

The Bandera PROPHEET

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World War II veteran and Medina native honored for Flag Day

By Jessica Nohealapa'ahi
The Bandera Prophet

In honor of Flag Day, celebrated annually on June 14, Medina Community Matters: Faith and Freedom paid special tribute to World War II Veteran Dayton Whitehead.

The program, held Monday at the Medina Library, included flag presentations to Whitehead, 95, and a walk down Memory Lane, as told by his daughter Darlene Stevens. Medina Community Matters host Vicki Shroyer also celebrated the attendance of WWII Veteran Jud Ashmore, 99.

“It’s very unusual to have two World War II veterans in one room,” Shroyer said. “[Ashmore] didn’t want me to say too much about him... he is well-known as a great newscaster...and served in the Pacific during World War II.”

~ Narrating her ancestry, Stevens explained her family first arrived in the area in the 1840s, when the Sutherlands settled in Medina. The Whiteheads came along a generation later in 1881. Eventually, her grandparents would meet, and her father was born in 1928.

“No one would have survived if wouldn’t have been for fish and squirrels,” she said, adding deer didn’t appear until the 1950s. “Times were very, very hard back then.”

The only girl with three brothers, Stevens regaled several stories from her childhood. Whether camping on the river during the summer, or “coon-huntin’” in the winter, she recalled wonderful memories of eating fish and finding snakes in minnow buckets.

“I’m a daddy’s girl and we still dance together,” Stevens said. Proclaiming him a Jack of All Trades, Stevens said throughout her father’s lifetime, he installed water lines for the City of Bandera, worked on roads for Bandera County, and served as Medina constable. “He worked during the day and he plowed the field at night with a [flash]light,” Stevens said. “He worked hard to make sure his four children had what we had, and you know what, we thought we were the richest people in the world.”

A hard-working and humble man, Whitehead finds it difficult to speak about his time in the war. Recalling those memories often creates overwhelming emotions, and he prefers to pay homage to his veteran brothers and sisters.

“I did not know he was a veteran. He never told us,” Stevens said. “Until I was way up in years did I ever know. So I’m very proud that I know that now.”

During Monday’s program, Bandera American Legion Post 157 Commander Susan Junker presented a pin to Whitehead for Women’s Veterans Day, as well as a basket of “consumables,” things that don’t require dusting or need to be placed on a shelf, including homemade fudge, apple crisp, and other goodies.

Field Representative Jordan Cook, with U.S. Congressman Chip Roy’s San Antonio office, presented a U.S. Flag that flew over the Capitol in Whitehead’s honor. District Director Kellie Early, with State Representative Andrew Murr’s office in Kerrville, presented Whitehead a Texas State Flag that flew over the Texas Capitol.

“This is to honor all veterans, men and women,” Whitehead said.

Please listen to the full presentation, including more comments and conversation with Opal Boyle, Cecil LeSturgeon and others, and stories from Whitehead.

To watch the video, please go to <https://www.facebook.com/banderaprophet>