

A Community Hero and ‘Proud Marine’

VFW Post celebrates Iwo Jima veteran’s 100th birthday

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VFW Post 1677 in Casa Grande, Arizona, as well as other veteran and community organizations, on Aug. 31 hosted a 100th birthday celebration for Robert Brutinel, a World War II Iwo Jima veteran. Brutinel, who turned 100 on Sept. 4, is a Silver Star and Purple Heart recipient.

The event brought together nearly 400 attendees to recognize his service not only in the Marine Corps but as a stalwart of the community.

“We sent invitations out and most people were surprised that he was a Silver Star and Purple Heart recipient,” said VFW Post 1677 Chaplain Frank Alger. “[Brutinel] never advertises that. People just know him as someone who works hard for veterans and for the community, especially.”

Many volunteers from Post 1677 and the Casa Grande community – including Larry Forster, Dana Weaver, Mac MacTavish, J.B. Ross, Kelly Sila, Scott Brown, Michael McCall, Taz Byrne and Post 1677 Auxiliary President Diane Philippi – helped organize the event, according to Alger, who also is the junior vice commander of the Department of Arizona’s 10th District.

“When we told [Brutinel] that we were going to have a birthday celebration for him, he thought it was just going to be a gathering of a few dozen family members and friends,” said Alger, a retired Marine Corps gunnery sergeant. “He was amazed that so many in the community attended. He was overwhelmed and humbled. It just goes to show the impact he has had on the community and at the Post.”

Brutinel earned the Silver Star for his actions as a “demolition man and flamethrower operator” on March 12, 1945, in the Battle of Iwo Jima, according to Brutinel’s Silver Star citation. He was part of H Co., 3rd Bn., 27th Marines.

“He has been a mentor to so many people in Casa Grande for decades,” Alger said. “There is

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a lot of respect for him in the community. He impacted many lives, probably more than he realizes.”

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