

Honoring the Greatest Generation

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MT. VERNON — More than 25 local World War II veterans were on hand Friday for the Salute to the Greatest Generation ceremony held at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

The event was designed to honor those men and women who fought so bravely for this country in its time of need, said Lt. Col. Ted Buck (USAF Retired), the main speaker at the ceremony.

“The men and women of that day served our country in the air, on the ground, and on the sea with gallantry and courage,” Buck said. “And as we honor them today, I want to thank each one for providing us with the same freedoms our forefathers wrote about so many years ago. You’ve each displayed extraordinary patriotism, heroism, and the desire to remain free.”

Friday’s ceremony was held just outside the Koziara Terminal airline gate in front of the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress Aluminum Overcast which is being displayed at the airport.

The Salute was sponsored by the Jefferson County Hall of Honor, Colonel R.D. White Veterans Museum, and the Jefferson County Heroes Memorial Committee.

The speakers included Buck and Airport Director Chris Collins, and there was also an invocation by Mike Ancona.

In addition, the American Legion Post 141 Honor Guard rendered a rifle salute and the playing of Taps as a tribute to the veterans.

“We wanted to put this together to say thank you to the World War II guys and gals for maybe the last time,” Collins said. “I’m not sure you’ll see this many World War II guys and gals together in one place because all of them are pushing 90 years old. And I’m just really thankful for all of you and everybody for coming.”

The event concluded with the veterans and their spouses lining up in front of the B-17 for a group photo.



Ceremony honors WWII veterans

Jefferson County World War II veterans and their spouses pose for pictures Friday during the Salute to the Greatest Generation held at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

Several of the World War II veterans present Friday were pleased with the ceremony.

"I think it's important myself," said Army Cpl. Leuty Chambliss of Bluford, who began his service in World War II in around 1943. "I enjoy it, coming out and meeting people and all that. I like the plane here for example."

Seaman Howard Gowler of Mt. Vernon enlisted in the Navy right out of high school in 1944. He said events like the Salute are a great chance to visit with his fellow veterans.

"A lot of these guys, I haven't seen in a few years," Gowler said.

During his address, Buck spoke with reverence of the World War II era, a time when the whole nation was involved in the war effort.

"Everybody in our community and our country was deeply patriotic and involved in (an) all-consuming war effort," Buck said. "These men who answered the call to serve were our fathers, our brothers, our uncles, our cousins, and our sons."

Now more than ever, it is vitally important these veterans be remembered and honored for their service, Buck said.

"This generation is now leaving us at a rate of several thousand a day," Buck said. "The Vietnam War vets now outnumber the World War II vets. Once again to all the World War II vets I say thank you for leading us through those troubled but eventful years."

The 'Greatest Generation'



Travis Morse/Register-News

More than 25 Jefferson County World War II veterans and their spouses posed for pictures Friday during the Salute to the Greatest Generation held at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. The event honored those men and women of the "Greatest Generation" who bravely served their country.

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