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Female pilot receives medal, 66 years later

Sen. Feingold delivers honor to Merrill woman

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

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MERRILL -- Elinore Owen Pyle never saw it coming.

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She expected no honor for her [U.S. Army Air Forces](#) pilot from 1943 to 1945. The job was just something her dad had done.

But Pyle, 87, received the surprise Sunday at Pine Crest Nursing Home. Sen. Russ Feingold presented her with the [Congressional Gold Medal](#), the honor provided by Congress.

"I say, thank you, and I appreciate you come by here," Pyle said to Feingold. "It's a beautiful. Absolutely beautiful."

Pyle is one of Wisconsin's two surviving [Air Force Service Pilots](#), or WASPs. Ethel Jones Sheffle of Appleton. WASPs survive nationwide.

WASPs were the first women ever



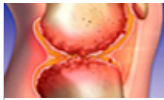
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U.S. Sen Russ Feingold presents a Congressional Gold Medal to Elinore Owen Pyle on Sunday afternoon at Pine Crest Nursing Home in Merrill. (Xai Kha/Wausau Daily Herald)

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American military aircraft and ser War II. About 1,100 women from country volunteered to join.

Women tested fighter planes, fer U.S. bases, towed targets for sh male pilots and instructed male p other duties.

However, they received no forma after President Barack Obama si that awards all WASPs with the [Gold Medal](#)

Past Gold Medal recipients includ Teresa, Rosa Parks, Jackie Robinson, [Pope John Paul II](#) and Ronald Reagan.

"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 daughter 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 good she seemed very pleased."

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scottagecheese wrote:
How cool is that? Unbelievably awesome.
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mostlymarkey wrote:
When I was just ending my years as an AF Basic Jet Instructor Pilot, women entered their first training classes. None got through basic. They went back to find out why - after all there were all kinds of female pilots. Turned out they had selected the female pilot flight school candidates on the basis of academics. When they used the same criteria for men and women (a combination of factors including academics) there was little difference in the success rate between the young men and the young women.

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

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kcabdeef wrote:
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

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