



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Senator Young Presents Posthumous Medal to Local WWII Veteran

CATHARINE YOUNG January 22, 2013

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*First Lieutenant Wicks was part of several combat missions and was a POW for many months*

**DANSVILLE** – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- Olean) awarded four service medals today to the family of the late First Lieutenant Robert W. Wicks, who courageously fought during World War II. First Lieutenant Wicks' family will be receiving the Prisoner of War Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal. The ceremony took place at the Daniel Goho American Legion Post #87 in Dansville.

“First Lieutenant Wicks’ story is truly amazing,” said Senator Young. “He was on the front lines protecting freedom throughout the world in one of the most important wars ever. His bravery and commitment to our nation are truly inspirational. I am proud that his family is here to receive the medals that he earned almost 70 years ago and see what a courageous soldier he was. We are all grateful for his service.”

“My father and his fellow soldiers in World War II were a remarkable generation of Americans,” said David Wicks, son of First Lieutenant Wicks. “I am so pleased today because my father truly deserves these medals. This completes the circle of his military career and I’d like to thank Senator Young and Ross Glover, the former Commander of the American Legion in Dansville, for all their help in making this possible.”

First Lieutenant Wicks spent most of his time with the 15th Air Force out of Southern Italy. His first combat mission was on August 27, 1944. This mission was an attack on Blechhammer, which was a military facility in Poland that housed many of the petroleum products used by Hitler’s war machine.

His 24<sup>th</sup> combat mission targeted Axis powers in Vienna, Austria. At the time, it was a heavily-defended Nazi stronghold. On December 11, 1944, moments before takeoff, First Lieutenant Wicks was switched to a different plane, as they wanted an experienced Bombardier, his specialty, to help lead the attack. With this new crew, who he had never met before, his B-24’s four engines were shot almost simultaneously by anti-air artillery. The plane lost speed and altitude and all of the ten men on board had to bail out of the aircraft.

The damaged plane crashed into the mountains in Slovakia, as First Lieutenant Wicks parachuted to the ground. There he was saved by the Pavol Macina family, who hid Wicks on their farm for several months. Wicks was considered a prisoner of war of the German Government from December 11, 1944 to July 16, 1945.

Wicks' son David even traveled to Slovakia in 2004 to meet four generations of the family that helped his father survive the war. This past summer, three generations of Pavol's family visited Dansville to spend time with the Wicks family and see some of our state's treasures, such as Niagara Falls.

"I am thankful for all members of the military who bravely served our nation during times of war or times of peace," added Senator Young. "They have all done their part to protect our freedoms and democracy."

First Lieutenant Wicks was born and raised in Rome, NY. After the War, he moved to Clinton, NY, where he ran a bowling alley. He passed away in 1996.