

North Branford veteran crafts quilts for military brothers

By Lisa Reisman

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BRANFORD — Since 2003, more than 223,400 quilts of valor have been bestowed on military veterans in recognition of their service and bravery.

While there are no statistics on how many have been created by veterans themselves, by our unofficial estimation, the number stands at 20, at least.

At a lively QOV ceremony last week at Branford VFW No. 12106 hall, North Branford Air Force veteran Chuck Larkins honored fellow military brothers Joe Anderson, a Navy veteran, and Roy Dunn, who served in the Marine Corps, with quilts he'd crafted with impressive artistry.

Larkins found himself inspired during a QOV presentation in June 2017 and took up quilting in answer to a challenge from his wife Claire. He hasn't stopped since.

"I get more pleasure out of this than anybody," said Larkins, as he wrapped Anderson, a nuclear power-qualified Electrician's Mate on the USS Nimitz from 1981 to 1985.

Anderson's ship engaged with Libya in the Gulf of Sidra incident, and was deployed during the conflict with Grenada, as well as the hijacking of a commercial jetliner in the Mediterranean Ocean.

Prompted by the involvement of Anderson, a Northford resident, in the North Branford Flag Day ceremony, as well as the Northford-North Branford Women's Club "Honor with a Flag" program, Larkins customized the



Lisa Reisman / For Hearst Connecticut Media

Roy Dunn, a Marine Corps veteran, middle, and Joe Anderson, a Navy veteran, right, sporting quilts crafted by Air Force veteran Chuck Larkins, left, at a Quilts of Valor ceremony.

quilt in a navy blue background that incorporated historic American and military flags.

With that, according to Jane Dougherty, Connecticut QOV co-coordinator who was emceeding the event, he met the QOV mission that "each quilt, each pattern, be made with a person in mind."

It was the same with Dunn, an active-duty USMC Combat Engineer from 1965 to 1967, who spent 11 months in Vietnam sweeping roads and around bridges for mines, and checking villages for

booby traps. He also served as a member of the tunnel team, working with explosives.

For his long-time Branford VFW 12106 pal, Larkins swapped out a red, white and blue original star pattern for Marine Corps scarlet and gold. In the center of each star, he integrated the USMC symbol of eagle, globe and anchor.

Crafting it "took considerable skill," Dougherty said. "That is drop-dead gorgeous."

Dunn, a Branford resident, who was joined by

his wife Betsy, sons, and grandchildren, was palpably moved.

"It really means a lot, coming from a brother," he said, Larkins' quilt wrapped around his shoulders.

Larkins was having none of it.

"It's these guys who are the real stars," he said after the ceremony with a grin. "I'm just a quilter."

If you know a veteran you'd like to honor, visit www.qovf.org, find the "take action" tab, and click "request a quilt," or email jane.dougherty@qovf.org.