were placed by a team of Rotarians, including LTC Thomas Meissgeier, USA, Retired, who was introduced to Rotary by Mulvihill, whom he knew through their Special Forces Chapter 88 membership along

with Rothrock. “Pat’s a fantastic person,” said Meissgeier, who is also a member of Mulvihill’s North Jacksonville Rotary Club; he is its newly elected sergeant-at-arms while Terry Lee, a healthcare executive, now serves as president.

Mulvihill and his fellow Northeast Florida Rotarians welcome the resumption of large ceremonies that invite the public to participate in events at national cemeteries and other memorials. Such events are fixtures of previous Memorial Day commemorations that had been curtailed for the past two years due to COVID-19.



Pat Mulvihill checking flag placement at a columbarium wall

Mulvihill and his fellows were also instrumental in the paving of the Gold Star Family Parkway that leads to JNC on Lannie Road from the I-95 Pecan Park interchange. He and other Rotarians spoke to Congress

about the need for a direct route to the cemetery rather than having to travel 15 miles around the airport to gain access. The new road opened on November 30, 2021. Mulvihill is now leading a group of Rotarians involved with the City of Jacksonville in the process of tree-lining that parkway.

Amidst all this, Mulvihill is mourning the loss of three integral members of his Rotary Club who died in the past year: Dick Chelius, Doug Register, and Ray Moore. Chelius served for 22 years as an aviator in the US Navy and Naval Reserve and had achieved the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Register was active as a multi-talented volunteer and project leader, building infrastructure specifically designed to serve veterans and their families. Register also left his footprints at the Sulzbacher Center, UF Health North, and Community Health Outreach. Moore is known throughout Northeast Florida as Father of the Wall, referring to the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Wall, a historical landmark located adjacent to TIAA Bank Field. The Wall honors almost 2,000 soldiers, marines, merchant marines, sailors, airmen, and coastguardsmen from Duval County. The local Wall is second in size only to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, DC.

Mulvihill and his Club also lost two Friends of Rotary: Johanne “Jodie” Raymond and Steve Spickelmier. Raymond served veteran families as one of the original Jacksonville Ladies who make certain that no veteran is buried alone at JNC. The Ladies are present when family or friends are unable to attend the burial services of a local vet. Raymond was also a distinguished member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and of the National Society United States Daughters of 1812. Spickelmier had served in the US Navy and Air Force for 26 years before retiring. He was the chair of the support committee of the Jacksonville National Cemetery, with Mulvihill stepping in to fill temporarily that vacant post. Spickelmier was also a member of the Veterans Council of Duval County, president of the Air Force Sergeants Association, and field operations director of the State of Florida Missing in America Project.



Rotarian Pat Mulvihill

Service Above Self is the motto of the 1.4 million Rotarians in over 200 countries worldwide. In 2018-2019, Mulvihill was one of 75 members to have received the Service Above Self Award, a much-deserved recognition for the strategic planner who focuses as much on charity as he does on business development. He admitted that he has an extraordinary team of teams helping him to assess local needs and viable funding to fill them. “Rotary opens doors, and we focus on health, education, and wellness for elders, infants, and families as well as for refugees,” he said. In fact, Mulvihill is a member of a Rotary action group by that same name: Health-Education-Wellness Rotary Action Group (HEWRAG). “A lot of organizations talk about doing it, but we actually do it,” Mulvihill said of the Rotary.

Larry Daley, CIV USN NETC, a member of the Rotary Club of West Jacksonville, said this of Rotarian Mulvihill’s efforts as a servant leader in the local community: “He does it because it is the right thing to do. It is in his DNA. We are very fortunate to have Pat here in Jacksonville.”



Richard Possert, Tom Meissgeier, and Steve Muskett, wreath placement team members

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