Female pilot receives medal, 66 years later

Sen. Feingold delivers honor to Merrill woman

BY DJ SLATER • WAUSAU DAILY HERALD • MARCH 22, 2010

MERRILL -- Elinore Owen Pyle never saw it coming. She expected no honor for her Army Air Forces pilot from 1943 to 1944. To her, the job was just something her country needed done.

But Pyle, 87, received the surprise of a lifetime Sunday at Pine Crest Nursing Home when U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold presented her with the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor provided by Congress.

"I say, thank you, and I appreciate your effort to come by here," Pyle said to Feingold when he gave her the medal. "It's a beautiful medal. Absolutely beautiful."

Pyle is one of Wisconsin's two surviving Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs. The other is Ethel Jones Sheffle of Appleton. About 300 WASPs survive nationwide.

WASPs were the first women ever trained to fly American military aircraft and served during World
Women tested fighter planes, fer U.S. bases, towed targets for shi male pilots and instructed male \(\text{other duties.}
\]

However, they received no forme after President Barack Obama si that awards all WASPs with the (Gold Medal)}


"It is not given out very often," Feingold said. "It's not a dime-a-dozen thing."

About 65 people were on hand to watch Pyle receive the award, including her two daughte and Barbara Philleo. Pyle was unable to attend a ceremony March 10 in Washington, D.C., Congress awarded the medal to the nation's WASPs.

Philleo said she contacted Feingold's office shortly after that ceremony and asked whether present the award to Pyle personally.

"Being able to hand a hero like that a medal is pretty meaningful," Feingold said. "It's a goc she seemed very pleased."

The female pilots of WW11 (more then 1,000) were a vital part of the war effort. Elino: Congrads from one former pilot to another. 3/22/2010 7:30:02 AM

Mrs Pyle. You are my American Idol! Thank you for leading the way for all female military personal. You are more than a hero and we Americans better be giving you more than 100% of what ever you need. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU. I Salute you. 3/22/2010 7:01:29 AM

You must be logged in to leave a comment. Login | Register