

## **September 19, 2011**

September 11<sup>th</sup> defines us as New Yorkers. Our village commemorated that day this year as we have every year since that first sorrowful anniversary. The Floral Park Fire Department assembled in their dress blue Class A uniform, marched and stood at silent attention at Headquarters as at 8:46, then again at 9:03 a single fire bell tolled, echoed by the majestic Methodist Church bells, marking each impact of the Towers. In the afternoon, an ecumenical service of remembrance was celebrated at the Methodist Church. In the early evening a closing ceremony was held at Reliance Firehouse on Holland Avenue; honoring all who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of others. The service, like all that day, was well attended by members of our Fire Department, surrounding fire departments, representatives and EMS personnel from New York Presbyterian Hospital and many Floral Park friends and neighbors. This quiet reflective service is punctuated by bagpipe, readings of Psalms and contemplative silence. The service's brevity and dramatic calm promotes an introspective mood and concludes the Village's ceremonies of this most difficult and painful day.

You have read about requests to the Port Authority by members of our fire department in acquiring a piece of steel from the World Trade Center. While only being received on April 27, 2011, that relic steel beam is now located at the Village Hall Lawn and is being incorporated into a lasting monument. While the monument is yet unfinished, residents now approach the steel. Most approach with a sense of awe and with halting reverence. I have seen the pain etched on faces as they gaze at the relic steel; reflecting on the day, on friends, on dreams unfulfilled. Others have shed tears or are drawn to share their memories with others. This relic steel is a fitting tribute to the shared loss we experience as New Yorkers and as Americans.

There are those who say, we should just move on, put it behind us. But I say, we must remember that on Sept 11, 2001, our freedom, indeed our American way of life was attacked. We were attacked by fanatics, nurtured in an environment intolerant of those freedoms: cowardly hijacking technology and ingenuity beyond their imagination or capacity to produce. We were attacked by evil. Evil whenever it is confronted must be identified, isolated, condemned and eradicated. It is a moral fallacy to try and qualify evil as good. It is the antithesis of the foundation of our country. We defeat evil by good. The capacity of Americans to provide financial and charitable expressions of compassion and hope are realized in the lives of our fellow Americans and by peoples all around the world.

We have all heard the expression, if we do not learn from history; we are condemned to repeat it. The 9-11 Relic Steel Memorial provides us the opportunity to teach generations that hatred and evil exist. But we may also tell them that while the Towers may have fallen that day, evil did not bring down our nation, our hearts or our American way of life. It is good to commemorate those lives lost that tragic day. We must never forget.