

Speech Given by Jan Northrup

Good afternoon. My name is Jan Northrup and I am President of the Kemper Memorial Park Preservation Fund. I have been President for almost 20 years now, since the Preservation Fund was first formed. My three sons all graduated from Mamaroneck High School from 1999-2006.

I, on the other hand, went to Camp LeJeune High School in Camp LeJeune, North Carolina which is a major Marine Corps base. I was a sophomore in high school during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Camp LeJeune was absolutely empty during those critical days. It was a ghost town. The rest of the nation may not have realized how close we were to war, but we sure did. In our classrooms we listened over the radio as the Russian ships approached our blockade. What relief was felt when the ships turned back! But what is seared in my memory is how our Marines were ready to go—no matter what was in store for them. My respect for the military had always been there but now it had grown exponentially. What heroic individuals these men and women were!

Fast forward forty years to when I lived in Larchmont and I learned that Mamaroneck High School had a World War II Memorial Park that

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honored 99 individuals. I was fascinated. At the time I was President of the Larchmont Historical Society and I thought “What a treasure”! As I began to research the names of the honorees and the dates of their deaths, I began to learn not only about the history of the community during the war, but the history of World War II itself. Questions cropped up. Where were the first deaths? Where were the last deaths? What year had the most deaths and where were they? What was the sequence of the main battles? Battle of the Bulge, Okinawa, Iwo Jima, Normandy. Kemper Park honorees participated in most of them. How deadly were they? What were the turning points in the war? I quickly realized what a tremendous learning tool the monument was for the Mamaroneck students—both middle school and high school.

But, of course, the Memorial Park is not just a learning tool. More importantly, it represents the ultimate sacrifice 101 individuals made and the sacrifice our community made. (It turned out that the list of 99 names was not complete—two more were recently added). The time span was very short—in only three years—1942-1945—at least 101 lives were lost—people that had been seen

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every day, at school, at the post office, at the grocery stores, walking down the street. Many were very young and all were our neighbors.

Fortunately, their deaths were not in vain. At the end of World War II, horrific governments were overthrown and the world was turned right side up again. We are so grateful to the Kemper Park Honorees as we are to all of those who fought in World War II. So many World War II veterans will say, "It could have been my name on that monument. I was just lucky." Everyone who served in World War II took a huge risk and we are so grateful to them for doing so.

Mamaroneck High School has a wonderful history. The Richard M. Kemper Park is dedicated to those who gave their lives in World War II but right next to it, Veterans Memorial Field is dedicated to those who served in the armed forces during World War II and the Korean conflict. I couldn't be prouder of our community. We are so fortunate to have these reminders of our history on our high school campus, the geographical center of the Mamaroneck School District.