

Friend's Bob Mead honored by U.S. Army  
by Lee De Bevoise

Bob Mead of Friend recently received a Certificate of Appreciation and Letters of Thanks signed by the Army Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Army, along with official Army lapel pin as part of the Freedom Team Salute (FTS) program. He was one of three Honorees, including Robert "Bob" Zersen and Father Brian Kane. This ceremony, the first in a campaign to commend approximately 5,000 Nebraska veterans, took place this past Saturday evening in Grand Island.

"It was a total surprise," stated Mead.

The FTS program, created by the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff, has partnered with the American Legion Department of Nebraska to commend three U.S. Army Veterans who served in World War II, Korea and Iraq.

"One thing is certain – the time spent in the Army affects a Soldier's life forever. Freedom Team Salute wants to honor each and every Army veteran no matter where or when he or she served, or for how long," said Freedom Team Salute Director Col. David Griffith.

Mead, a World War II veteran, served with Company B, 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division in Europe. His unit was involved in house-to-house combat in Bonn, Germany. On April 1, 1945, the German Army surrounded Mead and the men of Company B with tanks, half tracks and machine guns. Outnumbered, Mead and his unit were forced to surrender and spent the remainder of the war as prisoners. Mead was discharged May 3, 1946, at Camp Chaffee, Ark. This information and much more appear in "Memories of World War II", which he wrote in 2007.

Zersen was drafted into the Army during the Korean War.

Father Brian Kane is a Roman Catholic priest with the Diocese of Lincoln, Neb., who after receiving a direct commission to first lieutenant in the Nebraska Army National Guard as a chaplain, was deployed to Iraq.

Recognizing the powerful impact that a simple expression of gratitude can have, the Army created the FTS program in May 2005. The program gives the public the opportunity to thank U.S. Army Veterans for their service, and the Commendations bestowed upon them recognize their support and sacrifice.

To date, FTS has honored more than 1 million U.S. Army veterans, spouses, parents and employers around the globe.

"It is a recognition that is long since due," Col. Griffith said. "Army veterans have served this Nation with honor and dignity. Freedom Team Salute is a way to recognize our veterans and show them just how much we appreciate the legacy of loyal service they have passed on to this generation of Soldiers."

When asked what he would tell a young man or woman who was considering joining the military, Mead got a bit of a twinkle in his eye and responded, "I think that it's a very good education."

The City of Friend would also like to thank Mead for his service and to let him know that we are proud of him.