



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Cecilia Tkaczyk

Roma Stern

CECILIA TKACZYK May 20, 2013



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Award: Honoring Our Veterans

Year: 2013

While in college at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Ms. Roma Stern was one of only two women at her school to sign up for the Civil Air Patrol, which was still in its infancy. She earned her pilot's license, and when World War II broke out two years later she hoped to join the Army Air Corps, but the military at that time didn't offer much encouragement for female pilots.

Undaunted, and anxious to serve her country, she became one of the first women to join the Marines, which had just begun to accept women in order to address a personnel shortage. She completed her basic training at Hunter College and was stationed at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, where she quickly rose through to the rank of Drill Sergeant, training the next classes of Women Marines.

After leaving the Marines as a Staff Sergeant, Ms. Stern continued to distinguish herself and continued to serve the public. She worked as a bacteriologist in New York City for five years, then moved to Amsterdam, NY with her husband in 1950. She and her husband had three sons, and, eventually, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

She became a science teacher at Amsterdam Middle School, where she worked for over 20 years. She also began her long career of volunteerism, helping at Amsterdam Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home for more than 25 years. She also worked as volunteer usher at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center for 23 years. She was even Commander of the Jewish War Veterans in Amsterdam.

Teaching remained a passion for Ms. Stern, and after retiring she helped tutor schoolchildren and volunteered to teach English as a second language at the local library. Even while spending winters in Florida, she volunteered to help teach the children of migrant workers

to read and write English.

As a wife and mother, patriot, teacher and tutor, Ms. Stern has distinguished herself and remained true to the Marine motto “Semper Fidelis,” or “Always Faithful.” We are grateful to her, not only for her service to our country, but for helping to blaze new trails for women in the military.