



Photo from Graham Cullen / Frederick News Post

William Harvey Zeigler

World War II Veteran, December 8, 1941 - November 15, 1945

On December 8, 1941, a day after Pearl Harbor and the day President Roosevelt declared war, William Harvey Zeigler was drafted in the U.S. Army. He served as a private first class in the 329th segregated unit and protected supplies that soldiers needed on the front lines of Europe. Zeigler tour in England started in January 7, 1945 and he returned back to the United States on September 12, 1945. He received an honorable discharge in November 15, 1945. During his tenure in the U.S. Army, he received the Good Conduct Medal, American Theater Service Ribbon, European-African-Middle Eastern Service Ribbon, and the World War 2 Victory Ribbon.

He was born March 4, 1920, the 6th of 13 children, 9 girls and 4 boys. A descendent from slaves in Montgomery County, Zeigler was reared in the racially divisive farm town of Damascus, Maryland. His grandfather escaped slavery in South Carolina in the 1860s through the Underground Railroad. His grandfather made his way to Damascus, where he helped build Friendship United Methodist, the church Zeigler continues to attend.

Zeigler attended Lincoln High School, an all-black school in Rockville. From the early years, 1920 to 1946, he experienced discrimination that exemplified flagrant violations of one's rights. He was not allowed to eat at food counters, sit at the soda fountains, attend theaters, bowling alleys, public schools, doctor's offices or community clubs. What services he did receive came from the back door of these establishments.

Zeigler suffered many racial conflicts under General Mark Clark who was his commanding officer for the European Theater Operation (ETO). This company was labeled the fifth army that was associated to the ETO. On Dec 22, 1941, on their way to South Carolina to report for training he and the black squad were stopped at Union Station, Washington D.C, and they were refused service at the lunch counter.

When Zeigler returned to Maryland at the age of 25, he joined the NAACP in Montgomery County, where he worked as a youth director to help young African Americans. Ahead of the historic 1963 March on Washington, Zeigler organized a group from Montgomery County to attend. Zeigler also founded an AMVETS chapter in Frederick, Maryland. Zeigler's lifetime of service has earned him several awards, including induction into the Montgomery County Human Rights Hall of Fame.

Zeigler lived in Damascus, Maryland. He passed away on April 5, 2022 at the age of 101.