



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Karl W. Monson

DAVID J. VALESKY May 20, 2015



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Award: Honoring Our Veterans

Year: 2015

United States Army

Karl W. Monson was born in 1918. He graduated from Wheaton College and planned to attend medical school, but first enlisted in the United States Army as a Private in June 1941. Mr. Monson was assigned to Seacoast Artillery and was serving in San Diego when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He was sent to Officers Candidate School, and in April 1942, he graduated as a “90-day wonder” with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. That July, Mr. Monson was promoted to 1st Lieutenant and in August, Captain in charge of the 602nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) Battalion. Mr. Monson rose quickly in the ranks due to his unprecedented intelligence and perseverance.

In October 1943, Mr. Monson was promoted to Major and was charged with the anti-aircraft protection of New York City. In February 1944, his 602nd AAA shipped to England, where Mr. Monson was assigned the protection of airfields. On June 12, his 602nd AAA landed on Easy Red of Omaha Beach, Normandy. Mr. Monson headed the air defense of Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces, continuing through four major battles, including the Battle of the Bulge. Then promoted to Lt. Colonel, Mr. Monson was assigned to 1st Army V-Corps staff; he was discharged from the United States Army at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, in 1946, after serving with courage and nobility for five years.

While stateside in 1943, Mr. Monson married the love of his life, Janna Loeks. Together, they raised four children. After the War, Mr. Monson waived a scholarship to medical school and instead went to work as General Manager at the Perry Knitting Company. In the 1960s, Mr. Monson became President of the Atlas Underwear Company, which made men’s underwear for Montgomery Ward, Penney and Sears, and the underwear that Neil Armstrong wore when he landed on the moon.

Last year, in recognition of his wartime service in the liberation of France, Mr. Monson was presented the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor from the French government.

Mr. Monson lives with his daughter and son-in-law in Cazenovia, New York.