



Wreaths are placed in front of the Man at Wheel statue on Stacy Boulevard during the annual Fishermen's Memorial Service in Gloucester.

'We all wondered what happened'

Fishermen's service 'shows the story behind the memorial'

BY KELSEY BODE
Staff Writer

Around 70 people who attended the annual Fishermen's Memorial Service were held rapt by the words of local author and filmmaker Ron Gilson as he shared the stories of friends he has lost, fishermen who were taken by the sea.

Gilson was the keynote speaker at the service Saturday, which was held on the second floor of the Capt. Lester S. Wass American Legion

Post 3 hall because of inclement weather. Painted oars that would have been carried to the Man at the Wheel statue and its accompanying cenotaphs at Stacy Boulevard had it not rained were propped up against either side of tall windows in the hall.

Family, friends, and community members drove down to the statue to place floral arrangements and toss flowers into the harbor in memory of those they lost after the service.

"When an accident happens and you lose someone, you're hurt, but you put them to rest," Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken said after



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Marjorie Frontiero, 78, standing at the Fishermen's Memorial on Stacy Boulevard, tosses a flower into the harbor.

the service. "For those who have not returned, there is no closure. I feel every year, it's a little closer to that closure. It's just hard."

Romeo Theken read two poems at the service about mourning and loss, and shared the pain she knew as a child growing up in the city as she and others awaited neighbors who sometimes never came home.

"We are gathered like families," she said. "For those of you who have lost someone at sea, I don't know that feeling. I remember as a little girl when Mr. Parisi, Captain Cosmo, the Alligator, we all wondered what happened."

Keynote speaker Ron Gilson emphasized at the service that

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Gloucester was built upon the fishing industry.

"Four 400 years, we have been fishermen," he said. "Fishing is what we do here. Make no mistake: Fishing is who we are."

Gilson recalled the moment he was shaken as a young boy by the wails of a woman whose husband had been lost at sea. He told the story of his friend, Edgar "Ted" Decker, a barber whose dream of becoming a fisherman came true in 1949. Decker left a sign on his shop that read "gone fishing," but never returned. The ship he was on, the *Corinthian*, was torn in two by a freighter. Gilson also shared the memory of Alphonse Sutherland, a man who had mentored Gilson and died at sea in 1951 when the *Gudrun* went down with 17 hands.

"Those are the people that built this city today," Gilson said. "Our mayor and elected officials are merely guardians."

The service began with a



Jerry Houle, 77, searches names of those lost at sea on the cenotaphs at the Fishermen's Memorial during the annual Fishermen's Memorial Service in Gloucester.

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Staff photo

performance of "Gloucester, Always Gloucester" by vocalist Alexandra Grace, accompanied by Josh Cominelli on guitar.

Hank Fellows, who wrote the song, said he was deeply moved by the service.

"I had tears in my eyes," he said of

Gilson's speech and the service. "It shows the story behind the memorial. These families who lost someone at sea never saw them again, that's the tragedy of the city of Gloucester."

Kesley Bode may be contacted at kbode@gloucestertimes.com. Follow her on Twitter @Kelsey_Bode.