

Portrait of a public servant

It is 03h00am on an icy cold winter morning.
A piercing alarm shatters the silence at the station, and
he is sped away on a flashing red vehicle, horns blaring,
to respond to the emergency.
At the scene all three floors of the tenement are engulfed in flames which are
spreading to adjoining buildings on either side.
With selfless dedication and tremendous courage,
he rushes into that awesome inferno.
He is a professional firefighter in the city's Fire Department.
But so many people never think of these virtues
which carry him through his work.

Dedication...
As a public servant hired by the city,
he is needed by every man, woman, and child therein.
This requires selfless dedication, for
his purpose to save the lives and property
involved in a fire emergency comes above all else.
It may mean leaving Thanksgiving dinner at home with the family
to respond to a three-alarm fire.
It sometimes requires working on important holidays,
so that the entire city
is protected each minute of every day.
It demands hours of study, drills, attending classes,
constantly upgrading techniques and solving the new problems in firefighting.
It involves endless paperwork and reports.
It means being on call at all times to come to the aid of others in trouble.
This is dedication.

Courage...
A lighted match held close
can often produce fear in the average individual.
What a tremendous amount of courage it takes
to run into a burning structure with
flames licking at him from all directions...
to enter the interior which is charged with dense smoke, where
visibility is zero and requires him to crawl on his hands and knees,
close to the floor where it is less thick, in order to see anything at all.
But he forgets the risks.
Most important is to rescue the trapped children,
the elderly grandfather, or anyone possibly hiding under a bed,
or squeezing behind a stove or refrigerator as they so often do in panic;
or those screaming at a window,
in which case he must scale the outside of the building on a ladder
and attempt to bring them down to safety.
This is courage.

I admire and respect him for these traits.
They are part of him as a firefighter fulfilling those duties
which are so often taken for granted.
However, I do not take them for granted.
His virtues never leave my mind.
He is my husband.

Written by Sandra M Haight (2014)
in honour of my husband, a firefighter for 27 years, who retired as assistant chief