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Arnold "Buck" Zahratka officially received France's Medal of Honor at age 96 on Wednesday. The WWII veteran is pictured with the 2nd Battalion, 424th Infantry and members of the Red Cross at Losheim during WWII.

Buck's story

Veteran shares story, receives France's Medal of Honor decades after military service

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A spelling error led to WWII veteran Arnold "Buck" Zahratka, 96, earning one of the most famous military decorations in the world 78 years after the fact.

Zahratka's son-in-law, Dale Stadstad said he was searching an online record of Buck's WWII history with the 106th Infantry Division when he noticed Buck's last name was misspelled.

"A guy (Jim West) in Indiana keeps a record and registry of the 106th online. He mentioned a lot of the Americans who had received the Bronze Star went on to receive the (French) Medal of Honor," Stadstad said. "I contacted the French Consulate in Chicago who sent the paperwork."

On February 16, 2022, after a ten-month process of verifying Buck's service in the war and his community service, Buck received a letter on behalf of French President Emmanuel Macron, a French Medal of Honor, and its corresponding diploma.

However, strict protocols allow only Macron or a Consul General of France to pin it on Buck. In a special ceremony on Wednesday, France's highest distinction was officially bestowed to the local veteran at the American Legion Club Post 79.

Seventy-nine years ago, Buck, the son of Tom and Bessie Zahratka of Montgomery, worked in a factory

that canned chicken for U.S. troops. At the age of 18 years old, Buck was drafted and began serving our country with John Holtz, also of Montgomery.

He remembers the day like it was yesterday. "We left Montgomery on a train; went to Fort Snelling, got our equipment, and went to Camp Blanding in Florida for training," he said.

The two young men trained for 17 weeks, then went to different camps. Zahratka continued with more training in North Carolina and Indiana before joining the 106th Infantry Division, also known as the Golden Lions. According to the Army, Buck showed proficiency as an expert rifleman, machine gunner, and using hand grenades.

The 106th was shipped to England for further training before going to France's Normandy region. With vivid detail, the 96-year-old veteran remembers reaching the French shores in the wintry dark of night.

"We went by a big ship and could only get off in Le Havre, France. The ships couldn't get close to shore, so they put a rope over the side of the ship, and we climbed down the rope with all of our equipment, everything we owned," he shared. "It was blacker than the ace of spades - no lights. I kept wondering if I was going to slip off that rope and go down into the water ... You'd never come up with all of that equipment on ya. I don't know if anyone did or not."

Zahratka to 10



City approves mosquito control

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Summer and mosquito season are right around the corner, and the City of Montgomery is taking steps to control the insects.

At its regular meeting on Monday, the council approved an agreement with Clarke Environmental Mosquito Management, Inc. for mosquito control this year. The contract includes treatment of the stormwater ponds and the biweekly fogging - eight times during the season. The total cost - stormwater pond treatment and fogging is \$12,964. Broken down it is \$2,200 for the pond treatments and \$10,764 for the fogging.

According to the city, last year for the company to treat and fog was \$11,000.

Also at the meeting, Jason Gangeloff, the Montgomery Ambulance Service Director, updated council about Erin Township's desire to use a different ambulance service.

He said at an Erin Township meeting in October, 2021, there was a township board request to leave the Montgomery ambulance district for Northfield. The concern, Gangeloff said, was because Northfield Ambulance provides Advanced Life Support (ALS), whereas Montgomery provides Basic Life Support (BLS).

He said the township has been

City to 3

Quilting for Ukraine

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The quilters at St. John Lutheran Church have been putting in extra hours this month to make quilts for those in need, especially in Ukraine. On Monday, March 21, the group finished a quilt of sunflowers, which is the country's national flower.

The group normally meets the second and fourth Monday of the month, but since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the women have been doing double-time to stitch together aid for Ukrainian refugees. "We usually don't get this many

done - usually seven or eight each Monday," explained Doris Hendrickson. "This month we've been making at least ten quilts a week."

The group has finished 40 quilts and hopes to complete up to 60 by the end of the month. They are currently looking into direct routes to get the blankets to the Ukrainians.

If you would like to help, contact St. John Lutheran Church at 507-364-5002.

By Bill Murphy TampaThe group normally meets twice a month on Mondays, but since Russia has invaded Ukraine, the ladies are meeting every

Czech dancer topiary takes shape

Meghan Petricka, the winner of Discovery+ show "Clipped" and her husband Christopher "Topher" worked on Montgomery's Czech-themed topiary at the Revival on Main on Monday and Tuesday. Petricka, who now lives in Eden Prairie, partnered with the Arts and Heritage Center of Montgomery to collect monetary and material to support creating a 76-inch-tall female Czech dancer. She and Topher, her welding-wiz of a husband, built the topiary's figure on Monday before adding the floral enhancements. Petricka said she wants the piece to be fun, colorful and interactive so people can stand next to it and pose for photos like they're dancing with it. The big reveal will be held March 24 at the Montgomery Farmer's Market.

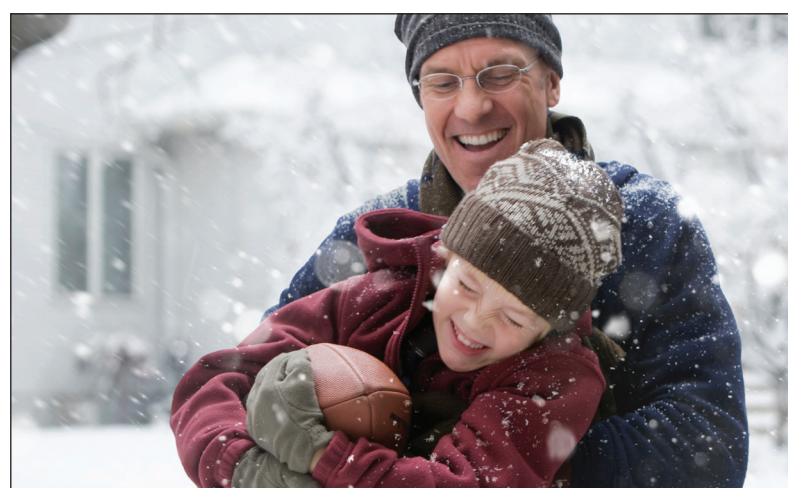


Wade Young Photo



Wade Young Photo

The Quilting group at St. John Lutheran Church stand by a special quilt for the Ukrainian refugees on Monday, March 21. Pictured (front, left to right) Doris Hendrickson, Myrna Terwedo, Kathy Derhaag, Maridan Nesmoie, Garie Teig, (back) Irene Jindra, Laurie Smith, Jan Cotten, and Carol Kaderlik.



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