



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Bob Zafran presents a flag to Andy Austin on Monday at Independence State Airport in memory of Brig. Gen. Staryl C. Austin Jr., who died Jan. 1, 2015.

REMEMBERING HEROES

Veterans, pilots honored on Memorial Day

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Ceremonies throughout Polk County honored Veterans who died while overseas as well as those who took their last flights in the last year, whether they served in the armed forces or not.

In Independence, Danny Jaffer served as the master of ceremonies for the 22nd annual Memorial Day Salute, Aviator Memorial Tribute.

Andy Austin and Kathy Austin were emotional about receiving a flag in honor of Brig. Gen. Staryl Austin Jr., who died Jan. 1, 2015.

The flag was flown over the United States Capitol in his honor, as were the 12 other flags presented to survivors of aviators who died in the last year. It was presented by Bob Zafran, Fleet Reserve Association.

"When you live with someone every day, and experience that person's kindness, generosity and love, it kind of gives you an egocentric view of that person," Kathy Austin said. "Coming out to something like this gives a broader sense of who Staryl was."

Several people spoke to Andy and Kathy about Staryl, Andy said.

"It's really a privilege to hear people talk about how much he meant to them," Andy Austin said. "He was pretty well liked. He never said a bad word about anybody. The reverse is also true: I've never heard anyone say a bad word about him."

Rep. Paul Evans (D-District 20) presented the welcome, while Paul Disney, retired colonel in the U.S. Army, delivered the tribute to pilots.

In Dallas, the 24th annual Avenue of Flags flew over Dallas Cemetery all weekend, beginning on Thursday when volunteers placed about 700 flags commemorating local deceased veterans. The Memorial Day program featured retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Frank Flux and a performance by the Dallas High School Choir.

Both ceremonies included participation by local Boy Scout Troops, who led the Pledge of Allegiance and handed out flags.



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Each flag lining the Avenue of Flags in Dallas Cemetery is dedicated to a veteran. This year, the display had about 700 flags.



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Staff Sgt. Dannielle Ritacco, of the Air National Guard Band of the Northwest, plays taps after the aviator memorial tribute at the Independence Airport on Monday.



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A legion of volunteers helps set up the Avenue of Flags in Dallas Cemetery each year before the ceremony on Memorial Day. Here, volunteers assemble flags to be placed.



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The flag at the Independence Airport flies at half-staff until noon, in honor of those who died.



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Civil Air Patrol cadets present the Pilot Memorial Wreath, provided by the Oregon Pines Chapter 99s, during the 22nd annual Memorial Day Salute, aviator memorial tribute, at the Independence Airport on Monday.