

# Local veteran awarded French Legion of Honor

*Hallie Lewis of Mt. Vernon receives the medal of honor from France for his World War II service*

**BY EMILY ROTH**

SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — The highest honor bestowed by the nation of France was awarded to a Mt. Vernon man and World War II veteran on Saturday as Hallie Lewis, age 90, accepted the French Legion of Honor medal.

The award ceremony was held in the Koziara Terminal Lobby at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport where Lewis not only received the medal, but also commendations from Congressman Bill Enyart, Rep. John Cavalletto and Mt. Vernon Mayor Mary Jane Chesley.

Accompanying Lewis' medal was

a certificate which stated in French, "The Republic of France, order of the National Legion of Honor, the President of the Republic of France, the Grandfather and National Order of the Legion of Honor name Monsieur Hallie F. Lewis, veteran of the World War II United States Army Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur."

Lewis spent three years of service overseas, which included time in Sicily, Italy, Germany and North Africa as well as France. He earned seven combat stars and a medal bestowed upon him by Gen-

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**RECOGNITION FROM FRANCE** — The French Legion of Honor medal and certificate were only two of several honors bestowed upon Hallie Lewis on Saturday. He also received commendations from Congressman Bill Enyart, Rep. John Cavalletto and Mt. Vernon Mayor Mary Jane Chesley who proclaimed May 24 as Hallie Lewis Day in Mt. Vernon.

## French:

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eral George S. Patton for his participation in the Sicily campaign. In Sicily, Lewis moved ammunition to the front lines. He was also awarded the Soldier's Medal in Munich, Germany, for brav-

ery. "I was in a time bomb explosion," explained Lewis, "and helped pick up 42 kids ... it went off at 12 noon. What the Germans had done was left a time bomb on the railroad yards in Munich, Germany, and these people were injured getting food out of the cars when the bomb went off."

The bomb is one of two major memories for Lewis. The other comes from his experience during the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp.

"The two things I remember was the time bomb explosion and going through Dachau. When we went through there they had people in railroad cars and were getting ready to take them in and cremate them. The war was over, I have pictures of all that."

Not all of the medals he was entitled to were received, as Lewis' records burned in the 1972 National Personnel Records Center fire in St. Louis.

Lewis reached the rank of Private First Class. "I was a young pup," he said. "I graduated in June and went into the Army that year, December of '43. They gave me weeks to get ready and I went out on Jan. 12."

Lewis believes that it is important for the young people of today to know what the young people of his time accomplished.

"To this day I remain firm in my belief that the younger generation of Americans need to know about the suf-

fering that my generation endured to keep our country free," wrote Lewis and a friend from Olney in a statement. "I want them to be aware of and appreciate the sacrifices made by American soldiers. They must value their daily freedoms because once they are lost, they may never be found again."

The medal recipient encouraged those younger than him to study history from those who remember it. "Here I was a kid, and when

I was a kid, I was surprised by what I had seen," explained Lewis. "I'd never seen anything like that before. ... There's so much history that's been lost because of the veterans who have passed away after World War II."

These days Lewis keeps himself busy with his hobby of photography, as he owns a variety of cameras and enjoys taking pictures of the outdoors, particularly barns. [eroth@morningsentinel.com](mailto:eroth@morningsentinel.com) 5-25-14



Sentinel Photo/EMILY ROTH

**HONORED VETERAN** — Hallie Lewis, 90, of Mt. Vernon accepts his Legion of Honor medal from France with a speech. Lewis spent three years overseas during World War II and earned seven combat stars.