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## For a change, 'Flag Man' on the receiving end

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ST. GEORGE - After decades of spreading patriotism, St. George's "Flag Man" was honored late Monday afternoon by Sen. Robert Bennett, R-Utah.

Lee Warren, a St. George resident since 1988, earned his moniker by distributing American flags to area residents. Warren said he has given approximately 40,000 flags to various groups and individuals in California and Utah.

Warren, a Navy Veteran of World War II, stood among his friends and fellow Pearl Harbor survivors in his St. George home Monday as Bennett presented him with an authentic flag from the U.S. Capitol building.

The flag was given to Warren in a somewhat early celebration of his 90th birthday next month.

The particular flag held historical significance, Bennett said, as it was flown at the U.S. Capital on July 2, 2008. On that same date in 1776, the Continental Congress voted to approve The Declaration of Independence. It was ratified two days later on the Fourth of July.

Before being presented with the honorary flag, Warren reached into his pocket and gave Bennett a small flag pin.

After receiving the small metallic token of national pride, Bennett emphasized Warren's benevolent nature.

"You have given away so many flags," Bennett said as the carefully folded U.S. Capital flag was presented in a wooden display case. "We figured somebody ought to give you one."

As Bennett spoke to the group, he thanked Warren and the other World War II veterans in attendance for their heroic service and continued support.

Following the ceremony, Bennett said he was thoroughly impressed by Warren.

"His enthusiasm and his optimism, it is just infectious to be around him. I'm awfully glad we did this," he said. "He is just a great guy."

Warren proudly held the flag as he posed for photographs with Bennett.

"This is marvelous!" he exclaimed.

Warren said his patriotic quest began years ago when he handed out flags in California along parade routes.

His operation has grown substantially since then, as he created Lee Warren's Flag Foundation eight years ago, which he said allows him to receive donations to buy and circulate more flags.

While he has been given some outside funding, Warren said he pays for the majority of the flags he distributes.

The cost of the flags is not troublesome, Warren said, as he spends little money on himself.

"I don't drink, I don't smoke, and I don't chase women anymore So, I put all the money into the flag foundation," he said.

Warren said he is eager to fulfill any requests for flags.

"If anyone calls me up, I put a flag in front of their place immediately," he said. "I love to drive around and see those flags flying."

In addition to his fondness for "Old Glory," Warren takes time to speak with local school children and convey the importance of Pearl Harbor and World War II.

"I'm patriotic," he said. "I love the Navy, I love America, and I love the flag."

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