

SPECIAL VETERANS DAY FEATURE

A Salute to LaSalle Parish Veterans

By Deborah Mayo
Contributing Writer

LaSalle Parish is home to many war and peace-time veterans, both men and women, who served in the armed forces in either combat or non-combat capacities from WWII to the Gulf War in the 1990's. Their sacrifices of service have ensured that democracy and freedom continue in the USA, and the debt and gratitude owed to them is monumental.

Apart from a few, many of their stories go untold yet their acts of heroism are recorded in the lives of Americans who daily reap the benefits of living in a

country where democracy reigns because of their service.

The oldest living LaSalle Parish veteran is Mr. Clarence Durham who served during WWII in the American Merchant Marines. In a past interview with The Jena Times, Mr. Durham shared his story of service. He and his shipmates were on Okinawa Island in the Pacific Ocean where they transported supplies of ammunition, guns and oil to the troops stationed and fighting in Japan and other parts of the world. He and his shipmates were blessed to have never come under

enemy attack.

"I was there when the US dropped the first atomic bomb. There were a lot of warships lined up where our ship was, waiting to go in and invade. I stayed in the ship all the time during the bombing of Japan," he recalled. "We had to ride out six or seven typhoons while we were anchored off the shore of Japan with winds reaching over 150 mph."

Mr. Durham, 17 years of age when he enlisted, experienced hard times during his enlistment and wartime service, but expressed pride in having served in the USA armed services during WWII for the USA and her allies.

Mr. Bill Appleby served in the US Air Force during the Korean Conflict, often referred to as The Forgotten War because it was sandwiched between WWII and the Vietnam Wars. Only 18 years old when he enlisted, Mr. Bill well remembers his reasons and motivation for joining at such a young age recalling that the country was only five years removed from WWII, and he was inspired by the men who had served in that combat against Germany and its allies.

"A lot of young men and women joined at the time, and we looked up to the soldiers from WWII and felt encouraged to go," he explained. "I served in combat from '52-'53 and was in a Special Task Force, a combat cargo unit. Our



Mr. Clarence Durham, pictured above, is the last living LaSalle Parish veteran from WWII.

duty was to go and secure the area for the planes to fly in and bring supplies to the troops."

He, his brother and his cousin joined the armed services simultaneously and after completing basic training, all three were dispatched to different assignments and locations in South Korea. Mr. Bill was assigned to the 15th Combat Cargo Unit/Regiment Team where he served until completing his tenure.

Vietnam War Veteran and purple heart recipient Gary Don Moseley was drafted into the army when he was 21 years old in 1968 and served in the war through 1969. He re-

members landing in Vietnam, getting off the plane and seeing 'a guy standing down' from him. The guy had a familiar face and Moseley, who knew no one in his unit, realized it was a face from Jena.

"It was Billy Nugent, and I hollered at him. We could have hugged right there in the middle of the road, but he shouted back he was getting on a plane headed to Saigon," Moseley shared. "I got there (Vietnam) and was assigned to artillery/infantry...I had gone to school and was trained to be in the field doing radio calls

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Veteran and LaSalle Parish resident, Mr. Bill Appleby, pictured above, served in the US Air Force during the Korean conflict.

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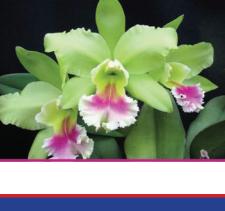


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