

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

May 30, 2003

Memorial Day, 2003

This year Longmeadow continued its tradition of commemorating Memorial Day as part of LongMeddowe Days, taking advantage of a mild, sunny Sunday on the Green for the service. Participating in the observance offers a reminder of the sacrifices made by so many for our country for everyone who attends. The ceremony provides literal linkage to our history of military sacrifice throughout wars from the Civil War to the present.

Memorial Day originated after the Civil War as Decoration Day, and that history was visibly recalled by the presence of a brigade of Civil War re-enactors, led by Lieutenant Burnham as portrayed by Longmeadow's Elliot Levy. Their rifle salute to the fallen soldiers brought the history of that bloody conflict to life for today's residents.

The next major conflict for Americans was World War I, and the town's oldest veteran from that war was missing this year. Arthur Newhouser, who was a young Army private in that conflict, attended the services for many years. His recent passing removed the town's personal linkage to military service in the Great War.

Another veteran who was missed this year was the late Andrew Fitzhugh, a regular attendee for years. He was always dressed in his colonel's uniform, reminding us of his presence at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Lloyd Waite, Richard Reid and many other veterans of World War II continue to represent the town's participation in World War II.

Peter Santos represents veterans of the Korean Conflict, keeping alive the reality of the hardships faced by young Americans on the Korean peninsula 50 years ago. Veterans of more recent conflict were also in attendance, and they will carry on the tradition in their turn.

Two Longmeadow High School students presented their thoughts on the meaning of Memorial Day, and Springfield Police Chief Paula Meara, the guest speaker, talked of the immediacy of military sacrifice in today's troubled world.

This year we all know men and women who are posted in Afghanistan or Iraq, protecting our nation from seen and unseen enemies. Their mission was apparent from changes in the military presence at the ceremony. There was less participation from active military units than in recent years because so many of the troops are on active duty. No jets flew formations overhead, and the Marine color guard consisted of veterans.

On a personal level, my family provides an example of the continuing need for American military readiness. The Korean armistice was signed 50 years ago, yet recent tensions have increased our alert level in Korea. One of my nephews served five years ago on the same Korean peninsula that Peter Santos defended 50 years ago. Another nephew is on alert right now, awaiting a posting to Korea.

As always, the service ended with the reading of Longmeadow men lost in wartime, with the church bell tolling for each name. Taps played and echoed across the Green. We will never forget.