



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Presents Medal to Family of WWII Veteran

CATHARINE YOUNG December 10, 2012

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Private First Class Taft served our nation during the Invasion of Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge

LIVONIA – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- Olean) awarded a New York State Conspicuous Service Cross Medal today to the family of Private First Class Mortimer Taft, who bravely served his county during World War II and passed away in 1969. The ceremony took place at the packed Harrison-Lee American Legion Post #283 in Livonia, NY.

“It is fitting that today, one day after the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, we are here honoring a brave and valiant World War II hero,” said Senator Young. “Private First Class Taft served not only our country, but helped spread freedom throughout the world, participating in some of the most important battles ever. Even though he is no longer with us, we remember his sacrifices and selflessness.”

“I’m so happy and excited that my mother can receive this medal that she worked so hard to get for over 43 years,” said Clayton Taft, son of Private First Class Taft who was born just two months before his father’s death. “It is a wonderful feeling to be here and see the medal that he earned. I thoroughly enjoyed working with Senator Young’s staff and through this journey, I was able to learn things about my father’s service that no one in my family had known before.”

“It is a great honor to be a part of this special ceremony,” said Thomas B. Baldwin, Supervisor of the Town of Nunda. “Brave men like Mortimer Taft and their sacrifices represent the heart of our nation.”

Mortimer Taft was born in Geneseo and was a farm hand when he was drafted into the Army on Jan. 21, 1943. He served with the 294th Quartermaster Salvage Repair Company. He served for about two years and 10 months and was discharged from Fort Dix, New Jersey on November 25, 1945. Most of his enlistment was served overseas in the European Theater.

Private First Class Taft participated in the liberation of Rome and was involved with the drive north into the mountains and driving the Germans out of Italy. He also took part in the invasion force that landed at Normandy. In addition, he fought hedge row to hedge row as the invasion force moved in-land into Northern France and participated in the advance to the Rhine River and the Battle of the Remagen Bridge.

The Normandy campaign, one of the most famous campaigns ever, includes the invasion and establishment of Allied forces in Normandy, France, during Operation Overlord in 1944. It was the largest amphibious operation ever to take place, starting on June 6, 1944, with that day referred to as D-Day. This invasion established the foothold for bringing Allied forces to the European continent, leading to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Private First Class Taft's story was brought to Senator Young's attention when Clayton Taft tried tracking down some of his father's medals. His mother, and Taft's widow Marilyn Porter, had tried for years to obtain medals that he earned, but she was told on several occasions that he did not earn or do anything to receive the awards. Officials even went so far as to say it was a mistake that his Discharge Papers stated he was to receive medals. She was also told that some of the necessary records had been destroyed in a fire. With help from Senator Young's staff, they were able to find out that he deserved the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross.

"This is an occasion for us to remember all Veterans who fought for our country and for the democracy and freedom that we all enjoy," added Senator Young. "Private First Class Taft gave so much for us and now his family can have a token of our nation's appreciation."