

'It's Who I Am'

A former VFW Post commander and Korean War veteran from New York is honored during a New York Mets game

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They stood like an orange and blue wave around the bleachers at Citi Field in Queens, New York, saluting native son and Korean War veteran Mike Liquori for a long moment.

At the ripe age of 91, Liquori embraced the honor, coming during the middle of the fourth inning of a July 30 game between his beloved New York Mets and the Washington Nationals.

The honor and gratitude from fellow Mets fans, friends and family astounded Liquori.

"It was very humbling to receive this honor from the Mets," said Liquori, a longtime VFW Post 150 commander in Queens and its current senior vice commander. "I won't ever forget this day."

For decades, outside of the stadium walls, Liquori himself swung for the fences with every VFW or veterans-related endeavor he engaged in. Those efforts included guiding and helping fellow veterans, or members of his community of Corona, Queens.

"From the time I initially met him, until now, 10 years later, Mike has not only been a close friend but a mentor as well," said Ryan Graham, an Iraq War veteran who succeeded Liquori as Post 150 commander. "Throughout the community, Mike has been as much a positive symbol as he is a community fixture."

'MAYOR OF CORONA'

Graham himself witnessed Liquori's perseverance and selfless acts of service first-hand when massive numbers of COVID-19 cases spiked in New York City in 2021. That year, one of the toughest for Liquori, personally, exemplified his motto — "Never stop living, don't give up and fight hard."

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“He had to take care of his ailing wife of 66 years, Dorothy, whom he married after serving in the Korean War as an Army combat medic,” Graham said of Mrs. Liquori, who passed away in 2022. “Adding to that, he battled cancer. He was taking care of his wife and doing chemo treatments, and yet, Mike remained a linchpin to the community and Post.”

Embodying the core values of the VFW, Liquori remained active in helping any way he could, from supervising Post fundraisers and community events to simply handing out coffee and providing an ear for a veteran to speak his or her mind.

“Besides holding the position of commander for more than a decade before my tenure, I realized Mike has been ‘the veteran’ and a sort of mayor of Corona,” Graham said. “But he won’t tell you that. What he cares about, what he truly loves, is his community and Post.”

Being the model veteran-citizen in his community comes easy to Liquori, who admitted that at 91 years old, it is all he knows how to do.

“I have always done things for my community,” Liquori said. “It’s who I am, and this old war horse will not go down easy.”

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