

PRESS RELEASE

November 18, 2009

ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS CELEBRATE VETERANS DAY

Board Honors Anthony Branco, Maurice Scott, Cornelia Thompson, And the Late Dwayne Kelley



Photo by Glen Frieson

Freeholders congratulate their Veterans Observance honorees: (front and center, l. to r.) honorees Anthony Branco and Cornelia G. Thompson; (back row, l. to r.) Freeholder President Blonnie R. Watson, Freeholder Vice President Ralph R. Caputo, Manita Seabrooks-Kelley (widow of honoree), Freeholder Rufus I. Johnson, Freeholder Carol Y. Clark and Maurice T. Scott (honoree)

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its 2009 Veterans Observance on Thursday, November 12th, at the Hall of Records to recognize the patriotism and sacrifices of Essex County veterans, past and present. The Observance included a program during which four Essex County veterans were honored for their service to their country and presented with framed Commendations, plaques and service medals. The ceremony was followed by a catered reception for their families, friends and invited guests.

This years honorees were: **Anthony Branco** of Belleville (sponsored by Freeholder Vice President Ralph R. Caputo); **Maurice T. Scott** of East Orange (sponsored by Freeholder Carol Y. Clark); **Cornelia G. Thompson** of East Orange (sponsored by Freeholder Rufus I. Johnson); and the late **Dwayne M. Kelley** of West Orange (sponsored by Freeholder President Blonnie R. Watson).



Photo by Glen Frieson

Anthony Branco of Belleville (seated) is congratulated by Freeholder Vice President Ralph R. Caputo during the ceremony.

Anthony Branco served his country as a member of the U. S. Army during World War II. Born near Catanzaro, Calabria, Italy, he emigrated to the United States in 1938 at the age of 17. After being drafted into the Army in 1943, he became a naturalized U. S. citizen and was mobilized to Morocco as a member

of the 3rd Infantry Division under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, before finding himself back in Italy for the Battle of Anzio and the Siege of Montecassino, where he was seriously wounded and then hospitalized for more than six months. For his military service, Mr. Branco received numerous medals, including: the Combat Infantry Badge, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Good Conduct Medal, the European, African and Middle Eastern Theater Medal with three Bronze Combat Stars, and the World War II Victory Medal. Following his discharge from the Army, Mr. Branco enjoyed a long career as a carpenter and sheet metal mechanic. He was a volunteer for more than 25 years at East Orange Veterans Hospital and has been a member of the Society of the 3rd Infantry Division, the Disabled American Veterans and the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation. Mr. Branco resides in Belleville with his wife of 62 years, Lena. They are the proud parents of Rose, Anthony, Jr., and Raymond, and the grandparents of three.



Photo by Glen Frieson
Freeholder Carol Y. Clark presents plaque to her honoree, Maurice T. Scott of East Orange.

Maurice T. Scott enlisted in the United States Marine Corps during the Korean Era. He was assigned to the 2nd Division 10th Field Artillery Regiment at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, was transferred to Puerto Rico where he was assigned to the Range Patrol, and then returned to his original assignment at Camp LeJeune. Mr. Scott was trained in the use of the M105 Howitzer and suffered partial hearing loss in one ear due to its extremely loud noise. He received a Good Conduct Medal, a Sharpshooter Medal for qualification with the M1 rifle, and was honorably discharged with the rank of Private First Class. Following his military service, Mr. Scott enjoyed a 25-year career as a Mail Department Supervisor with FM Global before retiring in 2001. He is a lifetime member of VFW Randolph-Anderson Post 9015, where he served as President from 1974-75, and currently serves as an Alcoholic Beverage Control Commissioner and member of the Office of Emergency Management for the City of East Orange, as well as President of his tenant association at The Brookside. He married his wife, Grace (nee Young), in 1955, and he is the proud father of Bryant (deceased), Felecia, Alonda and Anthony.



Photo by Glen Frieson
Cornelia G. Thompson of East Orange receives her plaque from Freeholder Rufus I. Johnson

Cornelia G. Thompson served in the U. S. Army from July 29, 1945, until April 15, 1947. She was assigned to the 318th Army Air Force Base Unit where, as a Private First Class, she served as a Medical

Administrative Assistant, sending and filing military correspondence while also performing supervisory duties. Following her honorable discharge, she attended Harlem Hospital School of Nursing, earned her B.S.N. degree from Seton Hall University, and an M.P.A. degree from Rutgers University. During her long and distinguished career in nursing, she worked at numerous venues, including: New York City's Harlem Hospital, Newark's Martland Hospital, East Orange Veterans Hospital and Lyons Veterans Medical Center in Lyons, New Jersey, from where she retired as Associate Chief of Nursing Service for Education in 1981, after 30 years of service. She then continued to work at East Orange General Hospital until 1991, when she retired for good. Ms. Thompson is a Life Member of the NAACP of the Oranges & Maplewood and the Tau Chi Chapter of Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc., as well as a member of the American Association of University Women, AARP, NAARF and the American Legion. She was married to her late husband, Marttie, for 39 years, and is the proud mother of two daughters, Sandra and Cheryl.



Photo by Glen Frieson

Freeholder President Blonnie R. Watson (right) presents the Board's plaque to the family of the late Major Dwayne M. Kelley: widow, Manita Seabrooks-Kelley (center) and daughter, Mushirah (left).

Dwayne M. Kelley (deceased) began his military service when he joined the ROTC Program in the early 1980's while a student at Rutgers University, where he earned his BA in Psychology and his commission as a U. S. Army Reserve Second Lieutenant in the Ordnance Branch. He joined the Military Police in 1999 and served as Headquarters Company Commander for the 2nd Battalion of the 309th Regiment, 5th Brigade, and 78th Division (Training Support) at Fort Dix until 2001. He was mobilized in 2001 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and became a Civil Affairs Officer in 2004, in which capacity he served as Executive Officer of the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion at Fort Dix, Assistant Plans Officer for the 353rd Civil Affairs Command on Staten Island, and Civil Affairs Chief with the 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He was mobilized to Iraq in November of 2007 and was serving as a U. S. Army Civil Affairs Officer on June 24, 2008, when an explosion took his life in Sadr City. For his service, Major Kelley earned many military awards, including: two Army Reserve Components Achievement Medals, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Services Medal, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal with Bronze Hourglass, and the Army Service Ribbon. Aside from his military service, he also enjoyed a highly-successful career as a NJ State Trooper that began in 1988, reaching the rank of Detective Sergeant First Class in January of 2008. The presentation of the Board's framed commendation, plaque and service medal was made to Major Kelley's widow, Manita, and daughter, Mushirah, who reside in West Orange.

The 2009 Veterans Observance was a heart-rending and poignant event that also included remarks from Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr., and Essex County Sheriff Armando B. Fontoura, opening and closing prayers by Reverend Jermel Mayo, Pastor of the Vailsburg Assembly of God, and a musical performance by Ms. Ruth Dargan of East Orange.

**For Additional Information:
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