

Honoring all who served: Alton VFW Post 1308 celebrates veterans in annual ceremony

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ALTON - This **Veterans Day**, a large crowd of spectators, active and retired service men and women, gathered in the yard of the Alton VFW Post 1308 near the doughboy statue to honor all who served in our country's military.

The ceremony, which left those in attendance both humbled and proud of those who have served, was led by **State Commander of the Veteran of Foreign Wars Dave Stout**, felt honored to speak at the same post that he called home for many years before being elected to the highest office within the organization.

“It’s very humbling, actually, out of the 50,000 members of the VFW in Illinois, they elected me commander,” Stout said. “That’s pretty cool, but also very humbling.”

The aspect of the day’s ceremony was the amount of people from around the area that came out to support and attend the ceremony. **Alton Mayor Brant Walker, State Representatives Bill Haine and Dan Beiser, Lewis and Clark Community College President Dale Chapman, along with Lt. Kyle Suchomski** were on hand at the celebration. Mayor Walker, Rep. Beiser, Chapman and Lt. Suchomski shared inspiring messages of gratitude and hope to those in attendance.

State Commander Stout served in **the United States Air Force** from **July 1965** until **October 1987**. He became eligible to join the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization while serving as a ground radio operator during his assignment to the 504th Tactical Air Support Group at Bien Hoa Air Base in the **Republic of Vietnam** from **May 1968** to **May 1969**.



As he served our country and protected the rights and freedoms of all Americans, Stout truthfully learned how to really appreciate the country he calls home.

“I have lived in third-world countries and have seen how that part of our society lives,” he said. “When you come back to the United States after a year or two years of spending time in those places, it’s very awakening. It opens your eyes.”

The overwhelming support of the community makes days like Veterans Day, and familiarly national holidays like Memorial Day, when people take the time to honor those who lost their lives in battle, an important part of our country’s history.

“We’re in the middle of the country — what they call fly-over country — and the people here bleed red, white and blue. They really do,” Stout said. “They know the sacrifices and know the cost. They’re supportive of our Post and military veterans in general.”

After the speakers completed their speeches, several wreathes were placed on the foot of the doughboy statue, commemorating veterans from each branch of the military. After the presentation of arms, Taps was performed. As the bugle swelled with the solemn song, it gave those in attendance a moment to reflect upon those who have valiantly served our great country.

“We want to pay respects to all veterans who have faithfully and loyally served this nation,” Stout said. “Veterans Day is meant to be a day of celebration. It’s about providing a service to your country, focusing on the common good rather than serving yourself.”

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