

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Roselawn speaker: Remember military sacrifices



Sunday's Memorial Service at Roselawn Burial Park was dedicated to the late Carleton E. "Shorty" Severance. Above, his son, Bruce Severance, left, received a certificate from the master of ceremonies, Paul Shivley.

actions no less important."

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By BULLETIN STAFF REPORTS -

Memorial Day is a time to remember that the sacrifices of war happen not only in the past, but every day around the world, a senior intelligence officer said Sunday.

Capt. William Scott Cunningham, who works with the Joint Warfare Support Office at the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington, urged Americans to remember all the sacrifices made by military men and women as he spoke during the 62nd annual Memorial Day service at Roselawn Burial Park.

The holiday's meaning "has sadly been lost to sporting events, store sales and barbecues," Cunningham said. To change that, Americans should "pause our busy lives to remember the sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives who died in major battles around the globe and also in smaller

Cunningham, who became a Naval aviator in 1987, served in numerous capacities before becoming part of the Navy Reserve. On Sept. 10, 2001, he was transferred to the Pentagon to work in Navy counterterrorism, only one day before the structure was attacked by terrorists manning a hijacked passenger plane.

Witnessing the attack at the Pentagon and the loss of 125 lives there taught Cunningham what it means to remember those who sacrifice for their country, he said.

He shared the story of a Navy lieutenant commander who was killed in the attacks. The man's colleagues now remember him with two dozen Boston cream donuts, which he requested the day he died, Cunningham said. He recalled that on the night of Sept. 11, 2001, "my cell phone rang. It was my boss telling me work would start the next day at 0700, and we did."

Intelligence officers and others in the military work every day to keep Americans safe even as the definition of national security evolves, he said. In addition to the threat of terrorists such as those who hijacked airplanes on Sept. 11, national security includes dealing with limited natural resources, the uncertainty about how to resolve conflicts with nations such as Iran, China and Russia, the risks posed by the nation's dependence on the Internet and the possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, he said. Though the nation faces threats, the military is prepared, Cunningham said.

"Our military force is stronger than ever and is recruiting above goals," he said. "... When a young person in Martinsville, Richmond, Norfolk or Northern Virginia makes the crucial decision to enlist, his or her journey is firmly set to continue the tradition to protect our values and principles."

He urged veterans to educate young people and "talk to them about your military service." He also reminded the crowd that the sacrifices of Americans, whether they happened on the beaches of Normandy or in the mountains of Afghanistan, must be remembered. Quoting evangelist Billy Graham, Cunningham said, "Courage is contagious. When a brave man or woman takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened."

Cunningham, who was born in Illinois, is married to Deidra Ramsey Cunningham of Martinsville. They have two children.

Sunday's service was dedicated to the memory of Carlton E. "Shorty" Severance, a Navy veteran. Paul Shivley gave opening remarks, and the Bassett High School JROTC presented the colors.

Bridgett Burnett sang the national anthem, and Rachel Stone of Bassett High School led the Pledge of Allegiance. David Kipfinger introduced Cunningham. The Amvets Post 35 Auxiliary and the Martinsville/Henry County Veterans Memorial Honor Guard took part. Doug Ramsey led a memorial prayer, Jeff Edwards led the benediction, and S.T. Fulcher recognized guests and gave closing remarks.

