

P. H. Martin Jr. In Stirring Address to Veterans of Wars

Attorney Warns Against Domination of Individual by State --- Pays Beautiful Tribute to Dead.

Captain P. H. Martin, Jr., veteran of the World war and an eloquent orator, made a most remarkable Memorial address at the exercises held at the armory Monday afternoon.

He solemnly warned his audience to beware of domination of the individual by the state, to beware of class legislation, for that on the day that we permit a vast federal or state hierarchy to be created, we write the obituary of the United States of America.

His speech was a powerful, yet tender tribute to the heroes of all war. He said in part:

“Again our nation has assembled to do honor to its heroic dead. I am oppressed with the impropriety of uttering many words on this occasion.

Sometimes words are helpless because the great idea disdains the bondage of language. Those whom we remember were not men of words but of deeds. A thousand battles on land and sea echo the glory of those deeds. Beneath the quiet sod, beneath the murmuring waves, their bodies sleep in peace, but in the destinies of men their souls go marching on. Because of them our lives and souls are free. Because of them our glorious nation lives.

“Our hero-dead are lying in a thousand burial places today. From Maine to Mexico they sleep; under the azure blue of Cuban skies; covered by the poppies of France; and ‘neath the cold, pure snow of Siberia they rest, there to await that final call of reveille on resurrection morn.

“What gigantic struggles were put forth by our revolutionary fathers that the infant republic might be born! What supreme courage that heroic little band under the command of Washington displayed!



This speech was given on Memorial day and published in the Fond du Lac (Wisconsin) Daily Reporter on May 31, 1921 by my great-grandfather, Patrick Henry Martin, Jr., (pictured here with his wife, Helen Schram Martin, and his son Patrick III). The text is also available at www.phmartin.com.

I make it available now because its truths illuminate the choices our country faces today.

“Those pioneers of the new freedom were not actuated by any hope of riches or pecuniary rewards. They fought and laid down their lives for liberty and they achieved it. They demanded the right of self-determination and paid for that right with the blood of thousands of the finest men in the American colonies.

The Civil War

“Today, I see the surviving veterans of the old Grand army of the Republic, grizzled and gray, and I remember, when I was but a tiny lad, seeing them march down the Main street of Fond du Lac on past Memorial days. Their ranks were far greater then, and they marched with heads up and shoulders squared to the thrilling music of the fife and drum. The great conflict in which they fought was, in the beginning, a contest between men, between sections. It was the Union against the Confederacy. In the early days of that war the doubtful tide of battle set most strongly against the Union shores. But, from the

hour when our government struck the shackles from the slave, from the hour in which the flag of the republic became the flag of humanity and the cause of the Union became the cause of liberty, from that hour victory shone in our arms. Our Revolutionary fathers wrested the thirteen colonies from the British and dedicated this nation to the sacred cause of liberty; the soldiers of the Union went forth to maintain and preserve that liberty.

“The cause for which they fought can never be assailed again. The Union by them preserved remains forever and liberty, equal rights, and justice are the heritage of their descendants.



“Again in the sacred cause of liberty we took up arms in 1898 to rescue Cuba from the grinding

heel of a Spanish oppressor, and we gave to the Philippine islands the benefits of an enlightened civilization. Thousands of the finest young men the country could produce went forth never to return. Thousands of those who came back shattered and ravaged by illness have long since passed away. They have passed away but the deeds they performed will keep their memory ever fresh in our hearts. And, with the veterans of 1898 who are with us today, we unite in tribute to the fallen comrades of that war.

The World War

“Still unhealed are the wounds in the hearts of hundreds of thousands of our fellow countrymen today. The events of the World war are still fresh in our memory. Day after day, week after week, the funeral ships are carrying back to the United States the flag draped caskets of those of our comrades who gave their all to perpetuate American liberty and to crush in its inception what would have been a world dominated by a Hohenzollern tyrant.



“They fought for us; for us they fell. And today we, with one accord forgetting blood and party, sect and creed, in deepest reverence do them honor. Nor, for their sakes, can we forget the desolated ones they left behind. Our tears or words of sympathy cannot bring back the comfort of those loving hands, the music of

those voices stilled forever. Only the ‘solemn pride’ of having given more than all the rest, is theirs who lived to weep. But all the world, because of what they gave, is debtor to the blood that fills their veins.

“The history made by the 32nd and 42nd divisions will never be dimmed, but, together with our pride in their achievements, comes a pang when we think of the scores of young men of Fond du Lac county, friends of us all, who left in 1917 and 1918 but who will march no more.

“It is well that, in the hurry and press of our times, when the higher soul within us is choked and stifled by the more sordid cares of the hour, by the selfish struggle for self, we should pause for a period to dwell on the illustrious dead who gave their lives for their country, and who typify that higher and truer Americanism which lies within us all, dormant and latent indeed, but

ready to spring again to the surface for a new call to arms. It is well that we should do them honor which honors ourselves in the doing. But it is well also to remember that their true mission was to further the cause of liberty.

Are We Appreciative?

“Are we, as a nation, appreciative of the liberty which is ours? The Constitution of the United States granted equal rights and privileges to all. But now, if certain political leaders and factions in our country had their way, that Constitution would be packed with amendments curtailing that liberty for which we fought, in the interest of certain groups or classes of the people, instead of for the benefit of the nation. Our tendency is toward a paternal government - both state and nation. It is a vicious tendency. When the government takes the initiative from the people, be they laborers or be they capitalists, and when that government attempts to run our private affairs through laws that make the laws forced by England on the American colonies seem insignificant, then indeed has liberty passed away. Beware of domination of the individual by the state. Beware of class legislation. On the day that we permit a vast federal or state hierarchy to be created, we write the obituary of the United States of America.

“Let us not forget the principles on which this government was founded. Impress upon your children that religious and civil liberty is their heritage. When you exercise your right to vote, cast your ballot, not for the candidate who holds out tempting rewards for this community at the expense of the rest of the state or nation but cast that ballot for the man who believes in liberty and who has the moral courage to vote ‘No’ when that liberty is assailed.

“Those whom we commemorate gave up their lives to insure that liberty to future generations. Are we so weak that we cannot preserve it even in times of peace? For their sakes, and for the sake of the generations yet unborn, let us - the living - consecrate and maintain the United States of America a magnificent monument to freedom and liberty forever.”

