



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Former Green Beret Honored WITH Medals

CATHARINE YOUNG December 15, 2011

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OLEAN – A former Green Beret who served for two tours in the U.S. Army was honored on Thursday with long overdue awards he never received.

Sgt. Mark Close of Olean was surrounded by friends and family at a special ceremony held at Senator Catharine Young's office where he received the Korea Defense Service Medal, the New York State Medal For Merit, and the Cold War Recognition Certificate.

“It always is a tremendous privilege to present medals to deserving veterans like Sgt. Close. As a Green Beret, Sgt. Close went through intense training in order to better protect our country. Like all veterans, he is deserving of our respect and gratitude and it is my honor to thank him for his outstanding service,” said Senator Young.

After enlisting in the U.S. Army in August 1976, Sgt. Close was sent to Fort Jackson in South Carolina for basic training and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) in supply.

From 1978 until 1979, he served at Camp Casey in Korea with the Second Infantry Division on the Korean Demilitarized Zone, a strip of land running across the Korean Peninsula that serves as a buffer zone between North and South Korea.

After leaving Korea, Sgt. Close initially was attached and later assigned to Special Forces as a supply sergeant. He later was ordered to Airborne School at Fort Benning in Georgia where he completed basic airborne training.

Sgt. Close jumped as a Special Forces Paratrooper for the next two and half years, and during that period was deployed to England twice, in 1980 and 1981.

On February 13, 1982, Sgt. Close was released from the active duty Army after two enlistments totaling five years, six months and one day.

Sgt. Close already has received many service awards and recognitions including the Army Service Ribbon, Army Commendation Medal with One Oak Leaf Cluster, Parachute Badge, Good Conduct Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Expert Rifle Badge with M16 Bar and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

The awards he received on Thursday included the Korea Defense Service Medal that is authorized for those members of the U.S. military who have served duty in the Republic of

Korea after the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement in support of the defense of the Republic of Korea.

Sgt. Close also was presented with the New York State Medal For Merit. This decoration is given to current New York State residents, or those who were New York State citizens at the time of their service, who served honorably in the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Merchant Marines, and whose service was in direct support of combat operations.

He also received the federal Cold War Recognition Certificate that goes to members of the armed forces and qualified federal government civilian personnel who faithfully and honorably served the United States any time during the Cold War era, which is defined as a period lasting from Sept. 2, 1945 to Dec. 26, 1991.

“I want to thank Senator Young for recognizing my military service. It is a great honor,” said Sgt. Close.

Sgt. Close currently resides in Olean with his wife, Jacki. The couple have two daughters, Emilee Close of Portville and Tricia Brdecka of Virginia Beach, Va.

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