



Eric Persons, a member of the American Legion honor guard, holds the flag leading up the raising ceremony Monday.



Photos by JAMIE WACHTER/Lake City Reporter

A marker honoring Philip Proctor and other Columbia County veterans rests at the base of the 35-foot flag pole at the Columbia County Veterans Park dedicated Monday by the American Legion Post 57.

Monument, flag dedicated to veterans

Proctor wanted to recognize late husband, all vets.

By JAMIE WACHTER
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What began as a way for Patricia Proctor to honor her late husband evolved into something bigger.

After Proctor's husband, Philip, passed away in 2022, she decided she wanted to recognize his love for his country and service to the U.S. Navy.

With the help of her neighbor Charles Roberts and the American Legion Post 57, Proctor's recognition of her husband turned into a way to honor all of Columbia County's veterans.

On Monday morning, the Legion held a ceremony at the park on SW Main Boulevard — across from Johnny's Auto Repair — to dedicate veterans monument and 35-foot flag pole that was erected in honor of Proctor's service, as well as other local veterans.

Patricia Proctor's aim is to turn the area into a Veterans Memorial Park for the county.

"I wanted to honor Philip in a very special way," she said during her remarks at the ceremony. "While I was planning this, I said I wanted to honor all of the vets of this great country. I have a very deep respect in my heart for all of our military. 'This is probably my proudest day.'"

Approximately 30 people attended the brief ceremony Monday morning, including friends and family, members of the Legion and a few officers from the Lake City Police Department.

Patricia Proctor thanked them all for coming, giving special credit to Roberts for his help, as well as to Mel Haynes with the American Legion for making it become a reality as well.

Haynes, the Legion's chaplain, said Philip Proctor was a deep thinker but also possessed a joyful, playful spirit that spread

joy to all he spent time with.

Patricia Proctor agreed. Sharing a brief story, including the fact that her and Philip were married twice, more than 50 years apart, said his zest for life brought happiness to all.

"My time with him was too short, but it was wonderful," she said. "Philip was the love of my life but every life that he touched he made happier."

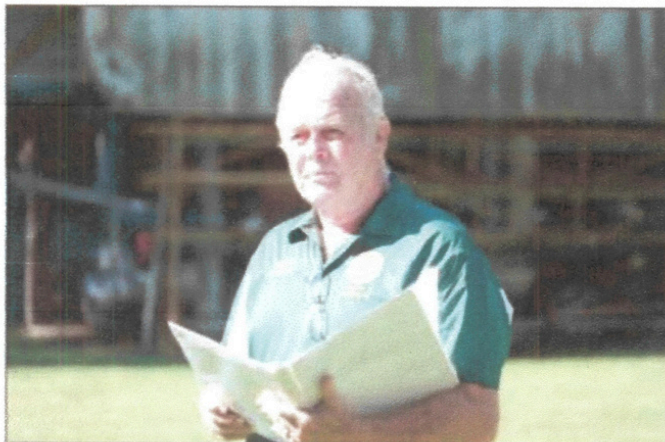
Now, Proctor, with the help of Roberts and the Legion, is looking to spread joy and respect to all the veterans of Columbia County.

"We gather to honor the brave men and women of Columbia County who have distinguished themselves and served our nation with courage," Haynes said. "This monument stands as a lasting tribute to their sacrifice and dedication."

"May this monument and the flag that flies above it inspire future generations to honor and remember our sacrifices and veterans."



The flag was raised atop the 35-foot flag pole Monday during the ceremony.



Mel Haynes, the chaplain at American Legion Post 57, said Philip Proctor lived life to the fullest.



Patricia Proctor said the idea for the Veterans Park came as she wanted to recognize and honor her late husband, Philip.