

# MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

## Area vets recall days in service

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"Thank God not only for giving us the gift of life, but also the gift of heroes."

John Thorsten -- a veteran, born of a family of veterans and now administrator of a facility inhabited by many veterans -- expressed that sentiment at the Blue Ridge Rehabilitation Center in a Veterans Day program on Thursday.

Highlighting the one-hour event which featured State Sen. Roscoe Reynolds, D-Ridgeway, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, was a roll call of the approximately 50 veterans who now live at the center.

Of the 50, more than a few joined Thorsten, Reynolds and the VFW unit in one of the center's dining rooms for the tribute.

"As a citizen of a grateful nation, I hope we will never forget the sacrifices that our veterans and their families have made. And as a matter of public policy, I hope America continues to honor its veterans and do its best to meet their needs," Reynolds told them.

As part of the tribute, each veteran was given a certificate "in recognition of (his) dedication, commitment and service protecting our country and freedom." Such recognition is still meaningful to the veterans.

"It's nice, because some people have forgotten," said 93-year-old Navy veteran Douglas Bryant.

The Martinsville native said he was in the Pacific theater for two years during World War II. "I made a lot of friends and enjoyed myself," he reminisced.

Retired Air Force veteran James Mize also brought up the more pleasant memories of World War II.

Mize said he was in Europe for almost 32 months. Part of the time he drove a Jeep for a general. "We could talk buddy to buddy," he said of their relationship.

Besides their friendship, Mize said the general had a daughter that he "was kinda sweet on."

Although he would let Mize take her to the movies from time to time, the general warned him -- "I don't want you for a son-in-law; I just want you for a friend," Mize recalled with a laugh.

While the memories of some veterans reach back to the hedgerows of France or the Islands of the Pacific, the memories of others are more rooted at home.

Roy Taylor Martin, 81, an Army Air Force veteran, said he learned a lot during his tour of duty, but "it didn't do me any good as far as getting around Dupont."

Martin said he finds himself and his friends talking more about his 28 years at the nylon manufacturer than his two years in the military.