Death Claims Oldest Living VFW Commander-in-Chief

Feb 03, 2009

Clyde Lewis, VFW Commander-in-Chief, 1949-1950 died Feb. 4, 2009, at Plattsburgh, N.Y

Lewis, an attorney, was the first World War II veteran to attain the highest office in a major U.S. veterans organization. He was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars at the Golden Jubilee Convention in Miami, Florida in 1949.

He became active in the VFW immediately after separation from service when he joined Post 125 in Plattsburgh in September 1945. He held important elective and appointive offices in the Post, County Council and Department of New York. He was elected Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief in 1947 and Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief in 1948. He was a member of the National Legislative Committee, 1946-47, and since that time has served on many national committees. For more than 35 years he has served as chairman/vice chairman of the VFW Employee's Retirement Board.

Lewis enlisted in the Army Air Corps as a private in April 1942, was appointed an aviation cadet, commissioned and received his wings as a pilot in March 1943. He spent 21 months overseas. He was successively a Flight Commander, Squadron Operations Officer and Squadron Commander of the 401st Bombardment Group, 8AF. He completed one tour of duty and volunteered for and had almost completed his second tour by V-E Day. After his first 15 missions as a flight commander he flew as a Group or Wing leader. He was promoted to major in January 1945, and separated from service the following September.

His decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the French Croix de Guerre, the Air Medal with four clusters, Distinguished Unit Citation with one cluster and the European-African-Middle East campaign ribbon with six battle stars.

Lewis was born in Hoquiam, Washington On June 20, 1913. He graduated from South Ben (Washington) High School in 1929 and from the University of Notre Dame, where he received his BA in 1934. He entered Harvard Law School and received the degree of Juris Doctor in 1939. He was the senior member of the law firm of Lewis, Rogers, Kudrle and Meconi, P.C. in Plattsburgh. He retired from the practice on December 31, 2001.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719
info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

Online Version: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2009/2/death-claims-oldest-living-vfw-commander-in-chief

He is a member of the Capitol Hill Club, Elks, Knights of Columbus and Clinton County, New York State and American Bar Associations. In January 1970, he was invested a Knight of Malta.

From 1952 to 1995, he served as chairman of Plattsburgh Air Base Liaison Committee. He was the honorary wing commander of the 380th Bombardment Wing (SAC)/Air Mobility Wing (AMC) assigned to Plattsburgh AFB. The wing was deactivated and the base closed in 1995.

In 1985, the United States Air Force presented him its highest civilian award, the Exceptional Service Award. His biography appears in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in the World.

Lewis was married to the former Helen M. Judge of Plattsburgh, New York, who died in 1985 after 49 years of marriage. He has two sons, Rev. Clyde A. and John E. He married Patricia Davis Judge on October 1, 1988.