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The Sentinel

Rotary honors veterans with annual recognition



LEWISTOWN — Rotary Club of Lewistown honored veterans with their annual *“Take a Veteran to Lunch”* appreciation meal Friday during their weekly meeting of the club at Reedsville Fire Company.

Rotary Club President William Campbell, and other Rotarians warmly welcomed keynote speaker, retired Col. Vincent J. Tedesco Jr.

Tedesco was commissioned in 1964 and began his Army career in the Artillery branch. During his 27 years of service, he commanded 3 batteries including the 1st Battalion 3rd Air Defense Artillery, 101st Airborne Division and the 6th Air Defense Artillery Brigade. Several of his military awards and achievements include the Silver Star Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, among other noteworthy decorations.

Following his military service, he worked for Lockheed Martin until 2011. During his tenure, he was granted many awards; notably, the Nova Award, the highest award that can be given to a Lockheed Martin employee.

Aside from his career, Tedesco allocated time for programs he was passionate about. For more than 30 years, he has staunchly supported Penn State Army ROTC. This program was one that was near and dear to him, as he went through the same initiative years beforehand. Since then, he has been in attendance at every formal and social event, serving as a personal mentor to each new Air Defense Artillery officer, encouraging Cadets and Cadre alike. Moreover, he created and sponsored an endowed scholarship for Penn State Army ROTC Cadets.



When first entering into Army ROTC, Tedesco was given a golden rule of thumb. “Army ROTC, first thing they taught me — 3 M’s, every part of your day: mission, men, myself; that’s the order in which you took care of things that day.

“It made my life simple. I knew exactly every day, from the day I was commissioned, what drove my life. I saw those things, I took care of the mission, I took care of my soldiers, and then, I took care of whatever I had to do. It made life easy to do it.”

Tedesco entered his time of service during the draft, which to this day remains a controversial subject for many, but instead of viewing it with disdain, he found it to be a blessing.

“All of a sudden, men were living with men that they had no idea existed ... and we were forced to live together. We worked together. We had common goals. And guess what? We learned that we were all Americans ... We all wanted better lives for our families. We all wanted to get on with our lives and do better and we realized that only happened when people that we didn’t know were now our brothers who were working with us to accomplish those goals.”

When reflecting on his military service, Tedesco looks back fondly on memories made.

“Fifty-five years later, I still go to my annual reunion with the guys I served with and it’s all the same. We’re brothers and we care about each other and

we go through life together.

“For me, it’s been a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful experience. Whether you were in combat or not in combat, you still live with this band of brothers; there’s still men and women out there ... (that) you would protect. Because you knew that they would come and protect you.”

In the closing of his speech, Tedesco gave a succinct account of his military career: *“People are always saying, ‘thank you for your service’ and all that, and for me, there’s nothing to thank me for. I spent 27 years doing the best thing I could be doing in my life ... those were the best years of my life. And in the 32 years since I’ve served, it’s still been beautiful. Because the friendships and the support I’ve received in those years goes on and on and on.”*

Despite the tribulations faced, he remains uplifted, spearheads obstacles with grace, smiles and brings light to each day with witty banter. Among these attributes, Tedesco leaves his legacy rooted in both gratitude and honor for his service and sacrifice to this country, like millions of his fellow veterans.

“I’m a lucky guy. Eighty years of luck; the luck just goes on and on ... and so many times, good things happen to you and you think they are bad things. And they turn out to be good things. Just amazing.”

And so it is.

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