



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 12, 2023

CONTACT INFO. :

Office of the Mayor

Patricia Resende

Dir. of Communications & Project Mgt.

(401) 435-7500 Ext 11013

presende@eastprovidenceri.gov

Note to Editors: Please see attached photos

City of East Providence celebrates Veterans Day, honors 100-year-old USMC Veteran

EAST PROVIDENCE, RI – The City of East Providence held its fourth annual Veterans Day ceremony on Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023 at the Garden of Flags Memorial, founded and maintained by the East Providence Battle Monuments Foundation.

During the event, U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sergeant, Jean Kesner, an East Providence resident was presented with a key to the city from Mayor Bob DaSilva.

On her 20th birthday in April of 1943, she walked across the street from her secretarial position at Rhode Island Hospital Trust Bank in Providence to enlist in the United States Marine Corps Woman's Reserve. Three days later she was sworn in and headed to Hunter College in New York for basic training. Next was Camp LeJeune, North Carolina for NCO training. Jean graduated as a Corporal and worked as an administrative person in the Sergeant Major's Office.

The Marine Corps Women's Reserve was established in July of 1942, so when Jean enlisted it had been in existence for just nine months. Women did not participate in combat, however their presence in the service provided much needed support on the home front, releasing men for combat duty. The women worked in many capacities including administrative staff, truck mechanics, laboratory technicians, radio operators and training to mention a few.

Ms. Kesner was promoted to Staff Sergeant at the end of 1943 and was a drill instructor for new female recruits. She was honorably discharged at the end of the war.

Living in a barracks with young women from all over the United States was quite an education. Jean learned to appreciate her New England upbringing and the support and love she received from her family back in East Providence. Her parents were proud immigrants to the United States and even prouder that their daughter stepped up to serve their new country.

After WWII, Ms. Kesner returned to East Providence to raise her family. She was one of the first women veterans to be hired by the U.S. Postal Service for the next thirty years, retiring as a Postal Trainer in 1990.

Ms. Kesner's six children beam with pride each and every Veteran's Day as they honor their mother, her patriotism, bravery and selfless act of stepping forward when her country called.

"She did that not for recognition, she did it to protect us, to protect our nation, so that all of us can continue to maintain our way of life, so that we may enjoy the freedoms that she, that her service one nation provided," Mayor Bob DaSilva said.

"We are here with so many honored guests, our veterans, my fellow veterans, I thank you for your service and sacrifice," Senator Reed said. "We have to give a special shout out to Jean Kesner, her extraordinary commitment to the nation leaving safety and security of East Providence to join the USMC in World War II and serve with distinction and continue to serve as a leader in the postal serve – thank you so much – you make us all proud. You are an inspiration to a generation of young women serving today."

Kesner, along with Senator Jack Reed, also a Veteran and chairman of the Armed Services Committee and Mayor Bob DaSilva, laid down a memorial wreath for those veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice.

U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Gov. McKee, Secretary Gregg Amore, Rhode Island Senators Robert Britto and Pamela Lauria and East Providence Council President Bob Rodericks thanked local veterans for their service and dedication to the their nation.

The East Providence Police and Fire Honor Guards participated in the ceremony along with local scouts who handed out flags to attendees. Cards made by Waddington Elementary Grade 4 students in Ms. Amaral's and Ms. Feather's classes were handed to local veterans/

The National Anthem was sung by Riverside resident Andrea Vargas and Taps was played by East Providence High School Junior James Cassamas. Bristol County Fifes & Drums played patriotic music throughout the event.

















