

Memorial Day May 31, 2011

Thank you to Red Hook VFW Post 7765, and all who attend to make possible the Red Hook 2011 Memorial Day Service. It is your presence that makes possible this touching and inspiring tribute to the memory of our fallen servicemen and women. As a small town Supervisor, an invitation to speak at Memorial Day ceremonies is an incredible honor.

As a child, I grew up in a small house built by my father on Prince Street in the Village of Red Hook. My brother, sister and I played with children in the neighborhood and had blissful freedom to wander throughout the village, admonished by our mother to be “home for lunch when the whistle blew” (that being the firehouse noon whistle).

On our street lived my brother’s friend, Manny. They rode bikes and played together with other neighborhood boys. Girls were ignored and sometimes tormented by their merry band. Manny had a guard dog who was mean by anyone’s standards, but he loved Manny. In good weather, he laid in the middle of Prince Street. I was terrified of him, and when sent by my mother to the village market for bread or milk, I went in the opposite direction sometimes walking 5 additional blocks to avoid that junkyard dog.

Manny entered the Army during the Korean conflict. Months later his family was notified he was missing. We waited. Our small village mourned. He was never found. His family quietly endured unspeakable loss, unimaginable pain.

I recount this memory to remind us that the losses of young men and women today are real. They are personal. They always have been.

Across our country, in cities, towns and villages like our own, we gather this weekend to honor and memorialize members of our armed forces

who have died in combat. They were our fathers and sons, our brothers, our neighbors, our friends. Their immense sacrifice was made on behalf of all those who believe in the right to live in freedom and peace, to gather together, to worship in our own way, to speak our minds, and pursue our dreams without fear.

Inspired by music and poetry, this weekend we remember not only those fallen servicemen and women and their families, but also express thanks to those who have served and returned home, recognizing their willingness to have made the ultimate sacrifice. Our words are inadequate. These are our heroes and we lift them up in gratitude, honor and love.

On this Memorial Day may God bless our fallen servicemen and women and their families. May God bless us everyone.

Sue Crane, Town Supervisor