



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Wallace C. Higgins Inducted into the New York State Senate's Veterans' Hall of Fame

CATHARINE YOUNG May 22, 2015

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Senator Young nominated Wally Higgins for his courageous service to the nation

ALBANY – This week Wallace C. Higgins, a decorated World War-II veteran and longtime resident of Allegany County, was inducted into the New York State Senate's Veterans' Hall of Fame.

As part of the state Senate's annual Veterans' Hall of Fame Ceremony, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean) nominated Mr. Higgins, known to many as “Wally,” to be recognized for his service to the nation.

“Wally Higgins' patriotic service and sacrifice for our country, and truly his entire life's story is remarkable example of the selflessness demonstrated by so many in his generation. They gave so much at a time when battles raged all around the globe and our nation needed heroes. As an original Tuskegee Airman who served in the Pacific theater, Wally's aviation knowledge and skills were vital to the movement of troops and materials,” said Senator Young.

“Aside from his service, Wally is a loving father and dedicated family man, who deserves our deepest respect and praise. It was an honor to be able to recognize him and have his story memorialized in the state’s history,” Senator Young said.

Born on November 11, 1925 on a small farm in Kendall, New York, Wally is the son of Alice and Daniel Higgins.

As soon as he turned 18 years old, Wally enlisted in the US Army Air Corps. Having already been attending Civil Air Patrol classes in Rochester during his senior year of high school, he

already had interest in pursuing aviation.

After initially reporting to Fort Dix, New Jersey, Mr. Higgins was sent to Biloxi, Mississippi for basic training and aptitude testing. As a result of his skin color and proficiencies, Wally was selected to be part of the Tuskegee Airmen experiment in Alabama, where he trained in Pre-Flight and Primary Flight training, including solo runs in the P-17 Stearman.

Following eleven months at Tuskegee, a downturn in the war in Europe resulted in less pilot training and Wally was transferred to the 1909th Engineers Aviation Battalion. A Sergeant in charge of an all-black, 30-man platoon, Mr. Higgins served in Saipan and Okinawa building roads, airfields and ammunition storage buildings.

On March 17, 1947 Wally was Honorably Discharged as a Staff Sergeant with Squadron F, 3505th Army Air Force. For his service, Mr. Higgins earned the WW-II Victory Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, American Campaign Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, and New York State Medal for Merit. He was also recently presented with a Congressional Gold Medal due to his Civil Air Patrol involvement during the war.

Upon returning from the war, Wally was accepted to the College of Ceramics at Alfred University, and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in ceramic design in 1952. While a student there, he met and married Norma Miller almost 64 years ago and never left Alfred. They raised four children, still reside in Allegany County, and are blessed with nine

grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Along with his work at Alfred University, Mr. Higgins continues to be involved with numerous civic organizations in Allegany County including Alfred Lions Club; Alfred Station Fire Department; Union University Church; Allegany County Office for the Aging; TRIAD; Allegany Senior Foundation; and Baker's Bridge Historical Society.

Mr. Higgins' full biography will remain on display in perpetuity in the Senate's Veterans' Hall of Fame online directory. A copy of the biography can be seen at <http://www.nysenate.gov/story/wallace-c-higgins>.

Video of Senator Young honoring Mr. Higgins during the Veterans' Hall of Fame Ceremony can be found at <https://youtu.be/a7M9iMu7x3k>.