



NEWS

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Civil Air Patrol to be Awarded Congressional Gold Medal

CAP's World War II heroes will be available for interviews Dec. 10

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – On Dec. 10, Civil Air Patrol will be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal on Capitol Hill in honor of its founding members' role in protecting the homeland against deadly German U-boat attacks during World War II and carrying out other vital wartime domestic missions.

The Congressional Gold Medal ceremony will take place at 3 p.m. in Statuary Hall at the Capitol. About 40 living World War II members and their relatives as well as the families of deceased members will be in attendance. Later that evening a celebratory dinner sponsored by CITGO will be held at 7 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel in Arlington, Virginia, where bronze replica medals will be presented to the World War II-era CAP members courtesy of the oil giant. Sunoco and Sunoco Logistics are also major sponsors of the events.

Some 200,000 men, women and teenagers from all walks of life – including stars of the silver screen and successful businessmen, future Tuskegee Airmen and aspiring pilots – participated in CAP during the war years, largely without recognition or reward. The organization was founded Dec. 1, 1941, six days before Pearl Harbor.

World War II members in attendance at the event will include:

- A pair of centenarians – **T. Guy Reynolds**, who turns 102 on Nov. 30, and **Jeri Truesdell**, who celebrated her 100th birthday Feb. 16. Reynolds, of Martinsburg, West Virginia, founded the West Virginia Wing's Martinsburg Composite Squadron in 1943. Truesdell, who lives in Winnetka, California, joined CAP in 1942 and served until 1944 as a pilot in the Illinois Wing.
- Along with Truesdell, early female aviators like **Jayne Pace** of Houston, who flew as a Louisiana Wing pilot starting in 1945, and **Etta "Kitty" Bass Knight** of Spruce Creek, Florida, a Georgia Wing pilot.
- **Gail Halvorsen** of Amada, Arizona, the U.S. Air Force's "Uncle Wiggly Wings," who is famed for dropping chocolate to deprived children on the Soviet-controlled side of Berlin during the 1948 Berlin Airlift, and who credits CAP with teaching him how to fly after he joined in 1942.

- **George Boyd** of Wichita, Kansas, and **Wallace C. Higgins** of Alfred Station, New York, who joined the Tuskegee Airmen after training as CAP cadets in New Jersey and New York, respectively.
- **Lester L. Wolff** of East Norwich, New York, who flew anti-submarine missions for CAP's New York Wing, more than two decades before he served as a U.S. representative for New York in the House from 1965-1980.
- Five of Wolff's fellow subchasers – **Robert Arn** of Westerville, Ohio, who served at CAP's Coastal Patrol Base 14 in Panama City, Florida, from September 1942-June 1943; **James Fletcher** of Sugar Land, Texas, who served at Coastal Patrol Base 4 in Parksley, Virginia; **Carl Jividen** of Londonderry, Ohio, who not only flew out of but also helped build Base 14 in Panama City; **Emery Overcash** of Moore, South Carolina, who served at Coastal Patrol Base 21 in Beaufort, North Carolina; and **Gilbert Russell** of Granite Quarry, North Carolina, who served at Coastal Patrol Base 16 in Manteo, North Carolina.
- **Otha H. Vaughan**, of Huntsville, Alabama, whose experiences and training as a CAP cadet in South Carolina helped lead to an Air Force stint and, ultimately, a career with NASA that included involvement in developing Saturn series rockets for the Apollo program and in designing the Lunar Rover.

Also attending will be the families of:

- **Willa Brown**, the first African-American woman to earn a private pilot's license and to hold a commercial pilot's license in the U.S.
- **Vernon Rudolph**, the founder of Krispy Kreme Donuts Inc.
- **Richard L. Yuengling Sr.**, the fourth co-president and manager of D.G. Yuengling and Son, the oldest brewery in the U.S. that's still active today.

Other high-profile CAP members during the war years included a significant Hollywood contingent, most notably famed actors **Robert Cummings** and **Mary Astor**; **Meinhardt Raabe**, who portrayed the Munchkin coroner in "The Wizard of Oz;" **Henry King Jr.**, a noted Hollywood director from 1915-1961 and one of 36 founders of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; and **Jose Iturbi**, a world-famous pianist and harpsichordist who also appeared in several Hollywood films in the 1940s.

During the war members of CAP's coastal patrols, flying their own or borrowed planes, flew 24 million miles from March 1942-August 1943 over the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in order to ward off German U-boat attacks against U.S. shipping – especially domestic oil tankers bound for Europe to help fuel the military machine. They did so at the request of the U.S. Petroleum Industry War Council, because the U.S. Navy lacked the resources to guard against the submarine attacks and provide escorts for commercial convoys.

The CAP coastal patrols, flying out of 21 bases located along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts from Maine to the southern tip of Texas, spotted 173 U-boats and attacked 57. They also escorted more than 5,600 convoys and reported 17 floating mines, 36 bodies, 91 ships in distress and 363 survivors in the water.

Other pioneering Civil Air Patrol members patrolled the country's borders by air, vigilant for potential saboteurs. In addition, they towed targets for military trainees, watched for forest fires, conducted search and rescue missions, provided disaster relief and emergency transport of people and parts and conducted orientation flights for future pilots.

In all, 65 CAP members lost their lives in the line of duty by the end of the war.

The Senate passed legislation authorizing the Congressional Gold Medal in May 2013, with the House following suit a year later. President Barack Obama signed the bill into law May 30.

"I salute CAP's founding members for their legacy of service and sacrifice in protecting the homeland during World War II," said Maj. Gen. Joe Vazquez, CAP's national commander. "Now, some 73 years later, CAP's rich history of service continues. Modern-day members, nearly 60,000 strong, still perform vital homeland security missions, search and rescue missions and provide emergency response for natural and manmade disasters."

In-depth information about CAP and its World War II missions and members, including those listed above, can be found at www.capgoldmedal.com.

#CAPgoldmedal

Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with 59,000 members nationwide, operating a fleet of 550 aircraft. CAP, in its Air Force auxiliary role, performs about 85 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and is credited by the AFRCC with saving an average of 70 lives annually. Its unpaid professionals also perform homeland security, disaster relief and drug interdiction missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to more than 24,000 young people currently participating in the CAP cadet programs. CAP received the World Peace Prize in 2011 and has been performing missions for America for over 72 years. CAP also participates in Wreaths Across America, an initiative to remember, honor and teach about the sacrifices of U.S. military veterans. Visit www.gocivilairpatrol.com or www.capvolunteernow.com for more information.

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