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Leroy Sapp receiving high school diploma. (Spectrum News 1)

HUMAN INTEREST

BY [SERGIO CRUEL](#) | ROCHESTER  
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ROCHESTER, N.Y. — Army veteran Leroy Sapp, 69, received his diploma fifty years after leaving high school. He grew up in a time when discrimination because of the color of his skin, and desegregation, affected how he navigated life.

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### What You Need To Know

- Leroy Sapp, a 69-year-old Army veteran, received his high school diploma after over fifty years
  - Leroy faced challenges due to racial discrimination and desegregation leading to his suspension from school and eventual enlistment in the Army
  - Leroy's daughter Stephanie, also a Navy veteran, encouraged him to pursue his diploma
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"Me being in high school, I had to go to the white school, got in a fight with a guy there, and got suspended," said Sapp.

A suspension that Leroy's father was not too happy about.

"My daddy said, 'boy if you ain't going to school, then get a job.' Being cocky, I said I'm going to work," he added.

Sapp worked until he turned 20, then joined the Army from 1976 to 1978. He worked as a cook, and his favorite memory is airborne training in Hawaii.

"A countryman like me in Hawaii? I did a couple of years there. I got married in the service and had a few kids," he expressed.

Sapp's late father's wish was for all ten of his children to graduate. Leroy's daughter Stephanie, a Navy veteran, saw a story about a veteran getting their diploma later in life, so she encouraged her father to do the same.

Program, honoring veterans who left school early. He received assistance from Eagle Star Housing staff, a supporting housing program, and various New York state agencies.

"When we were able to present Leroy with his diploma, what he didn't know was that Stephanie had then informed at least ten family members and they all started to show up. He didn't know they were coming. It was absolutely beautiful," said Elizabeth Doll, program administrator for Eagle Star Housing.

"I was over the moon, and it was all due to my daughter Stephanie, my baby daughter," Leroy said.

The phrase over the moon runs in the family.

"I was over the moon that he went back to school and did it," Stephanie added.

Now that Leroy has his high school diploma, maybe a college degree is next for the Army veteran.

"I just want to retire, I just want to retire now," Leroy added.

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