

Senior housing complex honors its aged veterans

Photos by Robert Wiener

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The people of the Lester Senior Housing Community in Whippany saluted Veterans Day on Nov. 11 with a simple and moving tribute to 20 residents who are veterans of service in World War II.

After rising from the front row of the complex's multipurpose room with the aid of a cane, Seymour Pine told the audience about the four years he spent with General George Patton's army in Europe during World War II.

"On Nov. 19, 1944, I was blown up riding in a jeep. That was the end of the war for me," he said. "Since 1944 I have been disabled, and bless this country for taking care of me through these years."

After the war, Pine joined the New York City Police Department; he retired with the rank of deputy inspector.

He reflected on his war years wistfully.



Alex Gross, administrator of the Lester Senior Housing Complex, presents a certificate of appreciation to former army sergeant and World War II veteran Alex Glass

"Unfortunately, too many of us didn't make it," he said. "To those of us who did, we are grateful to you that you're here to say 'hello' to us, and sometime in the near future, 'goodbye.'"

"My cousin fought in the Battle of the Bulge and he unfortunately was killed there," said Lester resident Anne Chanen. "But I named my son after him, and I have a very great feeling for the veterans. I love my country."

Adele Kaplan walked slowly to the podium clutching a photo of her late husband, Seymour, who entered the army six months before the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.

She spoke of their wedding at a restaurant on Prince Street in Newark, and of moving with him to military bases in North Carolina and Texas before he was dispatched to Europe.

"He was in the Normandy invasion and the Battle of the Bulge, and he received the Bronze Star for bravery. He went through plenty, but thank God he came home with his head on straight," she said. "He was gone 19 months and he came home to a 10-month-old baby. We had 55 wonderful years

together and right after his 80th birthday he left us. He is resting in peace and I hope some day I'll be able to join him."

Ulka Sommer, a Holocaust survivor from Poland, rose from the back of the room. "As a survivor I am very appreciative of the American army, because without the help of the American army and the Soviet Union we would not have won the war, and we would not be here," she said.

After the ceremony, Pine spoke with a reporter about his service and current conflicts.

"There was a purpose to World War II but there doesn't seem to be any purpose for the American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan," he said. "It's a little awkward to say 'pull out' and leave our friends in a big hole, but nevertheless, we have to think of our children, and I dread that my grandchildren might have to go through what I went through."

Lester resident Harold Siegel, who served as a cryptographic technician in the Army Air Corps, nodded in agreement.



"Unfortunately, too many of us didn't make it," World War II veteran Seymour Pine told fellow residents of the Lester Senior Housing Community

"In World War II there was a strong purpose. We were determined to knock out the German bastards," he said. "But currently it is not as clear-cut. We should be doing the fighting with other nations as a combined effort — not so much the U.S. taking the lead role."