



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Helps Two Local WWII Veterans Obtain Overdue Medals

CATHARINE YOUNG March 22, 2013

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Technical Sergeant Handrahan and Walter A. Bonney recognized for their military service

OLEAN – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- Olean) helped obtain medals for both a veteran of the air war in Europe during World War II and for the family of a World War II veteran who served in the Aleutian Islands and in Europe. The medals were presented recently.

At a ceremony at the Bolivar American Legion on March 16, the family of the late Technician Fifth Grade Walter A. Bonney received medals earned for his service during World War II as part of the Aleutian Islands Campaign and the Central Europe Campaign.

Technical Sergeant Richard Handrahan received the "Southern France" campaign star and the French Legion of Honor for his service during the Operation Dragoon invasion of Southern France in August 1944. Mr. Pascal Soares, France's Honorary Consul in Buffalo, presented the award during a ceremony at the American Legion in Wellsville on March 18.

"Our veterans who served during World War II played a pivotal role in defeating the Axis powers in the Pacific and European theaters, and prevented them from gaining a foothold on our own shores," said Senator Young. "Their sacrifices in bringing freedom to the world cannot be overemphasized. It is important that they be recognized for putting their lives on the line."

Technician Fifth Grade Bonney enlisted in the Army before World War II started, serving in the National Guard. He helped repulse the Japanese from the Aleutian Islands, and he served in the last campaign in Europe. He was part of the occupation forces in Germany, serving in the 513th Parachute Infantry. Technician Fifth Grade Bonney was also part of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The awards presented included the United States Army Good Conduct Medal, the American Defense Service Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one Bronze Service Star Device, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with one Bronze Service Star Device, the World War II Victory Medal, the Army of Occupation Medal with Germany Clasp, the Parachutist Badge-Basic, and the Honorable Service Lapel Button- WWII. Technician Fifth Grade Bonney was also awarded the New York State Medal for Merit, which was sent directly to the family.

Technical Sergeant Handrahan enlisted in the Army Air Forces on January 12, 1942 and was trained as a airplane mechanic/gunner. He flew 34 missions as a top turret gunner/flight engineer on a B-24 bomber with the 464th Bombardment Group. The Group was deployed to Southern Italy in February 1944 and entered combat service in April 1944. The 464th Bombardment Group was engaged in very long range strategic bombing missions targeting enemy railroad marshalling yards, oil refineries, airdrome installations, heavy industry, and other strategic sites in Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia.

Technical Sergeant Handrahan earned four Air Medals, four campaign stars on the European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal. He also earned a sharpshooter badge for the .45 caliber pistol. After leaving the military, he returned to college and wound up in Elmira where he began a career selling cars. He retired after a 35-year career from Hetzel Motors in Wellsville.

"I am grateful for all the members of our military who have faced the challenges of service during wartime," added Senator Young. "They have sacrificed so much to ensure that we all can enjoy freedom and liberty in our great nation."