

The Upton Memorial – a Tribute to all of Genesee County’s Veterans

by

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History is as much about what continues as it is about what changes. It is therefore as important to know what the ancients said about their veterans as it is to know what is said in our own day. This memorial is a tribute in the modern period to our county’s veterans – and the sentiments that led to its construction and our service today are surprisingly similar to what a people such as the ancient Greeks said about their fallen and wounded warriors. One emotion spoken of by someone such as the Athenian political leader, general, and patron of the arts, Pericles, in the 5th century B.C., is as relevant now as it was then:

those . . . (who) have the greatest souls, who, most acutely sensible of the miseries of war and the sweets of peace, are not hence in the least deterred from facing danger.

Just like the Athenian soldiers of the 5th century B.C. our veterans have given up their freedoms as civilians – along with the comforts of American life – to risk all on behalf of the rest of us. Around me are living examples of that sacrifice, and they include a recent Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, Staff Sergeant David G. Bellavia. Along with giving up civilian freedoms and comforts, our county veterans also displayed a deep and abiding patriotism. It is a resolute and quiet patriotism which is really a love of our people; our land; and our institutions – they have put our nation above themselves. Our veterans stand for the best in our American tradition – a strong defense that avoids militarism; principles not dependent upon coercion; and power without oppression. Because veterans are united in recollections of conflict, they as a group are devoted to the cause of peace. We are justly proud of what this monument stands for – as we are justly humbled by being in the presence of those who gave so much – and all too often did not return.