

Local legionnaire honored by Kentucky American Legion

The Kentucky American Legion honored a local legionnaire who has dedicated more than half a century of his life to helping veterans through the organization.



Submitted

George Larsen

George Larsen, a military veteran and longstanding member of American Legion Post 113 in Elizabethtown, received the Distinguished Service Award for “outstanding leadership and courage.” The award is presented annually to a legion member who exhibits these traits. A similar award also is given to honor a member who has died, Larsen said. But Larsen was quick to shine the spotlight on Post 113, saying it took everyone to make the award a reality.

Larsen, 81, was born in Iowa in 1930 in the midst of the Great Depression. “We didn’t have running water or electricity,” he said. During that time, he counted his father as his mentor and said the insights he provided coupled with the tutelage of his teachers carried over into his military and professional careers. “He taught me if you can’t be loyal to your superiors then you better move on,” Larsen said.

Larsen served in the U.S. Army for twenty three years and is a Korean War veteran, describing the conditions of the terrain as a “no man’s land.” “It was the coldest time I’ve ever (witnessed), and I came from a cold state,” he said.

To this day, he said, he still gets questioned about America’s success during the war. When asked, Larsen directs the person to juxtapose North Korea and South Korea today. “North Korea looks like it did when we were born,” he said, while South Korea has embraced modern technology and built its economy.

Larsen matured quickly once joining the Army, earning a promotion to sergeant major around the age of 23 while serving as a member of the artillery. Prior to joining the Army, he worked on the assembly line at a washing machine factory. “I thought, there’s got to be something out there better in life,” he said.

After retiring from military service, Larsen worked for the Fort Knox Federal Credit Union for 20 years and has spent 51 years with the American Legion. He has held most of the positions at Hardin Post 113 and was the post commander for five years. He also was named Kentucky Legionnaire of the Year in 2002 and 2008.

As part of his duties, he attained an all-time high in membership and has been recognized for attracting 100 new members annually for twenty four years. He also has helped organize the Memorial Day parade for 25 years and was the grand marshal in 2005.

Larsen said the legion's primary goal is to assist veterans, and it is the function most fulfilling. But the post also holds numerous roles in the community, such as providing scholarships to local schools and assisting with the Special Olympics.

Larsen said he finds it remarkable to watch special needs children compete in the competition, an event which he said has brought tears to his eyes in the past.

Larsen also enjoys attending conventions through his work with the American Legion, though his age has forced him to scale his traveling back.

"I went to Reno (once)," he said with a smile. "It was a little expensive, but wouldn't you know, I hit a jackpot on a slot machine in a casino," he said.

In the citation presented by the Kentucky American Legion, former Post 113 Commander Eddie Hack noted Larsen's ability to downplay his work.

"George doesn't like to take a lot of credit for what he does," Hack stated. "But he does a lot."

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