

Local WWII veteran receives 100th flag of Operation: Let It Wave

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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Thomas Lowe, a veteran of World War II who served in the United States Navy, received an extremely dignified honor from a local organization that serves veterans in an astounding way.

Operation: Let it Wave, created by Rodney and Gretchen Cook of Mission: American Gratitude, dedicated a brand new, American-made US flag at Lowe's home in Alton on Saturday, July 18. This was a special occasion for the Operation, as it was the 100th flag that they had given to a veteran in the River Bend. The honored veteran was shocked to see a crowd forming out on his front lawn. His family kept the dedication a surprise, and a surprise it truly was.

Alton Mayor Brant Walker was on hand to deliver a special proclamation; he thanked Mr. Lowe of his service in one of our country's greatest fights, and declared July 18, 2015, as "Thomas Lowe Day."

"It is rare that I get to be in the presence of a hero," Mayor Walker said, "Thank you so much for all that you have done for our country."

U.S. Navy Seaman 1st Class Thomas Lowe served in the NOB Company from 1943-1946. He received his Naval training at the Grissom Air Reserve Base in Bunker Hill, Ind. After he received training as a mess cook, Lowe headed out to see on the USS Winged Arrow.

He was stationed in the war-ridden Guam. His ship was once damaged by a hurricane, which ripped a 14-foot hole in the bow of the ship. While it was repaired, the ship landed in Saipan. While there, he met with his brother, who was a member of the U.S. Army at the time.

"I knew he was over there, but I never thought I would actually run into him," Lowe said.

Lowe returned to the U.S. on the USS Grafton, and arrived in Seattle, Wash. After his honorable discharge, Lowe worked and eventually retired from Illinois American Water.

His three sons, grandchildren, and other family members had come to see the dedication.

Mission: American Gratitude is an organization that coordinates large celebrations from service men and women who return home from action to their hometowns in the River Bend area. During Operation: Let It Wave, the Cooks' hand deliver flags to honorably discharged veterans who do not have one already displayed at their home.

One thing that sets the Cooks' organization apart from other operations like it is that if any of the flag-receiving veterans have any problems whatsoever with their flag, Operation: Let It Wave will replace the flag and its hardware free of charge, as a courtesy to the veterans.



