Syracuse Veterans’ Writing Group
May 2015 Writing Prompts

Proverbial Expressions
Think of a proverbial expression frequently used by your parents, other family members, or the people you knew in the military. Explore the meaning and impact it had on you, and if relevant, connect it to your thinking about the military.

Childhood Connections
Think of a story you were told as a child that has always stuck with you. Retell that story in your own words, and then, once you've written it out, see if there are any surprising connections between the story and your military affiliations.

Memorial Day
Many of us may have heard that the birthplace of Memorial Day is Waterloo, New York, not far from Syracuse. In Waterloo, a few years after the Civil War, local citizens, including veterans, organized Memorial Day rituals around decorating the graves of troops killed in the Civil War and holding ceremonies to honor the dead and their sacrifices. For more on the history of this, see http://www.waterloony.com/memday.html

Over many years, though, the traditional meaning associated with Memorial Day has often been lost or forgotten in the rush to “celebrate” the start of summer. The organization “Carry the Load” tries to restore the meaning of Memorial Day by posing the question: “Who are you Carrying?” Here is the story of how the organization got started:

A few years ago, former Navy SEAL and war veteran Clint Bruce sat at a barbecue on Memorial Day. As he thought about his friends he lost in combat, he couldn’t help but notice that the people around him had a very different view of what Memorial Day meant. To some it was a party. To others, a day off of work. Not knowing what else to do, Clint came up with a way to honor his fallen brethren, and share in the pain that they went through to give us our freedom. He decided to do what he did most when he was protecting our country along side the buddies he lost. Clint strapped on his pack and began walking, all the while thinking about the guys that sacrificed for him, and for you. As he walked, he encountered another veteran, an older gentleman who knew exactly why, and exactly what Bruce was doing without either of them speaking a word. With understanding and wisdom the man simply said, “Son, who are you carrying?” And with those five words, Carry The Load was born.

The organization holds relays/events to call attention to their mission to provide “active ways to honor the countless military, law enforcement, firefighters and rescue personnel who dedicate their lives to keeping our country safe” and to call attention to the true meaning of Memorial Day. http://carrytheload.org/

For this writing prompt, you can take one of two different angles or combine both:
In your writing take up the question: “Who are you Carrying?” Who do you remember or “carry” with you as you go into Memorial Day weekend?

Or write about what you consider the true meaning of Memorial Day from your perspective. This may be a story about how you have spent a particular Memorial Day or specific rituals you observe on Memorial Day.