

# Painting Homage

## A Post in Missouri honors veterans by adding a mural to its downtown location

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When members of VFW Post 6278 in Lawson, Missouri, moved into their new building in 2019, they began plotting for a mural that would honor their respective services.

Heralding from all five services and spanning several wars, Post members in this town of less than 2,500 people, about 34 miles northeast of Kansas City, Missouri, found their window of opportunity this year.

“It was something we had started planning since moving into the new Post building four years ago,” said Jeff Bye, who has served as Post commander for more than 23 years. “So we got all our members together and asked them what they wanted in each of their sections for their specific branch of service.”

The Post then hired a local painter for \$4,000, who sketched a couple of different versions implementing suggestions by a membership of more than 200 veterans.

Among the members voicing their opinions was Roy Cheek, a WWII Airmen whose plane was shot down over the Netherlands in 1944. Evading capture for 11 months in enemy territory, Cheek made his way to Brussels and eventually to Paris before joining his unit in London.

Cheek’s plane warranted a spot on the mural, as well as a Huey helicopter that symbolized a war fought by the Post’s many Vietnam veterans. The design also captured paratroopers, like Bye, jumping out of planes.

“We wanted it to be our gift to Lawson, but we also wanted it to be Post-specific by honoring our own through the representation of all five branches of service,” Bye said. “We even added the Space Force emblem for down the road. We didn’t want to leave anyone out.”

In just three weeks between April 27 and May 15, Post members watched as Lawson native Jacob Duncan gave life to their brainchild in an array of colors along the side of Post 6278 in

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downtown Lawson.

“Jacob has done a couple of murals in town, so we knew it would be phenomenal,” Bye said. “He did it all in black and white to start with, then he started adding the color and it just came to life. Almost gives you goosebumps thinking about it.”

Having received its unveiling ceremony during Memorial Day weekend, Bye recalled the mural drawing interest among residents and veterans in nearby towns, who made the journey to welcome a homage as much theirs as Post 6278’s members.

“It’s sparked an interest around Lawson to continue to add murals and help spruce up downtown,” Bye said. “But it’s mainly a tribute to those who served and to all of those who never made it back. Hopefully it can spark interest for other Posts to do the same.”

With the completion of the mural, Bye and Post 6278 members have now began moving onto their next task — building a military courtyard for the Post.

“We’ve already got a 75 millimeter cannon on wheels that we’re sandblasting now to use as the key piece for this military courtyard,” Bye said. “We plan on having that set up in about a year.”

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