

AREA VETERAN RECEIVES MEDAL

Hallie F. Lewis, 90, of Mt. Vernon was the man of honor Saturday where he received a long overdue medal.

Lewis was awarded the French Legion of Honor for his U.S. Army service in World War II nearly 70 years ago.

The Legion of Honor is the most prestigious award given by the French government to servicemen, according to Earl White, southern division field supervisor for the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Those selected are appointed to the rank of Knight of the Legion of Honor," according to the French

Consulate. "Created to honor extraordinary contributions to the country, the Legion of Honor is France's highest distinction."

Lewis was honored with a dinner and several certificates recognizing the achievement including one making May 24, 2014 Hallie Lewis Day.

Lewis thanked his wife and family and all those in attendance in his acceptance speech and noted that he has spent many years trying not to think about the war.

It was a trip to Washington D.C., where he was the guest of honor, that began to spark many of his memories of

serving his country during World War II.

"After I got back, I started thinking about what I went through," he said. "I had forgotten a lot."

He and four brothers all served in the war and also all worked for the railroad.

"We didn't talk about the war," he said. "We talked about the railroad."

Lewis entered the Army right after high school in 1943 and served for more than two years where he moved ammunition, food and supplies by truck through Italy and to the front lines in Germany.

He is also the recipient of the Soldier's Medal for Bravery and seven Combat Stars.

White ended the presentation with the words emblazoned on a war memorial in Sigel, IL.

"To those who gave all, we honor you and pray for eternal rest. To those who are missing in action, we express remembrance and hope. To those who were wounded in action, we honor your sacrifice. To those who were prisoners of war, we rejoice in your freedom. To those who returned home, we offer our eternal gratitude. For those who fought for it, freedom has a meaning the protected will never know."



Shopper's Weekly Staff Photo

Hallie Lewis, a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, receives the French Legion of Honor Medal on Saturday from Lynn Brown, a veterans service officer with the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs and Earl White, southern division field supervisor for the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs.