

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Presents posthumous medals to family of WWII hero

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DE PERE, WI — Rep. Gallagher today presented medals to the family of World War II Veteran Ray C. Jackson in honor of his heroic service in WWII. Jackson was one of the brave volunteers who signed up for the seemingly impossible task of retaking Burma from the Japanese units occupying it during the height of Japan's dominance over the China-Burma-India area of operations in WWII. This unit of brave volunteers, known in history as Merrill's Marauders, conquered all odds by securing victory in the Pacific.

In a speech presenting these medals to Jackson's family, **Rep. Gallagher said**, *"In April of 1944, Ray's battalion was trapped in the caves surrounding the village of Nhpum Ga for several weeks, beating back assault after assault from Japanese forces. Ray sustained injuries during this engagement, but he drew on a deep reserve of fortitude and fought on. When the smoke cleared from the over one hundred and thirty artillery rounds fired into Japanese positions, Ray and his fellow Marauders had emerged victorious despite their heavy combat losses."*

"While Ray played an indispensable role in this campaign, perhaps the defining element of his legacy is a lifetime spent passing on the same American values, which he swore to uphold and defend in the face of violence and tyranny as a Soldier, to his children and grandchildren," **Gallagher continued.**

The medals presented to Jackson's family were the:

- Bronze Star Medal
- Good Conduct Medal

- Presidential Unit Citation
- American Campaign Medal
- Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with 2 bronze service stars
- World War II Victory Medal
- Combat Infantryman Badge (1st Award)
- Honorable Service Lapel Button WWII.

You can read the congressman's full remarks as they were prepared for delivery below:

It is a true privilege to be here with you today to honor Ray C. Jackson for his service to our country. I am honored to present these medals to Ray's family members, who have tirelessly worked to ensure that he is recognized for the historical role that he played in securing victory in the Pacific during World War Two.

To even begin to grasp the magnitude of the challenges that Ray and his fellow soldiers faced, I would like to set the scene and transport us back to the China-Burma-India theater in 1942. By May of that year, Imperial Japanese forces had conquered large swaths of territory, including the entirety of the Malay Peninsula, the Philippines, and much of Oceania. The Japanese had also waged a brutal campaign to push the British Army out of Burma. This Japanese victory was of great strategic significance and allowed enemy forces to control the critical Allied supply lines between British India and China.

By 1944, General George C. Marshall requested volunteers "of a high state of physical ruggedness and stamina" for the seemingly impossible assignment of retaking Burma from the well-fortified Japanese units which occupied this critical territory. Ray C. Jackson was one of the three thousand warriors who had, without fear or doubt, decided that they would personally put an end to Japan's dominance over the China-Burma-India area of operations. The unit formed by these brave volunteers has been known to history by several names - the 5307th Composite Unit and Merrill's Marauders among them - but to me, they are simply American heroes.

While Ray and his fellow soldiers experienced heavy combat against veteran forces of the Japanese 18th Division during the Burma Campaign, they learned quickly that the jungle itself could be a formidable enemy. The Marauders had been tasked to infiltrate central Burma as the primary invasion force of a three-pronged attack on Japanese strongholds - this meant seemingly endless treks through both tropical

valleys and dizzying, heavily forested highlands to retake key logistics sites. They took heavy casualties while in contact with Japanese forces and through festering tropical diseases, malnourishment, and sheer exhaustion. In April of 1944, Ray's battalion was trapped in the caves surrounding the village of Nhpum Ga for several weeks, beating back assault after assault from Japanese forces. Ray sustained injuries during this engagement, but he drew on a deep reserve of fortitude and fought on. When the smoke cleared from the over one hundred and thirty artillery rounds fired into Japanese positions, Ray and his fellow Marauders had emerged victorious despite their heavy combat losses.

In August of 1944, the single-minded refusal to succumb to the horrors around them allowed Merrill's Marauders to achieve their objective, retaking and successfully defending Myitkyina Airfield from ruthless Imperial Japanese soldiers.

While Ray played an indispensable role in this campaign, perhaps the defining element of his legacy is a lifetime spent passing on the same American values, which he swore to uphold and defend in the face of violence and tyranny as a Soldier, to his children and grandchildren.

I could not be prouder to present the following medals to Ray's family in his honor:

- *Bronze Star Medal*
- *Good Conduct Medal*
- *Presidential Unit Citation*
- *American Campaign Medal*
- *Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with 2 bronze service stars*
- *World War II Victory Medal*
- *Combat Infantryman Badge (1st Award)*
- *Honorable Service Lapel Button WWII*

As a staunch defender of American Freedom during one of the most turbulent periods of the 20th century, it is fitting that we honor Ray C. Jackson in this way. Thank you, Tonya, and thank you to your father Robert and your entire family for asking me to help obtain these medals and decorations for you. I am truly in awe of Ray's accomplishments during his time in the Army. These honors are well-deserved and long overdue.