



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Olean World War II Navy Veteran John Capito Honored in Medal Ceremony

CATHARINE YOUNG July 13, 2013

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Veteran Receives Awards for Service Aboard USS Plunkett (DD 431)

OLEAN – Just over 70 years after joining the U.S. Navy, Petty Officer 3rd Class John P. Capito received the military decorations he earned for his service as a signalman aboard a destroyer during World War II.

During a ceremony at the War Veterans Park in Olean today, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I – Olean) presented Petty Officer 3rd Class Capito with the medals that were due to him. After being contacted by his family, Senator Young was instrumental in obtaining the awards.

“Our family is so very proud of this celebration in honor of our dad. He, like many veterans, returned home as a hero, and then went on with his life. My dad rarely discussed any specifics, so everyone in our family grew up never knowing many of the details of his service in the Navy. We are all so grateful to Senator Young and her staff for their efforts in making this possible, and couldn't be happier for our dad,” said Lorraine Sirianni, daughter of Petty Officer 3rd Class Capito.

“Our World War II Navy veterans deserve our deep gratitude. They bravely sailed into danger, determined to bring freedom to countries that had been overrun by the Axis Powers,” said Senator Young.

It was something that Petty Officer 3rd Class Capito saw firsthand during his travels. “I met a lot of people in different countries. I was glad to talk to them about America. They were so happy that they got liberated,” he said.

John P. Capito was born in Delanova, Italy on Jan. 9, 1923 and came to the United States when he was three years old.

He was working for Thatcher's Manufacturing Co. in Olean when he was drafted into the U.S. Navy on May 25, 1943. Seaman Capito entered recruit training on June 1, 1943 at Sampson Naval Training Center, Lake Seneca, NY.

After completing signalman and quartermaster training, he was assigned to USS Plunkett (DD 431), a Gleaves-class destroyer. At that point in the war, Plunkett was assigned to hunter-

killer, anti-submarine and convoy escort operations in the North Atlantic.

On January 24, 1944, Plunkett was supporting the assault landing of the Anzio beachhead when the ship was attacked by German aircraft and glider bombs. The ship maneuvered radically, shot down two of the attacking aircraft, and continued to fight off others when a 550 pound bomb crashed into a one-inch gun platform. The ship's crew performed gallantly under fire during this fierce 17-minute battle. Although undermanned and severely damaged, all fires were extinguished and the ship left the combat area on one engine to make temporary repairs.

After full repairs were made at New York, Petty Officer 3rd Class Capito and his ship returned to the European Theater to join the armada staging for the invasion of France. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, he participated in the invasion as Plunkett screened transports and provided shore bombardment off Omaha Beach.

Later, Plunkett returned to the Mediterranean to support "Operation Dragoon," the invasion of Southern France. The ship provided fire support and shore bombardment off St. Tropez, Port de Bouc, Marseilles and the Italian-French border.

The ship returned to the Atlantic Theater, engaging in training exercises, convoy escort, anti-submarine patrols, and experimental testing when the war in Europe ended. Plunkett was en route to San Diego when the war ended in the Pacific. The ship escorted occupation forces from the U.S. and the Philippines to Japan and later sailed northeast to the Aleutians, operating there until ordered back to the East Coast for inactivation.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Capito returned to Sampson Naval Training Center and was honorably discharged on Feb. 1, 1946. He served two years, eight months and seven days in the U.S. Navy, most of that time at sea aboard Plunkett.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Capito received the Combat Action Ribbon, the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, the American Theater Campaign Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with four bronze service star devices, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the Navy Occupation Service Medal with Asia Clasp, the Honorable Service Lapel Button and the U.S. Navy Discharge Button.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Capito also was formally nominated to His Excellency Francois Delattre, Ambassador of France, for the French Legion of Honor. That application has been forwarded to France for further approvals.

With humility that is inherent in his generation, Petty Officer 3rd Class Capito accepted the awards, all the while honoring the officers and crew he served alongside. "The credit really goes to the officers and the crew, especially the ones that were lost. Because of them, we managed to come through," he said.

"John Capito crisscrossed the world's oceans on a small naval vessel to defend our freedom. He faced the difficulties of life at sea, a challenge even during peacetime, let alone during combat. I was honored to present Petty Officer Capito with the medals he deserves," said Senator Young.

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