

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Ceremony honors the fallen

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By MICKEY POWELL - Bulletin Staff Writer

Young people must learn about America's military history to ensure that combat veterans' sacrifices in defending freedom are remembered for years to come, according to local veteran Carl deHart.

"We must forever honor ... our fallen heroes," not just famous people in history who lost their lives in battle, but also friends and neighbors who died while defending democracy, said deHart.

As the keynote speaker at the 55th Annual Memorial Day Ceremony on Sunday at Roselawn Burial Park, deHart reminded the crowd that "our fellow citizens have done their duty, and some will never return to their homes and families." Therefore, they should never be forgotten, he said.

DeHart, a librarian at the Martinsville branch of the Blue Ridge Regional Library, is a founding member of the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society. His military experience began in 1954 with the Virginia National Guard. Three years later, he joined the Air Force, serving in the Far East and Europe before leaving the service in 1961.

The United States is "the most powerful nation in the history of the world," deHart said, but it cannot afford to be complacent in defending democracy worldwide. "For our democratic nation to continue, we must fight for the rights of others," said deHart.

Americans always have seemed to be willing to fight to protect their freedom, he added.

Cemetery manager Phil Sparks noted efforts of military personnel to defend the U.S. following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

"Today, more than ever, we must thank almighty God" for the men and women in the armed forces, Sparks said. "Our armed forces will prevail" in protecting the United States from harm.

Participating in Sunday's ceremony were area American Legion, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) posts, along with the Marine Corps League, the Rangeley Ruritan Club and JROTC units in Henry County

and Martinsville. The Martinsville High School Band, under the direction of Kevin Lewis, performed patriotic music.

The Memorial Day Association of Martinsville and Henry County dedicated the ceremony in memory of Curtis Law, a recently deceased World War II veteran. Among several military service medals he had been awarded, Law received the Bronze Star for exceptional service in the liberation of France.

A small table was set in memory of prisoners of war and military personnel who still are missing in action. Those attending the ceremony were asked to remember and pray for them.

The ceremony concluded with a 21-gun salute, Taps, the release of numerous red, white and blue balloons and prayer.