

Memorial Day breakfast, 2003

Memorial Day breakfast honors WWII vets

By AMY TAYLOR
Special to The Villager

People of all ages and in uniforms of all colors attended The Woodlands World War II Memorial Day Breakfast, held Saturday at The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel and Convention Center.

The event, scheduled in conjunction with the official dedication ceremony of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., was a success, according to many of the veterans who attended. John Morphis, a retired Chief in the Navy, said, "I'm delighted that so many people are showing an interest in what's gone on in the past, especially the younger generations."

State Rep. Rob Eissler, R-The Woodlands, who served as master of ceremonies, spent almost an hour going through the crowd, making jokes and introducing individual veterans.

"We should have a breakfast like this every day. We should remember this every day," he said. "This is a generation that doesn't talk about it. They just did it."

Two of the veterans Eissler introduced were Sergeant Emitt Lewis and Army Nurse Margaret Horan Brown. Lewis was drafted underage into the Army in 1942 with only a second-grade education, and thanked the military for



Alfred Beauschamp, center, a resident of The Woodlands who was a Merchant Marine from 1943-1958 and a veteran of WWII and the Korean Conflict, with his wife Glennie, left, chats with Keith Stelter, a freelance writer from Spring who is also a veteran of the Korean War during The Woodlands World War II Memorial Breakfast at The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel and Convention Center on Saturday. Photo by Jerry Baker

continuing his education and for giving him a purpose in his life. Brown, who served as a nurse at the Battle of the Bulge, said, "I had the honor and the privilege to comfort and to care for so many of you, my colleagues, my comrades."

"A lot of people see Memorial Day as a kickoff to summer vacation," said State Senator Tommy Williams, R-The Woodlands, who spoke briefly to the crowd of 300. Williams was "really proud of this community," he continued, for remembering "all those who made the ultimate sacrifice."

U.S. Congressman Kevin Brady, R-The Woodlands, was the

featured speaker of the breakfast, and has played a crucial role in both the construction of the World War II Memorial, and opening new veteran's health clinics in the Conroe area. Brady spent much of his speech emphasizing what current Americans owe to the veterans of World War II.

"Our veterans are our heroes, and on Memorial Day we get to gather and tell them that. We can never repay (our) debt, but we can try."

Brady also had a message for soldiers currently serving overseas, whom he felt had been demoralized by the recent events.

"I think our troops are a little disheartened by the prison (scan-

dal). I just felt like I needed to say that we're still pulling for them."

Though most of the veterans at the breakfast were from the World War II generation, there were many members of younger generations taking part as well. The Oak Ridge High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps was on hand to provide the color guard, and there were several children and grandchildren of veterans there, too.

Army Captain Patrick Connelly gave an impromptu speech as a representative of the younger generations of veterans.

"Every generation has a challenge. My generation's challenge is a global one. My time in Iraq allowed me to see this World War II generation with new eyes."

Many of the younger children were impressed with several military vehicles on display in front of the hotel. These included a Willys Jeep with a 50-caliber machine gun mounted on it, and an odd-looking troop carrier called a half-truck, which had tank treads in lieu of rear wheels.

It was a day shared by those of all generations, both old and young. Overall, emphasis was placed on remembering and honoring the "greatest generation," and the veterans of World War II.

"Don't let us forget you," said Eissler. "Don't make us have a breakfast to remember."