



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Honors Korean War Veteran

CATHARINE YOUNG July 11, 2016

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OLEAN – Specialist William Thomas King, U.S. Army, was honored recently with military decorations reflecting his distinguished service to our nation.

During a private ceremony with his wife by his side, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I – 57th District) presented Specialist King with the U.S. Army's Good Conduct Medal and Korean Defense Service Medal (KDSM).

“We owe veterans like Specialist King a profound debt of gratitude, so it is always humbling to be able to pay tribute to our brave service men and women,” said Senator Young. “At a time when our nation faced global uncertainty and instability, Specialist King stood fast in defense of the values and beliefs we, as Americans, treasure.

“His legacy is a reflection of the tremendous pride and selflessness that is demonstrated by the members of our armed forces. They are willing to pay the ultimate price out of love and loyalty to our country. For his service and sacrifice, Specialist King is truly deserving of the medals presented to him, and we all are thankful for his dedication to duty.”

Specialist King said, “Thank you Senator Young. After all these years to have you take the time to recognize veterans such as myself helps me and many others feel a lot better about the so called forgotten Police Action. I am proud to receive these medals as is my family. The ending and clean up after a war is easily forgotten but the memories are not. We must never forget our soldiers, and what the South Korean people went through. I am thankful that I had a chance to help them.”

On October 18, 1955, at the age of 18, Mr. King was inducted into the United States Army and reported for active duty. Trained as a general supply specialist, he was ordered to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where he took part in 16 weeks of advanced infantry training with the 101st Airborne Division, which included a practice amphibious landing on the island of Iwo Jima.

Private King was then assigned to 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, and stationed at the 38th parallel of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). He was later attached to the 24th Infantry Division, where he was tasked with clearing munitions, building fortifications, and restoring battlefields to usable land for South Korean citizens.

During the ceremony, Private King noted that he remembers traversing battlefields on his hands and knees, probing for buried mines with bayonets. While in the field, the men of the 21st Infantry Regiment braved harsh winter conditions, living in tents with temperatures reaching such extremes as negative 40 degrees.

A combat ready unit, the 24th Infantry Division guarded against hostile North Korean snipers, thieves and unfound live landmines along the DMZ. Several months into this hazardous overseas tour, he was promoted to Specialist 3rd Class.

During this experience, Private King was severely burned when a stockpile of fuel exploded. He was evacuated and hospitalized, where he recovered from his injuries and eventually returned to duty.

On October 1, 1957, Specialist King was demobilized, having served one year, 11 months and 14 days during the Cold War, with one year, five months and 21 days of his service time overseas. He was transferred to the Inactive Army Reserves and served out the remainder of his military obligation until finally being honorable discharge on October 17, 1961.

After completing his time in the Army, Mr. King returned to his home town of Ashford, New York, where he has served the Town for 36 years. Eighteen of those years were as Town Supervisor.

“It was a privilege to take part in this ceremony, honoring Specialist King’s courage and sacrifice. His bravery and devotion has left a lasting impact on countless lives,” said Senator Young.