



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Army Veteran Everett C. Fortner Honored for World War II Service

CATHARINE YOUNG March 17, 2014

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Olean Veteran Awarded Medals Earned in War

OLEAN - In recognition of his exemplary record of military service, U.S. Army veteran Everett C. Fortner of Olean has finally received the medals he earned in World War II.

During a ceremony this weekend at her office in Olean, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I - Olean) presented U.S. Army Technician 4th Grade Fortner with the military medals that reflect his service overseas during World War II. With family and friends present, Senator Young conferred the awards and recognized Sergeant Fortner's honorable service.

“Sergeant Fortner’s great contributions to protect our country are worthy of our highest respect and thanks. I am honored to honor him and convey our state’s appreciation. With these awards, may his contributions to the defense of our country and to freedom throughout the world be duly recognized,” said Senator Young.

“If we hadn’t gone into that war we’d be speaking German or Japanese today,” said Sergeant Fortner as he reflected on his wartime experiences.

A native of Ensenore, New York, Everett C. Fortner was born on November 11, 1919.

At the age of 22, while attending Elmira Business Institute, on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States was plunged into World War II. Sergeant Fortner volunteered to serve with the Army three weeks later and on December 31, 1941, reported for active duty.

He was first assigned to the U.S. Army Recruiting Office in Elmira where he supervised the accession of new soldiers. Later in 1942 he was reassigned to the Army’s Olean Recruiting Office where he was the non-commissioned officer in charge.

After his service in Olean, Sergeant Fortner transferred to the Army Induction Station in Rochester in January 1943 and supervised the processing of new draftees and enlistees. His next assignment, in February, took him to the Army’s Adjutant General School and Headquarters in Fort Washington, Maryland, where he worked as a stenographer with the 60th Machine Records Unit (MRU).

The 60th MRU was a little-known but vitally important unit that served an integral role in the Army’s World War II combat operations. Established by the Army’s Adjutant General Corps, the 60th MRU was a special unit tasked with collecting and auditing up-to-the-minute data sent by units in the field detailing the status of personnel and equipment. Approximately 300 reports were generated on a monthly basis, communicating casualties, personnel and equipment status, and unit strength. The most significant reports were daily dispatches sent directly to the Pentagon, where important strategic decisions were regularly made based on them.

On April 1, 1943, Sergeant Fortner and the 60th MRU departed New York Harbor in a ship convoy bound for Algiers, where Allied forces were engaged in combat with Nazi occupiers. Landing in Oran, Algeria, on April 21, 1943, the 60th travelled by rail to Algiers where they would support those Army units fighting for the liberation of North Africa. Their support would continue as Allied forces moved on to invade Sicily and Italy beginning in July 1943.

As the Allied liberation of Europe continued successfully and the war was won, the 60th MRU became part of the American constabulary forces based in the defeated Axis nations.

With the war over, on November 11, 1945, Sergeant Fortner departed Italy on a troop ship bound for Norfolk, Virginia. Two weeks later, at Fort Dix, New Jersey, he would be discharged, having served his country for three years, 10 months, and 24 days, over two and a half years of which were spent overseas in North Africa and Italy.

Prior to leaving for the war in North Africa and Europe, on January 24, 1943, Sergeant Fortner married Helen Wilber in Olean, New York. After 64 years of devoted marriage, Helen passed away in 2008. Together they raised their two daughters, Cheryl and Susan. The Fortners also have six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

“One of the good things that came out of the war is that I met a girl here in Olean who I finally married, and she gave me two children, who I’m very proud of,” said Sergeant Fortner.

The Fortners lived in Olean from 1956 onward, where Sergeant Fortner worked at Dresser-Clark until 1982, serving as the supervisor of the parts accounting office. He is also a founding member of the Dresser-Clark Retirees Club.

In Olean, Sergeant Fortner is also active in the First Baptist Church, where he has served on a number of boards and committees and was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

In honor of his heroic service, Senator Young presented to Sergeant Fortner from the U.S. Army the Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, the World War II Victory Medal, the Honorable Service Lapel Button, and the U.S. Army Marksman Badge with Rifle Bar.

In addition, from the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs, he received the New York State Medal for Merit.

“In his many years of service, Sergeant Fortner has been a dutiful defender of freedom and humanity. Upholding the highest principles of the United States Army, he offered himself to his country in a truly selfless way. For that, we offer our sincerest gratitude and appreciation,” said Senator Young.

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