

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Service honors military



Above, retired Col. Mike Pulliam of the Army (right), guest speaker for the 61st Annual Memorial Day Service at Roselawn Burial Park on Sunday, delivers his address as a high school friend, Olaf Hurd, a Vietnam veteran who introduced Pulliam to the crowd, listens.

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By BULLETIN STAFF REPORTS -

As he spoke on the eve of Memorial Day, retired Army Col. Mike Pulliam honored American servicemen of the past, present and future and urged those listening to do the same.

"As we remember these brave warriors and their comrades on this Memorial Day, we must look to the future as well as the past," Pulliam said Sunday during the 61st annual Memorial Day service at Roselawn Burial Park. "In today's world, freedom comes masked in uncertainty. America still relies on her sons and daughters to defend her liberty." Pulliam, a Vietnam veteran, served in the

military for more than 30 years. A Ridgeway native, he graduated from Drewry Mason High School.

Pulliam asked those present to honor the sacrifices of America's military men and women, who have fought to preserve peace since the nation was founded, he said.

"For more than 230 years, our military has kept the country safe from our enemies," Pulliam said. "In that time the world has changed, and our armed forces have changed with it. But the valor and dignity and courage of the men and women in uniform remain the same."

Throughout American history, more than 50 million men and women have served in the military, and more than 1 million of them have died in combat, Pulliam said. They are "average Americans," he said, but in many ways, their lives are full of contradiction.

They love America but serve long periods in foreign countries; they cherish freedom but sacrifice their own; they defend Americans' rights as individuals but give up their own individuality for that cause, Pulliam said.

"They're all different, yet they share a sameness that is deeper than the uniform they wear," Pulliam said. "They are black, white, man, woman, Hispanic, Indian, Asian, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist and a hundred other combinations and variations. "What's most important, regardless of race, creed, color or gender, they are all Americans."

Their sacrifices, and those of their loved ones, should be remembered all year long, Pulliam said.

"It's not enough to honor their sacrifices simply on Memorial Day," he said. "We should remember them throughout the year as we enjoy the freedoms they won and preserved for us."

Pulliam was introduced by local Vietnam veteran Olaf Hurd, who described Pulliam as a patriot and a great friend.

Before Pulliam spoke, Paul C. Shivley made opening remarks, Rachel Stone placed a flag in honor of prisoners of war and those missing in action, and the Rev. Tony Beach led an invocation.

The Bassett High School JROTC and the Martinsville-Henry County Veterans Memorial Honor Guard presented colors and performed a three-volley salute, respectively.

During the service, the Rev. Dan Schelling led a memorial prayer, and Billy Barbour and Stefani Bradley laid a memorial wreath. Elyse Ramsey played "Taps."

The service was dedicated to the memory of Dr. Calvin Rains Sr., a Navy fighter pilot during World War II who later became pastor of First Baptist Church of Collinsville and McCabe Memorial Baptist Church in Martinsville. Rains, who also served as a chaplain in the Korean Conflict, served on various boards and committees in Henry County and Martinsville, including an interim term as Collinsville District Supervisor on the Henry County Board of Supervisors. He died in 2006.



Bassett High School JROTC Lt. Col. Rachel Stone salutes the lowering of the flag to half staff at the beginning of the Memorial Day program. (Bulletin photos by Mike Wray)