



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Gerry West and Bob Addison, U.S. Marine "Edson's Raiders" World War II veterans, honored in Albany

BETTY LITTLE May 21, 2013

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Gerry West and Bob Addison, World War II veterans who served in the same elite U.S. Marines unit and have remained lifelong friends, were inducted into the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Albany today.

Senator Betty Little nominated Addison of Glens Falls and West of Fort Edward.

“These two soldiers were among the first Americans to engage the Japanese in combat less than a year after Pearl Harbor,” said Senator Little. “They were specially selected and trained to serve in the First Marine Raider Battalion, called Edson’s Raiders, and fought in critical and victorious battles on Guadalcanal.

“After the war, they returned home, started families and careers, but never lost touch and remained lifelong friends. They are among the few remaining Edson’s Raiders and their bond is unique. It was a wonderful honor for me to have them here today, along with their family and friends, to share their story and see them receive this well-deserved recognition.”

West and Addison were suggested to Senator Little by Hudson Falls history teacher Matthew Rozell. Rozell is in the process of writing a series of articles on World War II, based on class archives of interviews, for the Washington County Historical Society Journal. The following are excerpts from a part of the series entitled “Recording the Voices of World War II – From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay”:

On September 14th, 1942, first light at Guadalcanal revealed over a thousand Japanese dead on the ridge. Outnumbered five to one, for two nights the Raiders held on against Japanese shelling by sea and Imperial troops, and the battle became legendary in Marine Corps history.

West recalls: “Most of us just refer to it as Bloody Ridge. We had 50% casualties that night...two men in our battalion received the Congressional Medal of Honor and there were thirteen Navy Crosses awarded to men in our battalion just for that one battle, which is unheard of.”

Suppressed from the public at the time, more than 7,000 U.S. Marines, soldiers and sailors would die in the six month Guadalcanal campaign. Japanese losses were much higher.

Bob Addison: “They called it Hell Island, the Japanese, because they had to live out in the jungles...They had lost over 26,000 men.”

Only a handful of the original Marine Raiders are left. Addison and West survived to return home, marry, and raise children. Seventy one years later, their friendship endures.

The New York State Veterans’ Hall of Fame was created to honor and recognize outstanding veterans from the Empire State who have distinguished themselves both in military and civilian life. The Hall of Fame can be accessed online at www.nysenate.gov/honoring-our-veterans.