

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Veterans honored at Carver

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

By KIM BARTO - Bulletin Staff Writer

It is every American's responsibility to find a way to honor and remember those who have sacrificed their lives in military service, said retired Army Sgt. 1st Class Deborah A. Knight.

The keynote speaker at the 24th annual Memorial Day Service at Carver Memorial Gardens on Monday evening, Knight urged attendees to ask themselves, "Are we really giving these people the recognition they deserve?"

Knight called Memorial Day "a chance to connect with our history and our core values" and encouraged people to think of it as more than a three-day weekend or an occasion for a picnic.

"Today I challenge each of us to look into our hearts, to always remember and be appreciative," she said.

"What can we do as individuals and communities to ensure that we honor the fallen, those who will fall and their families?"

The American military has changed greatly over the years, but "the valor, dignity and courage of our men and women in uniform has not changed," Knight said. "Over 200 years, our military has provided protection from countless enemies," Knight said. "The U.S. has fought in many, many wars. We fight, not because we believe war is good, but because sometimes it is necessary."

She then quoted 19th-century English writer John Stewart Mill, saying, "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is worse." Knight traced the history of Memorial Day, which began as Decoration Day, when flowers were laid on the graves of dead Civil War soldiers.

"Memorial Day evolved because of the empathy of grieving women — the mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and friends of Confederate soldiers," she said. The Monday evening service honored both deceased and missing soldiers. Joseph Ellison of Homer Dillard Post 78 placed the black POW-MIA flag in a display in front of the podium. Members of the Magna Vista High School JROTC color guard laid a memorial wreath and lowered the flag. The Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church's children's choir led the Pledge of Allegiance. The National Anthem and other patriotic musical selections were sung by the Bassett High School choir.



Joseph Ellison of Homer Dillard Post 78 retrieves the POW-MIA flag.

Master of ceremonies the Rev. Eugene Reynolds, an Army veteran and associate pastor of Antioch Christian Church, recognized and thanked the local dignitaries in attendance. These included state Sen. Roscoe Reynolds, Del. Ward Armstrong, Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry, Lt. Joe Louis Hairston of the sheriff's office, and Henry County Supervisor Deborah Buchanan.

Peggy Santuk of AMVETS Post 35 gave a tribute. The Rev. Robert Smith, pastor of Jerusalem Christian Church, gave the invocation. The Rev. Benjamin Redd, pastor of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, read a selection of Scripture. Lardenia Campbell, associate minister of St. Paul High Street Baptist Church, gave a memorial prayer. The Rev. Dwight Mack, pastor of Mayo Missionary Baptist Church, gave the final benediction.

Curtis Millner, commander of Homer Dillard Post 78 and a member of the Henry County School Board, introduced veteran commanders and auxiliary presidents. Sonny Richardson, first vice commander of Homer Dillard Post 78, introduced the Martinsville-Henry County Memorial Honor Guard and remembered the deceased members.

The honor guard gave a firing squad salute and played taps at the end of the service. The program was coordinated by Constance M. Martin, member of Homer Dillard Auxiliary Post 78.

Knight was introduced by retired Army Major Darvin Belcher, who said that Knight first enlisted in the Army in Philadelphia in 1976. A native of Mississippi, her first duty assignment was in Korea. Her final assignment in 20 years of military service was teaching at the Administration School in Fort Jackson, S.C.

Knight holds a bachelor of arts in school management services from Coker College and a master of arts in human resources development from Webster University. Since 2004, Knight has worked as assistant director and marketing representative for Extensions of Living Home Care in Hattiesburg, Miss.

