

CSM Tom Rezendes – our modern day Minuteman

Hearing of Tom's passing in February of this year was devastating to us all. To our Memorial building committee, Tom was a man of incredible force that embraced our dream to build a monument to honor the Rhode Island National Guard. We saw it as an almost impossible task; he saw it as a personal challenge and knew we could accomplish it. His technical direction, his ability to muster business associates to the cause, and his personal involvement were the keys to our success. Without him, we would have never completed this herculean task. It was our privilege to know Tom; he was today's Minuteman, rising to the cause, not deterred by challenges along the way.



In memory of CSM (ret)
Tom Rezendes

With a story like this, there is no beginning or end, just single snap shots of a person's life that we, as individuals, were familiar with. As I researched some of Tom's life's experiences, I found an incredible story of a man that not only had the love of his family, but the appreciation of the people he worked with and for, both in the military and his civilian job.

His obituary is a wonderful summary of his life, his family, and professional career, both military and civilian. I want to share what others contributed and my own experience with this "modern day Minuteman".

Tom's 30-year military career with the Rhode Island Army National Guard started when he enlisted in the 119th Military Police Company. He transferred to the Operations section as the OPS SGT (Operations Sergeant), then First Sergeant, then transferred to the 118th MP BN. Tom was selected and promoted to Sergeant Major in October 2002 and assigned to Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 126th Aviation. He was then laterally promoted to Command Sergeant Major, 1st Battalion, 126th Aviation. In September 2003 he was selected as the Command Sergeant Major of the 56th Troop Command where he served until his retirement.

The feedback from the troops he worked with had a consistent theme: always doing the right thing and nothing more important than troop morale, training, and accomplishing the job. He was there to support them, no matter what the challenge.

I want to share three stories of Tom's support of RING veteran projects in our state.

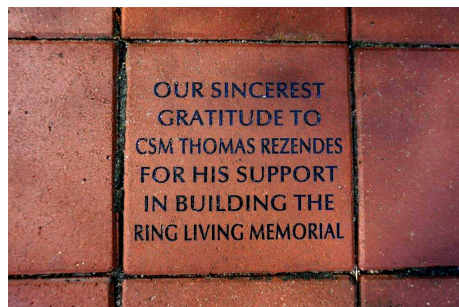
BG (ret) Richard Valente answered my request with this story of how Tom helped him with restoring the historic Warren Armory.

"Over ten years ago, I reluctantly accepted responsibility as President of the Historic Warren Armory, which at that time was owned by a diminishing chapter of the American Legion. Things had deteriorated over the years, especially building maintenance. I convinced fellow Legionnaires to sell the building to the Town of Warren for \$10.00. After working with the town, they agreed at a financial town meeting to purchase the building for \$10.00. Next, we formed a 501(c)3 organization and got a 100-year lease from the town to restore and operate the armory".

"We then started the long road to raise funds to replace the badly leaking roof of the 1840's armory. Out of the clear blue sky Tom called me and said "General, I know you are working on a big project. I would like to help". Well, I got volunteers to strip off the old roof and Tom provided the roofers who worked a full week replacing the roof. Not only that but we purchased the material through Tom and saved a lot of expense. Fortunately, the proceeds from our first clambake were sufficient to pay for the materials".



As Tom saw it - the picture
says it all!



Our tribute to Tom



RING Memorial as we saw it



Historic Warren Armory

This experience epitomized who Tom was - offering to help fellow veterans. Based on my engineering experience I estimate that the help provided by Tom amounted to about \$45,000!! It truly gave us the jump start in our restoration effort, which after that amounted to about \$400,000 in grant money. The end result is that we now have a true showpiece restored 1840's armory. I will always believe that the unsolicited help from Tom made our project very viable. Thereafter Tom always received complimentary tickets to our annual clambake, as a very small token of our appreciation. CSM Tom Rezendes, an outstanding soldier and a good friend. Rest In Peace, Tom"

In his civilian world, Tom was Senior V/P of Pariseault Builders. As with BG Valente's experience with Tom, he approached us (RING Retirees Association) one day, 13 years ago, to offer his assistance to build our Rhode Island National Guard Living Memorial. The next thing we knew he had all his sub-contractors lined up to assist in building the memorial: clearing the 60x80 ft. site (tree and gravel removal), provided gravel for the footings, built 8 (four foot deep) concrete forms to pour 20 Cu. yards of concrete, assembled 300 lbs. of rebar, spread 25 truckloads of crushed stone, and created a final stone surface, graded for drainage and brick laying. He even had the planned brick layout started by his brick layers, including cementing in the soldier bricks along the boarder. Tom also provided a huge crane to position the granite walls, statue base, four benches, and the minuteman statue, which took two days. We figured that Tom's volunteer efforts saved us over \$50,000. Tom's enthusiasm was contagious; his ability to see and understand what had to be done is the reason this memorial was built - and will last forever!

Another project of Tom's was the Rhode Island Military Police Corp Memorial, just across from the RING memorial. Although I have no additional details, I know this was a pet project of Tom's. It's beautiful in its' simplicity, a tribute to the men and women of the corps, "of the troops, for the troops" to "assist, protect, and defend". A classic "Tom Rezendes" project, for sure.



RI Military Police Corps Memorial

Pariseault Builders Inc. was the company "behind the curtain". The management staff believed in Tom's vision of supporting the military, especially "his" National Guard. They provided the sub-contractors, who donated their time and materials, to make it happen. And, they supported Tom by allowing him the flexibility to work each project as necessary. For the RINGRA memorial, the timing of the work was impeccable; materials, equipment, and contractors were in place, on time – and Tom managed it all.

The staff at Pariseault gave me some insight about Tom. He worked so well with all the staff and vendors, providing direction in their projects, encouraging them in their work, helped them whenever he could, always with a smile and respect. In our interview I could see that they missed this man; he was an institution and shared his values with all of us.



Tom's workmates at Pariseault Builders, INC: Tom; Brian Casey, President; Kyle Lloyd, Vice President

We were all very fortunate to know Tom; may he rest in peace with his fellow RI National Guard soldiers.

Bob Urquhart, President

My thanks to the following for their contributions to this article:

Pariseault Builders: Brian Casey, President; Sean Lamontagne, Dir. Of Business Development and Marketing

RING Retirees: BG (ret.) Richard Valente. CSM (ret.) Glen Dececco, MSG (ret.) Nelson Reynolds

Tom's obituary is found on this website:
www.barrettandcoter.com