

Former Alderman and Vice Mayor honored as December Veteran of the Month

By Sherri Onorati, Special to The Leader

Covington native William Oliver Beasley was honored as the December Veteran of the Month during a celebration held at the Tipton County Museum, Veteran Memorial and Nature Center, concluding the inaugural year of the recognition ceremonies of Tipton County veterans.

Starting the ceremony, museum director Barrie Foster thanked everyone for attending and remarked on a successful year of honoring Tipton County veterans.

“This wraps up one whole year that we’ve been doing this at the museum,” she said. “We have approximately 6,000 veterans in Tipton County and I think this has been very successful.”

Beasley, a veteran of the World War II era, was a senior at Byars Hall High School when he and several of his classmates were called to service. They asked their principal, A.F. Bridges to intercede on their behalf, requesting a deferment in order to graduate.

“I was a 12th grader at Byars Hall High School and four or five of us boys were called to go for examination,” Beasley told those gathered at the museum. “We got together and decided to go to our principal and see if he could get us deferred long enough to graduate. We graduated on May 1 [1945] and on May 8th I was sworn into the army. That was the day that Germany surrendered. That’s a day that I should always remember.”

After graduation, Beasley was inducted into the U.S. Army and attended basic training in Florida for 17 weeks. Even though WWII had ended before he completed basic training, he was sent to Yokohama, Japan as a member of the 8th Army Signal Battalion. There he served as a switchboard operator for a year.

“The day I went in, Germany surrender and before my training was done, Japan had surrendered,” Beasley recollected. “But we knew we were headed overseas to do what the army does, taking care of law and order. I ended up in Yokohama, Japan and I was there mid Oct. ‘45 to the first of Nov. ’46. I enjoyed my year over there with no hostility, the GIs over there didn’t have any trouble with [Japanese] and it was a privilege to serve my nation.”

After serving his time, Beasley was given an honorable discharge on Dec. 13, 1946 and returned home to Covington, Tenn., where he later met the love of his life, an athletic young lady named Faye Mills.

“I played football in high school and after I came back from service, I joined a softball league and met a beautiful girl,” said Beasley. “We started dating in August and by the first week of November, we were married. She’s been in inspiration in my life and still is. And I thank her for being my wife and the mother of my children.”

Beasley and his wife, Faye, were married on Nov. 7, 1948 in Central Christian Church and had four sons, William Michael (Donna), Philip Carey, Sammy Wayne (June) and Keith Alan (Ginger), who in turn gave them seven grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

Instilled with the values of being a life-long server to others, Beasley was elected as Alderman for District 2 in Covington in 1979, where he served five consecutive terms for a total of 20 years, including serving as Covington’s vice mayor for six years. During his time in office, he was

instrumental in building the Waste Water Treatment plant, the North and South Fire Station buildings, and the Terminal Building at Covington Airport.

Beasley retired in 2003 from his residential and commercial construction business, Beasley Lumber Company, but always the believer in hard work, he didn't stay retired for long. He became a part-time employee for the Charms Candy Company, where he is still employed.

Kathy Desjarlais, the 2015 Chairman of the Tipton County Veteran Council, read Beasley's certificate of honor, "It is with heart felt appreciation for your tireless efforts in support of our United States military, the Tipton County Museum, Veteran Memorial and Nature Center in partnership with the Tipton County Veterans Council gratefully acknowledge the selfless service of our veteran of the month for December 2015, William O. Bealsey. Your dedication to our country is commendable and an honorable addition for the fight for freedom throughout the world."

In addition to the certificate of honor, Beasley was also presented with a voucher for a free canvas portrait, courtesy of Munford Funeral Home, a Veteran of the Month coffee mug and a year membership in the Tipton County Veteran's Council.

Tipton County Genealogist David Gwinn presented Beasley and his sons with a copy of an article that ran in the Covington Leader about his service in Japan, written from a letter Beasley had sent home to his father, A.A. Beasley.

"Going through my scrapbook, I found this article that ran in the Covington Leader titled, 'Japanese do many things backwards - local soldier finds Japs build houses without nails,'" said Gwinn. "In a letter Beasley wrote home to his father, he said he was promoted from private to first class, he described the hills full of caves, the fertile farmland and said the 'carpenters would not get to first base here in America. The saws are backwards – they pull instead of push and they use no nails in building a house ... I could go for some good fresh eggs and most of all for some fresh sweet milk. Of the boys from Tipton County, I have seen very few, Dorsey Robbins and Virgil Patton being the only ones.'"

Also attending the ceremony was Covington Mayor Justin Hanson, who spoke very highly of Beasley.

"This man is very special to me," said Hanson. "We do want to thank you for your lifelong service. You've been in public service all your life – serving our country, serving the city as a business owner, family man, a leader in his church and on the city board. We are so thankful for you and Miss Faye and all your wonderful family. You've raised a long line of public servants and you are to be commended. You have been an example for us all."

Thomas Lawson, the minister at Central Christian Church where Beasley and his wife have been life-long members and he is a Deacon, spoke of Beasley's leadership in the church.

"William has been apart of the eldership and one of the major leaders at the church," said Lawson. "Brother William doesn't have a whole bunch to say in a meeting, but anything he says is worth listening to and I want to thank him for that. That's a great characteristic for any church to have, to have a person who thinks things through, comes to great decisions and gets things done and I believe that's what we are honoring here today, a person who gets things done."

“I just want to thank all of you for coming out, in honoring me with this recognition,” said Beasley. “You know, I’ve said it time and time again, the good lord has giving us a great nation and it was a great honor to serve. I’ve said it once and I’ve said it a number of times, if we’re going to war and I’m needed, I’ll be glad to go again. Words can’t express what I feel about my country. We live in the greatest nation the world has ever known. People need to thank the good lord for what they’ve got... they’re Americans.

I want to thank my family – I’m thankful for my family and all my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The good lord has blessed me with a good family, a beautiful family and he continues to bless us with love and fellowship with each other.”

The Veteran of the Month program is sponsored by the Tipton County Museum, Veteran Memorial and Nature Center and the Tipton County Veterans Council. Sponsors of the monthly event include premier sponsor Tipton County Veterans Council, Patriot Bank, The Bank of Tipton and Munford Funeral Home. Underwriters include the VFW Ray Pinner Post 4840 and the Disable American Veterans Auxiliary Unit 116 in Millington and Dunham Loge 50. The next honoree will be named on Tuesday, April 14 at 6:30 p.m. The public is invited to both make nominations and attend the ceremony.