

News from Senator George M. Borrello

57th Senate District

Representing Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and portions of Livingston County

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PFC CHARLES A. BROWN, JR. RECEIVES THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL

Senator Borrello participates in ceremony honoring the World War II veteran who was part of the U.S. Army's liberation of France



Senator Borrello congratulates French Legion of Honor recipient Charles “Charlie” Brown of Olean.

OLEAN – Surrounded by family, friends, elected officials and military officers, PFC Charles “Charlie” Brown of Olean, was presented with the prestigious French Legion of Honor Medal by Special Counsel Pascal Soares of Buffalo’s Consulate of France at a ceremony today. The World War II veteran, who served with the New York Army National Guard’s 258th Field Artillery Battalion, fought for the liberation of France and was in combat for 302 days including during the Battle of the Bulge, which marks its 75th Anniversary this week.

Brown was honored for his service to our country and our French allies at a ceremony at the Olean Community Church, which he founded in 2004.

Senator George Borrello, 57th Senate District, praised Mr. Brown’s unflinching dedication and service during a pivotal moment in history.

“Our community came together today to honor Charles Brown, a remarkable individual and an extraordinary patriot who heeded our nation’s call to serve. His service involved tremendous risk, hardship and courage, but he did not question the mission or waver in his duty,” said Senator Borrello. “The French government has designated Charles as a member of the Legion of Honor and I am proud to add my voice in expressing the

deepest admiration and gratitude for his contributions. Today's event is a reminder of the sacrifices made by this exceptional veteran, who truly embodies the best traits of the 'Greatest Generation.'”

PFC Charlie Brown was drafted shortly after graduating from Machias High School in 1943. Serving as a fire direction instrument operator, targeting 155mm Howitzers, the young serviceman landed on Utah Beach in Normandy on July 2, 1944 with the U.S. Army's 258th Field Artillery Battalion.

The Battalion is one of the oldest units of the New York National Guard, and by extension, the U.S. Army. By WWII, this New York National Guard unit had been federalized seven times, beginning with the War of 1812. When PFC Charlie Brown joined the unit in 1944, the 258th had already been on active duty for two years -- "federalized" on Feb. 3, 1941 and deployed from New York City to England in 1941.

The 258th landed on Utah Beach in Normandy on July 2, 1944. The self-propelled artillery unit was equipped with 12, M-114 155 mm howitzers mounted on the M12 gun motor carriage. PFC Brown was in combat for the next 302 days including during the Battle of the Bulge. He fought in Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes-Alsace (the Battle of the Bulge), Rhineland, and Central Europe. His war ended in May of 1945 outside of Magdeburg, Germany.

Charlie returned home in December of 1945. He married Barb Archer in 1949 and raised two daughters. His career ranged from electronics to retail marketing, retiring in 1984. With the support of his friend, Jack Drouin, he has worked to raise awareness of the experiences of the 258th Field Artillery Battalion in World War II and the contributions of America's veterans.

“Charlie's heroism is inspiring and a source of pride for our community. Our nation's defense of freedom and liberty, here at home and around the world, has only been possible through the bravery and sacrifices of great Americans like him. We owe Charlie, and all of our veterans, a tremendous debt.”

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French Honorary Consul Pascal Soares pins the French Legion of Honor medal on U.S. Army veteran Charlie Brown for his role in helping free France and Europe during World War II.



Current members of the New York Army National Guard's 258th Field Artillery Battalion traveled to Olean to pay tribute to the honoree. From left to right: Major Eric Emerling, Captain Steve Kerr, Major Brian Napier, Charlie Brown, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Mehling.