

Oran Collins spent 16 years as an educator in Wilson County in the 1960s and 1970s.

He was the principal at Lakeview Elementary School and guidance counselor at Mt. Juliet High School.

But he never had a high school diploma.

That is because Collins left school in the ninth grade to help finish the fight in WWII.

“Back then you didn’t have to lie,” said Collins about getting into the military at 15-years-old.

When Collins came home, he got a degree from Mercer University. That helped him go on to a long career that included education in Wilson County.

On Sunday, Feb. 2, Crisp County School System in Cordele, Ga., where Collins grew up, awarded him an honorary high school diploma. In the state of Georgia, WWII soldiers who had their school interrupted and were supposed to graduate anywhere from 1941-1950 and were honorably discharged, are allowed to apply for a high school diploma.

Collins applied after 68 years because he said he felt like there was always something missing.

It was the first honorary diploma to a WWII veteran Crisp County Schools had given.

MJ man gets HS diploma 70 years after leaving school to fight in WWII

Tuesday, April 1, 2014

“It is truly an honor to be able to do this,” Superintendent Dr. Rhonda Hayes said of giving Collins his diploma. “He is one of many men of a great generation. Many people like Mr. Collins sacrificed their education to serve their country.”