

Brownsburg Lions Club announces the Grand Marshall for the 4th of July Parade

Since 1966 the Brownsburg Lions Club has organized, directed and sponsored the Extravaganza, a multi-day event featuring a carnival, parade, and fireworks on the 4th of July. The carnival will be at Arbuckle Acres Park in Brownsburg from June 29 through July 4. The Extravaganza was conceived to be a yearly event, and to inject life into an otherwise sleepy suburb of Indianapolis. Inject life, it has. In recent years the 4th of July Parade has attracted as many as 10,000 people to see the military, the merchants, the police, and the firemen, as well as to visit with friends and neighbors. The Lions in Brownsburg have succeeded in preserving the small town atmosphere for community events—not too hurried, and lots of fun. They hope you will visit the carnival, watch, or take part in the parade, enjoy good food from the Lions Kitchen, and remember in your heart what it means to be a free person in the United States of America.

Mr. Charles Allen has been named 2011 Grand Marshall of the Brownsburg Lions Club 4th of July Parade. He is the last Pearl Harbor Survivor living in Brownsburg, and since 1995 he has participated in the Parade, along with others who survived that day of infamy. Not only is he an interesting

individual, with a dry and charming wit, but in these turbulent times, he is most worthy and suited to be Grand Marshall.

In 1918 the Great War was still raging in Europe, but in Brown County Indiana, things were looking up. Charles Allen entered the world to parents, William and Grace Allen, a couple that would have four boys and one girl. He grew up on a farm in Brown County and attended Christiansburg High School with six classmates for three years. In his senior year the family moved, and so he actually graduated from Plainfield High School, in a class of about 50.

In 1939 the depression was in full swing, and the winds of war were blowing strong again. Charles joined the U.S. Navy in May of that year, one of three hundred who mustered at the Navy yard in Indianapolis and then traveled to Chicago to begin military duty. Charles was ordered to the USS Sacramento, where he became gunners mate Allen. He and two brothers were all in the Navy during WWII, each serving on a different ship in the south Pacific.

The USS Sacramento left the Great Lakes via the St. Lawrence Seaway and gradually made its way to Hawaii, where it patrolled the turquoise waters in search of hostile vessels. On December 7, 1941, the Sacramento was berthed at a pier in Pearl Harbor, where it had been in dry dock for minor repairs.

On this fateful day the ship and crew were waiting for fuel and supplies. It was just after breakfast, and Charles and his shipmates were preparing to go ashore for liberty. The attack came with fury. Pristine Pearl Harbor was bombed, strafed, and turned into an inferno of blazing oil and exploding guns. Hundreds died. But, through some miracle, or quirk of fate, the Sacramento was not hit. The crew fought with ferocity and was credited with shooting down 1 ½ Japanese planes. For this courageous action in difficult circumstances, they received a battle star.

Following the attack, it took several days to resupply and fuel the Sacramento. During that time Charles and the other sailors assisted the medics, giving what care and support they could to the wounded.

Having tended to their comrades, as best they could, the crew of the Sacramento once again assumed the role of hunter with patrol duty around Hawaii, the largest of the Hawaiian Islands. There was good reason for this patrol, since a Japanese submarine had shelled the sugar warehouses on Hawaii. The Sacramento and other members of the battle group were part of a search and destroy mission to eliminate the immediate danger. Destruction of the submarine was never confirmed, but it was not for lack of trying. The Hawaiian Islands were not attacked again.

In 1942 the Sacramento was sent to Boston for major refitting, and Charles Allen was sent to gunnery school to learn new ways to defend the United States. Following school he was a member of the crew that took the USS Pennywill to Brazil to aid in the war effort. He still has the flag that once flew from that ship.

In 1944 Charles married Bonnie Nickel, a WAVE from Washington. They met during a training session and enjoyed a few weeks together, before he went to his next assignment in San Diego to prepare for an assault on Japan, and she returned to administrative duty in Washington. It was more than a wartime fling. They remained happily married for 53 years.

When the war finally ended, Charles was in San Diego, assigned to a troop transport that was ready to sail in 2-3 weeks. Virtually everyone realized that an invasion of Japan would come at a very high cost. He and many others felt a great sense of relief that the need for invasion ended with the use of the atomic bombs. Those bombs ended a brutal conflict and undoubtedly saved many lives, both American and Japanese.

With the end of the war men and women were anxious to get back to the business of living. One of the sailors said, "Just give me my discharge, and I'll walk home." Charles had a more pragmatic approach. He took a train to Chicago and then Indianapolis, where he was finally discharged and reunited with Bonnie. They lived for a few months with his parents, who were now in Brownsburg. Then they moved into a home of their own. His first job, after being discharged from the Navy, was repairing time clocks. His territory stretched from the first row of counties in Illinois to the first row of counties in Ohio and covered virtually all of central Indiana. The company provided a car, but he was always on call, and always on the road. He liked the work, but he wanted more time at home, and so when Eli Lilly called, he answered.

He went to work in a laboratory, studied biology and chemistry, helped researchers untangle the mysteries of antibiotics, and worked on the development of a new, oral vaccine for polio. He was a productive member of the drug development community until his retirement in 1980—31 years of satisfaction.

When Bonnie died in 1994, Charles busied himself with activities involving the American Legion in Brownsburg, and the Cornerstone Christian Church. In 2004 he went to Washington, DC, to commemorate the veterans of WWII, and on that trip he met Betty McIntyre. They became friends, were married in 2008, and currently reside in Brownsburg.

Charles is a modest man, claiming that he has done nothing outstanding that would qualify him to be Grand Marshall of the Lions Club 4th of July Parade. He says, he is just a survivor. But, modesty aside, we need men like Charles Allen. We need individuals, who do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done—without anyone twisting their arm. These individuals put themselves in harm's way, protect others, and then, go about their lives with a certainty that they have done the very best they could do.

Thank you Mr. Allen for being that kind of individual. Thank you for being a part of Brownsburg for 66 years. And thank you for leading our parade.

Raymond L. Furner, Brownsburg Lions Club