



## Letter: Much more than 1 percent

**Dear Editor:**

The day began early last year, as is the habit of our retired military officers. At 6:30 am, members of the Carlisle Sunrise Rotary Club gathered to place U.S. flags along the cross roads of the town square in preparation for the Memorial Day parade. The community procession began promptly at 9 a.m, led by the commanding general of the U.S. Army War College and Carlisle Barracks with several delegations, which represented the Pennsylvania National Guard and several veteran associations. Accompanying the active, reserve, and retired military groups were the numerous civic and public service groups that make up our unique community. And, of course, the bands provided the music of pride, commemoration, and reflection.

As with small-town celebrations, there were many familiar faces among the parade participants. Today, for some reason, the crowd of observers that lined the streets of the parade route was noticeably larger than in past years. What was remarkable to me was the integration of people with some military affiliation into our relatively small community. One would expect the old guard to be part of the veterans' organizations, but the bands provided another perspective of our town.

The town band comprised local citizens, former and retired military, and one serving Air Force officer. The high school marching band understandably had children of former military members, but a sizeable contingent of children of active duty members from Carlisle Barracks. This was doubly impactful when the more mature members of the town band joined forces with the youth of the high school band to provide a selection of patriotic music for the official memorial ceremony.

As striking during the ceremony, was the participation of past military members who are integral members of the community — merchants, business persons, professionals, clergy, community organizers, and public employees. Of note was the number of former military that are involved in borough and county leadership.

The town square was filled with people from myriad backgrounds who took time this day to gather and remember those who have served and transitioned from this life. As the master of ceremonies read the dozens of names of veterans of wars past and present who died in the past year, the legacy of military service was clear. It was also apparent

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that a spirit of service is strong within our community as former military members have found ways to continue to serve others.

While some decry that only one percent of the U.S. population has served in uniform in this past decade of conflict, it is heartening to see, at least in Carlisle, that the connection with our local citizenry is so much more.

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