Birthday Bash

VFW Post Celebrates WWII Vet's 105th Birthday

Sep 28, 2020

VFW Post 4250 in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, surprised its oldest living member with a birthday celebration and homage on Aug 10.

Members of the Post joined friends and neighbors in crafting a parade laden with cars, floats and golf carts, bringing it to World War II veteran Lou DeBiasio's doorstep in celebration of his 105th birthday.

"A prayer was said, the pledge rendered, a few words were spoken, and Lou was presented with his VFW membership pin and a challenge coin," said Ken Martin, a Life member of Post 4250. "As the ceremony took place, Lou sat in his wheelchair with his wife by his side taking everything in. Afterwards many people came forward to wish Lou a happy birthday and share a few words with him."

DeBiasio, believed to be the oldest living VFW member, according to Post 4250, moved this year to New Smyrna Beach, about 15 miles from Dayton Beach, to live with his son Michael DeBiasio. He is one of only about 389,000 WWII veterans alive today, according to statistics from the VA.

Born in 1915 to Italian immigrants in Creekside, Penn., DeBiasio lived through the Great Depression, quitting high school as a 14-year-old to work on a farm and later a machine shop at National Rubber in Clifton, New Jersey.

In 1943, DeBiasio was drafted into the Navy at the age of 27, where he served aboard the USS Piedmont (AD-17), a repair ship in the Pacific Theater. Aboard the Piedmont, DeBiasio repaired destroyers and other ships that had been damaged in combat. He also served as part of a 20-millimeter anti-aircraft gun crew.

DeBiasio was serving in the Sea of Japan, about 7,157 miles from the Pacific Ocean, when Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, 1945 — five days after his 30th birthday. He also occupied a role among the forces on the Japanese mainland after the war ended.

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Along with many WWII Navy veterans, DeBiasio was met by hordes of people welcoming them home near the Navy base in San Diego in September 1946.

After the war, DeBiasio married his wife, Helen, in 1948 and built a house in Lincoln Park, New Jersey, in 1955. He returned to National Rubber and performed taxidermy work in the evenings to make additional money to support his family. He continued to work at National Rubber until he retired in 1980 at age 65.

For most of his life before and after WWII, DeBiasio worked long, hard hours for minimum wage without ever complaining about his circumstances, according to Michael.

“That’s what made him and his generation so great,” Michael said. “They loved and accepted what life gave them and tried to make it better through hard work and doing the right things in life.”

When often asked about the secret to his father’s longevity, Michael added that his father’s simple philosophy is to work hard, not complain and keep a happy and positive attitude each and every day.