

# MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

## Petty: 'They gave their all for freedom'

Monday, May 31, 2004

Retired Brigadier Gen. Robert O. Petty paid tribute to those who have served in the nation's military, those serving now and those who gave their lives for America's freedoms during his speech at the 57th annual Memorial Day Ceremony on Sunday.

"By honoring the memory of our fallen heroes, we find deeper meaning in the cause for which they fought and died. They gave their all for freedom," Petty, of Bassett, said at the service held at Roselawn Burial Park.

A large crowd gathered for the outdoor service the day after the nation dedicated the World War II Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C.

"Fifty-nine years after the end of World War II, we finally honored the men and women Tom Brokaw called 'The Greatest Generation.' When linked to the memorials of those who died in Korea and Vietnam, and the memorials to the women who served and to the separate services, we are at last appropriately honoring those who sacrificed so much," said Petty, who served in the Air Force.

He remembered those who had served during all the nation's wars, and said their purpose was the same as those wearing the military's uniforms today.

"Their service then, and the service of our men and women today in Iraq and Afghanistan, require a bravery and resolve that is hard to measure or understand. The belief that sustained and continues to sustain these people is as great as America itself. They believed that liberty and justice are essential to human happiness and must be protected at all costs," he said. He quoted Gen. Omar Bradley, who spoke during World War II about the need to sustain the faith in the country's foundation and ideals that began in the Revolutionary War.

"It is now our turn to keep the faith. We must maintain the will, the courage, the moral and physical strength to keep our country free," Petty said, quoting Bradley.

Almost every generation has had to defend America's freedoms, Bradley stated, and Petty said that is as true today as it was during World War II.

"Our safety and personal liberties are being threatened by terrorists and rogue nations who hide behind facades of legitimacy, waiting to strike us wherever we are not vigilant. Just as in the past, our men and women in uniform are serving nobly, in many cases giving their lives to protect our country and keep our people safe," Petty said.

While some people claim that expressions of patriotism are not appropriate "for the complex times in which we live ... Yet it was this belief that motivated the heroic dead that we honor here," he said.

It also motivates young men and women who are volunteering for military duty in numbers that exceed recruiting quotas, Petty said.

"The fact that great numbers of our young people are coming forward at this crucial time in our history is one of the best indicators we have that patriotism is alive and well," he added. Noting that 1.25 million Americans have died in wars, Petty said, "let their sacrifice serve as a constant reminder that our inalienable rights are more precious than peace ... We must remain devoted to the principles of honor, loyalty, integrity and faith in the future of America. Let us resolve to keep faith with those whose heroism we honor today. Our resolution will be their memorial, the guarantee that they did not die in vain."

Sunday's ceremony was dedicated to the memory of James Clate "JC" Hayes, who served with the Marines in World War II and received two Purple Heart medals. Hayes, who was a member of VFW Post 4637, was instrumental in helping veterans get medical and other benefits, according to James Rogers of Collinsville.

The program also included Cadets Lynette Goupil, National Anthem, and LTC Joshua Amos, pledge of allegiance; the Bassett High School color guard and Magna Vista High School Band; Taps by Page Cargill and Sarah Connely; Curtis Millner II of Post 78, who placed the POW/MIA flag; Carl Johnson Sr. of Post 78, who introduced veteran commanders and auxiliary presidents; Girl Scout Troop 700; Pastor George E. Gorman and Tim Manning, among others.

The program was sponsored by area American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts; Edward W. Richardson Detachment, Marine Corps League; 31st BN Highland BDE Virginia Defense Force; Roselawn Chapel Funeral Home and Burial Park; local JROTC units; Collinsville Jaycees; Rangeley, Horsepasture and Stanleytown Ruritan Clubs; Boy Scout Troop 73 and Girl Scout Troop 700.