



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

Donald Fida

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO May 19, 2015



Private First Class

Private First Class Donald Fida

**Award:** Honoring Our Veterans

**Year:** 2015

United States Army

Donald Fida was born on January 28, 1924, in Syracuse, New York. He enlisted in the United States Army on December 5, 1942, becoming a Private First Class in the 184th Infantry Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division, deployed to the Aleutian Islands in the Central Pacific.

During World War II, Mr. Fida fought in five battles, including the invasion of the Japanese-held atoll of Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands. He was assigned to the initial landings on Kwajalein, and faced unimaginable challenges to help United States forces take control of the island. The four-day Battle for Kwajalein marked the first time that American soldiers captured a Japanese-held territory during the War. The victory gave the United States a major anchorage point from which to continue operations.

After the Battle for Kwajalein, Mr. Fida went on to serve as a scout in the Philippines. It was there that he was captured, tortured and brutally wounded at the hands of Japanese soldiers. He was rescued by an American soldier from his hometown of Syracuse, and miraculously recovered from his severe wounds, regained his strength and proceeded to fight in another battle in April 1945, the 82-day long Battle of Okinawa. Mr. Fida's tremendous tenacity kept him alive and, unbelievably, kept him wanting to continue to serve.

For his wounds and immeasurable sacrifices, Mr. Fida earned the Purple Heart and several other military decorations, including the American Theater Campaign Medal, the Pacific Service Medal with Bronze Arrowhead, the Good Conduct Medal, the Combat Infantry Medal, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with 2 stars, the World War II Victory

Medal, and the Presidential Unit Citation. Upon his honorable discharge from the United States Army in 1945, Donald Fida was promoted to Sergeant.

Soon after returning home, Mr. Fida began a successful landscaping business which he operated for more than 60 years in the Syracuse area. He married and started a family, and then again served his Country during the Korean War, serving in the United States Navy before being honorably discharged in May 1953.

Though retired, Mr. Fida remains active in his community. He has two adult children, and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Mr. Fida continues to participate in the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, and serves as a guest lecturer at various Central New York colleges.

Donald Fida's remarkable story of courage, survival and triumph as a World War II combat veteran deserves to be permanently recognized by the New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame. He has distinguished himself both in military and civilian life and has made this Empire State extremely proud.