For the Lisowski family of Simpson, Memorial Day is a family celebration. Mike Lisowski, a retired principal of Susquehanna Community High School, will be hosting a softball tournament to benefit the Wounded Warrior Project this weekend in Simpson.

And for Mike's brother, Peter Lisowski, this year is very special. Peter has five sons serving in the armed forces, four of them as officers and one as an "officer in training" in the Air Force ROTC at the University of Dayton.

Peter is a Simpson native who lives in Ohio. He and his wife, Roseann, are building a home in Olyphant and will return to Northeast Pennsylvania to live when construction is complete. Peter's mother, Mary Lisowski, still lives in Simpson, and Roseann's parents, Eddie and Marie Krafchick, live in Carbondale.

Peter and his sons got together on May 14 as his second son, West Point graduate Army Capt. Ryan Lisowski, helped commission his brother, Kyle, as an ensign in the United States Navy at Villanova University's Navy ROTC graduation ceremony. Peter said, "To have my five sons with their various schedules and assignments scattered across the globe to be able to stage this reunion makes Memorial Day a special one."

Peter Lisowski Jr. is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and is a captain in the Marine Corps. He pilots the Sea Stallion, the largest helicopter in the U.S. military. He is stationed at New River, N.C.

Ryan Lisowski is also a graduate of West Point and is an Army captain. Ryan flies the EO5C, a heavily laden electronic plane that is used for surveillance and reconnaissance. Ryan's recent tours brought him to Colombia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He is stationed at Fort Hood, Texas.

Todd Lisowski is a graduate of Cornell University and became a naval officer through the Cornell Navy ROTC Program. He is a lieutenant junior grade and will be stationed in Athens, Ga.

Kyle Lisowski, the recent Villanova graduate, has been accepted into Navy flight school and will be stationed at Pensacola, Fla.

Mr. Lisowski's youngest son, Corey, will be a sophomore at the University of Dayton. He has a full Air Force ROTC scholarship and plays quarterback for the football team.

I talked to Peter Sr., who also served in the Marine Corps as a first lieutenant, last week via cell phone as he was driving Todd across country from San Diego to his new assignment in Athens, Ga. This is an excerpt of our conversation.

Q: How did you decide to join the Marine Corps and to what do you attribute your family's commitment to service in the U.S. military?
A: My father and eight uncles all served during World War II or Korea. We have great appreciation for anyone who has served in any branch of the military regardless of rank or occupation, to include the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force or Coast Guard. The camaraderie is tremendous.

Q: With four sons as officers in the military and one as an "officer in training," what is Memorial Day like for you and your family?

A: It has very special meaning to all of us. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all that have served, especially to the families of those injured or killed.

Q: What is the rest of the year like for you, especially today as we are fighting two wars in the Middle East?

A: Naturally, it is very difficult when they are stationed overseas. We tend to get nervous watching the news or answering the phone. And when they are back on safe soil we still get nervous because we know that someone else's family members are in harm's way.

Q: You have at least one son in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. What does this do for friendly family rivalry around the dinner table?

A: It is a lot of fun, especially during the Army-Navy game.

Q: Do the boys get back to Northeast Pennsylvania often?

A: The boys visit their grandparents and extended families as often as possible. It will also be much easier when our home is finished in Olyphant for them to return to the Greater Scranton area.

Both Mike and Peter were extremely appreciative that I was writing this column about their family on Memorial Day weekend. However, I was quick to remind them it is all of us who should be appreciative of their family's service to our country. Please pause and remember the Lisowski family this weekend and all of the men and women of this country who have sacrificed for us.

Happy Memorial Day to all of you. Thanks for reading.

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