

Community Recognition 11/7/14

In honor of Veteran's Day, I'd like to dedicate this week's Community Recognition to a local hero on many fronts. John Shirley is a living legend within our community. He is a decorated war veteran, a respected former mayor of the City of Livermore, a retired renowned veterinarian and business owner of 33 years, an active community advocate, family man and author.

During his service to our country in World War II, John earned the Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart, among other prestigious honors for his valor in battle. In 1944, he was captured by German forces, but managed to escape, a story which is detailed in his book. "I Remember" about his experiences as a combat infantryman.

In 1994, John received the French Legion of Honor from then French President Jacques Chirac. He was also honored in 2005 when a town square was dedicated in his honor for his part in liberating the people of Benwihr, France in December 1944.

Aside from serving on the Livermore City Council from 1958 to 1966, two of which he served as mayor, John has a long, prestigious record of volunteer service and community activism. In the 1950's, John became a member of the Livermore Rotary Club, joined the Livermore Chamber of Commerce, and was appointed to the Livermore City Planning Commission and since has served various other area boards and commissions.

This last summer marked the 70th anniversary of the German landing of John's unit of the 3rd Infantry Division. To honor and remember that day, he coordinated a trip with several of his comrades in arms. They visited the same sites and battlegrounds on which they stood and fought during the war. They also visited the American Cemetery where 800 3rd Infantry Division soldiers lay buried. John wrote about his personal experiences in his book, where he recounts the experiences of war. Those both ordinary and extraordinary, brutal and heart-felt.

After the War, John went to the University of California at Davis, received exceptional grades and as a result, was accepted into the inaugural class of the now-prestigious Davis veterinary school. He graduated in 1952 and opened his practice in Livermore in 1954, where he worked for 33 years.

Thank you, John for all that you have done for our community and our country; your service and sacrifice extend far beyond the confines of American soil. I'm not sure that there are words to properly express the ever-lasting importance of your selfless service and sacrifice over the years. On behalf of all the citizens of our community and our great nation, I extend my deepest gratitude. Thank you for all that you have done to make our world a better place.

~~**On this upcoming Veterans Day** — and every day — thank a veteran. Find a way. Without our veterans, our country would not be what it is today. They are our teachers, our delivery personnel, our utility workers, our grocery store attendants, our current and former mayors, the list goes on and on. If you see a military convoy on the road, wave; shake the hand of the veteran who proudly wears the hat of a former unit or battle. Say thank you to an active military member. Take the time to stop and say hello, or make that phone call; afterall, they gave up so much of their time for you.

Keep in mind, we are only the land of the free because of the brave. Thank a veteran.