

INAUGURATION SPEECH

Mayor James L. Richetelli, Jr.

November 16, 2009

Reverend Clergy, Judge Ronan, honorable elected officials, distinguished guests, friends, family and fellow citizens of Milford:

I am so happy to be with you tonight. Once again we find ourselves completing the fundamental process, which is central to a representative democracy: where we formally confirm and take oaths from those fellow citizens who have earned our trust.

Thomas Jefferson described this much more eloquently than I when he wrote in the Declaration of Independence that "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

I want to thank all who voted in our recent elections, no matter for whom. To those who voted to re-elect me as Mayor and, equally to those who gave others their consent, please accept my deep thanks. And please accept my pledge: That I will work on a daily basis to earn and retain your trust, so together we can work to keep Milford the wonderful city that it is.

In 2007, when last before you in this situation, I expressed congratulations to all who sought office. I do the same tonight. Win or lose at the polls, we should admire anyone who engages in seeking elective office. It is no easy task to serve as an Alderman or Board of Education member, a constable or City Clerk, a Mayor or Planning and Zoning Board member. The willingness to take on the duties and demands of these offices - and to put oneself before the people seeking their approval - is not to be taken lightly. None who sought office this year did so.

I offer a special note of congratulations to Linda Stock. Empathetic, compassionate and intelligent, this wonderful woman and native daughter, who knows Milford so intimately, will make an excellent City Clerk.

Like her predecessor. To my good friend, Alan Jepson, for the first time in decades not being sworn in for another term, we wish him the deserved happiness of retirement, the affection of a community which deeply admires him, and the hope that he will remain available for the kind of informed counsel and wisdom that only he can give.

As has been the case for these last eight years, making Milford a better place will be my personal mandate for the next two. I am sure that this sentiment is shared by all who are being sworn in tonight. Who among us here does not want to see Milford thrive and prosper, meet and surmount new challenges, and remain the envy of our region?

Should we ever require inspiration in these matters, we need only remind ourselves that we are the heirs to a good people, a great people, who since 1639 have inhabited this special place situated between the Housatonic, Wepawaug, Indian, and Oyster Rivers and the glorious Long Island Sound. We need only remind ourselves of people such as Isaac Miles and Stephen Stow, of their families, and of their sacrifices.

At Milford High School's graduation ceremony in 1913, young Mabel Whitman Mahoney read a speech titled, "The Town of Milford During the American Revolution." It's a wonderful essay, and is available on the Internet. I recommend it to all.

I'd like to share with you a passage from Mabel's speech. She was writing about how the men of Milford were addressing the continuous threat of British assault via the Long Island Sound. Mabel wrote

For further protection, companies of soldiers were stationed at Burwell's Farm and Poconoc Point. The battery at West Point or Fort Trumbull was situated about where the summer home of Colonel Falls now stands. Many a night the people were awakened by the clanging of the bell of the fort, to call the men of the village to arms, for a ship had been sighted which might prove to be one of the enemies', making ready for an attack.

This was a set-up for Mabel's desire to discuss the major Revolutionary War event on Milford's shores. She continued:

On December 31, 1776, shortly before night, there appeared off the harbor of Milford a British vessel carrying at her fore-top a flag of truce. Darkness increasing, she was not again seen. Near the beach was the home of Capt. Isaac Miles, an earnest patriot, who with his sons, sitting before his fire, heard unusual noises. Opening his door, he found the yard filled with wild, forlorn looking creatures in a most deplorable condition, suffering for want of food and clothing. On that bitter winter night they had been turned ashore and left to shift for themselves. The sympathies of the Miles family and neighbors sheltered these two-hundred released American prisoners for the

night. In a day or two they were removed to the town-hall, which was prepared for them...

We all are familiar with the rest of the story - the historic and compassionate care of Stephen Stowe and the people of Milford.

We are privileged to live in a town whose forefathers include such great men and women, people like Isaac Miles and Stephen Stowe and their families and neighbors, who ministered to the sick and tormented, even if doing so meant their own death.

We should seek to be inspired by Milford's past to ensure that we are prepared for Milford's future. We live in difficult times. I believe these tough times will endure far longer than many expect.

We must all of us, whether elected officials or good citizens, find within ourselves the fortitude and

resolve to make sure we do the right thing, and not the expedient thing, for the sake of our great city.

Today, there are sons and daughters of Milford who are as brave and as fearless as Stephen Stowe, who find themselves, willingly, in hostile lands to defend the freedoms and liberties that so many -- including many of the men who were delivered on Milford's shores that cold final night of 1776 -- paid for with their lives. We ask tonight for the Good Lord to safeguard the men and women of America's military, and to bring about the lasting peace which is the objective of their service.

Let the spirit of their selflessness instruct us. Let it inform us as to the reality that there is much more to Milford and to our lives than politics and partisanship. Let it motivate us to remember that much more unites us than divides.

From 1776 to 2009, from Stephen Stowe to Jordan Pierson, there are many to whom we owe thanks, to whom we have obligations. So let us commit ourselves to be ever mindful of their brave efforts and service and sacrifice, and to never forget that we who hold public office do so because it is a blessing of liberty won for us at a dear price.

May God help me and all here tonight administer our offices to serve what are truly the best interests of the people of this great City. May the Almighty bless and protect our City, our State, and our Nation, may He continue to endow us with liberty and freedom, and may He see us through these difficult times to a new and better era.

I desire for us all, my daily affirmation which I have borrowed from Abraham Lincoln: "I do the best I can, the best I know how. And I aim to continue to do so!"

Thank you all so much. May God bless each of you. God
bless the City of Milford, and God bless America!