

Rep. Semmel  
Fire Company Volunteerism/ Memorial Day  
May 22, 1999

~~Good morning~~ <sup>afternoon</sup>. I can't tell you what a pleasure it is to be here in my hometown today, and to see all of your smiling, friendly faces.

*As Chn. of the House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Comm.*

I first want to congratulate the Schnecksville Volunteer Fire Company on its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary!! What an accomplishment! While many companies have been forced to close or consolidate, you continue to thrive. I am not only proud of your success but am also grateful for the wonderful work you do to protect the public safety.

*(in addition not at all to forget the ladies auxiliary and fire police in their support efforts.)*

(1)

And as we prepare to pay tribute to our military veterans <sup>upcoming</sup> on this final Memorial Day of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I can't think of a more appropriate time to also honor the other men and women, like our fire company volunteers, who have selflessly given their time – and sometimes their lives – to public service.

It was more than a century ago, after the tragic Civil War, that people first honored the loyalty and dedication of soldiers who laid down their lives for our country and our future.

(2)

The Memorial Day tradition was born, and although time has separated many of us from the realities of war and military service, communities continue to gather to pay tribute to our dedicated soldiers. These gatherings serve as a reminder of just how blessed we have been by the many men and women who have answered the call of duty to serve our country.

These <sup>CITIZENS</sup> ~~soldiers~~ epitomize the values of loyalty, duty and respect. Of selfless service, honor and integrity. And of personal courage.

(3)

We find many of the same values in the people who volunteer at our local fire company.

Whether serving their country or their community, these men and women put their lives on the line to protect us.

The dangers are different, but they are very real.

Whether its a flaming fire or the fire of guns or missiles, these men and women fight back on behalf of people they usually don't even know. And they expect nothing in return.

Unfortunately, that is often what they get – nothing – as both jobs can be rather thankless ones.

(4)

In this relatively peaceful post-cold-war era, many of us lack a real understanding about the importance of our military and the people who serve in it.

And those of us who are fortunate enough never to have experienced a fire or related emergency in our lives rarely think about how much it means to have a group of dedicated volunteers ready and waiting to help us. And we certainly don't give much thought to what we would do without them.

(5)

So let us take this opportunity to send a much-deserved message of thanks to these men and women, these heroes.

I'd like all of our veterans and our volunteers to stand, please. I want to personally thank each and every one of you for your dedication and your loyalty to your country and your community.

And now, please join me in a round of applause.

(PAUSE FOR APPLAUSE)

(6)

Now, if the rest of you would join them in standing, I'd like to take a moment of silence in remembrance of our veterans and volunteers who have died in service.

(PAUSE)

*Start*

I want to thank you all for coming out today and taking the time to show your appreciation for the people that serve our country and our community. I hope you will keep them all in mind this <sup>*upcoming*</sup> Memorial Day weekend and throughout the year.

Thank you.

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