

Veterans welcome oldest newest member

BY JOHN HUGRO
STAFF WRITER

Floyd Staller spent two and a half years in the United States Army, a military record that qualified him to take his oath as one of the newest members of American Legion Post #360 in Farmington.

But at age 93, he is also the Post's oldest member. Recruited by member Charles Cromer, Staller has never belonged to a veterans organization. He began his Army hitch in 1943, boarding the Queen Mary.

"We landed in Scotland," he recalled, "and then went on to England. And then of course we went across the Channel into France and Germany."

He spent the anniversary of his discharge—Armistice Day, Nov. 11, 1945—at a special Veterans Day ceremony held in the Post clubhouse.

Cromer said it wasn't hard to convince Staller to join. "I just kept putting a good example in front of him," Cromer joked.

Staller, Michael Leads and William "Bill" Monson were all

sworn in by Post Commander Vern McBride Monday night, capping a ceremony that included remarks from Farmington Hills Assistant City Manager Dana Whinnery, Farmington Mayor Jim Mitchell and State Rep. Andrew Raczowski (R-Farmington Hills), who is just a few weeks away from heading off for Army Reserve duty.

On everyone's mind was the reality that the United States is currently involved in a very different kind of war than has ever been fought by the Armed Forces.

"People think we are war mongers," Post Post Commander Wally Christian said of the veterans' organization. "We are peaceful people. We work for peace in our own community."

He said members of the Post work to provide for disabled and elderly veterans, bringing them comfort and cheer especially during the holiday season.

Whinnery also encouraged a broader view of all who made sacrifices in times of war. "When we reflect on the sacrifices made by our veterans, we think of the wounded and those



American Legion Post No. 360 Commander Vern McBride (standing left) officiates the swearing in of three new post members on Veterans Day: Mike Leads, Bill Monson and 93-year-old Floyd Allan Staller, pictured right.

who made the ultimate sacrifice," he said. "All veterans leave...their loved ones. They give a piece of their life that cannot be recovered."

"Thank you for your family's tears, for your sacrifices and most of all, for your service," he added.

'WAR IS HELL'

Mitchell talked about a simple lesson he learned as a child, when he asked his uncle about the war as part of a school assignment.

"I learned he went to Italy as a 19-year-old soldier. He was very grateful to come home to the U.S. when the war ended," Mitchell said.

When the youngest pressed for details, his uncle said, "Jim, war is hell."

"No truer words were ever spoken, and I remember them to

this day," Mitchell said.

Reflecting today's war on terrorism, Cromer read a poem he penned after 9-11, called "Let's Roll Let's Roll," which recounts the bravery of passengers on Flight 93, who thwarted terrorists and lost their own lives in the process.

The poem reads, in part: "What actually went on up there we surely won't know. Courage, nerves and guts forcefully took over the show. If by chance these roles were reversed and we were there, would we honestly have made those moves in spite of despair?"

Raczowski noted that in his six years in Lansing, he might have been called into active duty three times.

"It never occurred to me how I'd feel if I had to leave home," he said.

Bledsoe sworn in as FBI academy chapter president

Farmington Hills Assistant Chief Martin Bledsoe will be sworn in as the new president of the Michigan Chapter of the FBI National Academy Associates.

The event happened Friday at the annual FBI-NAA Michigan Chapter's Fall Luncheon at the Club Venetian in Madison Heights.

Bledsoe is a graduate of the 166th session of the FBI National Academy and has served as vice president, secretary, treasurer and the curriculum committee chairman of the FBI-NAA Michigan Chapter.

He is a 1988 graduate of the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command and has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Madonna University and a master's degree of public administration from Eastern Michigan University.

Bledsoe is currently in charge of the Hills Police Department's Uniform Operations Bureau. He began his career with the department in 1972 as a cadet.

As the new president of the FBI-NAA Michigan Chapter, Bledsoe along with the executive board will represent several hundred Michigan law enforce-

"It's a pleasure to join with the men and women of the Michigan law enforcement community to continually pursue better ways to keep our cities safe and secure."



Martin Bledsoe
FBI national academy president

ment executives and supervisors who have previously attended the FBI National Academy in Virginia.

Bledsoe will work with the FBI's local training coordinator to address the training needs of law enforcement supervisors in Michigan.

"It's a pleasure to join with the men and women of the Michigan law enforcement community to continually pursue better ways to keep our cities safe and secure," Bledsoe said.

Hills Police Chief William Dwyer, a former FBI National Academy graduate, stated it is an honor to have one of the department's members serve as president of an association that has promoted professionalism through training for Michigan law enforcement executives.

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